



Daniel Jeremy Silver Collection Digitization Project

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MS-4850: Daniel Jeremy Silver Papers, 1972-1993.

Series III: The Temple Tifereth-Israel, 1946-1993, undated.

Sub-series B: Sermons, 1950-1989, undated.

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Box
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The Kids and Hasidism, 1970.

The Kids and Hasidism
When The Old Is New
Daniel Jeremy Silver
December 6, 1970

The Zaddik's court is an example of a religious commune, the art of meditation as developed by the Hasidic masters. Now this interest in Hasidism is not unique, not a response to some emphasis that I have placed on it. I am told that outside the gates of the campus of UCLA there are living the messianic disciples of a small Hasidic group which began years ago in a small town in Eastern Europe whose ancestors continued a rather visionary approach to Hasidism of this particular group. These people have established a house. They hold open house for the students on the campus. They meet each Sabbath afternoon. Several hundred Jewish students come to sit cross-legged on the floor and sway to the wordless chants of Hasidim. One of the most popular figures on the college campus is a man, whose programs will always draw, who is a folk-singer, guitar-strumming, hippie, hasidic robe by the name of Shlomo Carlbach who travels around the country speaking the wonderful folk legends of Eastern Europe, singing the songs, and giving out with tidbit glee modern, ancient, old, new wisdom in lectures designed for the generation gap. The Jews represent the young, the anguished, those who are outside, those who feel that the establishment is rotten to the core, cold, those who deny the cold society and the freaks, the other world, the elderly world. Let me very briefly give you the kinds of words that Rabbi Carlbach speaks. I lack the long hair, the dark glasses, the rather disreputable clothes, the guitar - forgive me.

"You know that the buying of the Chanukah light is a special mitzvah, that to buy the lights one is permitted to sell even one's shirt. It is because there should be no excuse for hanging back. This is a lesson for us. The soul of Judaism has to come. There are no two ways about it. You know, till the Maccabees arose hundreds were killed. They died without protest, faithful Jews to the end, martyrs, so many. There is this story.

A Jewish boy worked in a pagan temple. He didn't know any better. When Judah Macabee asked him to fight the Greeks he said yes. And Judah said, why didn't you fight before this? He said: No one ever asked me to. No one ever asked me. Perhaps that is what a lot of people need, to be asked. The old people just let themselves be killed. It was the young who started up. The light is there. The candle is there. We have only to bring them together to make a light. "

Now when you stop to analyze it carefully, it is very effective. It draws on the past and speaks of the past and to a source of great wisdom. It speaks of response, of being a light, of being alive, of caring, of sacrificing, of duty. How does one explain the interest of the stemmed generation, or the larger part of it, or the significant element in it, or those who still have some vestigial Jewish interest within it. How do we explain their interest in Hasidism? The answer, I believe, lies in this fact. Hasidism began as a tuning out and a turning off of the outside world. It was born in the dark midnight of the medieval oppression. It was born after the days of the Melinsky massacres, after the Cossacks had erupted from the Ukraine and moved across the hinterland, the heartland, the Jewish eastern Europe. It was the denial of the outside world and a search for integrity, a search for what joy could be gotten in life, in the world within. And it sought to find this joy in community, in fellowship, in fraternity, in turning to one's better self and drawing out the love, the better self in someone else. It spoke of community. It spoke of communion. It spoke of deity. It admitted openly that God's journey passions within, but spoke of the possibility of finding the brighter passions and of sharing these with another.

Recently, Dr. Reichsfield of Yale University has made something of a splash with a book which he called THE BREEDING OF AMERICA. Some of you may have read it. Among other things it tends to describe the inner world, the perspective on life as many in the college generation Dr. Reichsfield feels see it. He speaks of various levels

of consciousness and he says that the young people have come to a level which he calls Consciousness III. By this he means a world in which they have rejected the outside world, turned away from it; it is too cold, too dispassionate, too impersonal. They want nothing of the status or achievement-oriented society. They want to find the world within, the best world within themselves, the best within another, and have meeting, community, sympathy, compassion and concern. I submit that there are a great number of similarities between Consciousness III and Hasidism I, between the old and the new. And I would like to draw some of these out for you this morning. Before I do I would like to take a step back into history to point out two things: one, that it is surprising that the young people should turn to hasidism; and two, what kind of hasidism, what understanding of hasidism they are in fact turning to, the world as it was or what they assume the world to have been.

Many of you come from homes where learning was prized. Many of you remember that on your shelves in all probability there were six thick volumes published in the late 19th century, in the 1890's, by Hyman Gretz, which were an English translation of his great German history of the Jews. Dr. Gretz's work represented the culmination and summing up of the first hundred years of academic, critical Jewish self-awareness. Instead of folklores, instead of legends, instead of midrash, he attempted, from a university perspective, to write critical history. And when he turned to the Hasidim, to these figures who are so romantic to our young people, this is what Dr. Gretz had to say:

There arose in Poland a new Essenism, of the Essenes, with forms similar to those of the ancient cult, with ablutions and baths, white garments, miraculous cures, and prophetic visions. Like the old movement, it originated in ultra piety, but soon turned against its own parent. It seems remarkable that at the time when Mendelsohn declared rational thought to be the essence of Judaism and founded, as it were, a widely extended order of enlightened men. Another banner was unfurled, the adherents of which announced the gross superstition to be the fundamental principle of Judaism, and formed an order of wonder-seeking confederates.

The founders of the new Hassidism were Israel of Miedziboz and Beer of Miziricz. The former received alike from his admirers and his antagonists the surname of "The Wonderworker by means of Invocations of the Name of God", Baalshem, or Baal-Shem Tov in the customary abbreviated form, Besht. As ugly as the name Besht was, the form of the founder and the order that he called into existence, the graces did not sit by his cradle but the spirit of belief was in wonderworking and his brain was so filled with fantastic images that he could not distinguish them from real, tangible beings. And on and on and on.

What we have in Dr. Gretz's history is the typical liberal's attitude towards the scrubby, towards the poor, towards the semi-literate, towards the fundamentalist, towards revival meetings, towards those who turn to a faith healer rather than to a physician, towards those who deny their youngsters admission to a secular state school, towards those who marry off their daughters when they are eleven and twelve, towards those who insist that the secular book must not be read and that the only books which are permissible are those based on the traditional, orthodox and Hassidic, towards those, in other words, who live not in the real world as a Dr. Gretz understands it but in a world of their own. All this from the sun as he saw it, darkened by the grossest forms of superstition. The Hassidic world was poor. The Hassidic world was ridden with superstition. Many of the Hassidic world men did turn to their psychic king, to their wonder-working leaders, for amulets and for charms and for superstitions, for faith healing, for all kinds of magical healings.

The world of Dr. Gretz is a liberal, humane world which sets such a value on education, on discipline, on control, on reorganizing the terms of society, and produced, among other things, modern anti-semitism; produced, among other things, the world of war; produced, among other things, Auschwitz and, of course, produced men who began to look beyond the word "the mass", the word "proletariat", the word

"superstitious", the word "obscuratist", to look at the inner life of these people to see if there was not something there that modern man could find to give meaning to. The mystery is always an attempt to find in the past that which refracts our own attitudes and our own prejudices. In the twentieth century he has given up on the romantic histories, histories of war, histories of kings and princes and noblemen, and has found the glory of the past in the so-called "uncommon common man." This brings to mind the meaning of myth, of folklore, folk legend and folk music and folk mystery.

And so, in the twentieth century, a whole group of men, the most prominent of them the philosopher Martin Buber, began to re-examine the inner life of the Hassidim and to present to us a different kind of understanding of these poor, these huddled masses, who had turned away from the nineteenth century, who had turned away from science and technology and the world of the establishment and turned in on themselves. Cecil Roth is perhaps to our generation what Hyman Gretz is perhaps to his, the world-re-knowned historian whose understanding reflects the best in the historical traditions of our century. Let me read you the parallel paragraph in Roth's history to Gretz's.

A more remote effect of the Messianic stir was the birth of Hassidism. The revivalist movement in Poland permeated all sections of society, until it touched a simple Podolian lime-digger, Israel ben Eliezer (1700-1760). The cycle of legends which has gathered about the latter's personality has made it difficult to realize the exact import of his teaching. It is clear, nevertheless, that this man of the people revolted against the hegemony of intellect which had hitherto prevailed undisputed amongst the Polish Jews where learning had been considered fundamental to Judaism, and consideration was withheld from any person who was not a profound Talmudist. The new leader, a tender-hearted mystic of rare personal magnetism, taught that piety was superior to scholarship, and that it was the prerogative of any man, however ignorant and however poor, to attain communion with his God. The Deity, according to him, infused all creation, could be served in many manners and with every bodily function, so long as His worship was carried on with joy and gladness. Man could derive no advantage from the mortification of the flesh; it was by spiritual exaltation and complete abandonment of self that the gulf between earth and heaven could be bridged. On the other hand, there existed certain Righteous Ones (Zadikim) who were close to the Almighty,

and whose intercession might sometimes sway His immutable will.

Here we have a world not sane with a pejorative adjective, a world in which we sense grace and spiritual enlightenment, has meaning and love and need. I sometimes wonder as I read these histories will the real Hassidic world please stand up.

It is clear that both Gretz and Roth were reacting to a reality unto their own need. It is clear that the young people today turn to Hassidism, turn to it and read about it, rather than the beautifully formed prose of Martin Buber and the pearls of the Hassidic masters. It is the meaning of God in Hassidism and the dozen books that he wrote on the subject. They find something of the Hassidic world in the tales of Agnon who so recently won the Nobel Prize. They find much in the novels and novella and the likes of a man like Isaac Bashevis Singer. They turn to a world, in other words, which they do not have to see or smell or know. They turn to people whom they do not have to meet nor to find the meaning of meeting. They turn to a world whose reality, whose obscuratism, whose illiteracy, whose ignorance is not part of the printed page. And they react simply to an understanding by sensitive western scholars of the spiritual, cultural, psychological meaning of that world. They react to a disembodied world as it was. And as we proceed with this analysis I would like you to keep this in mind. They are not reacting to people so much as to a body of ideas. They are not in the class dancing back and forth with Hasidim, but in their own circle dancing with their own to a record, a long-playing modern scientific technical achievement on the victrola, not to the rather sometimes unmusical sound made by the assembled voices of the Hasidim.

What do they find in this world? They find, in the first instance, the rich folklore, a rich set of symbolic ideas around which they can form their own perceptions of life. Like the Hassidic world, the world of Consciousness III, the world of some of these young people begins in a turning off in anger against the outside world, the world of policy, the world of power, the world of finance, the world of war, the world

of the factory, the world of the machine, the world of the automobile and of the highway, all that speaks of the daily reality. The second World War and Viet Nam are to Consciousness III what _____ were to the Hasidim. They look for reality, for confirmation that there is meaning to life, for a sense of joy in this blackness. They look within, not without. They deny the possibility of climbing a greasy pole. They deny the meaningfulness of getting to the top of the pole simply to manipulate the bits of power which exist in our world. That is not enough. Suddenly deliverance, meaning to life, comes only when one has touched another life, when one has had the very depths of his own being exposed to beauty, exposed to feeling, exposed to compassion as well as to passion. So both these worlds begin in the tuning out of the world we assume most of us to be the real world. If this be reality I want no part of it. This tuning out of the real world is specified in anger against certain figures in its establishment, against the war lords, against the military and industrial complex, in the case of the Hasidim against the rabbinic complex, against all those scholars and teachers who have organized communities, who have taught that it is only through learning, only through mastery of the book, of the Talmud, that one gains power, status, meaning, credit, brownie points with God. The Hasidim _____ is full of anger against those who are in power, particularly those whose power depends upon scholarship because they were semi-literate, against those whose power depends upon wealth because these were the poor. Though they often speak in gentle terms, this Consciousness III tends to be very gentle in its most scheming condemnations, nevertheless, this bitter attack is explicit.

An elderly man who had once been a scholar, who had now become a Hassid, was riding in the back of a wagon. The wagoneer began to talk with him and began to apologize that his profession precluded his attendance with any degree of regularity in the Talmud circle in his little synagogue. The man answered him by indirection.

He said, do you often give rides to those who cannot afford to pay? The man said, of course. And the one-time scholar turned Hassid smiled and said to the wagoneer simply: "well, then, you are truly serving God. One serves God in service to the poor. One serves God in extending one's self and being sympathetic, in sacrificial act, in caring, not in ritual, not by amassing degrees, not by prating the cleverness of one's mind.

Hassidic thought tends to speak of the world about as darkness. God is in exile. There are all about in this world of ours sparks of the divine glory. It is man's responsibility to reach out and to uplift these sparks, to bring them out of darkness, so that the darkness becomes light. How do we do it? We do it by walking into the bitter darkness of a home where there is anger, strife and contention and by bringing laughter and love and compassion, to warm the atmosphere, lighten the spirit, kindle the lights in the living room of this home. Wherever one is one can be the bearer of light. One kindles light, one's own inner light, and in that moment of sharing finds his own inner light burning the more brightly. There is no place so ugly, no place so destitute, no place so humble, no place so dark that there is not in that darkness an implicit light, that one cannot find there service, the lighting of lights, a chance to light one's own inner meaning.

This is what Consciousness III is saying. There is no street, there is no backward part of this world, there is no peasant, there is no cold war, there is no wealthy apartment complex, where there is not darkness. When we are alone, service, compassion, cannot bring light. And that is the true service, not the manipulation of people, not the management of power, not the organizing of five-year plans, but the true service is in lightning the sparks that are under the shadow of the darkness. Consciousness III and Hassidism speak almost the same symbolic terms and the terms speak of the moment. All that we do we do now. We cannot know what the future will

bring: more war, more abusive power. We cannot plan for a future which will never be, sacrifice ourselves for a retirement we may never enjoy and say that is when I will travel, that is when I will read, that is when I will visit my family. The moment is now, and it is now that we must fill this cup, this momentary cup. The moment is always with people, always to share, the way in which we share that moment, our ability to touch another rather than living walled in from all others as most of us do. The ability, Hassidism says, . Future? There will be a future, perhaps. God will take care of the future, but the moment is now and the deed must be done now. The touching must be now and the loving must be now and the sharing must be now and the caring must be now. There may be no other time but now. Again, Consciousness III and Hassidism speak in the same language.

I would remind you that it was not the student generation but Jewish scholars who sensed the new meaning of life, the new direction of the day, who mined this gold mine of Hassidic legend and Hassidic teaching. Much of what I have said appeals to you as it appeals to me because what Hassidism said essentially was that the world of form, the world of work, the world of power is not enough to satisfy any of us. The real meaning of our lives is in the context of our relationship with others, particularly those most precious intimacies of family and of deep friendship, that is, the way in which we live rather than the amount of achievement which we accumulate in the eyes of the outside world which validates our being. It is not how many initials you have after your name or how many inches of space you have in your obituary - you're dead then. How many people have been enlightened, been spurred, made happier, made more human, that is the test. But there are no panaceas in life. There is no way which is the way, the only way. The fault I see with Hassidism is that no one reminds us to move beyond the formal, to move beyond the institutional, to move beyond our urges, to see that there is more to life than the management of beings which

speaks a very necessary counterpoint to the social engineering, technological preconceptions of our society. Nevertheless, as it is taken over by the young it speaks a lesson which has within it validity in its own innate

The world of Hyman Gretz ^{describes} a world of ignorance, a world of superstition, a world of fear, the world which denied itself the machinery, the learning, the nursing, which modern society dared offer to its people. This world was real. It is part of the reality of Hassidism just as it is real and true that in the old sections of the city of Jerusalem there are still Hassidic roots that deny the very existence of the Jewish state because it was not created through the agency of the supernatural design.

When you turn off the world, like it or not, you become a flotsam tossed about on the stormy seas of time and take life at a greater risk than need be taken. Many of us willingly entrust his body to a wonder-working remedy instead of a surgeon. We trust the security of the State of Israel to the messiah, alivayh he should come, rather than to diplomacy and soldiering. Hasidism, taken to its logical conclusion, the tuning out, the turning off, forces us to a fatalism, forces us to cast our burdens on the unknown and unnoble, makes us clay pigeons if you will. More than the Hassidism, of course, is a world in which it was very clear what the terms of existence were. There was the halacha. There was the Talmudic law and even though the scholar was no longer the paragon of all virtue, the law was scrupulously followed. In Consciousness III, on the other hand, there is no law. There is a disrespect for all ritual, for all rites, for all description, legal, institutional or otherwise, of what is the way men must go. And lacking this kind of framework, this Talmud if you will, the young people in Consciousness III have very little except some overlay in their consciousness of the old, humane, religious, liberal consciousness which was instilled into them in their childhood to tell them what they ought to do. Hassidism has over to them: talk to them about intensity, talk to them about the feeling, how they should do, what

they should do and not what we should do. It never prescribes; it never defines; it never says this is the way, these are the goals, this is right, this is wrong, this is what you must do, this is what you must give. And as the of consciousness it tends to disappear in Consciousness III. When people rely more and more on intuition, on compassion, what does it mean? They become more and more prone to the kind of erratic act or irresponsible act, or sometimes even a violent act which most of us consider to be fundamentally immoral. It is very important to know how we do what we do, but it is also important to know what we do and what we should do and what are the goals we must seek. As I read of Consciousness III reminded myself of all the wars which glorified intuition, compassion, feelings, spontaneity, genuineness; that Hitler, too, spoke of intuition and compassion and genuineness. He, too, knew instinctively what he must do.

Here we are, at a critical moment of time. All of our values are being turned. All of the old teachings are only partial teachings. None of us feel secure, certain, that we know what we must do and how we must do. Hassidism speaks to all of us of feeling, compassion, warmth and what we most desperately need, fellow men, community. Beyond I and thou, beyond intimacy, beyond love, must there not be some larger organization of the society, some careful and meaningful social planning? Must there not be some meaningful conscious organization of power? Must not all of us recognize that not all of us can be Hassidic saints and begin to organize institutions, organize the power for the good, for the larger good, for the common weal.

Let us go back some fifty years in this country before we organized the New Deal, before we reorganized the very structure of our economic order. Those who organized the New Deal were politicians. All of them were tainted. All of them were full of compromise. All of them played the game of politics. All of them manip-

ulated men. But how much good for how many came out of that power? Unfortunately, Consciousness III and Hassidism ask of men the unworldly which the real world precludes. Many are truly concerned with words like justice and righteousness and equal opportunity in the social order, but it is a remarkable and poignant reminder not to be bemused by what we do, by the institutions which were organized, by the way in which we work to see the stately structure so that we forget the phrase of the Psalms which I read to you this morning which is perhaps the key phrase in all of Hassidic literature: "Know Him, acknowledge Him in all His ways for there is no work, there is no beauty, there is no relationship, there is no meeting of people when we cannot acknowledge God and find the chance to do the good, to lighten the lights, to be enlightened, to become more human ourselves.



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to share it, so we all include some for the poor
of the world. Everyone has not money, for it takes
time to get it. It is a necessary necessity.

If a man has a house before he goes to work
he will be happy to share it.

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it is a necessity.

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A man has a house to see his
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deposition - 1/10/00
Page 1 of 1

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 - IRVING H. MANDELZWEIG
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Yes, they loved Shlomo,
use—and voted with their
dn't criticize, they didn't
s, they just left.

Midnight. We filed back into the
room, settled down on the rug. Shlomo
looked with love at the Hanukah lamp.

"You know that the buying of the
Hanukah lights is a special *mitzvah*?
That to buy the lights one is permitted
to sell one's shirt? That's because there
should be no excuse for hanging back.
That's a lesson for us, The Soul of
Judaism has to come. There are no two
ways about it. You know, till the Mac-
cabees arose, hundreds were killed.
They died without protest, faithful
Jews till the end. Martyrs. So many.
And not remembered. There is this
story. A Jewish boy worked in a pagan
temple. He didn't know any better.
Then Judah Maccabee asked him to
fight the Greeks and he said yes. And
Judah said, why didn't you fight before
this? And he said, no one ever asked
me. No one ever asked me. Perhaps
that's what a lot of people need. To be
asked. The old people just let them-
selves be killed. It was the young who
started up."

Mattathias? Somehow he had disap-
peared in the telling. I looked around
me. The young. The elders had gone
home during the recesses. They had to
be up early in the morning for work.
College kids can sleep late.

The boy lying down in front of me
had an Old Russian Bolshevik mus-
tache. Evergreen Posters had brought
the October Revolution back into
style. Pretty as a poster. Cosmetic Revo-
lution. When I talked to the boy earlier
he was shocked that I thought the
Black Panthers fascistic.

Was this the Army of Tomorrow and
I blinded to the fact? Was Shlomo
right?

"The Light is there," says Shlomo,
"the Candle is there. We only have to
put them together. . ."

A pause.

"To make a light. . ."

"Think! Think! Who conquered the

Greeks when the whole world fell be-
fore them? The *Kohanim*, the priests!
If anyone would have asked, 'Can it be
done?' the answer would have been
'Nol' but they didn't ask!

"They didn't know what they were
doing.

"If you know what you're doing—
you're Greek!"

There's a break. Food's been pre-
pared. We go into the dining room.
The things are laid out buffet style on
the table but some people forming a
little assembly line put small amounts
of each thing on a paper plate and it's
given to us with picnic plastic forks:
2 little fruit fritters, kashe, cold cut
cabbage, a home-made fruit cocktail.
It's the same all-carbohydrate diet we
had last time I visited.

"It's asked in the Talmud," Shlomo
says, "if the lights in the Hanukah
menorah go out are they to be relit?
The answer is yes. It's because we
should be burning forever and ever."

2 A.M. Forever and ever!

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 10, 1969.
SIXTH DAY OF HANUKAH
THE HOUSE OF LOVE AND PRAYER
348 ARGUELLO, SAN FRANCISCO

8 A.M. Everyone up. Much commo-
tion. Everyone is going out with
Shlomo to Santa Rosa Jr. College—
everyone but Ona and the kids. She's
driving them to school, then going off
to another school to teach.

We're getting into the car, a station
wagon driven by Stu. Louie (still wear-
ing his cowboy-Hassid outfit) is asked
to vacate his place in the luggage com-
partment for me, which he does most
unwillingly.

The space in back is cramped but
the view of California road, hills, sky
is breathtakingly beautiful, the road
continuously flowing beneath my feet.

9:25 A.M.

We're there,
so many campu
grass, trees,
Country of the

We're late t
a friend of the
scraggly bearded
Cough Drops.
class on the
same on black

Shlomo con
front with his
pastel colored
opening on th
length of the

Gedalia intr
voice taking o
a *yeshiva boch*

The kids in
hippie-style
year, girls long
one straight
look, girl wi
permanent,
combed hair.

Shlomo str
puts on the
darkness/sple
fornia. Here
Shlomo will
shtetl.

Someone ha
tainers of cof
if he liked
course," he sa
if I want milk
I don't believe

He drinks th
ing the kids
twenty, not c
"Come closer!"

They move
strums his gui
"You know, a
to be the rabbi
never been to
his eyes"—here
—"and when h

CHAPTER IX.

THE NEW CHASSIDISM.

The Alliance of Reason with Mysticism—Israel Baalshem, his Career and Reputation—Movement against Rabbinism—The "Zaddik"—Beer Mizricz, his Arrogance and Deceptions—The Devotional Methods of the Chassidim—Their Liturgy—Dissolution of the Synods "of the Four Countries"—Cossack Massacres in Poland—Elijah Wilna, his Character and Method of Research—The Mizricz and Karlin Chassidim—Circumstances prove Favorable to the Spread of the New Sect—Vigorous Proceedings against them in Wilna—Death of Beer Mizricz—Progress of Chassidism despite the Persecution of its Opponents.

1750—1786 C. E.

As soon as an historical work has performed its service, and is to undergo a change, new phenomena arise from various sides, and assume a hostile attitude, either to alter or destroy it. It might have been foreseen that the rejuvenescence of the Jewish race, for which Mendelssohn had leveled the way, would produce a transformation and decomposition of religious habits among Jews. The innovators desired this, and hoped, and strove for it; the old orthodox party suspected and dreaded it. The process of dissolution was brought about also in another way, upon another scene, under entirely different conditions, and by other means, and this could not have been foreseen. There arose in Poland a new Essenism, with forms similar to those of the ancient cult, with ablutions and baths, white garments, miraculous cures, and prophetic visions. Like the old movement, it originated in ultra-piety, but soon turned against its own parent, and perhaps hides within itself germs of a peculiar kind, which, being in course of development, cannot be defined. It seems remarkable that, at the time when Men-

delssohn declared rational thought to be the essence of Judaism, and founded, as it were, a widely extended order of enlightened men, another banner was unfurled, the adherents of which announced the grossest superstition to be the fundamental principle of Judaism, and formed an order of wonder-seeking confederates. Both these new bodies took up a hostile position to traditional Judaism, and created a rupture. History in its generative power is as manifold and puzzling as nature. It produces in close proximity healing herbs and poisonous plants, lovely flowers and hideous parasites. Reason and unreason seemed to have entered into a covenant to shatter the gigantic structure of Talmudic Judaism. The attempt once before made by history, to subvert Judaism by the contemporaneous existence of Spinoza and Sabbatai Zevi, was now repeated by the simultaneous attacks of representatives of reason and unreason. Enlightenment and Kabbalistic mysticism joined hands to commence the work of destruction. Mendelssohn and Israel Baalshem, what contrasts! Yet both unconsciously undermined the basis of Talmudic Judaism. The origin of the new Chassidim, who had already become numerous, and who sprang up very rapidly, is not so clear as the movement started by Mendelssohn. The new sect, a daughter of darkness, was born in gloom, and even to-day proceeds stealthily on its mysterious way. Only a few circumstances which contributed to its rise and propagation are known.

The founders of the new Chassidism were Israel of Miedziboz (born about 1698; died 1759) and Beer of Mizricz (born about 1700; died 1772). The former received, alike from his admirers and his antagonists, the surname of "The Wonderworker by means of Invocations in the Name of God," Baalshem, or Baal-Shemtob, in the customary abbreviated form, Besht. As ugly as the name, Besht, was the

form of the founder and the order that he called into existence. The Graces did not sit by his cradle, but the spirit of belief in wonderworking, and his brain was so filled with fantastic images that he could not distinguish them from real, tangible beings. The experiences of Israel's youth are unknown. So much, however, is certain; he was left an orphan, poor and neglected, early in life, and passed a great portion of his youth in the forests and caves of the Carpathian mountains. The spurs of the Carpathian hills were his teachers. Here he learnt what he would not have acquired in the dark, narrow, dirty hovels called schools in Poland—namely, to understand the tongue which nature speaks. The spirits of the mountains and the fountains whispered secrets to him. Here he also learned, probably from the peasant women who gathered herbs on the mountain-tops and on the edges of rivers, the use of plants as remedies. As they did not trust to the healing power of nature, but added conjurations and invocations to good and evil spirits, Israel also accustomed himself to this method of cure. He became a miracle-doctor. Necessity, too, was his teacher; it taught him to pray. How often, in his forsaken and orphaned condition, may he have suffered from want even of dry bread, how often may he have been surrounded by real or imaginary dangers! In his distress he prayed in the usual forms of the synagogue; but he spoke his words with fervor and intense devotion, or cried them aloud in the solitude of the mountains. His audible prayer awakened the echoes of the mountains, which appeared as an answer to his supplications. He seems to have been often in a state of rapture, and to have induced this condition by frantic movements of the whole body while praying. This agitation drove the blood to his head, made his eyes glitter, and wrought both body and soul into such a condition of over-excitement that he felt

a deadly weakness come over him. Was this magnetic tension of the soul caused by the motions and the shouting, singing, and praying?

Israel Baalshem asserted that, in consequence of these bodily agitations and this intense devotion, he often caught a glimpse of infinity. His soul soared upward to the world of light, heard and saw Divine secrets and revelations, entered into conversation with sublime spirits, and by their intervention could secure the grace of God and prosperity, and especially avert impending calamities. Israel Miedziboz also boasted that he could see into the future, as secrets were unveiled to him. Was this a deliberate boast, self-deception, or merely an over-estimation of morbid feelings? ~~There are persons, times, and places, in which the line of demarcation between trickery and self-delusion cannot be distinguished. In Poland, in Baalshem's time, with the terrible mental strain created by the Kabbala in connection with the Sabbatian fraud, the feverish expectation of imminent Messianic redemption, everything was possible and everything credible. In that land the fancy of both Jews and Christians moved among extraordinary and supernatural phenomena as in its natural element. Israel steadfastly and firmly believed in the visions seen when he was under mental and physical excitement; he believed in the power of his prayers. In his delusion he blasphemously declared that prayer is a kind of marriage union (Zivug) of man with the Godhead (Shechina), upon which he must enter whilst in a state of excitement. Equipped with alleged higher knowledge of secret remedies and the spirit world, to which he thought he had attained through Divine grace, Israel entered the society of men to prove his higher gifts. It must be acknowledged to his credit that he never misused these talents. He did not make a trade of them, nor seek to earn his livelihood with them. At first he followed~~

medieval tradition, after which the Talmud was condemned and thousands of copies publicly burned. Ultimately the Frankists went over *en masse* to the dominant faith, proving as questionable Christians as they had been Jews. As late as the period of the French Revolution, one of the sights of the German town of Offenbach was Jacob Frank, self-styled Baron von Offenbach, living in great style on the offerings brought to him by his Polish and Moravian adherents. Shortly after his death in 1791 his designated successor, Moses Dobrushka (who went by the name of Junius Frey), was sent to the guillotine in Paris, with Danton. Frank's beautiful daughter, Eve, now became the 'Holy Mistress' of the sect, and kept the tradition alive well into the nineteenth century.

VII

A more remote effect of the Messianic stir was the birth of Hassidism. The revivalist movement in Poland permeated all sections of society, until it touched a simple Podolian lime-digger, Israel ben Eliezer (1700-1760). The cycle of legends which has gathered about the latter's personality has made it difficult to realise the exact import of his teaching. It is clear, nevertheless, that this man of the people revolted against the hegemony of intellect which had hitherto prevailed undisputed amongst the Polish Jewries, where learning had been considered fundamental to Judaism, and consideration was withheld from any person who was not a profound Talmudist. The new leader, a tender-hearted mystic of rare personal magnetism, taught that piety was superior to scholarship, and that it was the prerogative of any man, however ignorant and however poor, to attain communion with his God. The Deity, according to him, infused all creation, could be served in many manners and with every bodily function, so long as His worship was carried on with joy and gladness. Man could derive no advantage from the mortification of the flesh; it was by spiritual exaltation and complete abandonment of self that the gulf between earth and heaven could be bridged. On the other hand, there existed certain Righteous Ones (*Zadikim*) who were close to the Almighty, and whose intercession might sometimes sway His immutable will.

Gradually the little band of disciples who gathered round the Master of the Good Name (*Baal Shem Tob*: abbreviated as 'Besht'), as they termed him, in the little township of Miedzyboz, grew into many thousands, who adopted the name of *Hassidim* ('the Pious'). A

revivalist movement now swept through the Jewish masses of eastern Europe. Prayer meetings were established at which feasting and ecstasy and song were considered of greater importance than a mechanical recitation of the liturgy. After the founder's death, the conception arose of the presence in a few chosen families of special merit, which passed down by hereditary right from one *Zadik*, or Righteous One, to another, all designated to act as intermediaries between man and God. Dov Baer of Meseritz (1710-1772), the earliest scholar amongst the adherents of Hassidism, adapted the new doctrines to the taste of the more learned elements, amongst whom it henceforth began to make increasing headway. By 1772 the current had reached Lithuania, and a secret Hassidic meeting-place was formed at Vilna. This at last brought the traditional party (with the approval of Elijah ben Solomon, the 'Vilna Gaon' [1720-1797], last of the Rabbinical giants of the heroic age) to take formal steps, and issue an edict of excommunication against all who followed the new movement.

It goes without saying that this measure proved ineffectual to stem the tide. For some years to come, eastern European Jewry was divided between *Hassidim* and *Mithnagdim*, or 'Opponents'. When the din of battle died down, a new spirit had pervaded both sides. The *Hassidim* now recognised the importance of the traditional order of things, and counted Rabbis of outstanding learning and ability amongst their numbers. The *Mithnagdim* had become tolerant, and their conceptions were perceptibly influenced by the warm humanity of their erstwhile opponents—a change symbolised in the next century in the ethical teaching of the saintly Israel Salanter (1810-1883). Thus, *Hassidism* was prevented from developing into a sect, and its adherents (once to be numbered by the million) remained within the Jewish fold. Its advent, nevertheless, had made an enduring difference to Judaism, the poetical element in which it had reinforced: while its hold among the lower, more impressionable classes, who felt the need for some mystical constituent in daily life, was enduringly strengthened.

The pseudo-Messianic movement of the seventeenth century, with its subsequent ramifications (notwithstanding the final debacle), thus marked the close of an epoch. The Jews of the west were utterly disillusioned. Their pride was touched; and it took them long to recover from the blow. Never again was a pseudo-Messiah, relying on supernatural powers, to obtain universal credence. The movement of national redemption was ultimately rationalised. In the meantime, the former dupes became severely practical, looking for Jerusalem in

Kaddish

Friday

Dec 4

Sunday

6

Those who passed away this week

Vahrzeits

PHIL MELDON

DAVID SAFIER

ARTHUR WALLACH

ANN FRANKEL

MINA LEVIN

*Mina's rhyme with dinner; Levin, accent
2nd syllable Le-VIN*

ABRAM M. KAPLAN

CHARLES A. STONE

ANNA BROWN

BELLA FRIEDMAN

RYNETTE LOIS KRAUS

HARRY C. KATZ

JEROME A. LEVY

CARRIE KOBLITZ KOHN

KARL FORCHHEIMER

JACK M. SHEPARD

SAM H. MEISTER

HAROLD M. THORMAN

ABRAM KOVAL

JESS C. FISHMAN

HYMAN H. MANDELZWEIG

LOUIS LITTMAN

LOUIS K. SUGARMAN