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### Around the Maggid's Table

*Tsaddik*, Leadership, and Popularization in  
the Circle of Dov Baer of Miedzyrzecz

I

Hasidism represents one of the great success stories in the history of religious movements. When Israel Ba'al Shem Tov, the figure around whose image the movement was to coalesce, died in 1760, we know of no more than twenty or thirty people who can be identified as associated with him or laying claim to his spiritual heritage. These were all within Podolia, a somewhat remote corner of southeastern Poland, up against the Russian and Turkish borders. Although his reputation as a clairvoyant and wonder-worker was beginning to grow, we have little specific knowledge of influence the BeSHT had beyond this group and his own town of Miedzhybozh. Half a century later and beyond, large swaths of eastern European Jewry, majorities in some areas, considered themselves followers of the movement that carried his banner.

Hasidism as a mass movement was created by the disciples of the Great Maggid, Dov Baer of Miedzyrzecz (1704–1772). They belong to what is conventionally called the third generation of Hasidic leadership, though they were in fact the movement's founders. It was members of this circle who brought Hasidism into the public arena as a distinctive and to a degree separatist religious phenomenon, arousing both avid support and bitter denunciation.<sup>1</sup> In the extensive anti-Hasidic polemical literature of 1772–1800, it is almost always members of the Maggid's circle who stand at the center of controversy.<sup>2</sup> It was they who sought to “conquer” new communities for the movement, to introduce Hasidic practices and customs over wide geographical realms, and when necessary to take on opponents in public disputation and response to controversy. While there were indeed contemporary Hasidic authors writing and devotional circles flourishing outside the Maggid's domain,<sup>3</sup> we almost never find them embroiled in the great Hasidic-Mitnagedic confrontation.<sup>4</sup>

Because of this, it seems correct to assume that a decision was taken by this group, surely with the agreement (though reluctant, as I hope to show) of its leader, sometime in the 1760s, to “go public” with Hasidic teachings and to offer them as an alternative vision of Jewish religious life intended to have mass appeal. It may have seen an opportunity after 1764, when the Polish authorities abolished the Council of Four Lands, ending even a shadow of regional rabbinic hegemony. Members of the circle spread outward, especially to the north, taking Hasidic ideas from the two Ukrainian provinces of Podolia and Volhyn across the vast distances of Polesia and Belorussia, even to the gates of Lithuania, where they were to meet strong opposition, as well as west to Galicia. Within the original Hasidic heartland there seems to have been rather limited controversy regarding the Maggid’s disciples and their teachings, possibly because of relatively weak rabbinic leadership.<sup>5</sup> But as their influence spread, rumors of a new “sect” and its dangerous heresies went with it, culminating in a single semi-formal meeting of the disciples in 1772 in response to the publication of the first bans against them.

From within the list of those whom Hasidic memory records as disciples of the Maggid, special credit for the spread of Hasidism has to go to seven of the closer disciples. Four of these carried the message northward, thus particularly running into difficulty with the rabbinate and communal authorities: R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk (c. 1730–1788),<sup>6</sup> R. Abraham of Kalisk (1741–1810),<sup>7</sup> R. Shne’ur Zalman of Liadi (c. 1745–1813),<sup>8</sup> and R. Aaron of Karlin (1736–1772).<sup>9</sup> In Poland and the entire southern tier, only one man is named as the object of the anti-Hasidic bans: R. Levi Yizhak of Berdyczow (c. 1740–1809).<sup>10</sup> It seems highly likely that he was a key figure in both the decision to disseminate Hasidic teaching and the actual carrying out of that task. Two other disciples are added to this list, although they were not centrally involved in the Hasidic-Mitnaggedic controversy. These are R. Menahem Nahum of Chernobyl (1730–1797),<sup>11</sup> listed in part because of the activity of his son, Mordecai, who still in his father’s lifetime was an active propagandist for the movement.<sup>12</sup> R. Elimelech of Lezajsk (c. 1717–1787) carried on leadership of an intimate disciple circle after the Maggid’s death and, largely through his students, brought about the spread of Hasidism through Poland and Galicia.<sup>13</sup>

The Miedzyrzecz years represent the formation of a close spiritual/intellectual circle, a group of young men intensely devoted to a set of ide-

als, to the task of spreading religious revival, to their master, and (for the most part) to one another. Members of the circle continued in their work for decades after the master's death, into the early years of the nineteenth century. The end of this "third generation" of Hasidic leadership and the waning of its influence is generally depicted as taking place between 1809 and 1815, with the deaths of Levi Yizhak and Shne'ur Zalman, but also the passing of several key disciples of Elimelech of Lezajsk.

As Hasidism began to spread and gain a mass following, veneration of the *tsaddikim*, as the leaders of the new movement were being called, and faith in their supernatural powers became defining hallmarks of the movement.<sup>14</sup> But who was a *tsaddik*, and how could one attain this status? Was not aspiring toward such a claim of righteousness in itself a violation of the virtue of modesty and hence a paradoxical impediment to one's path? Were *tsaddikim* predestined to be such, chosen by God and "emplanted in each generation"?<sup>15</sup> Or was such righteousness something one could earn by virtue of spiritual struggle and growth? What did discipleship have to do with becoming a *tsaddik*? Were only those who had served apprenticeship under the BeSHT, and then under his immediate followers, to be called *tsaddikim*? Surely it is hard to imagine anyone calling *himself* by the name *tsaddik*; it was up to others to do that.<sup>16</sup> But even to this there are exceptions. Then did being a *tsaddik* result from achieving a following? Could *anyone*—without pedigree of either discipleship or rabbinic learning—who reputedly worked wonders, prayed with great intensity, and looked the part be set up by himself or by followers as a "holy man?" All of these questions swirled about the emergence of Hasidism as a historical force in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. The phenomenon called Hasidism (a name derided in documents penned by its opponents, therefore clearly in use by the *hasidim* themselves)<sup>17</sup> grew in spontaneous and uncontrolled ways, without social controls or rigorous standards of any sort. One might say that it created a situation ripe for abuse, and the many reports of such abuses were surely not only the product of the anti-Hasidic imagination.

But what of the inner circle that created Hasidism and made the decision to take it public? I am not of the view that the founders of Hasidism from the start set out to create an elite who would have exclusive control of the levers to divine access, chiefly as a way of asserting its own power.<sup>18</sup> Surely the followers of the BeSHT and the Maggid were serious religious

people, out to create a great religious revival, not simply looking for power, money, and control over the masses, as their enemies, both early and late, depicted them. How did they view the figure of the *tsaddik*, his powers, and how such personalities might come to be? A close reading of the sources reveals that there was a good deal of divergence on these questions, even within the circles that took them most seriously. These differences surely were in part determined by the various personalities involved and questions of faith, but they also reflect diverse positions regarding the spread and popularization of Hasidism. Indeed one of the most difficult issues to determine is the balance between personal belief and strategy in their varying portrayals of the *tsaddik*. Do more extravagant claims for the *tsaddik*'s powers, or for the necessity to attach oneself to the *tsaddik*, reflect the authentic spiritual/intellectual position of a particular author, perhaps based upon his relationship with his own teacher, or were these views elaborated in order to gain more followers?

What follows will be a series of such close readings, particularly from within the Maggid's circle. But first we will turn our attention to the writings of the first published and most prolific of early Hasidic authors, R. Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye (d. 1783), and to a few other general remarks that will proceed from them.

R. Jacob Joseph was the leading disciple of the Ba'al Shem Tov who did not become a member of the circle in Miedzyrzecz, perhaps even resenting the Maggid's growing authority. He had been rabbi of Szarogrod, one of the largest Podolian Jewish communities, when in the 1740s he became attracted to Hasidism of the pre-BeSHTian type, including both self-isolation for meditative prayer and a rigorous pattern of ascetic self-mortification. His community was not pleased with this turn and he was deposed from his rabbinic post. One of his guides in the ascetic life, a figure known as Aryeh Leib the "reprover" of Polonnoye, introduced him to the Ba'al Shem Tov, who had begun making a name for himself in these proto-Hasidic circles. Their meeting apparently changed Jacob Joseph's life. For the next thirty-some years, he humbly referred to Israel ben Eliezer as "my teacher," even though he was the far greater scholar by any conventional measure of rabbinic knowledge.<sup>19</sup> R. Jacob Joseph was author of four volumes of collected sermons, three of which stand among the first printed works of Hasidism, beginning in 1780. In hundreds of places, his long and erudite homilies, often quite difficult to follow, are

dotted with brief quotations that “I heard from my teacher” or “I heard in my teacher’s name.” These are accepted by scholars as among the most reliable evidence of the BeSHT’s transmitted teachings.<sup>20</sup>

A preacher of the old school, Jacob Joseph’s conversion by the Ba’al Shem Tov did not change him completely. We have preserved an important (and apparently authentic) letter in which the BeSHT chides him for not following his advice and clinging stubbornly to the old ascetic path.<sup>21</sup> His writings reflect him as a crusty and sharp-tongued polemicist. Religious leadership is the central question dealt with in his sermons. He fulminates endlessly against both the aloofness and the corruption of the rabbinate and the irresponsibility and greed of the lay oligarchy that runs the communities hand in hand with their own chosen rabbinic appointees.

In contrast to these “Jewish Demons”<sup>22</sup> (and a host of other nasty epithets by which he calls them), Jacob Joseph holds out an ideal of the true *talmid hakham* (he generally prefers this term over *tsaddik*), the proper spiritual and temporal/legal leader of the Jewish people. He knows no distinction yet between *rav* and *rebbe*, but he expects the former to embrace many of the characteristics we associate with the latter. The *Toledot* (as he is often called, after the title of his first book) is clearly an elitist who sees Jewish spiritual life in rigidly stratified terms. Using terminology rooted in ancient Platonic tradition, he defines the truly and selflessly pious scholars/sages as “men of form,” while the masses of ordinary Jews, sunk in corporeal concerns, are “men of matter.” The former are destined to serve as leaders, exemplifying the life of holiness and uplifting the spiritual lives of the communities they serve. The latter are to serve as *tamkhin de- oraita*, “sustainers of Torah,” attaching themselves to the leaders by means of material support and loyal obedience. He does not give the impression of any flexibility in the social structure as he imagines it, of “men of matter” growing in such a way that they might enter the category of “men of form.” While indeed the purpose of leadership is to help people turn from pursuit of matter to that of form, he does not speak in terms of transformations in which the line between leaders and followers is crossed. He exhibits little patience either for hypocritical or badly motivated scholars or for the sinfulness, and especially the excessive materialism, of ordinary Jews. One of the great questions of his writings, on which he vacillates frequently, is whether bad leaders have corrupted the folk or a lowly populace has dragged its well-meaning leaders downward to its level.

Through his contact with the BeSHT, Jacob Joseph has come to appreciate the pious innocence that is sometimes found among simple people. There are passages in his writings representing the once much touted “democratizing” side of Hasidism, that which elevates the holiness potentially to be found in ordinary Jews, and not just in the learned.<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless, when he describes the ideal leader, he thinks in terms of a refined spiritual/intellectual elite, learned scholars who will also embody the level of wholeness and innocence that his teacher so personified. The *tsaddik*, in an old phrase widely quoted by the *Toledot* as well as other Hasidic sources, is one who “holds fast to both heaven and earth,”<sup>24</sup> becoming a personified link between them. His task is not only to teach the people and to serve as a moral exemplar but actually to become a personal link between the “upper” and “lower” worlds. A Talmudic *aggadah*<sup>25</sup> much beloved by Jacob Joseph<sup>26</sup> describes Rabbi Hanina ben Dosa, a renowned first-century wonder-worker, about whom God is heard to say, “The entire world existed for the sake of Hanina, My son.” The words “for the sake of” in Hebrew are *bi-shevil*, which can supraliterally be read as “by the path of.” The *Toledot* insists in the name of the BeSHT (repeatedly but not originally) that this teaches that the *tsaddik* himself becomes a pathway or channel through which divine blessing flows into the world. Elsewhere the *tsaddik* is an earthly container or throne where the divine presence might alight.<sup>27</sup> This claim will become a great opening point for popular Hasidism, which called upon the masses to attach themselves to *tsaddikim*, with the promise that through them they could come to share in that blessing. In the *Toledot* this dependence is not yet categorical. Indeed “men of matter” or weekday Jews need to attach themselves to the proper sage, the personification of the Sabbath among humans.<sup>28</sup> But we also find warnings against excessive reliance on the spiritual elite. On the battlefield, if all soldiers were to rely on a single hero, once he is disarmed the entire battle is lost. Better to build up one’s own spiritual weaponry in the great struggle against the enemy, the evil urge.<sup>29</sup> The *Toledot* also makes it clear that the dependence between the two categories of Jew is mutual; the otherworldly “men of form” are to depend on the ordinary folk for support and physical sustenance just as the others rely upon them to keep open the font of divine blessing.<sup>30</sup>

The man of form lives on a plane that transcends the ordinary course of nature. It is because of this that he has the powers long attributed to the *tsad-*

*dik* in certain biblical and rabbinic passages that are often quoted throughout Hasidic writings, beginning with the *Toledot*. These begin with the biblical *tsaddik moshel be-yir'at elohim* (2 Sam. 23:2), which, when taken totally out of context, can be rendered either as “The *tsaddik* rules by means of fearing God” or “The *tsaddik* rules [over] the fear of God.” That verse itself is quoted by the sages to defend their view that “The blessed Holy One issues a decree, but the *tsaddik* may negate it.”<sup>31</sup> The activity of seeking to nullify divine decrees is already evidenced in the Ba’al Shem Tov’s famous letter to his brother-in-law Gershon Kitover, the last part of which is devoted to such efforts. It should be recalled, of course, that a *ba’al shem* as shamanic healer is engaged in precisely that work, since illness as well as oppression by either pogroms or governmental edicts were seen as reflecting the will of heaven or the power of demonic forces.<sup>32</sup> A powerful intercessor could affect that will. It was for this that a *ba’al shem* earned his livelihood.

What was a Jew to do in times of trouble, in the era prior to Hasidism? To whom could one turn for help if one’s ill fate seemed to be decreed from above? One could go to the graves of the righteous, especially one’s own pious ancestors, and ask them to intercede, to “go before the Throne of Glory” and seek mercy for those still on earth. But the living *tsaddikim*, like the famous thirty-six, in pre-Hasidic times were supposed to keep hidden and were not in the habit of giving out blessings. One might turn to a famous rabbi, of course, but the rabbinate did not recognize this as part of its role. A wide discrepancy existed between the needs the community and the willingness of its leaders to fulfill those needs. The highly intellectualized world of rabbinic learning in Eastern Europe did little to support the people’s desire for a “holy man.” The typical *rav* was not taught to give out blessings or even to reassure those wavering in their faith because of personal troubles. Training in “spiritual leadership,” one might say, was not part of the curriculum that led to the rabbinate. A *ba’al shem* stood in this breach, having the professional role of healer, which also meant intercessor.<sup>33</sup> He was the one who might be able to offer what it would take to make your prayers more effective. The *ba’al shem* could offer you an amulet or teach you a formula of holy names to recite that might ward off those evil spirits that were beleaguering you. (Of course an effective *ba’al shem* knew herbs and natural medicines as well as names; these certainly added to the likelihood of his cures.) There were *ba’aley shem* before the BeSHT who were also shamans in the fullest sense, partaking of out-of-

the-body experiences, having revelations, etc., but this was not essential to the fulfillment of their professional role. Significantly, the *ba'al shem* was able to function as a healer not because of claims of special righteousness or moral fitness. Nowhere are we told that *ba'aley shem* in general were great *tsaddikim*; they were plying a holy trade, comparable to that of *mohel* or *shohet*. Nor did a *ba'al shem* need to be a person of especially venerated ancestry. Subject, of course, to the generally expected norms of piety, he was a man possessed of esoteric knowledge, especially that of divine names bearing supernatural powers. A *ba'al shem* is, in short, a magician, one particularly devoted to the arts of healing, or a folk doctor possessed of esoteric knowledge.

What happens in Hasidism is that the roles of *tsaddik* and *ba'al shem* come to be amalgamated. Once Hasidism proclaims that there are indeed living *tsaddikim* who can be found, revered, and followed, the functions served by *ba'al shem* very quickly migrate to these *tsaddikim*. Tellingly, there is no other *ba'al shem* prominently associated with the Hasidic movement after the Ba'al Shem Tov. There is no longer a need for one; the Hasidic *tsaddik* has taken his place.<sup>34</sup> The *tsaddik* is the channel of divine bounty flowing into the world. Surely he can pray for your sick child, your barren wife, or your failing business. He is also the one who can ward off the broader evils that may be affecting the Jewish community as a whole. He may still use some of the old magical devices, which surely did not disappear with the advent of Hasidism. Eastern European Jewish life, especially in the Ukrainian/Moldavian regions, was immersed in magical beliefs and practices right down to modern times, many of them practiced alongside and intertwined with faith in the *tsaddik*. But in Hasidism a very important difference struggles against this background. In the emerging Hasidic hierarchy of values, personal piety and intensity of prayer take precedence over a body of esoteric knowledge about holy names and how to write or pronounce them. At least as reflected in the theoretical writings of the Maggid's school, it is the former that now make the *tsaddik* a capable intercessor and worker of wonders. It is God's love for the *tsaddik* and his exceptional devotion that causes him to be endowed with these powers. Even though some Hasidic *tsaddikim* continued to use holy names and amulets, these devices themselves were increasingly seen as powered by the piety of the one who prescribed or wrote them, rather than as being independently potent.<sup>35</sup>



Not only is there no *ba'al shem* in Hasidism after the BeSHT; no one in the circles that created the Hasidic movement is prominently described as a “Kabbalist.”<sup>36</sup> Although many, including the Maggid and Shne’ur Zalman of Lyady, were highly learned in the mystical tradition, that term had come to imply either a recondite and other-worldly ascetic or someone capable of performing in the realm of “practical Kabbalah” or magic. These people were choosing a different path, one in which their healing abilities, though not denied, had more to do with personal righteousness than with technical skill. For some, the claim of power to heal or intercede would come to be seen as secondary, or even atrophy almost completely, overwhelmed by their role as teachers and personal exemplars, as we shall see below.<sup>37</sup>

The shift from *ba'al shem* or Kabbalist to *tsaddik* takes place in the teachings of both of the BeSHT’s most important disciples, the *Toledot* and the Maggid. In a sense it reflects a reintegration of the supernatural powers of the magician into the normative religious traditions of Judaism. In providing the living and identified *tsaddik* as an accessible model, these successors to the BeSHT were themselves opening a channel that would allow the religious worldview of the post-Safed mystical revival to extend to a much wider audience within Jewry and even beyond. Knowledge of magical secrets was no longer required, either by the individual or (in some cases) by those to whom one turned. Faith in the notion that there are indeed living *tsaddikim* in the world and that they bear divine grace and render it accessible was now sufficient. Finding such a true *tsaddik* and attaching yourself to him was now at least the proper first step for living a life blessed by God’s presence.

## II

We turn now to Dov Baer of Miedzyrzecz, and then to his circle, to see the issues that emerged around the proclamation and definition of this old/new role. We should always bear in mind that while Hasidism was in some ways a revolutionary movement in both the spiritual and social spheres, its rhetoric was always traditionally rooted, dependent entirely on creative exegesis of ancient sources within the Jewish canon. Determining what the authors of Hasidic homilies sought to teach, how they differed from one another, and how they may have been arguing or responding to one another’s views always depends upon subtle readings of difficult texts (usually Hebrew-written synopses of much longer oral talks delivered in

Yiddish), the meaning of which is often not entirely clear. A sense of both dignity and of the timeless and transcendent nature of Torah interpretation did not permit specific reference to contemporary events or controversies. Instead, the scholar has to ferret them out from extended discussions of Abraham's encounter with the angels, Moses' confrontation with Pharaoh, the many leadership conflict stories in the biblical book of Numbers, and lots more. For this reason, certainty with regard to the contemporary "address" of such sermons is always hard to achieve.

The first and most important collection of the Maggid's teachings is found in his *Maggid Devarav le-Ya'akov*. Published in 1781 (making it the third Hasidic book printed), it was (quite poorly) edited by his disciple Shelomo of Lutsk. Many additional teachings were preserved in recensions copied from a manuscript by Levi Yizhak of Berdyczow, published later in fragmentary form. Especially useful among these is *Or Torah* (1804), the only version of the Maggid's teachings that follows the weekly Torah cycle.<sup>38</sup>

The most obvious divergence between Jacob Joseph and Dov Baer's view of the ideal leader has to do with the absence of rigid categorizations in the latter's writings. Gone is the distinction between "men of matter" and "men of form;" these terms are completely absent from the Maggid's corpus. The polemical tone of lambasting improper leaders is also missing. Dov Baer is not interested in preaching *against*, but rather in building *toward*. Tellingly, this difference in their writings confirms descriptions of their distinct personalities as recorded in the legendary sources. Jacob Joseph is said to have been angry and short-tempered. For this reason he did not succeed in developing either a popular following or a coterie of students, a matter that he did not accept quietly.<sup>39</sup> Dov Baer seems to have been more of a teacher. Although a powerful mystical presence, he was more a contemplative than an ecstatic type.<sup>40</sup> He seems to have possessed a charisma of a quieter and less obvious sort than his master. He was able to imbue his disciples with a deepened commitment to his mystical view of existence and his psychologized rereading of key symbolic terms of Kabbalah. At the same time, his less buoyant personality allowed room for those around his table to cultivate their own distinctive religious personae and to feel empowered by him to begin to spread the teaching.

Even a casual reader of the Maggid's teachings will be struck immediately by the prevalence of loving and psychologically sensitive parental metaphors throughout his writings. The love between God and Israel or

the *tsaddikim* is always that of father and son, even if he is expounding a passage in the Song of Songs where another sort of love is the obvious subject. Rivka Schatz-Uffenheimer's index to her edition of *Maggid Devarav le-Ya'akov* offers long lists of father/son and king/prince parables, often repeated throughout the text. This motif has a long history, as we know from reading Moshe Idel,<sup>41</sup> but I hope to show that it is also anchored in a real-life emotional context. Dov Baer had only one son, Abraham "the Angel" (1740–76), born after a significant period of barrenness in his marriage.<sup>42</sup> He must have been an exceptionally loving father. It seems likely as well that he had fatherly feelings toward his younger disciples. For this reason I choose to open this discussion of the Maggid's views on the *tsaddik* with a reading of the following text:

"May the glory of Y-H-W-H be for the world" (Ps. 104:31).<sup>43</sup> All the worlds cannot bear the brilliance of the blessed Holy One, but He has wrought multiple reductions of it (*tsimsumim*) so that they might be able to do so.

But this seems problematic. Wouldn't the inaccessibility of God bespeak greater glory [Then why should He reduce it?]? But [the verse continues] "Y-H-W-H delights in that which He makes," God wants to rejoice in His creatures.

This is like a father who has a young child. The little child wants to take a stick and ride about on it as though it were a horse. But a real horse leads its rider; this child is just leading the stick! Still, he has fun with it. The father helps by giving him the stick, to fulfill his son's desire.

Such are the *tsaddikim*, who want to lead the world. God created the worlds so that they would enjoy leading them. God's essential glory remains beyond our grasp, but we can grasp His glory as it exists within the worlds. This is why God reduced Himself into the worlds, so that He derive pleasure from the joy that the *tsaddikim* find [in leading] the worlds.

This is the meaning of "Those who fear Him bring about will" (Ps. 145:19).<sup>44</sup> In the Infinite (*eyn sof*) "will" does not apply; it is brought about by those who fear God, the *tsaddikim*. This is the meaning of "He consulted the souls of the *tsaddikim*" (in creating the world).<sup>45</sup>

This is a truly astonishing text, one that needs to be read on multiple levels. Its obvious meaning is theological. God is indeed utterly transcendent

and unknowable. At the same time, He loves His creatures (especially the righteous), having created them in order to derive pleasure from that love. These intelligent human seekers want to stretch their minds to conceive God's glory, which will give them the power to "lead the world." But that glory by definition remains beyond them. What does the loving Father do? He lets them have a stick, a toy glory, as it were, the reduced form of glory found within the worlds, and lets them "play horsey" with it, pretending that they really have some influence in conducting the worlds. Because He loves them so much, He takes great parental pleasure in watching this game, while being fully aware that it is just child's play. The point is that humans can't really "rule the universe" by perceiving the bit of divine glory that He allows to seep into "the worlds." But *tsimtsum*, the illusion that we are doing so, is good for us and gives our Creator pleasure.

The parable has another unspoken level of meaning. The phrase *ha-tsaddikim rotsim le-hanhig et ha-olam* would clearly be heard by a contemporary reader to mean "the *tsaddikim* want to lead the community."<sup>46</sup> We have here the Maggid's comment on the desire of his disciples, the newborn *tsaddikim*, whom he also sees as his spiritual "children," to go forth and become leaders, spreading his teachings widely. He considers this childish. How much of his profound mystical teachings could be contained in the vessels they will design to reach the public? They will be fooling themselves, thinking they are "riding the horse" of true spiritual teaching, bringing the *oylem* or community to perceive God's glory, when they are really just riding about on a stick, having no real effect on the world around them! Nevertheless, the loving father will give them the stick. Their efforts will still bring him pleasure. In this reading, the Maggid himself is that "father." The *tsaddikim* have brought about the will within their earthly teacher-father, and perhaps also their Father in heaven, to let them "lead the world" in this way.

Barely hidden within this text is a statement of the master's ambivalence regarding his disciples' desire to become leaders, to spread the teaching forward in such a way that they would take on roles of communal responsibility. This was not what he originally had in mind. In welcoming these young men to his table in Miedzyrzecz, he was creating a mystical brotherhood, a *kloiz* where his own approach to spiritual questions would be cultivated.<sup>47</sup> His intent was no different than that of the BeSHT and quite consistent with the other Hasidic circles that existed in

and before his day, a group of master and disciples, cultivating their own spiritual lives, and perhaps influencing a few around them. But he sees the impatience of his young followers: “*tsaddikim* want to lead the community.” In his fatherly love for them, he cannot refuse them, and here he is announcing his willingness to support their desire. We are being told in this text that the decision to spread the teachings and essentially create the Hasidic movement was not Dov Baer’s but that of his disciples, for which they achieved his somewhat reluctant support. I am suggesting that this text should cause us to revise the way we think about the original spread and popularization of Hasidism. Rather than the Maggid’s “sending forth” disciples to build the movement, we might think about young disciples bursting at the seams to go forth and teach, finally receiving their master’s blessing to do so. The Maggid’s reaction (as recorded in later tradition) when the hammer of opposition came down in 1772 would tend to confirm this view. His *hasidim* considered turning the *herem* around and excommunicating their opponents. “You have lost your head,” he told them, a statement taken as predicting his imminent demise later that year. It was *their* fault, their decision, which had wrought the controversy and the *herem*, not his.<sup>48</sup>

This is not to say that the Maggid is a nonbeliever in the real powers of the *tsaddikim*. The ability to “bring about will” in God (his reading of Ps. 145:19) is no small matter. The transcendent God allows Himself to follow the lead of His earthly elect. In a well-known homily on Numbers 10:12,<sup>49</sup> “Make yourself two silver trumpets,” the Maggid reads the word *hatsotserot* (trumpets) as *hatsi tsurot* (half forms), saying that God and the *tsaddik* are each incomplete without the other. Daringly reinterpreting Ezekiel 1:26’s *demut ke-mar’eh adam* to mean “an image reflected in a mirror,” he suggests that God’s worldly actions follow where the *tsaddik* leads. “If love is awakened in the *tsaddik*, love is awakened in all the worlds.” The *tsaddik* thus rules “like a king in his troop.” According to multiple texts in the Maggid’s writings,<sup>50</sup> changing the will of heaven as it affects the world is very much within the *tsaddik*’s grasp. God is exceptionally generous with those who accept His rule.

“Yours O Y-H-W-H is loving kindness, for You repay a man according to his deeds” (Ps. 62:13). We may understand this by a parable. If an artisan fashions a vessel for a householder, what reward does he give him?

Only that which is appropriate to the effort he put in. Does he really give him full exchange of value? Or consider a country where people accepted a certain person to be their king.<sup>51</sup> The king will be good to those noblemen and reward each of them appropriately to his own station. But it would be impossible for him to return to each of them a royal crown, parallel to the one they gave to him.

But the blessed Holy One rewards with full value. Whoever makes God King, God makes into ruler over all the worlds. God issues decrees and he cancels them. “The *tsaddik* rules (over) the fear of God.” The *tsaddikim* create worlds, resurrect the dead, and make fruitful the barren. Such is their this-worldly reward. This is “You repay a man according to his deeds—the reward You pay is up to the full value of his actions.”<sup>52</sup>

This indeed sounds very much like something Joseph Weiss once described as “The Great Maggid’s Theory of Contemplative Magic.”<sup>53</sup> In exchange for his loyal submission to divine authority, the *tsaddik* is given the ability to change the decrees of heaven. In fact God as *eyn sof*, the endless Source of existence, or as *ayin*, the Nothingness behind all being, is indifferent to the fate of individuals or the outcome of historical events. But God loves the *tsaddik*, who then can take advantage of this relationship to implant concern for human affairs in God. This radically anthropocentric theology is complicated by the fact that it is sometimes “Israel” rather than *tsaddik* that appears in these sources, since “God created the world for the sake of Israel,” etc. That would seem to make the fate of Israel an essential divine concern rather than a human-generated afterthought. But such inconsistencies abound in these sources. The grandest inconsistency of all, that of God as *ayin* or primal Nothingness, in the very radical mystical formulations that lie at the heart of the Maggid’s theology, and the loving parent-God of his favorite metaphors, also remains essentially unresolved. Of course he has the old distinction of *eyn sof* versus *sefirot* to rely on, except that he has converted the *sefirot* into mostly psychological categories. Therefore the mirror image quoted above may be particularly important in a theology that he realizes needs to be left partly unspoken. The God of his abstract theology has no specific will beyond the rushing flow of being or light issuing from the great and endless font of *eyn sof*. Only we humans have will. But because that divine energy flow can also be described as love (*hesed*, the creative/procreative *eros* of exis-

tence), it allows itself to be shaped by the desire of its love objects, Israel or the *tsaddikim*.<sup>54</sup>

Yet a certain ambiguity remains in the Maggid's teachings about just how real the powers of the *tsaddikim* are. Listen to him again in another typically affectionate paternal description of the relationship between God and the *tsaddik*:

Our master and teacher the holy lamp Dov Baer offered the following parable:

A father is teaching his son and he wants the boy himself to speak forth the objection in an argument or the solution to it. He wants it to be considered the child's own question or answer, so the child will take pleasure in having mastered it, even if it is something too deep for him to truly understand. The father explains it fully, enough to make the child understand it [on a superficial level] and say it back to him. Even though he really comprehends nothing of it, and it's all due to his father's willing explanation of the matter, the child takes pleasure in having spoken the question or its answer. They then call it "his."

The same is true when the *tsaddik* nullifies the decrees of the Blessed One. The *tsaddik*'s thought to pray about this matter itself came from God! Nevertheless, since the nullification came about through the *tsaddik*'s words and the intensity of his prayer, this negation of decree is called by his name. This is so even though both the thought and the words were sent by God.<sup>55</sup>

Both the Maggid and his disciples were aware of the problematic nature of extravagant claims for the *tsaddik*. While the shift from Ba'al Shem as purveyor of wonders to *tsaddik* as deserving grantee of divine blessing was a return to the few well-known and oft-quoted scriptural and rabbinic sources, the granting of heavenly powers to the righteous was enough to create some nervousness. It was not difficult to foresee the abuses that could emerge from such claims. Here it is again dismissed as a sort of child's play. All the powers really belong to God, not to the *tsaddik*. These may also have been attempts to forestall the emerging anti-Hasidic critique. They were reason enough for the Maggid to have originally wanted to be quiet and cautious about what he understood to be very radical ideas, potentially dangerous in the wrong hands. Here is a passage where R. Mena-

hem Nahum of Chernobyl presents and defends the Maggid's view, one that seems to have the emerging critique of Hasidism clearly in mind:

Our sages taught: "What is Hanukkah? On the twenty-fifth day of Kislev . . . as the Greeks [i.e., the Seleucid army] entered the sanctuary . . . (b. Shabbat 21b)." It would seem that the sages are asking why these days are called by the name Hanukkah. If so, what answer is here offered? In fact the word Hanukkah is composed of *hanu koh*, "they dwelt in 'thus.'"

There is an aspect of divinity that is called "thus"; this is *malkhut*, the seat of divine rule. The king commands "Thus will it be! Thus will it be!" It is this aspect that issues commands through all the worlds, by which the universe is ruled. This is why the *tsaddikim* have within their power dominion over all the worlds: they bear within themselves this aspect of divine kingship (i.e., they are *hanu koh*; they dwell in 'thus'). So the rabbis (b. Mo'ed Katan 16b) have taught us on the verse "The righteous one rules the fear of God (2 Sam. 23:3)." On this verse they said, "Who rules over Me? The *tsaddik*. The blessed Holy One issues a decree, but the righteous one may cancel it."

The Zohar (1:45b) objected: "Does the *tsaddik* then control God?" In fact it is God Himself who cancels the decree. Several times we have taught that "In all their suffering, He suffers" (Is. 63:9), referring to the *shekhinah* in exile. *Shekhinah*—so called because She dwells (*shokhenet*) everywhere—is identical with this aspect of divine rule. She is also called *keneset yisra'el*, "Assemblage of Israel," gathering all of Israel within Her, since all of them come from Her.

Thus our sages (b. Shabbat 128a) taught: "All Israel are children of kings" (i.e., of *malkhut*). All sufferings that Israel undergoes, God forbid, secretly belong to the fall of *shekhinah*. Scripture refers to this in "You weaken the Rock that bore you" (Deut. 32:18). The righteous, by their good deeds, raise up the *shekhinah*, as it were, as in "Give strength to God! (Ps. 68:35). The rabbis (Ekhah Rabbah 1:33) add: "Israel add power to the upper 'family.'" *Malkhut* is called "family" because She gathers into Herself all the divine potencies that stand above Her. All



of their powers flow into *shekhinah*. As She is uplifted, all decrees and judgments are negated.<sup>56</sup>

We see here the awkwardness felt by the Hasidic author about a claim that would limit divine authority and make the *tsaddik* look too much like a magician bearing somehow independent powers. Relying first on a Zohar passage (which actually goes in a somewhat different direction), Menahem Nahum attributes the power to the *shekhinah*, within which Israel dwell. God as *shekhinah* (= *keneset yisra'el*) identifies fully with human (i.e., Israel's) suffering; this is the nature of Her exile. If a Jew acts for the sake of *shekhinah*, that authority within Her embraces his intent and causes it to be fulfilled. But this pious idea is being used here to interpret the statement "Who rules over Me? The *tsaddik*," and that usage demands explanation. The answer is that the *tsaddik* is not magician, as it might appear, but devotee. It is his submission to God and devotion to the *shekhinah*'s need, to the point of his own nothingness, that brings God to do his bidding.<sup>57</sup> Note how different this is from the classical *ba'al shem*, where the issue of selfless acting for the *shekhinah* is not part of the rhetoric.

This change in the language by which the holy man's power is described has everything to do with the Maggid's school's well-known dropping of interest in the complex system of Lurianic *kavvanot* or mystical intentions, the renewed preference for *kavvanah* over *kavvanot*.<sup>58</sup> The latter have to do with the realm of esoteric knowledge, very much like the *ba'al shem*'s knowledge of holy names and amulet writing. The Lurianic intentions are of course more respectable than "practical Kabbalah" or magic, but they are similarly technical in their highly detailed apparatus. There is no longer a need for any of these; all that matters is selfless devotional intent. The receptiveness is there within God for the *tsaddik* to have his will reflected in the divine Self, so long as that will really is for the sake of heaven. Nothing more is needed, either for the great task of uplifting the *shekhinah* and mitigating Her exile, or for the ancillary task of bringing blessing forth into this world. Elsewhere the Maggid tells us that even the forces of nature recognize and are awed by the *tsaddik*'s righteousness. The Reed Sea fled when it saw that the Israelites were bearing Joseph's coffin (cf. Ex. 13:19), so powerful was even the memory of that original *tsaddik* who "fled outside" (*va-yanos ha-hutsah*) to escape the wiles of Potiphar's

wife (Gen. 39:12). His denial of natural impulses took him “outside” the power of nature, allowing him to dwell in a supernatural state, one that remained present in his bones even as they were brought forth from Egypt. “The Sea saw it and fled” (Ps. 114:3) means that the Sea saw the *va-yanos* of Genesis 39:12! He may also have in mind reading *va-yanos* as derived from *nes*, rendering “The Sea saw it and became a miracle.”<sup>59</sup>

But just how much is the *tsaddik* allowed to have an interest in the latter function, that of bringing blessings into this world, and especially to the *oylem* of his own disciples? His potential capability for doing so is unquestioned by the Maggid, but he is no advocate of wholesale usage or “marketing” of such powers.<sup>60</sup> In fact we see in the Maggid’s writings almost none of the admonitions to believe in the *tsaddik*, or the insistence that God can be approached *only* through the *tsaddik*, that we will find so much of later on in Hasidism. Truth to be told, the task of *‘avodah* is really the duty of every Jew. Frequently his teachings go back and forth among *adam*, *yisra’el*, and *tsaddik* as the subject of their discourse. God created the world so that humans, or Israel, or the *tsaddikim*, might serve Him. The *tsaddik* is just a Jew who has managed the task better than most and thus serves as a beacon to others.

Here we see the great divergence that emerges within the Maggid’s school, one that stands in direct relation to the popularization of the Hasidic message. The great advocates of the *tsaddik*’s worldly powers are the key figures in urging that the nascent movement burst forth from Miedzyrzecz and “lead the world.” These are R. Aaron and Shelomo of Karlin and R. Levi Yizhak of Berdyczow.

The key role of Karlin as an early center of Hasidism is well known, documented especially by Wolf Rabinowitsch in his *Lithuanian Hasidism*,<sup>61</sup> based on important discoveries he made in the archive of the Karlin/Stolin *tsaddikim* in the 1930s. *Hasidim* in the north (including Vilna) were originally referred to as “Karliner” in many of the bans and other anti-Hasidic sources throughout the 1770s and 1780s.<sup>62</sup> R. Aaron was an active missionary for the movement already in the late 1760s, not only in Karlin, essentially a suburb of Pinsk in Polesia, but daring to wander far north into the Lithuanian heartland of rabbinic authority itself. Salomon Maimon’s diary mentions “K” along with “M,” clearly Karlin and Miedzyrzecz, as the two centers of the new sect.<sup>63</sup> Unfortunately, we know rather little of R. Aaron’s own teachings. He died young and very early in the process of

Hasidism's spread (during Pesah of 1772, several months before the Maggid).<sup>64</sup> His disciple R. Shelomo, who took his place in Karlin, however, carried forward the twin emphases that he learned from his master.<sup>65</sup> Karlin was famous for loud, prolonged, and highly demonstrative prayer and for faith in the dependence of the *hasid* on his master for prayer and support, including prayers for matters of this world. The Hasidism of Karlin (the source also first of Amdur and later of Lachowicze, thence Kobryn, Novominsk, and Slonim) was hardy and enduring. R. Shelomo left Karlin around 1784, due to a combination of persecution by the Pinsk rabbinate and the difficulty of competing with the growing influence of R. Shne'ur Zalman.<sup>66</sup> He migrated to the Ukraine, settling in Ludmir (or Wladimir-Volynsk), an area more receptive to their brand of Hasidism. However, his follower R. Asher, the son of R. Aaron, returned to Polesia and reestablished the court in nearby Stolin. They and their offshoots remained the only significant alternative to HaBaD in the entire Polesian, White Russian, and Lithuanian region.

The Maggid's disciples' venture northward was continued by R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk, who had established a center in Minsk by 1770. He was the chief object of the 1772 bans against Hasidism, considered the most significant leader of this northern branch.<sup>67</sup> His disciple R. Abraham of Kalisk had by the same time, or perhaps even earlier, created a small following in his own town. The Kalisker, among the youngest of the disciples, seemed to have played the role of *enfant terrible* in the Maggid's circle. The first bans against Hasidism, those of Shklov in 1771, which led to the great *haramot* of 1772, may have been directed against him. In a letter describing the events as they unfolded, R. Shne'ur Zalman describes the excesses of *hasidey TaLK*, the extreme pietists of 1770. The Kalisker and his disciples are accused of *kulyen zikh*, turning somersaults, in front of the *aron kodesh* as expressions of their ecstatic devotion and in general of *harbeh yaldut*, "much childish behavior."<sup>68</sup> They were also known for excessive mockery of scholarly rabbis. The letter suggests that responsibility for the entire campaign against Hasidism should be laid at the feet of the Kalisker, obviously an exaggeration, perhaps exacerbated by the fierce struggle over both ideology and money in which the two were engaged in the late 1790s and beyond. But it does supply the interesting memory that in 1772, when the disciples gathered in Rovno to take counsel after the first *haramot*, the Kalisker was afraid to face his master, and both R.

Mendel Vitebsker and R. Shelomo of Karlin had to speak up for him before he dared to enter the room.

Outside the northern territories, where hostility was more consistent, the battle against Hasidism may be seen as having been directed almost exclusively at R. Levi Yizhak. Unlike either Karlin *tsaddik*, Levi Yizhak was an ordained rabbi and an acknowledged *talmid hakham*. He had been brought to Miedzyrzecz by R. Shmelka Horowitz, whom he succeeded as rabbi of Ryczywol when R. Shmelka moved on to Sieniewa and later to the very distinguished rabbinate of Nikolsburg (Mikoluv) in Moravia, well outside the pale of Hasidic influence. Levi Yizhak then became rabbi of Zelechow, southeast of Warsaw, the first of the disciples in central Poland, well before Hasidism's spread there. He was active enough in preaching the Hasidic doctrine to arouse the enmity of the community's leaders and was forced out of his post, probably in 1771 or 2. From there he went to Pinsk, a community that at first welcomed him and seems to have had a significant pro-Hasidic population.<sup>69</sup> But eventually (c. 1784) he was forced to resign that position as well, possibly as a result of outside pressure from the Vilna Gaon and others. He was then invited to assume the rabbinate of Berdyczow, the largest Jewish community in Volhyn, in 1785.<sup>70</sup>

*Kedushat Levi*, the compilation of R. Levi Yizhak's teaching published after his death (Berdyczow, 1811),<sup>71</sup> is replete with claims for the *tsaddik's* powers, repeating over and over various versions of the Talmudic (b. Mo'ed Katan 16b) "the *tsaddik* ordains and the blessed Holy One fulfills" or "The blessed Holy One issues a decree, but the *tsaddik* nullifies it."<sup>72</sup> More than any other single work of Hasidic teaching, the *Kedushat Levi* reveals its author as a popular propagandist for Hasidism. His sermons are addressed to the needs and beliefs of ordinary Jews. Levi Yizhak was, of course, famous for caring about ordinary people and their concerns, and he believed in a God who did so as well. While he shares the abstract notions of the Maggid's mystical theology, he is more attracted to the parental side of his master's God, and he tends to focus repeatedly on real human beings (always Jews, of course) and their needs. The earthiness of the BeSHT's message is fulfilled for Levi Yizhak in his touching expressions of human concern. The following is an indication of his distinctive approach to leadership.

“May Y-H-W-H the God of the spirits of all flesh set forth a man over the community . . . and may the community of Y-H-W-H not be like a flock that has no shepherd” (Num. 27:16–17).

The principle is that one has to speak out in defense (*li-lemod* [!] *zekhut*) of Israel, who do not constantly fulfill God’s will as do the angels, since they are burdened by earning a living. Thus Abraham, the man of *hesed*, sought to speak in Israel’s defense. That was why he brought the angels food to eat, to show them about human needs, so they would not speak accusingly against Israel.<sup>73</sup>

This is why Moses refers to Y-H-W-H as “God of the spirits of all flesh.” A person of flesh and blood needs to earn a livelihood. Because of this, he cannot serve God constantly. “God of the spirits of all *flesh*” means that You are a Judge and Leader who ever seeks to defend Israel. Just as You defend human beings who do not always serve You, Moses asks that You set forth over Israel a [human] leader who will do the same.<sup>74</sup>

The text of *Kedushat Levi*, here and elsewhere, supports the image of its author depicted in the later hagiographical literature. But it also completely dovetails with the anti-Hasidic emphasis on him as the central figure of the movement’s spread. He is a preacher willing to give the people what they need, the constant reassurance that the *tsaddik* has heavenly powers and will seek to wield them for their benefit, relieving their burdens of daily life. This point of view is by no means uncontested in the Maggid’s circle. The master’s own preference is for service dedicated to the *shekhinah*, not to the needs of the human community. That more elitist and limiting view is given a significant barb in the following teaching by Levi Yizhak, one that I would suggest may be directed against the master himself, a part of the inner debate within Miedzyrzecz about whether to step forth into the public arena:

“Moses went up to God” (Ex. 19:3). . . . Moses our Teacher, of blessed memory, prepared himself in very intense and powerful ways to have God speak to him on a high level, one that no other person could understand. God said to him: “Do not prepare so much as you want to do. [If I address you on such a high level,] you will not be able to teach the Children of Israel.”

This is the meaning of “Moses went up to God”—he was preparing for this high level, that of going up to God, to speak on God’s level. But the blessed Holy One did not want that, for He wanted to teach Israel. That is why “God called him from the mountain” (19:3), on a lower level. God’s intent was “to say” to Israel, the people that were near to Him.<sup>75</sup>

What God wants of his leaders, Levi Yizhak is arguing here, is not that they strive to reach the contemplative heavens, but that they bring heaven down to earth.<sup>76</sup> This means a *tsaddik* who sees himself deeply committed to helping with real human needs, rather than getting lost in his own strivings to achieve oneness with divine abstraction.

But it is not only the Maggid who needs to be convinced. There are other voices around the table in Miedzyrzec who express (perhaps in teachings only articulated later, but formed by this debate) much more hesitancy about the popularizing push. Chief among these is the *Or ha-Me’ir*, R. Ze’ev Wolf of Zhitomyr.<sup>77</sup> His work, while on the radical edge of the circle in some theological ideas, is marked by sharp criticism of popular Hasidism as it is beginning to emerge. He is concerned both with the emergence of false leaders, would-be *tsaddikim* who are themselves profit-seeking ignoramuses, and shallow followers of *tsaddikim* who pretentiously imitate their behavior. Following are brief examples of each:

Not like what has become so widespread in this generation, when ignorant people burst forth and raise themselves up. They claim that they too deserve a place among the great, saying Torah filled with plays on numbers and letters. They imagine they have influence for good, offering advice on the service of God. But truly they are wise [only] in their own eyes. Their wisdom amounts to nothing, since they are filled with improper and deceptive motives, ruled by desire.<sup>78</sup> “The feeble sheep (*’atufim*) belonged to Laban, but the robust ones were Jacob’s” (Gen. 30:42).

There are some people who, even in the course of walking the royal path and doing God’s commandments, including study of Torah and prayer, are really doing so for purposes of their own self-glorification and pleasure. They think “How nicely I speak! How nicely I act!”

Our eyes see this in our own generation, when so many burst forth to wrap themselves up in a *tallit* that is not really theirs. As soon as they see a *tsaddik* or an enlightened person act in a certain way, they try to clothe themselves in the very same actions. Those fools do not understand that even if they lived a thousand years they would not attain such a rung! “How can the fool have the price in his hand to attain wisdom, when he has no heart?” (Prov. 17:16). He can’t even see to the task of setting right his own seven personal qualities,<sup>79</sup> keeping away from their negative sides, but he peers into the actions of others, the pure and enlightened, without any understanding of their secret meaning as a way to pursue the path of truth.

The Torah hints at this by saying that the feeble sheep (*ha-’atufim*, also meaning “wrapped up”) belonged to Laban, but the robust ones (*ha-keshurim*) were Jacob’s.

This verse provides a sign. Those who wrap themselves up in a *tallit* not their own, looking to what others do when they don’t yet properly see themselves, still belong to Laban. They have false weights in their hands, and do everything by cheating. These are the qualities of Laban the cheat. But the *keshurim* (also “attached”), those who do all their deeds in a bound up or attached way, belong to Jacob. They have conceived how exalted God is, and they take no part of practices that belong to others . . . their spirit keeps faith with God; they belong to Jacob our Father, whose quality is truth.<sup>80</sup>

Here and in several other places R. Ze’ev Wolf seems to anticipate the dangers in a spreading of Hasidism that will come up so sharply a half-century later in the caustic views of R. Mendel of Kotsk. Levi Yizhak would be considerably more forgiving of such people, viewing the task of the *tsaddik* as seeing the good in people and pleading their cause, rather than condemning them for trying to imitate the *tsaddik*’s behavior!<sup>81</sup>

### III

An interesting lens on this debate within the Maggid’s circle may be seen in a series of homilies around Numbers 20, the account of Moses strik-

ing the rock, the Torah's *locus classicus* for discussion of errant leadership. Levi Yizhak has a predictable comment on this passage. The reason Moses was led to sin by striking the rock was his lack of patience with the people. He ties the Numbers text into a well-known Hasidic typology of two sorts of preachers:

“Speak to the rock before their eyes . . . because you did not have faith in Me, to sanctify Me in the eyes of the Children of Israel” (Num. 20:8, 12).

RaSHI and RaMBaN are divided as to the sin of Moses. One says it is that of saying “Listen, O you rebels!” (vs. 10) and the other defines it as striking the rock. But they really are the same, for one led to the other.

There are two sorts of preachers who address Israel to get them to do the Creator's will. One speaks to them in a positive tone, telling each one of Israel what a high rung is his, how the souls of Israel are truly hewn from beneath the Throne of Glory. [He reminds them] of the Creator's great pleasure in a *mitsvah* performed by any Jew, how all the worlds are joyous at seeing God's command fulfilled. This kind of preaching bends the heart of Jews to do God's bidding and to accept the yoke of God's kingdom. But other preachers reprove Israel with tough language, shaming them until they are forced to do God's will.

The difference is that the one who approaches them with goodness, uplifting their souls to such great heights . . . is a fitting leader for Israel. Not so the one who speaks harshly. When a preacher speaks so well of Israel . . . all the world's creatures necessarily turn of their own accord to doing Israel's will, since it was for Israel's sake that they were created. But if one doesn't speak well and uplift Israel's righteousness, each creature will have to be forced to do their bidding, that for which they were created.

When Moses said, “Listen, O you rebels!” he was reprovng Israel with harsh words. That was why he had to strike the rock in order to force it to fulfill its created purpose. Had he uplifted Israel as the blessed Holy One intended by saying, “Speak to the rock,” he would have been saying, “You, O rock, who were created for the sake of Israel! They are on such a high rung that you have to do that for which you were created,



to bring forth water for Israel!” But now that he had reproved Israel harshly, he needed to strike the rock. . . .

“Because you did not have faith in Me, to sanctify Me in the eyes of the Children of Israel.” The one who approaches Israel through goodness can pass this understanding on to them, “sanctifying Me in the eyes.” . . . Our sages (Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah 1:23) say that “eyes” refers to the wise within the community. They too would be able to attain this understanding.<sup>82</sup>

Although the concluding line is a bit unclear, it seems he is suggesting that Israel too (not just a specific group of “leaders”) could have gained the wisdom that all nature is there to serve them, had Moses addressed them with proper respect and affection. Then the rock would have gushed forth on its own, just as the Reed Sea had been so transformed at the sight of Joseph’s bones! The message, in other words, is to have great faith in Israel and patience with them, even in hard times, always defending them and thus raising them up to their true high level. This is Levi Yizhak’s essential teaching.

A similar view to that of Levi Yizhak is taken by his colleague and supporter R. Elimelech of Lezajsk.<sup>83</sup> Moses felt he needed to do the sort of deed that would impress the people, even if it was somewhat contrary to God’s instruction:

It is the way of the *tsaddik* to constantly seek out what is good for Israel, even if doing so appears to contain some bit of transgression. If it is for Israel’s good, he will do it, even accepting that he might have to suffer Hell for their sake. His entire desire is to do what is good for them. The *tsaddik* could in fact bring forth the flow of blessing just by his word, without any physical act at all, but sometimes he has to do it . . . for those who do not believe.<sup>84</sup>

The words of the *tsaddik* will affect only those who already believe in him, but a “physical act”—a miracle—will convince everyone. R. Elimelch of Lezajsk is in fact a very prominent figure in the Maggid’s circle. His book *Noa’m Elimelech* (Lvov, 1788) stands alongside the *Kedushat Levi*

as one of the best-known works of early Hasidism. Like Levi Yizhak, he devotes much attention to the *tsaddik* and is often portrayed as the key figure in developing this aspect of Hasidism.<sup>85</sup> But there is an important difference between the treatment of *tsaddik* in these two works.<sup>86</sup> Unlike Levi Yizhak, Elimelech maintained a close circle of disciples, essentially carrying on for another generation what had existed in Miedzyrzec. Most of the leadership of Hasidism in the next generation, both in Poland and Galicia, emerged from the *bet midrash* of R. Elimelech (and his own successor, R. Ya'akov Yizhak, the *Hozeh* of Lublin). The *No'am Elimelech* is addressed primarily to this circle. It is a series of homiletically formed instructions on how to become and behave as a *tsaddik*.<sup>87</sup> He understands his own role as that of cultivating an elite group of future *tsaddikim*, who in turn would lead the people.<sup>88</sup> Elimelech is a tough master, one who (like the Maggid) never fully gave up the old pre-BeSHTian ascetic path.<sup>89</sup> Although fully a believer in the *tsaddik* and his powers, he does not tout them as does Levi Yizhak. Here he is telling his would-be *tsaddikim* how much courage the role will demand of them, even the sort of courage that might put at risk their own future other-worldly reward. The *tsaddik* is very much there “for others,” even at the cost of his own self-interest. This is R. Elimelech at his best.<sup>90</sup>

But now we turn to another homily on this same text, leading to a very different conclusion. R. Issachar Dov, rabbi of Zloczow, is the author of *Mevasser Tsedek* (Dubno, 1798), one of the lesser known works of the Maggid's circle. He and Levi Yizhak were in-laws, having known each other at a young age. Both of them spent some time in the *bet midrash* of the town of Lubartow (Levi Yizhak's wife's home town) in the Lublin district, where they were married to the daughters of two brothers prominent in the town. In fact it was from there that they were both attracted to the Hasidic path<sup>91</sup> and found their way together to Miedzyrzec.<sup>92</sup> Here is his reading of Moses' striking the rock:

A *tsaddik* who wants to bring about some change in the order of creation needs to go to the root of the thing that is to be changed. Suppose someone made a vessel out of clay. If you wanted to change its function, you would go back to its maker and ask him to change it to suit your purpose.<sup>93</sup>

When Moses wanted to get water for the people to flow miraculously from that rock, he had to raise the people up to the rock's own Source. This is what the blessed Holy One intended, that Moses uplift the people; then speaking would have been sufficient. Moses did so. But the ordinary folk also needed water [immediately], and he was unable to raise them up to that high level, the Source above. Thus he did not succeed and was forced to strike the rock, representing a lower level [of religious action], as is spelled out in the *Likkutey Torah* of Rabbi Isaac Luria.<sup>94</sup>

The *tsaddik* was punished for this. Even though it was impossible to raise up the masses, he should have elevated the *tsaddikim*, who are called “the eyes of the community,” so that Y-H-W-H would be sanctified in their sight. Thus the verse says, “Moses and Aaron assembled the congregation,” including the ordinary masses. “Facing the rock”: having them look into the rock, toward its Source. In this lay their failure; the ordinary folk were just not able to rise up that high. Once Moses saw that they were unable to concentrate on the Source, but only on the rock below, he said to them, “Listen, you rebels! Shall we bring you water out of *this* rock,” meaning the rock that you see. This is indeed impossible. And since you are incapable of rising to the Root, it will not bring water forth for you. Therefore, “he struck the rock,” acting at a lower level. Then “the community drank,” including the masses.

Y-H-W-H said to Moses and Aaron: “Because you did not have the faith in Me to sanctify Me before the eyes of the Children of Israel.” These are the community's “eyes,” the *tsaddikim*. Even though you couldn't succeed with the ordinary people, you needed to “sanctify Me before the eyes,” the proper leaders. Because of this, “you will not bring.”<sup>95</sup>

What was Moses' sin? He stooped too low, going down to the level of ordinary Jews. Their thirst did not let them rise to the level of “Speak to the rock.” They were desperate for a miracle, something they could *see*. Moses responded too readily to that, reaching down to the lowest common denominator among his flock, and struck the rock. Instead, he might have spoken to it, done something that reached only *eyney ha-èdah*, the “eyes” of the community, but raising them up to the heights. They then could have taken it to the next level forward, reaching down toward the

common folk. The sin, in other words, was too much of a rush toward popularization, giving the people what they need rather than raising them up. I read this text as a critique of emerging popular Hasidism and probably one directed squarely at his old friend and relative Levi Yizhak.<sup>96</sup>

The position taken by R. Issachar Dov would have been shared by several other members of the Maggid's circle, those who felt more nervous about the pace and measures taken for the sake of convincing the masses. The Berdyczower is a popularizer, ready to reach out and down to the level of the folk. "Isn't that the Ba'al Shem Tov's message?" he would argue. "What's wrong with the level where the people stand? They are all holy Jews, after all, and their needs are all holy needs. Who are we to dare judge them otherwise?" The *Mevasser Tsedek*, the *Or ha-Me'ir*, and others<sup>97</sup> are much less convinced of this and may even have been horrified by what they saw emerging. The *No'am Elimelech*, despite his agreement in this specific instance, was somewhat more cautious.

But let us return once more to Moses and the rock. It turns out that this series of interpretations was not initiated by Levi Yizhak or Issachar Dov but by the Maggid himself. In a passage published in both *Maggid Davarav le-Ya'akov* and *Or Torah*, he says the following:

The Zohar (1:28b) teaches that "had Moses spoken to the rock, there would have been no forgetting [i.e., Torah would never be forgotten]."<sup>98</sup> The reason is that all the miracles Moses performed were accomplished by speech alone; he did not belong to the realm of action. He was told to lift up his staff (Ex. 14:16), but the Sea was subdued by the word alone, [with no need to strike it]. This was not the case with Joshua. Moses represents the category of mind or awareness; as such he was drawn toward speech. His generation was also called "the generation of awareness." For this reason they are referred to as *dor ha-midbar*, which can mean "the generation of speech" (b. Sanhedrin 108a). Speech is drawn forth from the mind. Hence they received the Torah in speech. . . .

When this first generation was dying out and another was coming along, Moses perceived that they were people more related to action. They were going to inherit the land [i.e., earthiness; *erets/artsiyut*]. That was why he struck the rock. But the blessed Holy One in fact said just the opposite: his task was to *uplift* that second generation, to raise them higher.

“They were to inherit it in the name of their fathers” (Gen. 48:6), the generation of the wilderness/speech. Speech alone would have brought water out of that rock. In this way they too would have become a generation of awareness. By hitting the rock he brought about forgetfulness, a fall from speech to action.

The Maggid is accusing Moses of an excessive willingness to popularize, descending to the level of *artsyyut*-focused deed rather than raising the people up to the rung of speech. But here a new element is added: that of generational divide. The generation of Moses is, ingeniously, *dor ha-midbar*, “the generation of speech.” That of Joshua is *dor ha-arets*, “the generation of earth[iness].”

But these are *derashot*, sermons, not texts of biblical interpretation! Their real focus is the present, not the ancient past, as these authors themselves so frequently remind us. When reading a sermon one has to ask why the preacher chose to say these things, *toward whom his words were directed*. In this case, who was “sitting on the other side of the table”? The Levi Yizhak camp in this inner-group argument was saying: “But we need to reach out *to the young people*, the next generation that will follow us. Profound teachings (i.e., “speech”) are not enough for them. The masses we are trying to reach did not sit at the Maggid’s table, drawn by the power of the word. They need some *action*, something they can see. We need to offer them faith in a *tsaddik* who can *do* something about their worldly woes. A *tsaddik* who dwells in the upper worlds, praying for the *shekhinah*, is not enough.” This is the master’s answer to his impatient disciple. The Maggid and others with him are responding to the radical popularizer: “No, that’s just the point. Our job is *to raise them up*, not to go down to where they are. We should not be in the business of providing a *tsaddik* as miracle-worker, but should be leading the people to think of the *shekhinah* rather than themselves. Profound and convincing teachings are *precisely* what they need.”

The presence of this text within the Maggid’s own written corpus, in print by 1781 and also present in prior manuscript versions,<sup>99</sup> makes it completely clear that the debate about popularization and its price had begun already in the Maggid’s lifetime. Levi Yizhak was among the great agitators for moving forward. The Maggid, we see here once again, is more hesitant, worried about corrupting the purity of his teaching. He had per-

mitted his “sons,” the *tsaddikim*, to ride about on that stick and thus “lead the world,” but he was very worried about the results.

In fact we have a passage by Levi Yizhak, in the Torah portion immediately preceding this one (though we know nothing of the year in which he said it), where he takes up the same question of generational difference, the time of Moses being that of speech and the time of Joshua demanding action. Speech is adequate, but it needs to be clothed in the “world of action.” It is our *middot*, meaning our moral/emotional character, that allow us to do so.

“Korah took . . .” (Num. 16:1). . . . There are the generation of the wilderness and the generation that entered the Land of Israel. *Dor ha-Midbar* refers to speech; they accomplished everything by speaking. There are *tsaddikim* who accomplish everything by speaking and do not need to perform any deed. “The generation that entered the land of Israel” refers to action; they needed to do some deed. That is why Joshua, when doing battle with the thirty-one kings, had to perform some act with the javelin and the ambush (Josh. 8:18–19). Moses, who lived in the generation of *midbar*, needed no such act; he did it all through speech. . . .

The Torah of Moses is parallel to speech, since he accomplished all by speaking. But it becomes garbed through the *middot* in the world of action as well. Of this scripture says: “I am first and I am last” (Is. 44:6) [meaning that God is present on the highest and lowest levels].

When Korah saw that this generation would not enter the Land of Israel, he had no faith that Moses’ Torah could become garbed in action. . . . Korah believed only in the world of speech . . . and not that it could be garbed in the world of action.<sup>100</sup>

This passage is of course squarely based on the Maggid’s teaching just quoted. The *tsaddik* who can do everything with speech (Moses in the homily) is none other than the Maggid himself. Unlike his master the BeSHT, the Maggid was not known for performing miracles. He had assembled his remarkable circle of followers by the word, by the power of his teachings alone. But now that we are entering “the land,” the realm of ordinary Jews who dwell in *artsiyut*, those verbal teachings need to

be garbed in action.<sup>101</sup> We need to give them actions they can see! Here with remarkable daring Levi Yitzhak identifies the refusal to garb speech in action with none other than Korah! Although he says this with less direct dichotomization than the Maggid himself employed, the audacity is hard to avoid. Quite clearly the two of them are on opposite sides of a great debate. Levi Yitzhak wants to break forth out of the small circle that will be attracted by words alone. He wants to give the people a *tsaddik* who can act, who can reshape the will of heaven in response to their needs. But other voices, including that of the Master himself, say back to him: Your love for the people is leading you to excess. Beware lest you reach out so generously that you debase our precious words and thoughts, making us into wonder-workers rather than profound teachers. Levi Yitzhak's reply? "Do not be like Korah, believing only in the word. We are entering the land now (i.e., "we are dealing with an earthy generation"); you have to dress the master's verbal Torah in clothing they can see and touch."<sup>102</sup>

#### IV

Not everyone in the Maggid's circle took an active position in this debate. If we look at the *Meor Eynayim* of Menahem Nahum of Chernobyl, we find relatively less interest in the question of the *tsaddik* than we do in Levi Yitzhak or in R. Elimelech. Of all the Maggid's circle, he is the one who stays closest to the essential message of the Ba'al Shem Tov: the divine presence is everywhere, needing to be served in every way, and our job is to cultivate awareness (*da'at*) and to uplift the fallen sparks. The task belongs to all Israel, and the *tsaddik's* role is not easily distinguished from that of all Jews.<sup>103</sup> R. Nahum's son Mordecai of Chernobyl (1770–1837) did make much of the *tsaddik*, particular of the emerging dynastic model, but there is much less of that in the father. Other authors within the Maggid's circle who did not become *rebbe*s with a following, including B. Benjamin of Zalozce, R. Joseph Bloch, and R. Uziel Meisels, have rather little to say about the *tsaddik* and the need for faith in his powers. The *Or ha-Me'ir* occupies a middle position on this question. There are places where *tsaddik* is the vehicle for the renewed receiving of Torah in each generation; it is specifically the *tsaddikim* of each generation to whom Torah is revealed.<sup>104</sup> But in other places *tsaddik* seems virtually interchangeable with *mi she-yesh bo mi-da'at kono*, "anyone with a bit of spiritual awareness."<sup>105</sup>

The writings of R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk and especially of R. Abraham Kalisker play a special role here, reflecting some delicate balance of the question of the *tsaddik* and his role. They left Russia for Erets Yisra'el in 1777, surely in part because of the severe persecution they had encountered.<sup>106</sup> Once in Tiberias, they had to give up on their original intent of spreading Hasidism far and wide. In effect they too had created, by force of geography, a small, intense hothouse of Hasidic piety. The question of the pace of popularization was no longer theirs. In his letters back to Russia, R. Mendel does ask for the continuing loyalty of his own disciples, though he seems to know that the next generation will turn elsewhere.<sup>107</sup> But in a letter to a *hasid* who asks him for a blessing to cure barrenness (a very common request for the prayers of *tsaddikim*), he demurs, making a very interesting distinction between the Ba'al Shem Tov, who could successfully intercede for such matters, and all other *tsaddikim*. Then he adds, very caustically: "There are some big-time *tsaddikim* in our generation who open their mouths and promise such things, but I am not one of them."<sup>108</sup> Whom might he have had in mind in that nasty remark? Perhaps R. Shelomo of Karlin, who was "eating his lunch" back home in Belorussia? In the writings of the Kalisker, there is a unique emphasis on *dibbuk haverim*,<sup>109</sup> the intimacy of spiritual peers, a phenomenon growing directly out of life in that sheltered but constricted community in the Holy Land. With no broader *oylem* to lead, the *tsaddik* was indeed teacher/exemplar to an intimate circle, perhaps in some ways parallel to that of R. Elimelech among his disciples.

The one key figure of the Maggid's circle with whom we have not yet dealt is their successor in the leadership of Hasidism in Belorussia, R. Shne'ur Zalman of Lyady.<sup>110</sup> As indicated above, he and Levi Yizhak were friends, both deeply committed to the spread of the Maggid's teachings and the creation of a popular movement. In fact it is fair to say that with the death of R. Aaron Karliner and the emigration of the Vitebsker and the Kalisker, they became the two key figures in Hasidism's spread. Their prominence in the anti-Hasidic polemics certainly gives the impression that it appeared that way to Hasidism's enemies throughout the 1780s and 1790s. But on the issues of the *tsaddik*, his nature and function, and the methods of popularization, there is a very deep divide between them.

R. Shne'ur Zalman's original published work, the *Tanya* or *Likkutey Amarim* (Slavuta, 1797),<sup>111</sup> differs from all other writings to emerge from the Maggid's circle. Neither a collection of Torah-cycle homilies nor a ran-



dom collection of moral instructions (*hanhagot*), it is written as a systematic treatise. Its language is one of personal instruction, but its tone is also clear and categorical, laying out a position in a definitive manner. Its main section is a presentation of religious psychology, in the sense of *psyche* as “soul.” Its primary subject matter includes the origins and parts of the soul and the nature and various aspects of worship and religious devotion. This treatise is subtitled *Sefer shel Beynonim*, The Book of Intermediates, meaning Jews who fit neither the category of *tsaddik* or *rasha*, “wicked one.” In expanding this category, those to whom the treatise is addressed, R. Shne’ur Zalman is quite restrictive in his definition of *tsaddik*.

There are two types of *tsaddikim*, according to the opening chapter of the Tanya, following an old Talmudic paradigm.<sup>112</sup> These are the complete or perfect *tsaddik* (*gamur*) and the imperfect one. The former is a person who has completely uprooted the evil urge from within himself, taking no pleasure whatever in material things, committed to the love of God alone. He has thus transformed the evil urge into good. The incomplete *tsaddik* has not yet achieved this sort of perfection, still retaining some degree of attraction to worldly things, while being completely without actual sin. R. Shne’ur Zalman’s language is quite intense and graphic:

The complete *tsaddik*, in whom evil has been transformed entirely into good, is therefore called “the *tsaddik* who bears goodness.”<sup>113</sup> He has entirely removed the filth-soiled garments of evil. He deeply reviles the pleasures of this world, those things in which people take pleasure in fulfillment of their bodily desires alone, rather than for God’s service.<sup>114</sup> They do so because they are attracted and influenced by the “shells” and the “other side.”<sup>115</sup> The complete *tsaddik* absolutely despises all that derives from the “other side” because of his great love for God and the pleasure he takes in the holiness of that passionate “great love.” “One opposite the other has God made” (Eccles. 7:14). “I despise them with utter hatred; they are become my enemies. Search me and know my heart” (Ps. 139:12–13). The greater one’s love of God, the more utterly does one despise the “other side” and revile evil, since revulsion, like hatred, is the opposite of love.

The incomplete *tsaddik*, who does not despise the “other side” entirely, does not feel utter revulsion toward evil. But if one’s hatred and revul-

sion are not utter, some bit of love and pleasure [for evil] must remain. The filthy garments have not been entirely removed. . . . Therefore he is called an incomplete *tsaddik*.<sup>116</sup>

How far we are here from the forgiving and accepting world of Levi Yizhak! In a formal sense, of course, they could be reconciled. Levi Yizhak indeed “loves the sinner, not the sin.” But the tone is entirely different. It is presumed that no reader of such a text could dare think of himself as a *tsaddik*, not even aspiring toward that goal. The purpose of the treatise is not to cultivate future *tsaddikim*, as we have read both the Maggid and R. Elimelech, but to allow the reader to strive toward the high goal of being a proper *beynoni*.<sup>117</sup> Presumably only the group’s single leader would be described by the *hasidim* as a *tsaddik*. R. Shné’ur Zalman articulates a position that is surprisingly close to that of R. Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye’s elitism of the *tsaddikim* as *anshey tsurah* (without his terminology), people of an essentially different nature than those around them.<sup>118</sup>

The *Tanya*, as is well known, was a great vehicle for the popularization of the Hasidic message. Its publication became a focal point during the third round of anti-Hasidic agitation, leading to the arrest of its author in 1798. But this is popularization of an entirely different sort. One cannot imagine Shné’ur Zalman’s *tsaddik* reaching down to experience life on the level of the ordinary Jew in order to raise him up. If he did, such an act would bear no edge of dangerous spiritual adventurism, such as one might see in the writings of several of the Ukrainian masters. It could only be an act of *lèse majesté* on the part of a perfected being, a kind of Jewish *bodhisatva* coming down to help those in need. In setting forth what was to become the organizational structure of HaBad, the *Tanya* is interested in cultivating serious *beynonim*. The average reader begins as much less than a *beynoni*, a *rasha’ ve-tov lo*, a wicked person containing some bit of good. The leading disciples of Shné’ur Zalman were put forth as *beynonim*. These were to become the teachers and personal exemplars—indeed accessible models demonstrating an attainable spirituality—who were to spread the doctrine and build the movement. They represented the intermediate rung that we have seen described by R. Issachar Dov of Zloczow as “the eyes of the community.” But in his view, along with that of R. Elimelech, these are “*tsaddikim*-in-training,” the disciples who will eventually “graduate” and become *tsaddikim* in their own right, as indeed

was to become the Galician model. Shne'ur Zalman does not seek this. He wants a doctrine that will work to transform the lives of *beynonim*, without allowing them to aspire to a higher status. But he also does not want to have them attached to *tsaddikim* simply by fealty, which becomes the HaBaD critique of most other Hasidism. Something has to be done for their own spiritual lives, but such a path needs to be taught by fellow *beynonim*. They now have in their hands a *Sefer shel Beynonim*, which is to be taught, recited, and imbibed—a sort of Hasidic catechism—in the spreading forth of what are to become the “wellsprings” of HaBaD Hasidism. For this purpose an exalted and uncompromising view of the *tsaddik* is well suited.<sup>119</sup>

Shne'ur Zalman would agree with the critics of Levi Yizhak that one should work to raise the masses upward rather than reach down to their level. Thus there is no proclamation at all in the *Tanya* of the *tsaddik's* special powers or his ability to intervene for his followers' needs. He offers no miraculous “deeds” to attract the masses. In fact we are told<sup>120</sup> that R. Shne'ur Zalman disdained such an approach and refused to entertain requests for prayer regarding worldly matters.

The method of “uplifting” proposed by this highly educated and refined author, clearly a member of the Lithuanian-Jewish intellectual elite while at the same time a disciple of the Maggid, was by systematic inculcation of value-laden teachings. Intense study and recapitulation of large parts of the *Tanya*, along with instruction for meditation on its key themes, became the path of HaBaD.<sup>121</sup> In the context of the highly educated Lithuanian-style community of northern Belorussia, this method was highly successful in creating its own sort of mass movement. For those in the early years who were not attracted to, or satisfied by, this intellectual/contemplative approach, other alternatives such as the Hasidism of Karlin or Amdur, remained available. With the passage of time, HaBaD became so pervasive in the areas it dominated that it found room for Jews with a wide variety of intellectual abilities and aspirations.

The wide-ranging discussion of the *tsaddik's* nature and powers that characterizes the writings of the Maggid's circle took place over a period of forty years, extending several decades beyond R. Dov Baer's departure from this world. Varied paths were chosen by the disciples, determined by factors of personality, cultural geography, and historical circumstance, including the effects of persecution. But the essential questions surround-

ing the identity of the *tsaddik*, the old-new holy man they first saw in the person of their master, and what his role was to be in the growth and popularization of the as yet undefined movement were first thrashed out “around the Maggid’s table” during those formative years in Miedzyrzecz and Rovno. Reflections of that debate, which must have continued in the minds of those present for decades onward, are to be found throughout their writings, if one has the patience to read them with care and discernment.

#### NOTES

A Hebrew version of this essay appears in *Zion* 78, no. 1 (2013): 73–106. I am grateful to my research assistant, Ariel Mayse, for his help with footnoting this article.

1. The key study of this period is Ada Rapoport-Albert’s “Hasidism after 1772: Structural Continuity and Change,” in her edited volume *Hasidism Reappraised* (London: Littman Library, 1996), 76–140. Much that is said below agrees with and builds on her conclusions, although some demurrals will be noted.
2. This emerges clearly from a reading of the anti-Hasidic polemics and bans collected by Mordecai Wilensky in his two-volume *Hasidim u-Mitnaggedim* (Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik, 1970).
3. This, as Rapoport-Albert points out, was directly continuous from the situation during the BeSHT’s lifetime and even before he was recognized as a key figure in the emerging proto-Hasidic movement. Important individuals, including Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye and the BeSHT’s grandsons Ephraim of Sudylkow and Barukh of Miedzybozh, did not accept the Maggid as their master. Independent Hasidic circles also existed around Pinhas of Korzec and Yehiel Mikhl of Zloczow. I disagree with the extravagant claims made for Yehiel Mikhl of Zloczow and his circle in Mor Altschuler’s *The Messianic Secret of Hasidism* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), a book that reads more like an advocacy brief for Yehiel Mikhl than a work of scholarship. Regarding the Pinhas of Korzec circle, see most recently Ron Margolin, *Mikdash Adam* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 2005), especially 409ff. and the classic treatment by my teacher A. J. Heschel in *‘Aley ‘Ayin, Sefer ha-Yovel le-Zalman Schocken* (Jerusalem, 1948–52), 213–44, translated in Heschel’s *The Circle of the Baal Shem Tov* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 1–43.
4. The books of R. Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye were condemned and even burned in the second round of anti-Hasidic bans, but he personally does not seem to have been denounced or to have taken an active role in the disputes. This is the case, I am suggesting, because the move toward actively seeking to expand the movement came entirely from the Miedzyrzecz circle, of which he was not a part.

5. See Simon Dubnow, *Toledot ha-Hasidut* (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1930–31), 165–69. Yochanan Petrovsky-Shtern suggests to me that these two provinces of Volhyn and Podolia were dominated by the Orthodox Church, unlike Eastern Galicia and Polesia, which were largely Catholic and Uniate. In the Uniate areas, the Jesuits were active, making for higher levels of literacy among townsmen. It would be interesting if the nature of Jewish intellectual life somehow reflected that of the general society. (I am grateful to Petrovsky-Shtern for several other notes as well.) Of course this was also an era when these regions were exporting the best of their rabbinic talent westward to communities including Frankfurt, Prague, and Mikoluv. A *herem* was issued in Brody as part of the 1772 bans, and copies of the *Toledot Ya'akov Yosef* were burned there after it appeared in 1780. However, Brody (technically across the border in Eastern Galicia) and Ostrog (where there was also a well-known Christian seminary) were towns with stronger rabbinates than most of the region, and perhaps that made the difference. It is noteworthy that the rabbi of Brody, R. Zvi Hirsch Bosko, did not sign the anti-Hasidic ban.
6. See Moshe Hallamish, “The Teachings of R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk,” in *Hasidism Reappraised*, ed. Ada Rapoport-Albert (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1997), 268–87; Mendel Piekartz, *Ha-Hanhagah ha-Hasidit* (Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik, 1999), 192–94, esp. n. 10; Rapoport-Albert, “Hasidism after 1772,” 98–100.
7. For a foundational study of R. Abraham, see Ze'ev Gries, in his article “From Mythos to Ethos: Toward a Portrait of R. Abraham of Kalisk,” *Umah ve-Toldoteyha* 2 (Jerusalem: Merkaz Zalman Shazar, 1984): 117–46 [Hebrew]. Further discussion of this important figure will continue below.
8. For the most recent study of this leader, see Immanuel Etkes, *Ba'al ha-Tanya: Rabbi Shne'ur Zalman mi-Li'ady ve-Reyshitah shel Hasidut Habad* (Jerusalem: Merkaz Zalman Shazar, 2011), and especially his extensive bibliography. Naftali Loewenthal's *Communicating the Infinite: The Emergence of the Habad School* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990) also remains central.
9. See Wolf Z. Rabinowitsch, *Ha-Hasidut ha-Lita'it me-Reshitah ve-ad Yameynnu* (Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik, 1961). Reprinted in English as *Lithuanian Hasidism*, trans. M. B. Dagut (New York: Schocken, 1971).
10. In 1781 Rabbi Avraham Katzenellenbogen of Brest-Litovsk referred to Levi Yizhak as *resh biryoney shelehem*, “their chief thug.” A critical study of Levi Yizhak and his role in the dissemination of Hasidism is a desideratum of Hasidic scholarship. Samuel Dresner's *Levi Yitzhak of Berdichev: Portrait of a Hasidic Master* (New York: Hartmore House, 1974) has some important footnotes but hovers too much between biography and hagiography. My student Or N. Rose is writing a doctoral dissertation on the theme of leadership in Kedushat Levi. See also my entry “Levi Yitshak of Barditshev” in the *VIVO Encyclopedia* (2009). In saying that he is uniquely the object of the bans, I do not mean to ignore the attacks on others in the works of David of Makow, for example. But

these were more after-the-fact denunciations than testimony of outright persecutions.

11. On Chernobyl, see my introduction to Menahem Nahum of Chernobyl, *Upright Practices: The Light of the Eyes* (New York: Paulist Press, 1982), and Gad Sagiv, “The Chernobyl Hasidic Dynasty: Its History and Thought from the Beginning till the Eve of the First World War” (PhD diss., Tel Aviv University, 2009) [Hebrew]. Full discussion of the emergence of dynastic leadership in Hasidism goes beyond the scope of this essay. I would suggest, however, that the role of Barukh of Miedzybozh in creating that pattern has to be underscored. By the mid-1790s his own nephew Nahman of Bratslav saw Barukh as embodying the corruption of Hasidism, proclaiming himself a *tsaddik* primarily because of family descent. He sought to assert singular leadership of the movement as *tsaddik ha-dor*, a claim at leadership based on heredity, probably (and appropriately) the first such claim within the Hasidic camp. See the sources, oral as well as written, assembled by R. Margalioth in *Makor Barukh* (Zamoszcz, 1931), chaps. 1, 5, and 9. It is likely that this scion of the BeSHT inspired the Chernobyl’s son and others to do the same. See the discussion by Rapoport-Albert, “Hasidism after 1772,” 109ff. While it is true that we do not have an early or authentic collection of teachings by R. Barukh, the accounts of his self-aggrandizing behavior totally fit the personality type described in the sources, a prototype for the later R. Israel of Ruzhin, ironically a descendent of the Maggid.
12. His is the only name of a son listed along with his father’s (indicating that both are alive and active) in R. Aaron Auerbach’s list of Hasidic leaders, printed in R. David of Makow’s *Shever Posh’im*. See Wilensky, *Hasidim u-Mitnaggedim*, 2:101 and Sagiv, “The Chernobyl Hasidic Dynasty,” 175.
13. For an analysis of R. Elimelech’s life and teachings, see Gedalya Nig’al’s excellent introduction to his edition of *No’am Elimelech* (Jerusalem, 1978). See also Louis Jacobs, “The Doctrine of the Zaddik in Elimelech of Lizansk” in his *Their Heads in Heaven: Unfamiliar Aspects of Hasidism* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2005), 73–89, and Rivka Schatz-Uffenheimer, “On the Essence of the Zaddik in Hasidism,” *Molad* 144–45 (1960): 365–68 [Hebrew].
14. Arthur Green, “Typologies of Leadership and the Hasidic Zaddiq,” *Jewish Spirituality: From the Sixteenth-Century Revival to the Present* (New York: Crossroad, 1987), 2:127–56; reprinted in Hebrew in *Tsadik va-Edah* (Jerusalem: Merkaz Zalman Shazar, 2001), 422–44; Arthur Green, “The Zaddiq as Axis Mundi in Later Judaism,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 45, no. 3 (1977): 327–47. [Both of these essays are included in the present volume.]
15. B. Yoma 38b.
16. For some exceptions to this seemingly obvious limitation, see sources quoted by Piekarz, *Ha-Hanhagah ha-Hasidit*, 41f. Of course, Rabbi Simeon ben Yohai had already described himself in this way in the second century: Genesis Rabbah 35:2, quoted in Green, “Zaddiq as Axis Mundi,” 332. An interesting justifica-

- tion for self-praise by the *tsaddik* is found in a passage attributed to R. Nahum of Chernobyl in *Siftey Tsaddikim*, 62d–63a. He is like a peddler calling his wares—“Perfume! Needles! Pins!” etc. The *tsaddik* offers the opportunity to return from sin, but sinners will be embarrassed to come to him, thus publicly admitting their guilt. He therefore calls out a variety of wares—“I heal illness! I cure barrenness! I can improve your love life! I can make your plants grow!”—so that sinners can come to the *tsaddik* without others knowing that they are really coming to repent. *Siftey Tsaddikim* is a late-published work (Lviv, 1864), but seems to have been composed in the 1820s and includes much interesting early material.
17. Including a play on *hasidim* and *hashudim*, one that works especially well for *Litvak* Hebrew pronunciation.
  18. This is the general impression one takes away from Ada Rapoport-Albert’s early essay “God and the Zaddik as Two Focal Points of Hasidic Worship,” *History of Religions* 18:4 (1979): 296–325. Reprinted in G. Hundert, ed., *Essential Papers on Hasidism* (New York: New York University Press, 1991), 299–329. See esp. 314–16 in the Hundert edition.
  19. For a fine summary of the ways in which the BeSHT was “my teacher” to both the *Toledot* and the Maggid, see Haviva Pedaya, “The Ba’al Shem Tov, R. Jacob Joseph of Polonoy, and the Maggid of Miedzyrzecz: Guidelines toward a Religious Typology,” *Da’at* 45 (2000): 25–27 [Hebrew]. Aspects of her views will be discussed below.
  20. R. Jacob Joseph’s memory was not perfect, however. Scholars have shown that he sometimes attributes the same sayings to the BeSHT and to other figures.
  21. For a translation, see Moshe Rosman, *The Founder of Hasidism: A Quest for the Historical Ba’al Shem Tov* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 114–15.
  22. *Toledot, va-ethanan* (Korzec, 1780), 169c; the term is based on Zohar 3:253a.
  23. See *Toledot, va-yakhel*, 67b (commenting on Num. 11:29): “It was Moses’ intent that all Israel attain the same rung he had reached. This is not impossible, since a person has the free choice to purify his corporeal self until he reaches the rung and status of Moses.” Also quoted in Dresner, *The Zaddik: The Doctrine of the Zaddik According to the Writings of Rabbi Yaakov Yosef of Polnoy* (New York: Schocken Books, 1974), 276n23.
  24. Zohar 1:31a, based on an alleged (but unknown) Targum to 1 Chron. 29:12. Cf. Green, “*Zaddiq as Axis Mundi*,” 338n14.
  25. B. Ta’anit 10a; Zohar 3:216b.
  26. See, inter alia, *Ben Porat Yosef* (Warsaw, 1883; henceforth, BPY), *Va-Yehi* 63b, 80b, etc.; Green, “Typologies,” 131–32. See discussion by Moshe Idel in his *Ben: Sonship and Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Continuum, 2007), 531–39.
  27. On the earlier history of *tsaddik* as both “vessel” and “pipe,” see Idel, *Hasidism: Between Ecstasy and Magic* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1995), 189–207. The metaphor of *tsaddik* as throne immediately calls to mind the old rabbinic saying, “The patriarchs themselves are the [divine] chariot” (Bereshit Rabbah 82:7) as well

- as Idel's discussion of the "Hermetic" model of spiritual influence in the world, first in *Kabbalah: New Perspectives* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 40, and frequently in his later writings.
28. *Ben Porat Yosef, va-yigash*; also cited in Dresner, 280n73.
  29. *Toledot, emor*, 104b/c; Dresner, 280n73.
  30. *Toledot, va-yetse*, 22c–d. Ron Margolin discusses this mutuality at some length in *Mikdash Adam*, 398ff.
  31. B. Mo'ed Katan 16b; cited in *Toledot, mishpatim* 56b–c.
  32. Immanuel Etkes has emphasized that R. Israel BeSHT was known as a *ba'âl shem* who took great interest in the fate of Jewish communities and of Jewry altogether, not just in the affairs of specific "clients." See Etkes, *The Besht: Magician, Mystic, and Leader*, trans. Saadya Sternberg (Waltham MA: Brandeis University Press, 2005), 97–112. Ze'ev Gries has rightly questioned the centrality of the BeSHT's letter in the historical development of Hasidism, compared to the very central role given to it in modern scholarship. See his "The Historic Image of the BeSHT," *Kabbalah* 5 (2000): 411–46, 420 [Hebrew].
  33. On *ba'aley shem* and their role, see Etkes, "The Place of Magic and Ba'aley Shem in Ashkenazic Society in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries" [Hebrew], *Zion* 60 (1995): 69–104 (mostly translated as chapter 1 of his book cited in the preceding note) and the article by Pedaya mentioned in n. 19 above.
  34. A keen observer of Polish Jewish life like Dov Baer Birkenthal of Bolechow already noted that "the *ba'aley shem* have changed their name to *hasidim*." See Gershon Hundert in *AJS Review* 33:2 (2009): 258. My thanks to Dr. Hundert for this reference.
  35. A special place in this transition may belong to the story of the BeSHT's use of amulets containing only his own name. See the tale connected with R. Isaac of Drohobycz in *Zikkaron la-Rishonim* (Piotrkow, 1912), cited by Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Circle of the Ba'âl Shem Tov*, 167–70. Another example of the BeSHT's own name bearing magical power is found in *Shivhey ha-BeSHT*, ed. Avraham Rubenstein (Jerusalem: Rubin Mass, 1991), 232–34; translated in Dan Ben-Amos and Jerome R. Mintz, *In Praise of the Ba'âl Shem Tov* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1970), 180–81. It may be, however, that these accounts are there to indicate the BeSHT's power as a magician rather than a transition from magician to *tsaddik*.
  36. This term had been used to identify the BeSHT in the Polish tax records in Miedzybozh. See Rosman, *Founder of Hasidism*, 159–70. Of course, some early Hasidic figures may have been called *mekubbal* on title pages or in *haskamot*, but such designations are not to be taken too seriously.
  37. Of course, such transitions do not take place overnight. In the Maggid himself one can still see some elements of the *ba'âl shem*'s impersonal magic present in the *tsaddik*. See, for example, *Maggid Devarav Le-Ya'akov* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1976; henceforth, MDL), 30–31. For a Kabbalist close to the Maggid's cir-



- cle, see the *Seraf Peri 'Ets Hayyim* by R. Moshe of Dolina (Chernovtsy, 1866). Though printed relatively late, some of the *haskamot* seem to indicate that the book was prepared for publication much earlier. This work stands directly within the Lurianic tradition, unlike the author's briefer *Divrey Moshe*, a more typically Hasidic volume, showing that the two genres were clearly distinguishable, even by a single author.
38. Others include *Likkutim Yekarim*, edited by R. Meshullam Feibush Heller of Zbarasz (1796), *Kitvey Kodesh* (1862), and *Shemu'ah Tovah* (1938). See the discussion by Rivka Schatz-Uffenheimer in the introduction to her edition of *Maggid Devarav le-Ya'akov*. Exactly what in these later collections represents the thought of Dov Baer and what is drawn from other sources is exceedingly difficult to determine. There are many parallels between *Likkutim Yekarim*, a work that really belongs to the literature of *hanhagot*, and *Tsava'at RYVaSH*, where the teachings are attributed to the BeSHT. This is only one of many complexities examined by Ze'ev Gries in his *Sifrut ha-Hanhagot* (Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik, 1990), esp. 103–230. Levi Yizhak's precise role in editing the Maggid's writings is less than fully established.
  39. See Ben-Amos and Mintz, *In Praise of the Baal Shem Tov*, 61–70, 81–84. For Dresner's slightly different accounting of this rivalry and transition, see *The Zaddik*, 59–62. See also the memoir of Shelomo of Sadegora quoted from manuscript by Heschel in *The Circle of the Baal Shem Tov*, 79–80n72.
  40. Haviva Pedaya has made an important contribution to understanding the relationship between the BeSHT and his disciples. See n. 19 above. She suggests that aspects of the mystical/ecstatic model of leadership that were essential and natural parts of the BeSHT's personality were imitated by his disciples as a program toward which they aspired but which they did not necessarily fulfill. While we are told in Shelomo Lutzker's introduction to *Maggid Devarav le-Ya'akov* that the BeSHT taught the Maggid certain secrets of his own supernatural praxis, it seems clear that these were not the heart of the Maggid's teaching and were not what he chose to pass on to his own disciples. I am suggesting that this divergence in spiritual temperaments asserted itself, especially after the master's death, and that the Maggid forged his own path. Hasidism as it emerged afterward is very much an amalgam of the two.
  41. As quoted above in n. 26.
  42. This seems to be the case based on the early sources. David Assaf, *Derekh ha-Malkhut* (Jerusalem: Shazar Centre, 1997), 49, agrees. I am thus surprised to note that Israel Berger's *'Eser Orot* (n.p., 1907), 25, quotes the *Igra de-Pirka* of Zevi Elimelech of Dynow as referring to the Maggid's children, in the plural.
  43. Of course the *peshat* meaning of *le-olam* is "forever." All following translations of biblical verses are contextual.
  44. Again, a total distortion of the verse's original meaning, ignoring the construct state of *retson* and reading it as the object of the sentence.

45. MDL #7; the final line is from Bereshit Rabbah 8:7.
46. The singular form *’olam* here, instead of the plural *’olamot*, better fitting the theological reading, makes that entirely clear. *Oylem* in Yiddish means “the public” or “the community,” and *di tsadikim viln firn dem oylem* was surely the Yiddish original as spoken. This text also appears at the beginning of Ron Margolin’s very important chapter on “The Zaddik in Early Hasidism,” in *Mikdash Adam*, 382. Unfortunately, he too quickly accepts Rivka Schatz-Uffenheimer’s conclusion that the text is to be read on a metaphysical, not a social, level. These preachers were masters of making their point on more than one level at once.
47. A late-recorded tradition reports that the Maggid regretted having become a public figure and was told that it was a punishment for a transgression he had committed. See Berger, *’Eser Orot*, 25, #10.
48. Y. Berger, *’Eser Orot*, 35. Berger’s account of the meeting, including the attempted counter-*herem*, and Levi Yizhak’s central role in it, is most interesting. He does not offer a source for it. I am reading the Maggid’s words as applying more broadly than is reported by Berger. Of course, *ibbadetem et ha-rosh shelakhem* is also a translation of the oral Yiddish *ir hot farloiren eyer kop!* or “you’ve gone mad!” That might support the narrower reading.
49. MDL #24.
50. See MDL #26, 60, 127. See also MDL #1, quoted by Margolin, *Mikdash Adam*, 383. This seems to follow what is reported to be the BeSHT’s reading of Psalm 121:5: “Y-H-W-H is your shadow.” Cf. Ephraim of Sudylkow, *Degel Mahaneh Ephraim, Shabbat Shuva* (Jerusalem, 1963), 267b.
51. He has in mind the elected Polish monarchy, where kings were chosen by the powerful nobility.
52. MDL #185, following the manuscript version in Schatz-Uffenheimer’s edition.
53. See Joseph Weiss, “The Great Maggid’s Theory of Contemplative Magic,” *Hebrew Union College Annual* 31 (1960): 137–47; Joseph Weiss, “The Saddik—Altering the Divine Will,” *Studies in Eastern European Jewish Mysticism and Hasidism* (London: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1997), 183–93. Weiss’s views on this subject are taken up in a new and richly comparative context by Jonathan Garb in his *Shamanic Trance in Modern Kabbalah* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011). I am generally sympathetic to his approach, which sees the *tsaddik*’s ascent to the state of *gadlut* as a power-bearing shamanic experience.
54. There is precedent in pre-Hasidic sources for the notion that the recipients of divine bounty may shape and direct divine blessing. However, the statement that divine will *itself* is created by humans seems to step beyond what had been claimed previously.
55. *Kedushat Levi, kedushat Purim* 5, ed. Michael Aryeh Rand (Ashdod, 2005), 366. This text would fit well into what R. Schatz-Uffenheimer defined as “quietism.” But it may in fact be just the opposite, where attributing the power to heaven in fact masks an extreme theurgic activism.

56. *Me'or Eynayim, derush le-hanukkah* (Ashdod, 2008), 109.
57. See Margolin's perceptive note on this in *Mikdash Adam*, 388n45.
58. See Joseph Weiss, "The Kavvanot of Prayer in Early Hasidism," in *Studies*, 69–94; Schatz-Uffenheimer, *Hasidism as Mysticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 215–41. For a different perspective on this question, see Menachem Kallus, "The Relation of the Baal Shem Tov to the Practice of Lurianic Kavvanot in Light of His Comments on the Siddur Rashkov," *Kabbalah* 2 (1997), 151–68. Rapoport-Albert uses the rejection of *kavvanot* as evidence of the new charismatic elite that Hasidism sought to put in place of the former rabbinic and Kabbalistic elites. See "God and the Zaddik" in Hundert, *Essential Papers*, 316. But the very text she quotes, the Maggid's well-known admonition that "breaking the heart opens [the door] to everything" proves just the opposite. Surely the ability to "break the heart" does not belong only to a charismatic elite! Again, I am not claiming that either magical or Lurianic praxis disappears entirely or overnight. Nothing could be further from the truth. But within this circle, especially for its key authors, a new ideal is being forged that structurally diminishes the importance of both.
59. MDL #183, based on Bereshit Rabbah 87:8.
60. This distinction between belief in the *tsaddik's* powers and the active "marketing" of such belief is not made by Margolin (*Mikdash Adam*, 381) and should not be overlooked.
61. See note 9 above.
62. See Wilensky, *Hasidim u-Mitnaggedim*, 1:64–65; Rabinowitsch, *Lithuanian Hasidism*, 14–15.
63. For Maimon's report on his visit to a Hasidic "sect," see *Solomon Maimon: An Autobiography*, trans. J. Clark Murray (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 151–75. See also David Assaf's discussion in "The Teachings of Dov Ber the Maggid of Mezritch in Solomon Maimon's Autobiography," *Zion* 71 (2006): 99–101 [Hebrew].
64. The volume called *Bet Aharon* (Brody, 1875) is made mostly of teachings by his grandson, Aaron II of Karlin-Stolin; only occasionally is a fragment quoted in the name of Aaron I (*ha-gadol*).
65. Sayings, teachings, and tales of R. Shelomo were collected in *Shema' Shelomo* (1928; Jerusalem, 1974).
66. See the discussion by M. Nadav, "Pinsk and Karlin between Hasidism and Its Opposition," *Zion* 34 (1969): 98–108.
67. Wilensky, *Hasidim u-Mitnaggedim*, 1:40–41, 63–65.
68. The letter was written in 1805 or 1806. See Tsevi Hillman, *Igrot Ba'al ha-Tanya* (Jerusalem, 1953), #103, 175, and 177, and discussion by Rapoport-Albert, *Hasidism after 1772*, 119, as well as by Ze'ev Gries, "From Mythos to Ethos," 117–46. The practice of performing headstands before the ark is already mentioned in the *haramot* of 1772, though without linkage to any particular per-

son. In some of the *haramot* the somersaults were interpreted as a form of idolatrous practice derived from the worship of Pe'or, whose service, according to the Talmud, included defecating in his presence! Ze'ev Gries has argued that since Shne'ur Zalman is the only source linking the Kalisker with this behavior and that the document doing so was a letter written in the heat of their conflict, the linkage should be considered suspect. I tend to doubt that Shne'ur Zalman would have dared to make up this accusation entirely, including the account of the Kalisker's fear of being in the Maggid's presence at the Rovno meeting, while there were still others alive (including Levi Yizhak) who had been there and knew the truth. Of course, there may be exaggeration, but not fabrication, as in some of the later HaBaD accounts discussed by Rapoport-Albert and other.

69. See Rabinowitsch, *Lithuanian Hasidism*, 14 and note ad loc., as well as Hayyim Lieberman, "The Rabbinical Positions of R. Levi Yitzhak of Berdichev," *Ohel RaHeL* (Brooklyn: Empire Press, 1980), 66–69 (Hebrew). Although Pinsk is in Polesia, adjacent to northern Ukraine, politically and culturally it was identified as part of greater "Lithuania." Pinsk was one of the five major communities to receive the original documents of the Vilna *herem* in 1772, but its rabbinate did not sign on to them. On the complicated history of the Pinsk community's changing attitudes toward Hasidism, see M. Nadav, as cited in note 66 above.
70. Yohanan Petrovsky-Shtern, "The Drama of Berdichev: Levi Yitshak and His Town," *Polin* 17 (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2004), 83–95.
71. *Kedushat Levi* on Hanukkah and Purim was published during the author's lifetime in Slawuta, 1798.
72. For a few examples, see *Kedushat Levi ha-Shalem* (Jerusalem, 1973; henceforth KLS), 9b, 39b, 131a, 134a, 151a, 306b. The index in the new Rand edition points out that this passage is his single most quoted text from all of rabbinic literature!
73. Of course, the angels were on their way to destroy Sodom, not "Israel." The biblical Abraham does not speak to God in defense of *Israel*, who do not yet exist in his day, but rather of *anshey Sedom* (Might we dare call them "Palestinians?"). Levi Yizhak conveniently ignores this fact.
74. KLS, 237b. See also the teaching quoted from "the rabbi of Zelechow" by R. Uziel Meisels in *Tif'eret Uziel* (Brooklyn: Imrey Shefer, 2003), *Yitro*. RLY was called "Rabbi of Zelechow" through his Pinsk period, but after 1785 he was generally known as rabbi of Berdyczow. R. Uziel is thus likely quoting an early teaching, but one in which this focus on humanity and its needs is already fully developed. On RLY's attraction to the parental metaphor, see inter alia KLS 269a, the call to be judged on Rosh ha-Shanah by God only in His role as parent.
75. KLS, 129b. Cf. Levi Yizhak's very important discussion of Abraham and Melchizedek, KLS, 15b ff.

76. For a parallel view by R. Elimelech, see *No'am Elimelech* on Num. 7:9 (ed. Nig'al, p. 376). Saul is not fit to remain king over Israel because he is "from shoulder up above all the people" (1 Sam. 9:2), too much a moral perfectionist to be a leader.
77. See the discussion of R. Ze'ev Wolf by M. Piekarcz in *Ha-Hanhagah ha-Hasidit*, 94ff. and sources quoted in n. 44a.
78. *Or ha-Meir* (Jerusalem, 1995), *bereshit*, 6b. See also *Hukkat* 111b and 115b. It is worth noting here that the phrase *lomar Torah (zogn toire)* seems to be a unique Hasidic expression. See two other places where the *Or ha-Meir* uses it, quoted by Piekarcz, *Ha-Hanhagah ha-Hasidit*, 95. I am suggesting that *a rebbe zogt toire; a rov zogt a vort oder a dvar toire*; I do not know whether Yiddish philologists have noted this distinction.
79. The *middot* are the seven lower *sefirot*, reread in Hasidism as the essential moral qualities that need to be uplifted. This is an especially predominant theme in the *Or ha-Meir* and the *Me'or 'Eynayim*, as it is in the writings of R. Pinhas of Korzec and his circle.
80. *Or ha-Meir, va-yetse*, 51b–52a.
81. He is forgiving toward the *tsaddikim* as well. See his striking comment on *homer ba-kodesh* in KLS, 306, where he justifies the *tsaddik's* attraction to money. In the course of uplifting ordinary Jews, some of their material thoughts cleave to the *tsaddik*, who is himself *kodesh*.
82. KLS, 344b–345b. On these particular "two types of *tsaddikim*," see also KLS, 304b.
83. R. Elimelech's most serious involvement in the battle with the *mitnaggedim* comes in the form of an impassioned defense of Levi Yizhak in a letter signed by his son but extensively quoting the father. See the text in Wilensky, *Hasidim u-Mitnaggedim*, 1:169–76.
84. *No'am Elimelech, Balak*, ed. Nig'al, 447f.
85. See Rivka Schatz-Uffenheimer, "On the Essence of the Zaddik in Hasidism," *Molad* 144–45 (1960): 365–68 [Hebrew].
86. It is worth recalling that Elimelech was considerably older than Levi Yizhak. If we assume a debate about how or whether to expand the movement that took place in c. 1765, Levi Yizhak was twenty-five years old and Elimelech was forty-eight; this difference may explain a lot.
87. For this understanding of the *No'am Elimelech* I am indebted to conversations with my student Rabbi Ebn Leader. This reading diverges from the usual understandings of the *No'am Elimelech*, including those of Schatz-Uffenheimer and Piekarcz, *Ha-Hanhagah ha-Hasidit*, 148.
88. See, for example, *No'am Elimelech va-yera* to Genesis18:4 (ed. Nig'al 44–45), where he refers to the disciples around his table as *tsaddikim*. This continues the view of the Maggid, seen above, demonstrating clearly that R. Elimelech is training them for that role and, in good educational fashion, is already treating them as "colleagues."

89. A good selection of teachings on the tsaddik, his prayer, and his powers, can be found in *No'am Elimelech, va-yehi*. In order to pray effectively for worldly blessings for his flock, he needs to be completely detached from worldly things. See Nig'al, 151.
90. When I say "at his best," I leave room for the fact that there are passages in the book, especially when read outside the disciples' circle, that may have led in a different direction. Certainly in later Hasidism R. Elimelech was read, as suggested by n. 82 above.
91. Via R. Shmelke. He seems to have played an important intermediary role in constituting the Miedzyrzec circle. R. Jacob Isaac, the future seer of Lublin, also came through him.
92. See the biographical note *Toledot Rabbenu* on 145–46 of the Jerusalem 1970 edition of *Mevasser Tsedek*.
93. He has in mind the ayin teachings of the Maggid, taking everything back to its roots in God prior to individuation, in order to effect change.
94. See *Likkutey Torah* (Jerusalem, 1988), *hukkat*, 220. Cf. *Ets Hayyim*, II 32:6.
95. *Mevasser Tsedek* (Jerusalem, 1970), 112b–113a.
96. Juxtapose this text especially with Levi Yizhak on Korah, to be quoted below.
97. See, for example, the fierce comment of R. Benjamin of Zalosse: "The flatterers among the *tsaddikim* who do not reprove people should tremble, more than just fearing, for they will be punished first . . . the *tsaddik* who does not reprove will not only be caught up in the sins of the generation, but will be punished in Hell for them." *Torey Zahav*, 155a–b, as quoted by Piekarz, *Hanhagah ha-Hasidit*, 107. What would he say to Levi Yizhak?
98. The dangers of forgetting Torah and aids to prevent such forgetting are an ancient part of Jewish esoteric lore, reaching back into the *merkavah* era.
99. It is quoted by R. Zvi Hirsch of Nadworno in his *Tsemah ha-Shem Li-Tsevi* ad loc, from the *ha'atakot*, pre-publication manuscripts of the Maggid's writings that were in his possession.
100. KLS, 341.
101. In fact this discussion of *artsyyut* and *dor ha-arets* may be hiding another Hebrew/Yiddish locution that could not be spoken here. 'Am *ha-arets* in both languages means "an ignorant person," in somewhat insulting terms. "What do we need to do to convince these *amaratsim* of our message?" may be the unuttered question here.
102. For another example of the Maggid's position with regard to leadership and outreach, see *Or Torah, shemot* on Ex. 4:27 (=mdl, ed. Schatz #62). Moses is unable to redeem Israel from Egypt on his own because he is all hesed, drawn from the water (=hesed), as his name indicates. He needs the *tsimsum* of Aaron to balance him. The Maggid is saying something about leadership here, probably addressed to Levi Yizhak or the "Levi Yizhak faction" among his disciples. "If you want to redeem people from the Egypt of *galut ha-da'at* and

*galut ha-middot* in which Jews are now exiled, you can't do it by love alone."

We have already seen how Levi Yizhak would disagree with such an approach.

103. Gad Sagiv agrees with this view. See Sagiv, "The Chernobyl Hasidic Dynasty," 375.
104. Piekarz, *Ha-Hanhagah ha-Hasidit*, 100.
105. Piekarz, *Ha-Hanhagah ha-Hasidit*, 31.
106. The 1777 *'aliyah* has been extensively treated by scholars. For bibliography, see David Assaf in "The Rumor was Spread that the Messiah has Already Come," *Zion* 61 (1996): 318ff. The decision to emigrate and settle in the Holy Land was seen by earlier scholars of Hasidism as a response to the resistance to Hasidism in Lithuania and Belorussia. See Dubnov, *Toledot ha-Hasidut* (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1931), 133–37; Rabinowitsch, *Lithuanian Hasidism*, 26. More recent discussion by Raya Haran and David Assaf has focused on the positive reasons for their decision, rather than the rather obvious reality that they were in flight from severe persecution. Raya Haran ascribes the *'aliyah* as a quest for attainment of higher spiritual status in the Holy Land. She bases her view on the letters sent home by both R. Mendel and R. Abraham. Such documents, however, cannot be taken entirely at face value. They would naturally choose to highlight the positive and spiritual, rather than admitting to their followers that they had fled their enemies. Assaf, while offering a nod to a more balanced view, deals primarily with the possible influence of a messianic prediction as a motivator of their *'aliyah*. But surely the difficult decision to emigrate was motivated by a push as well as a pull, something one would hardly expect to find detailed in the documents. See Haran in *Cathedra* 76 (1995): 77–95 and Assaf in *Zion* 62, no. 3 (1997): 283–88.
107. See his letters, collected by Y. Barnai in *Igrot Hasidim me-Erets Yisra'el* (Jerusalem, 1980), 92ff., 108. This whole school is newly discussed in the opening section of Immanuel Etkes's *Ba'el ha-Tanya*.
108. *Avot ha-Hasidut be-Erets Yisra'el* (Jerusalem, 1987), letter 7, 13a.
109. See Joseph Weiss, "R. Abraham Kalisker's Concept of Communion with God and Men," in *Studies*, 155–69; Raya Haran, "The Teachings of R. Abraham of Kalisk: The Path of Devekut as an Inheritance of Those Who Immigrated to Israel," *Tarbiz* 65, no. 4 (1996/97), 517–41.
110. I am grateful to Naftali Loewenthal for several suggestions regarding the following paragraphs.
111. There is a vast literature, both by HaBaD devotees and by critical scholars, around the Tanya. See sources cited by Etkes in *Ba'el ha-Tanya*. On the specific theme of leadership, see M. Hallamish, "Yahasey Tsaddik ve-'Edah be-Mishnat R. Shne'r Zalman me-Liadi," in *Hevrah ve-Historiyyah*, ed. Y. Cohen (Jerusalem, 1980), and E. Etkes, "Rabbi Shne'r Zalman of Lyady as a Hassidic Leader," *Zion* 50 (1985): 321–54.
112. B. Berakhot 7a.

113. This is a complete distortion of the passage's original meaning, which has to do with theodicy. Cf. *ibid.*
114. That is, he recognizes that the ideal is not celibacy, but engagement in physical—notably sexual—activity exclusively as an act of devotion to God.
115. Kabbalistic terms for the cosmic forces of evil.
116. *Likkutey Amarim—Tanya* (Brooklyn: Kehot Publication Society, 1983), chap. 10.
117. I could thus not imagine Shne'ur Zalman making a statement like that quoted from R. Elimelech in n. 83 above.
118. I would thus restrict Margolin's comment (*Mikdash Adam*, 390) that the Maggid's disciples followed R. Jacob Joseph toward an elitist view of the tsaddik, rather than the Maggid's more "egalitarian" model. I find this most applicable to R. Shne'ur Zalman. At least Levi Yizhak and Elimelech believe that one may strive successfully to become a tsaddik, something I do not see in R. Jacob Joseph or R. Shne'ur Zalman. A very slight possible bridge between *beynoni* and *tsaddik* is found in *Tanya*, chap. 14. A *beynoni* who turns utterly from evil and learns to despise the things of this world quite thoroughly might attract the soul of a departed tsaddik to "impregnate" him, that is, to dwell within him, giving him some glimmer of the *tsaddik's* light.
119. Of course one may also say that this was the appropriate strategy for establishing and preserving a single vast HaBaD "empire," rather than a welter of new spiritual fiefdoms, as happened in the Ukraine and Galicia. Could it be that R. Shne'ur Zalman was noticing the parallel between the failed Polish state, crippled by too many independent authorities, and the pattern that was emerging in Ukrainian and Galician Hasidism? He and his descendants became well-known admirers of the unified and bureaucratized Russian autocracy. Was the centralization of power somehow a part of what he learned from the czar's conduct of his empire?
120. Etkes, *Ba'âl ha-Tanya*, 48–56. quoting from R. Shne'ur Zalman's extant letters and Heilman's *Bet Rabbi*.
121. See Loewenthal, *Communicating the Infinite*, esp. 47–51.



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# The Heart of the Matter

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