

THE LIFE OF THE HASIDIC JEWS OF EASTERN EUROPE AS SUGGESTED
BY THE 'SAYINGS' OF THE RABBIS
IN ELIEZAR STEINMANN'S
BA'ER HA-HASIDUT

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TO
THE BLESSED MEMORY OF
MY ZAIDE
R. NAPHTALI GOLDMAN
A SLONIMER HASID

TO
THE BLESSED MEMORY OF
MY MOTHER
ANNA DINERMAN GOLDMAN
WHO NEVER SAW HER SONS GROW UP

TO
THE HONOR OF
MY FATHER
YITZHAK BEN NAPHTALI
SON OF A HASID

TO
THE HONOR OF
MY TEACHER
DR. RABBI JOHN J. TEPPER
A MODERN ZADDIK

DEDICATED
TO
MY WIFE BARBARA
A
CONSTANT BLESSING

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AMUD HAAVODA

INTRODUCTION

Hasidism is a dynamic expression of faith. It suggests an approach to life which is wholly Jewish and yet frequently contradictory to the norms of its day. One cannot fully comprehend Judaism and its way of life without inquiring into Hasidism. In Eastern Europe this approach to life had a powerful impact on the lives of the Jews. The tremendous influence of Hasidism on the life of Martin Buber and his determination in making it comprehensible to modern day readers is indicative of the resurgence of interest in it. Neo-Hasidism, if not in practice then certainly in thought, has found a place in the minds and hearts of many young people of today who are curious about the small group of modern day adherents.

It was necessary for me in preparing this project to forget everything I had previously known about the Hasidim, their history, socio-economic situation and political and religious ideology. I wanted only one thing and that was for the Hasidim by means of their sayings to tell us what Hasidism really is. Obviously there are dissenting attitudes and points of view. This can readily be expected. There are however certain vast and general impressions that emerge after studying the literature. These will become obvious as one reads this project. As I do not accept the literal word of the Torah, but rather the spirit and tradition it represents, so I also

do not accept each saying of the rabbis as the literal truth. I suspect that many of the sayings as well as the stories are pure fabrication and exaggeration. Nevertheless, this too tells us a great deal about the Hasidim. For the very imaginations that fashion these ideas are in themselves suggestive of a certain freedom and openness. We are concerned less with the literal truth and more with the spirit of the community and their motivation as an expression of their innermost hopes and aspirations and attitudes toward God and man, life and death, work and play, study and prayer, asceticism and total involvement and commitment to life.

Although the reader will find allusions to references outside the eight volumes from which this material has been culled, the final analysis is determined by the Imrot themselves. Where dissenting and opposing views are available, these are cited wherever possible. I have endeavored to render a translation as close as possible to the Hebrew in a style that is both accurate as well as pleasant to the reader.

This project is organized first to describe and define what a Hasid really is. The subsequent chapters are devoted to the religious life of the Hasid with emphasis on his attitude toward prayer, study, and mysticism. The following chapters deal with the

secular life of the Hasid, his work, trades and occupations, the social attitudes, and general characteristics that one can expect to find inherent in Hasidism. The daily life of the Hasidim of Eastern Europe, their immersion in and involvement with, the various points of view and attitudes toward this world and all other worlds, in other words, their Weltanschauung - is the underlying consideration of this thesis.

Each major Hasidic concept deserves at least a full volume of explanation, comment and analysis. In this work, however, such concepts will be dealt with only as they pertain specifically to the various aspects of the daily lives of the Hasidim.

CHAPTER I

WHAT IS A HASID?

The Hasidic rabbis as well as their opponents attempted to define and express not only the meaning of Hasidism, but what a Hasid is. Each one had his own definition. Some went further to suggest who could or could not become a Hasid.

When the Seraph was asked: 'What is Hasidism?' He replied: 'I have no idea what Hasidism is and cannot utter Hasidic teachings. I only know this - that one cannot go about idle and must always engage in Torah study and prayer.'¹

Rabbi Yehezkel of Kuzmir defined Hasidism as:

Matter that cannot be stained. A man can be a great scholar, a wise man, one who is chock full of Sifra, and Sifra Raba,² yet at the same time have as many faults as a pomegranate has seeds, like being a liar, miser, and a thief. But a Hasid of whom it is said 'He is a thief' or 'He is a liar' is in no sense a Hasid.³

Rabbi Hanoch Henich says it is good to speak of Hasidism, for even if what is said exerts no influences on the listener, it still constitutes a protest against the evil inclination, that it might not rule over a man.⁴

Two Hasidim, one of Kotsk and one of Tschernobol, met and discussed Hasidism. Said the one of Tschernobol: 'Hasidism in Tschernobol is marked by three things: on the night of the eve of the Sabbath we stay awake all night; on the eve of the Sabbath we give charity as much as we are able, and on the Holy Sabbath we recite the entire book of Psalms.'

Replied the Hasid of Kotsk: 'It is not so in Kotsk. We stay awake every night, give charity whenever we encounter a poor person and have money in our pockets; but we lack the strength to recite Psalms all at once, rather we recite a few chapters with devotion. Should we recite at one sitting what it took King David seventy years of hard work to compose?'⁵

A favorite question is 'What is a Hasid?' Rabbi Mendel of Kotsk believed a Hasid is one who with every word or deed would ask himself for an accounting of his motivation.⁶ He also says in everything a Hasid does or says, he asks himself 'What is God's will therein?'⁷

'A Hasid should always have the manner of an infant. Just as an infant cries and is happy, both at the same moment, so does the Hasid cry when he remembers his sins, his vastly humble state and his imperfections, while at the same time rejoicing as he recalls his Maker before whom he serves in awe and fear. These emotions together, joy and sadness, promote our efforts to avoid transgressions though each separately has its pitfall. Sadness alone is very difficult and can lead one to despair, heaven forbid; joy alone is very difficult as it can cause a lack of reverence.' This we learn from R. Yaakov Yitschak.⁸

Rabbi Hirsch Baer of Garbovitz, one of the elders of Kotsk, was asked, 'Who is a Hasid?'. He answered, 'One who wants to be a Hasid.' Then he was asked, 'Who doesn't want to be?' 'Whoever thinks that he has already attained to the level of a Hasid,' he answered at once.⁹

A Hasid of Kotsk was asked 'Who is a Hasid?' and he replied, 'A Hasid casts the world aside. He who casts the world aside is a Hasid.'¹⁰

The Hasidim of Kotsk tells us that 'There is no such thing as an old Hasid. The exultant heart of a Hasid advanced in years is equal to two or three young men.'¹¹

'Ask an empty headed Jew where the glory of the Creator is to be found', says the Maggid of Kozinta, 'and he will reply at once: "In the Heavens." Ask a scholar and he will at once measure five hundred miles from the earth to the firmament and five hundred miles from one firmament to the next until he reaches the Throne of Glory. Ask a Cabbalist¹² and he flies off to the upper spheres and unfolds one world after another until he reaches the place of the Creator's glory. But ask a Hasid and he immediately replies that He created everything for His glory.'¹³

Not only were many sayings recorded regarding a myriad of definitions of Hasidism, Hasid, and who is a Hasid, but as well the numerous debates and controversies between the Hasidim and the Mitnagdim¹⁴ as to the essential differences of the two. In addition we find many instances of disputes among the Hasidim of the various dynasties.¹⁵ Let us consider some of the comments of the Hasidim and their opponents.

When we ask what distinction can be made between a Hasid and a Mitnagid, we are told: 'It is like the difference between being a storekeeper and having a lottery. A storekeeper wants his competition to be limited. It is to his advantage to be the only storekeeper; not so one who buys lottery tickets. It is his wish that there be many buyers. For as business grows he becomes a partner in a larger enterprise. The teacher who is a Mitnagid wishes to be the only teacher in town. The Hasid, however, wishes to expand the number of Hasidim, for a large number of followers enhances the glory of the rabbi and furthers the glory of God. Accordingly, the Hasid says "And your people all are Hasidim"'.¹⁶

R. Pinchas renders his opinion as to the distinction between the Hasid and the Mitnagid when he states: 'The Mitnagid is in awe of the Shulchan Aruch¹⁷ while the Hasid is in awe of God.'¹⁸

These are just two instances of differences between the Hasidim and their opponents.

One need not look to the Mitnagdim solely for differences of opinion. These are readily apparent among the Hasidim themselves in both matters of doctrine and especially in whose rabbi is best.

The Hasidim of Kotsk point out the difference between them and the Hasidim of Habad. 'The men of Habad¹⁹ proceed from the higher to the lower, whereas we proceed from the lower to the higher. He who looks heavenward and not at the earth is likely to fall into a pit. First comes mending of one's ways, and then intellectual pursuits.'²⁰

In another case a certain Hasid launched a verbal attack against a Hasid of Kozsk relating to the different levels of their respective rabbis. Said the Hasid of Kotsk: 'Your rabbi penetrates the heart of the world, but my rabbi seeks through his learning to penetrate the heart of men.'²¹

One Hasid boasted that his rabbi could make a Golem.²² Rabbi Mendel said to him: 'But can he at least make one Jew into a true Hasid?'²³

Throughout the course of this work we will witness the many instances in which the Hasidim demonstrate great pride, loyalty and almost idolatry in their absolute devotion to their rebbe.

There are situations where the Hasid must know his place. Once during the third repast of the Sabbath, a young man saw that an elderly Hasid, distinguished in learning, was

sitting by the door because the density of the crowd prevented him from approaching the table. He went to the Gabbai²⁴ and whispered to him to give the esteemed elder a place of honor at the table. Rabbi Shmuel Eliahu said in a loud voice: 'The Mezuzah is certainly holy. None the less it remains attached to the door.'²⁵

Another rabbi, also recognizing the importance of discipline, nevertheless acknowledged the occasional need for freedom for his disciples. Rabbi Abraham of Sochzov did not allow his Hasidim to celebrate the seders with him on Passover. Once a Hasid urged him to explain the reason for this. Rabbi Abraham said this to him: 'During the Passover seder every Jew must feel that he is a free man. But a Hasid in the presence of his rabbi does not taste the flavor of freedom.'²⁶

In addition we learn that it is not sufficient to be a Hasid. One must be a Hasid whose heart is directed toward a worthy purpose.

Rabbi Yitzhak teaches 'A man can be a genius and a Hasid and still be completely in error. Looking into his deeds he would find that nothing in him is for the sake of heaven.'²⁷

Rabbi Uri told his Hasidim: 'You journey to me, but whither shall I journey? I journey to be attached firmly to Him, may He be blessed.'²⁸

The Baal Shem Tov is credited with having said that 'A Jew is never alone. Wherever he goes and wherever he stands, his God is with him.'²⁹

This aptly describes the spirit of Hasidism, that the relationship between a Jew and God is one of attachment and closeness. This is one of the primary points of view that we begin to see emerging from what we have just read.

We bring this first chapter to a close with an admonition and warning from Rabbi Elimelech that:

Hasidism has no greater enemy than its own fame and great growth. If all became Hasidim, Hasidism would be no more. True Hasidim would cease to exist and there would remain only a totally shattered Hasidism.³⁰

We see from the preceding texts that the Hasid views every Jew as a prince in his own right. Although he demonstrates great loyalty toward his rebbe he sees all Jews as equal and free. The Hasid is equal to everyone else. He knows no distinction between rich and non-rich, between learned and unlearned, between the skilled and the unskilled.

He is motivated by his love of God to perform even the simplest and most mundane acts as representing the will of God. We see that he tends to shun the Shulchan Aruch in favor of a more flexible, freer, and uninhibited expression of deeds he believes are in accordance with His Divine Will. All his acts whether conscious or not are motivated by Ahavath Adonai (love of God) as opposed to the

Code of Law which Jews observe out of Yirat Adonai (fear and awe of God).

The life of the Hasid in every facet is devoted to Divine purpose and Avoda (service of God). Every being regardless of its size, man and worm alike, has been created to serve and glorify His Name. Therefore, whether a Hasid eats, drinks, studies, prays, or performs ordinary functions of the body, these acts are in themselves serving a Divine purpose. Those who seek to serve the Lord will find a Divine element in every aspect of their lives. God is omnipresent and therefore not to be restrained within the confines of the Shulchan Aruch.

The Hasid, untrained in modern theories of motivation, accounted for his actions and motivations through introspection and self-examination. The prime motivations of his thoughts as well as his deeds are based upon a worthy purpose.

CHAPTER II

THE HASID AT HOME

The most logical place to begin a discussion of the life of the Hasid is in his home. The home is an institution in Jewish life. It is the most basic unit of the people Israel. Far greater than a place of shelter, it suggests the life cycle of the Jew. Beginning with birth, the Brit Milah (circumcision ceremony), the marriage of a child now adult, it ends one day with his passing from this world; from the home where he was born.

It is the smell of the Shabbat meal and fresh Challah, to the shouting and laughing of children.

It is the warmth and closeness of a husband with his wife; a father and mother with their children. The son learns from his father and the daughter from her mother how previous generations of Jews lived, so that this tradition might be perpetuated within the home.

The home is a Jew's palace where he is king and his wife is queen. It is where simple men become Zaddikim and Zaddikim become simple men.

Let us now look to the Hasid as he in his own words gives us an insight into his home, that we might better come to know and understand the everyday aspects of his life.

R. Naphtali would often say:

In cities far removed from here people call me the Zaddik, Rabbi Naphtali;¹ in my city of Ropshitz, where they know me better, they call me 'Our Rav.' Whereas my wife, who knows me well, calls me Naphtali without any titles.

As in all aspects of a Hasid's life the Divine Spirit is always there. R. Yitzhak Isaac tells us how important it is for a man to have a wife:

The Divine Presence simply does not rest upon a man without a wife; nor is it with him at all, for neither does It attach Itself to a man without a wife, for the Divine Presence is transmitted essentially through a wife. And a man stands between two wives; his corporeal wife, who takes from him² and the Divine Presence hovering over to bless him in everything, thus he receives illumination, holiness and communion with the spiritual because he has this corporeal aspect. But he who dwells without a wife, be he who he may, has no truth in him.³

The Hasid, unlike his predecessors, ascribes greater worth and importance to the role of women. No longer is she considered as common chattel. The woman is exalted and made to feel that she too in all her labors and household tasks is serving not only her husband, but also the Holy One, Blessed be He.

God and a man's wife come to know and understand him well. For they are two who cannot be deceived by him.

Two know if a man is truly God-fearing: The Lord, Blessed be He, and the man's wife.⁴

In public a woman is naturally modest and shy, for:

It is in a woman's nature that when she sees a righteous man she runs and hides herself from him.⁵

At home, a Hasid's wife is a woman in every sense. Sexual intercourse is a Mitzvah (Commandment). It is incumbent upon every wife as well as her husband to fulfill this Holy Commandment.

As they grow less young and their competence begins to wane they still try to fulfill the Mitzvah of sexual union in a relationship of tenderness that brings them closer to complete communion with one another and with God.

From the sayings of R. Yitzhak Isaac we find:

...that even when their sexual powers ceased entirely and they were no longer able to fulfill this holy commandment, none the less they took wives and were united (with them) with loving words, tenderness and nearness of the heart; and this is true reverence (of God), for without a foundation there can be no building.⁶

The Hasidim realized the necessity of discussing marriage from every aspect. Those who would believe that the Hasid was too God-intoxicated to take note of the world around him might be mistaken. What would happen, for example, if a Hasid were to become attracted to another woman, whom he found lovelier than his wife?

Just such a question was posed to R. Abraham of Sochnov?⁷

'Could our Rabbi tell us why Rabbi Akiba said in the Tractate of Divorce (Gittin) page 90, "Even if he found a woman more attractive than she (he can divorce her)." How could the holy sage have uttered such a statement - that one can divorce his mate simply because he found a woman lovelier than she?' Rabbi Abraham answered: 'The reason is simple. The Sage wished to say that if someone was accustomed to looking upon another woman as fairer than his wife, it is an indication that he has not found his mate, and it is a Mitzvah to divorce her.'⁸

The previous saying might lead us to believe that each time a Hasid found a woman lovelier than his wife, he divorced his wife in order to marry her. It tells us that the Hasid might not have been spending as much time praying as he would have us believe. In addition, we understand from R. Abraham's explanation that laws and attitudes regarding divorce were sufficiently liberal to acknowledge such possibilities and their affects. It expresses a concern for the welfare of the wife, and is thus humane as well.

Long before the time of the Hasidim, more justification was necessary before a man could divorce his wife (regardless of the presumed Mitzvah). At the same time neither would he be permitted to divorce his wife simply because he didn't like the taste of her soup. R. Meir Yehiel asks:

Why was Rebbeinu Gershom⁹ called 'the light of the Diaspora'? Because he forbade Jews to divorce their wives if the wives were unwilling. Rebbeinu Gershom saw with the Holy Spirit that Israel would need this reform, in order not to fear during the bitter exile that the Holy One, Blessed be He, might, Heaven forbid, divorce us against our will and change us for another people.¹⁰

Under the Hasidim the rights of women were greater. This was not a resultant factor of legislation but one of attitude. It was based upon a greater tendency to extend the democratic point of view to include women as well. As a man saw his own worth grow, and he came into closer communion with God, so he became closer to his wife that she too might serve her creator. Service of God more and more included the woman, as her mundane but important tasks took on a quality of holiness. In this way she was able to participate in the ideology of her husband by working together with him to sanctify their home.

Although the role of the woman may appear obscure and insignificant compared to that of her Hasidic husband, the following testimony suggests quite the opposite.

In this fashion the Saraph of Mogilnitza mourned his wife after her death: 'You were a righteous woman. Life was a travail for you because of the sorrows endured by Israel. Your portion in my Torah (study) and my service of God was as great as mine. You will sit with me in Paradise. Now I set you apart from friends, but only physically, our souls will be bound together forever. The canopy of holiness will be stretched over us for all eternity; and all the unions made by a Jew in this world we will do together in the future.'¹¹

The Saraph apparently accepted the role of his wife as one equal to his own in a partnership directed to the service of God. Their union spanned both worlds - that they might continue in the future. Thus his wife shared with him equally in this world - and would one day in the world of eternity.

A Hasidic wife invites the Divine Presence to the family table, by taking painstaking care to prepare a meal that is nourishing both to the body and the soul. The blessing is recited prior to the breaking of bread. After the meal, God is again acknowledged as the Provider. It is as though He were the Honored Guest.

Jews enjoy eating a good meal. The Hasidim were no different but most preferred to think of it as a spiritual rather than physical nourishment as we observe in the following:

During the Chol Hamoed of Sukkot, R. Dov Baer's wife sold a precious possession of hers, bought challahs and prepared a table graced with tasty dishes. When Rabbi Baer returned from the house of study and entered the Sukkah, he saw the good food on the table and felt very good. He sat down happily to eat. As soon as he realized that he was excited by the food, he stopped eating at once and said: 'Look here, Baer, you are not sitting in a Sukkah but in a bowl.'¹²

When Dov Baer was asked if he loves pepper, he retorted:

Peppers I eat. It is the Lord, may His Name be Blessed, that I love.¹³

R. Pinchas of Korets used to call the body animal and he used to say he had to feed the animal.¹⁴

In a very brief sentence the Maggid of Koznitz sums it up for us:

This is the rule: one must not lust after the physical aspect of eating but after the spiritual aspect of eating.¹⁵

Just as eating is a divine act, so is drinking. When Naphtali of Ropshitz was asked: "Why do Hasidim drink liquor?" He replied:

In order to make the blessing, 'by whose word all things exist.' They asked him again: 'If that is the reason, let them drink water and say the same blessing.' Rabbi Naphtali responded: 'A Jew who drinks water and says the Shehakol¹⁶ Blessing deserves to have a sip of liquor.'¹⁷

No family is really complete without children. They bring joy to a home and gladden the hearts of those around them. Indeed, very few sayings were found on the subject of children. This rather surprised me. However I later surmised that children were simply less of a topic for conversation among the Hasidic fathers who engaged in discourse on other matters, thus leaving the women to care for and discuss them among themselves.

The following blessing of R. Zusya is of interest because it includes a positive reference to the Gentiles.

Rabbi Zusya would bless every Jewish child: 'May it be God's will that you be strong and healthy as a Gentile.'¹⁸

We can infer from this blessing that the Gentile children were stronger and healthier than their Jewish peers and therefore to be admired.

Fathers take great pride in their sons. However, a father need not always expect his son to walk in his footsteps, but on the other hand neither should he suspect the opposite - until he ascertains the facts for himself. The following saying would be right at

home with contemporary Jewish humorists were it entitled "My Son the Scholar".

It seems that a rumor reached the Rebbe Abraham of Tshichnov that his son Barish, later the Rabbi of Beila, who joined the Hasidim of Vorki and sat in the court of Rabbi Yitzhak of Vorki, spent very little time studying Torah but preferred to drink a great deal of liquor with the Hasidim. He ordered him, by the honor due a father, to come home. When Barish returned, his father did not greet him but at once began discussing with him a difficult section of the Talmud in order to test him. When he saw that he excelled in his learning and that there was no substance to the story of his drinking so much liquor, he gave him his hand and said: 'Well then, you deserve a Shalom Aleichem, my son.' After that he entered the kitchen and said to his wife: 'Please prepare a proper meal in honor of our son, Rabbi Barish the Scholar.'¹⁹

Would that every home be filled to overflowing with happiness and joy. One realizes that joys of home are accompanied by occasional sorrows. The skill of living is not to expect or hope to avoid these sadnesses, but to live with them that they may bring about new and fresh gladness through a proper attitude.

Rabbi Levi Yitzhak says there are two types of sadness and two types of joy.

How can there be two kinds of sadness? There is the sadness of a man perturbed and worried over the loss of something or because of some other misfortune he encountered; he goes about sad-faced and downcast, thoroughly and needlessly depressed. Of him it is said, the Divine Presence does not settle on a man through sadness. But there is the sorrow of a man who laments the loss of his days, who examines his deeds and looks to the mending of his soul - this sorrow is a source of blessing to a man and a force that betters one's way of life. It is similar with happiness. There is a kind of happiness that has no reason whatever, and that is the happiness of the fool,

who feels no lack in himself and does not worry himself at all with the mending of his soul. But he who is steeped in happiness marked by good taste and wisdom resembles a man whose house has burned down, but does not see the world as a wretched place; more than that, he trusts in the Lord to make up his loss. And when he becomes confident again, through the power of his hope and his faith, he begins to build his house anew, and with the laying of every stone his heart becomes like a fountain overflowing with joy and happiness.²⁰

Joy and happiness are fundamental among the Hasidim. The Hasid approaches sadness with an attitude of acceptance, without bitterness and defeat, and with the determination and hope that his life will be better as a result of it. By the same logic we should expect one whose happiness is based upon propriety and good taste to accept life willingly regardless of its disappointments and tribulations.

The Hasid at home sees every aspect of his family life as a manifestation of God's Will. The natural human needs of men and women such as eating, drinking, sexual intercourse, and the raising of children serve simply to bring the members of the family into communion with God and hence into closer communion with one another.

When the Hasid partakes of a meal, a necessary, yet Divine ritual, he tastes each delicious mouthful of food while giving thanks to His Great Providence and Mercy. Each sip of wine is one more Praise to His Holy Name.

The greatest paucity of material is on the subject of the home, with all its many and varied ramifications. One would expect to find more, but perhaps that is a projection of our own modern thinking into the text; precisely what we want to avoid. As we consider the fact that the Synagogue served the Hasid in so many capacities, namely Prayer, Study, and Social Gathering, we can better understand the preponderance of available source material regarding it. We must not infer from the absence of more material that the home, family, and children were unimportant and therefore disregarded.

The discussions in the Synagogue and the discourses by the Zaddikim serve to elucidate those matters which the individual Hasid, the family man, did not determine or decide for himself.

The areas of interest and concern of the Zaddik are those we find expressed in the Sayings. In the areas where the individual Hasid has dominance, namely, matters of family, home and commerce, few references are found for his words are not included in the compilation of Sayings. Only the sayings of the Rabbis and their chief disciples are available to us.

Matters of theology, social justice, legal opinions, and prayer occupy most of the literature.

CHAPTER III

THE HASID AT WORK

Every man must earn a living. This is the reality of life. A man must provide for the support and see to the welfare of his family. Once this is established what remains is contingent upon the selection of a trade commensurate with one's ability and interest. Occupations are varied and numerous. The selection of one's work entails also a consideration of personal and community values, remuneration, as well as satisfaction.

The Hasidim had definite attitudes regarding the many ramifications involved in earning a living. R. Pinchas¹ had no compunction about admitting:

The day that I don't worry about earning a living is a holiday for the whole world.

He believed the matter of earning a living was one of Godliness.

Men think that if they behave deceitfully they will succeed monetarily and they don't understand with their limited knowledge that earning a living is Godly. An insight into this matter is that all creatures must earn a living, even fish

return that His Blessed Name may feed them all. As much as a man conducts himself in truth and righteousness, the more Divine Revelation he has and the more livelihood he will have as a result of this Revelation.³

Hasidim will frequently come to the Zaddik under the pretense of asking a question or to request a prayer or for a myriad other reasons.

Rabbi Dov relates the incident about when he was very poor and first came to see the "Seer". He actually lacked bread. When he was about to leave his teacher, he gave him a slip containing the request that the "Seer" pray for him, but made no mention of making a living. The "Seer" asked him: 'What about making a living?' Dov Baer answered him: 'Rabbi I did not come to your honor for that.'⁴

The "Seer" obviously understood the underlying reason for Dov Baer's visit but wished to spare him any embarrassment, so he took the initiative in asking him first. But sometimes requests are far less subtle. In the following examples we find quite the opposite point of view. Rabbi Shmuel Eliahu of Volozin⁵ tells the following incident:

Once a Hasid came to him and turned to him at once with a request pertaining to making a living. R. Shmuel Eliahu said to him: 'We have in our possession a basket of gold - Hasidism and the fear of Heaven, and you ask of us a basket of manure.'⁶

The distain expressed by R. Shmuel is not the most typical example. He suggests immediately that making a living is not in the same league with either Hasidism or the fear of God. One could safely say that this attitude is not in keeping with the generally accepted point of view of that period. In another saying, R. Shlomo Hacohen of Radumsk⁷ says:

Go now and see how well it is with the flock. There are Zaddikim, great and good, who during their entire lives concern themselves only with exalting His Glory, may His Name be Blessed, and paying no attention to the welfare of this world by interceding in behalf of their generation. But that is not proper. The Zaddik must look down into this world too, must be concerned that Jews make a living and not lack anything good: He should look after the welfare of his brothers, the sheep, in this world.⁸

This attitude is the antithesis of the one previous. Here the Zaddik is beseeched to have both feet on the ground and concern himself with practical considerations of day to day living, such as whether his flock is in need of his care and help. The Zaddik who serves as the intermediary between God and man who receives his support at the hand of the community, who recognize the belief that all men are princes in their own right and that the need to earn a living is one more means by which a Hasid can express his love and reverence for God.

We are reminded by the Disciples of Kotak:

He who is closed up in the tent of Torah, set apart from the follies of this world, finds it easy to aspire to holiness. But a common ignoramus who cannot succeed at business and supports himself by selling eggs in the market place, how can he come to holiness?⁹

All too easy is it to aspire to holiness far from the very aspects of life that deter one from it. Even a Zaddik has to work, we are taught in a saying that states:

Once during the third repast of the Sabbath he became enthused and said: 'They wish to become rabbis. Let them first blacken their faces like us. Without work there is nothing. It is not enough for a Zaddik to be possessed of a great soul from birth, in addition he must work limitlessly, endlessly.'¹⁰

To possess a great soul from birth refers to the fact that many Zaddikim acquired their office through legacy, having attained it through birth. One can't sit back and live off the support of the community. He too must know what it means to roll up his sleeves and get his hands dirty.

The Zaddik was frequently called upon to give advice. His great wisdom and insight gave confidence to his followers.

A Hasid asked the Rabbi what trade to choose. Should he become a scribe or a teacher? The Rabbi answered: It would be better to become a teacher. You may chance upon a good pupil and then you too will learn.¹¹

When one wanted to have a contract drawn up he knew he could rely on the judgement and wisdom of the Rabbi. He knew too that an ethical approach to business was the way a man should conduct his affairs. Many sayings are strongly in favor of proper conduct in business. One soon understands that this is the way a genuine Hasid looks at his work, especially as it affects others.

Once certain men came before Rabbi Meir of Premislan¹² and asked him to write them a partnership contract. Rabbi Meir took a piece of paper and wrote on it the letters Aleph, Bet, Gimmel, Daled. He gave it to them and said, 'Here is your partnership contract.' Seeing that they were astounded and did not understand the meaning of this action, he explained to them as follows: Aleph (for) Emunah, faith; Bet (for) Bracha, blessing; Gimmel (for) Gmura, thievery; Daled (for) Dalut, poverty. He wished to convey, if you conduct your dealings faithfully you will succeed (literal, see blessing in your work); but if you engage in thievery, poverty will be your lot.¹³

So much emphasis was placed on ethical attitudes toward work, could mean that, in general, dishonest and improper business dealings were frequent.

As a manifestation of the democratic attitude and spirit of Hasidism, there was no distinction between the rich and the non-rich. Ample evidence suggests that money representing material pursuits and endeavors was dirty and unclean. There was a certain unholiness and impurity associated with materialism and wealth.

There is one thing very difficult to fulfill, and that is that a man should have pure gold, i.e., money completely Kasher (pure) free of any dross or guile or the disqualifying flaw of thievery. Anyone who fulfills this injunction is comparable to a light-giving candelabrum that can light the entire world.¹⁴

The Rabbi of Kotsk asked one of his Hasidim why his son-in-law did not come to visit him in Kotsk. The man replied: 'He fears, as rumor has it, that the rabbi tries to have all his Hasidim lose all their wealth and become poor.'¹⁵

The Hasidim took great pride in their work. The type of trade one had was not as important as how he himself felt about it. It was not a means to an end where one worked for materialistic reward but for the sake of Heaven. No occupation was too menial, for the Hasid, because every aspect of work came under the watchful eyes of the Lord.

Rabbi Moshe Michal, a prosperous Hasid was proud that his profession was sufficiently important to warrant the scrutiny of God.

I am a waggoner commanded by Divine Supervision to draw wagon loads of manure.¹⁶

Every way of making a living is good. A man can support himself even by magic alone. What matters is that the business not be despicable in his own eyes. When a man despises his own business, it is an indication that he is lacking in purity.¹⁷

Whoever enjoys the fruit of his labor is greater than the man who fears Heaven. That is, the man who enjoys the fruits of his labor but walks with his head in Heaven is greater than he who only fears Heaven.¹⁸

A Hasid approaches everything he does with gusto and vitality. Were he to pursue his work with no more interest other than a means to earn a living, he would be denying himself satisfaction and joy. Each day would become more unbearable than the preceding until finally there would be a complete negation of God's purpose. It is not for man's sake that he works, but for the Heavens.

God created man so that he could let him share in the delights that come from work. Man became a co-sharer with God by continuing on earth the creative process in His Name. A synthesis of earthly work, the joy of earning a living, and gaining sustenance coupled with a pious attitude, good intentions, and a holy purpose assures the Hasid that the Will of God is being served.

CHAPTER IV

THE HASID IN SOCIETY

The daily activities in the life of the HASID in relation and association with the community and her many institutions comprise the society of the HASID.

It includes every aspect of his relationship and commitment to the life of the Shteet.

In addition, his associations and experience with his fellow Hasidim, the Rov, and the Zaddik are all part of the Hasid and his society.

The Hasid in society - is the Hasid performing mitzvot, doing pious deeds, and studying Torah.

The Hasid in society is then his complete and total immersion in every facet of his community.

There are three periods in a man's life:

- 1.- Youth, during which his heart wanders after his desires
- 2.- Maturity, when the desires decrease
- 3.- Old Age, when he has no desires whatever

This is because a man has three associates - his mother, his father and the Holy One blessed be He. Therefore, during his youth he has many desires from these parts of him deriving from his mother and his father. During maturity his mother's part has already vanished, but he still has desires from his father's part; whereas in old age he has no more desires at all, for at that period the part of the Holy One blessed be He takes pre-eminence. ¹

Youth is the time for eating, and the time for sleeping is in the grave. There is no time for sadness. Others call it sadness, I call it simply casting off God's yoke. ²

Once at an auspicious time Rabbi Mendel excitedly told his teacher that he actually saw, at twilight, the angel that rolls away the light before the darkness; and at daybreak the angel that rolls away the darkness from before the light. Rabbi Elimelech said to him, "Yes, Mendel. So I thought, too, in my youth. After that one does not see this". 3

There are ZADDIKIM who complete their holy tasks in this world and the time comes for them to depart; then they take counsel within and find new service in order to lengthen their days. 4

A certain merchant complained to the rabbi of Kotsk that he was always busy and had no time for reflection, let alone for taking moral stock. The rabbi said to him: 'Let me advise you to set aside some time for yourself. Whenever you go down to the wine cellar to take a bottle of wine for your meal, stay there a little while so that you can reflect calmly. Little by little you will be able to take moral stock also.' 5

Once Rabbi Yitshak Meir of Gur said to the son of his sister that Jews should knock their heads against the wall because of the state we are in as regards Judaism. His nephew said to him: 'But we are not suited to such behavior'. Rabbi Yitshak Meir replied: 'Even though we are not suited to knocking our heads against the wall, still we are obligated to do so.' 6

Rabbi Mendel says: 'Before main roads were paved people would travel on paths only during the day and at nightfall would enter inns to pass the night. They would sit and look at a book or gather together for friendly talk, whereby they would arrive at a communion of the hearts. And there would be someone alone with himself, even amid the group, examining his deeds and stirring himself to repentance and regret. When the roads came into the world everyone began scurrying about whether it was day or night, with no time to look at a book or speak to a human being. Hurried men are always on the roads, and the road weakens the fear of heaven'. 7

If simple, crude men enter my Succah I must endure them and not turn them away, for the Holy One blessed be He is a patient one, too, as it is written, 'forgiving iniquity'. And in the future, in the Succah of Leviathan, the ZADDIKIM will be seated with their crowns, and I too will push my way in to sit there. Should anyone come to put me out, saying, 'What is such a crude man doing here?' I will claim that simple men sat in my Succah and I tolerated them. 8

Good manners come before learning; that is, serve as introduction to Torah. Even as one learns the contents of a book by reading the introduction, so a man's traits show what his learning is. 9

When a man does not want to give charity he says that his wife is holding back his hand. This is a 'help' against them. 10

In Kotsk they said: 'The Hassidim of Kotsk perform MITZVOT secretly but transgress openly; others do the opposite, sinning secretly and fulfilling the commandments openly. Nonetheless, it is easier to catch others sinning than catch the Hassidim of Kotsk fulfilling commandments. 11

Once a certain rich man brought Rabbi Yehiel Meir of Gustinin a gift - a precious flask of old wine. Rabbi Yehiel Meir asked if he too locked his door with an iron chain, as is the custom of rich men in our day. When the rich man said yes, Rabbi Yehiel Meir asked him: 'And what will you do when Elijah the Prophet comes and seeks entry to your house and finds the door locked with an iron chain?' And he did not accept the gift. 12

A miser once asked Rabbi Dov Baer if he knew a poor man worthy enough for him to give a contribution to. Rabbi Baer answered him: 'Is your money so special that it requires a particularly worthy poor man? If it were so special it would not have fallen into your possession.' 13

One who wishes to arouse people's hearts in the direction of penitence should not approach them with words of anger and rebuke, but with gentleness and composure, in a manner of acceptance and conciliation. Only paths of pleasantness bring hearts closer to our Father in Heaven. 14

R. Simha Bunim said: 'One can accomplish more through happy praying than through tearful praying. Once, in Danzig, he saw a man falling into the sea and beginning to drown. He said to him: 'Give my best to the Leviathan'. Then the Lord came to his rescue, for he seized a floating plank and was saved. He said that he could not help the man because he was so upset. Then, after the joking, from which he derived some joy, he could help the drowning man. 15

Once a stout, well-to-do Jew came before Rabbi Yehiel Meir of Gustinin. Rabbi Yehiel Meir greeted him joyfully: 'So much Jew, kinahera'. 16

There are two kinds of ZADDIKIM who rebuke the people. There is the ZADDIK who makes a deep impression simply by speaking; he does not have to bolster his speech with arguments, for his speech itself penetrates the heart of the listener. And there is a ZADDIK who cannot influence others through speaking alone, but must adduce arguments and quotations, and must be a polished speaker. 17

From the time of Moses our teacher, the prophets and the heads of the Golah until the late generations of RABBANIM and GAONIM the people would render honor to the great men of the generation, for the ZADDIK is the foundation of the world. But when the generations decrease in size and hearts became smaller, the honor rendered the sages subsided. From the time of the Baal Shem Tov once more the ZADDIK regained his eminent position and his name was honored. So we see that Hassidism is simply restoring a beautiful ancient practice. But the adversary looks with a jaundiced eye on the ZADDIK and attacks the Hassidim who accept the authority of their Rabbi. 18

Rabbi Zvi Hirsh of Zditchov declared: 'There are sects of Hassidim who journey to their rabbi and declare that there is no rabbi in the world other than theirs - this is idolatry.' Rather, let this be said: Every ZADDIK is good for his Hassidim and every rabbi- for his pupils; but our rabbi is good for us, for our concerns'. 19

Once Rabbi Yaakov Aryeh of Radzimin sat on a chair near his table and a Hassid stood before him, bending over in order to ask him something. The rabbi, incensed, rebuked him: 'Why this stooping over? Are you bowing down to me, Heaven forbid?' 20

Once he heard two young Hassidim talking about the delaying of the recitation of prayer beyond its allotted time. They argued that there could be nothing wrong with it, Heaven forbid, since their rabbi, too, did so. He ordered that they be called before him and rebuked them before a gathering of Hassidim, saying: 'It is a commandment that prayer be recited at its proper time, and adduce no evidence from the fact that I am full of ailments and at times cannot pray at all, even though according to the law I am not

obligated to pray. You can learn nothing whatever from what your rabbi does. When one sees that his rabbi does something not permitted by the Law, he cannot use that as an example to follow. Now I am shaming men in public - should you learn this vile trait from me? He who shames a man in public has no portion in the world to come. 21

In the Priestly Benediction it is written: 'And he commanded us to bless his people Israel with love. That is God commanded us to bless his people Israel that they should love one another. 22

Rabbi David of Lulov told: 'Once I learned from a simple Gentile in a bar the meaning of "thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself". The Gentile asked his companion: Do you love me? The companion answered: Yes. The questioner said: you lie to me, for what do you know of what I have, what I lack and what I need?' Rabbi David added to this: 'Thus should be the extent of one's love for his neighbor. One must know what his neighbor has, what he lacks and what he needs - in body and soul. One who does not know his friend to the depths of his soul cannot love him faithfully. 23

CHAPTER V

THE HASID AT PRAYER

The eloquence and clarity contained in the following passages express the various attitudes of the HASIDIM both to prayer and in prayer.

These sayings were carefully selected to render all points of view. Whenever divergent or conflicting attitudes were discovered among the sayings of the HASIDIM, they were included. Each Hasidic comment is complete as it stands and speaks for itself.

Said the Maggid of Koznetz:

I enjoy nothing in the world more than a good prayer. 1

If ten people gather in the synagogue to pray and they ask after their own needs, even though they are in one building they are considered scattered, for each one is thinking of what he pleases - this one of his vineyard, this one of his olive tree, this one prays for life and this one prays for his children. But the essence of prayer is that the ten should be in one place, to pray for the unity of the world, that He might be One and His name One, and that his kingdom might be revealed and be seen by us in the near future. 2

Prayer is coupling with the Divine Presence. 3

Whenever a Jew opens his mouth to utter Torah or a prayer the hosts of heaven are told to be quiet, cease their service and listen to the joyous sound and to the prayer; only after that do they draw nigh to offer up song before the king, the king of kings, the Holy one blessed be He. 4

When a man is on a lower level it is best that he pray out of a prayerbook, for seeing the letters gives him the power to pray devoutly. However, when he is more firmly attached to the upper world, it is best to close the eyes, so that his vision might not prevent him from being attached to the upper world. 5

I know nothing, except that I wrap myself in the Infinite (SIN SOP) and shout: 'Hear O Israel!'

Once he shouted 'Hear O Israel!' with such strength that the plaster fell from the ceiling. 6

The principal importance of praying with enthusiasm is the impression (it leaves) in the inner portion of the heart; for enthusiasm during prayer very likely resembles, as it were, a gratified desire. But the impression remains in the heart, unfulfilled, is more important. Prayer is never completed, for its remnants always flutter in the heart. 7

It is a great act of (Divine) loving kindness that a man lives after reciting the AMIDAH prayer; for it would only be natural that he should die in the course of praying because of the great energy he expends. 8

In prayer I go down, then up; up, then down, like the captain of a ship dashing about on its ladders in order to know how to steer the ship. 9

Why say that one should pray seriously? Is there anything that can be done without seriousness? 10

A man cannot pray properly unless he is surrounded by light on all sides. 11

Rabbi Levi Yitshak once asked a cantor of his home town: 'Why is your voice hoarse?' The cantor answered: 'Because I prayed before the Ark.' Rabbi Levi Yitshak answered: 'But if you had prayed in front of the Master of the Universe, rather than in front of the Ark, your voice would not be hoarse.' 12

One must only think constantly of the fear of God and His greatness. And a ZADDIK raising his hands in prayer through ecstasy and communion with God is an example of what was to be found in the Temple. 13

Rabbi Zusya, making a fine distinction said:

'Bless the Lord, who is to be Blessed' - every blessing that we utter, whether it be the MOTZI over bread, or the SHEHACOL over water or PRI HAGAFEN over wine, should be directed not at the pleasure derived from the bread, water or wine, but from Him may He be Blessed, for He is the Blessed One in everything. Heaven forbid that we utter a blessing over the pleasure we derive from something. It is told of Rabbi Zusya that he once fasted three days because during the recitation of the MOTZI he directed the prayer to his own pleasure. 14

Why do we not say a blessing before giving alms as with other good deeds? Because the God-fearing will become absorbed in preparing for the blessing and focusing attention on it and in the meanwhile the poor will expire of hunger. 15

The RAV Rabbi Abraham Katznelboigen once asked Rabbi Levi Yitshak: 'Why do the Hasidim recite the SHMA and the Silent Devotion not during the prescribed time?' Rabbi Levi Yitshak answered: 'Rab Abraham, we never heard tell that there is a clock in Heaven that angels refer to in order to in order to direct prayers properly. I, Levi Yitshak, think that a Jew must announce it every hour that we have one God, and must always serve the Name may He be blessed, not necessarily in accordance with the dictates of a watch.' 16

They used to set aside one hour and pray so that they could direct their hearts-that is, in the same hour they prayed that they would be worthy of Prayer with direction. 17

It is written in Ecclesiastes 4:17, 'Guard thy foot when thou goest to the house of God.' That is, beware of habit and want when you go to the house of God. There is no holiness without innovation. 18

Every night before sleep Ha-Yehudi would offer a special prayer for the health of his enemies and persecutors. 19

There are ZADDIKIM who can be effective praying silently, every utterance working its effect. And there are ZADDIKIM who are not on this level but must pray to the Name may He be Blessed by crying aloud. 20

Rabbi David, the son of Rabbi Mendel, fell seriously ill and came close to death. But at the last moment he gathered strength and vanquished his illness. At that moment his father came in and asked him 'My son, as you were about to die, what did the evil inclination say to you?' Rabbi David answered him: 'The evil inclination came to me and said the following, 'Now that the moment when you are about to depart this world has come, it is appropriate that you confess in a loud voice.' 'And what did you answer, my son?' 'I told him that the men of Kotsk do not choose to pray in a loud voice. In Kotsk we pray silently. 21

Rabbi Sholom was accustomed to pray at great speed, like one who gulps down his words; while it was the custom of other ZADDIKIM of his generation, and in particular Rabbi Sholom, the father of Rabbi Israel of Rizin, to pray slowly and calmly, as though counting their words. Rabbi Israel of Rizin said: 'What Rabbi Sholom did and what the other ZADDIKIM did are in essence the same. The Rabbi of Belz, out of his great love for the holy words of prayer, could not conquer his strong desire for them and would gulp them down word after word, letter after letter, in order to enjoy their light. Indeed, if he could have gulped down the entire service at once with all its words and letters, he would have done so because of his great love and yearning. My father, of blessed memory, and the other ZADDIKIM loved every word and each letter so that it was hard for them to take leave of them, so consequently they would pray at great length, slowly and calmly.' 22

Once a villager and his wife came to him to ask that he pray to God on their behalf, requesting viable children. He demanded so many Zuzim of them. They tried to bargain with him, but he would not change his price. The villager said to his wife, 'Wife, let us leave here; the Name may He be blessed will help us without the Rabbi's help.' The Maggid said to them: 'By the power of your faith in the Name may He be blessed, you have brought about (what you desired) and at no cost.'

CHAPTER VI

THE HASID SERVES HIS GOD

Many who err think that the place of God's glory is in the heavens, and that when they want to draw near to Him they must lift themselves up higher and higher. It is not so. The Holy One, blessed be He, desires to dwell in the depths, with Him that is of a contrite and humble spirit. Therefore to the degree that a man reduces his stature and makes himself little, stooping down and bending over, he draws nearer to Him may He be Blessed. 1

The whole earth is the Holy One, Blessed be He. The world is situated in the Creator may He be blessed and we walk in the Creator may He be blessed. There is Divinity in everything, giving life to everything. The Holy One, blessed be He, is clothed in this lowly world. There are some people who are of the opinion that the Holy One blessed be He, is not clothed in this world - because of His great brilliance. This situation resembles that wherein a great light blinds one's vision, making it impossible to see. 2

Only a curtain separates us from our Father in Heaven. 3

One cannot look at the sun because of its great brilliance, but one can see the light emanating from it. If the light were as brilliant as the sun we could not look at the light either; it would blind our eyes. The Holy One blessed be He, too, cannot be perceived, for his great brilliance blinds the eyes of our reason, but we can perceive Him through his emanations, and they are the soul and thought, that give life to the body. 4

The glory of his Essence we cannot attain to, but we can attain to his glory in the worlds. For example, whoever has a beloved son, even though he be far away, paints a picture of him in his thoughts. So it is with the Name, may He be blessed; even our bodies are always in his thoughts. 5

Serve God in the same way that you serve your wives and children. 6

One must worship the Creator as if there is only one man in the world - you alone. 7

The essence of the service of God is a man's linking himself with all Israel, with ZADIKIM and God-fearing men, that he might thereby truly enter into the service of God and learn from their good deeds. 8

The essence of the service of God is taking on the yoke of heaven, and bearing always the yoke of Torah, the yoke of prayer and the yoke of a secular occupation. The yoke should be heavy so that one always feels the yoke. 9

Men must serve the Creator by arduous physical labor and through contrition of the heart. Be not deceived into thinking that much can be attained by the mind and by thought - one must toil, heart and soul. 10

Even within the truth itself there are 400 paths until one reaches the path of serving God alone. 11

...The people Israel, a holy nation, have special tools which they can attain to things well beyond their reasoning powers, and these tools are: 'We will do and we will listen.' By our performing God's commandments we can hear, and even attain to, the level of the ministering angels. 12

He who opens a new gate in the service of the Lord is in his generation a true leader equal to Samuel in his generation. In every age there is a renewal and this is begun by the leader of that age. In each generation there are two leaders parallel to the Messiah ben David and the Messiah ben Yosef... These correspond to the two levels of absolute ZADIKIM and penitents. They open these two gates in every generation. 13

CHAPTER VII

THE HASID SPEAKS TO MODERN MAN
THE WISDOM OF THE HASID

What does the wisdom of the Hasidim have to do with their daily lives? It is very simple. Hoohmah (wisdom) is the sum total of the days, events, and experiences in a Hasid's lifetime. Only from the everyday grappling and struggling with life does a man one day realize the cumulative wisdom that is inherent in the tradition of Judaism. Imagine the possibility of one great volume containing all the wisdom of our tradition, in combination with the thoughts, observations, and understanding of every father and mother back to the time of Abraham Avram (our father), finally integrated with the knowledge that comes to one only by living life itself. All this is given free to each man, the only contingency being that he spend one hour each week reading from this comprehensive Book of Wisdom. How many men would want to own and use such a unique compendium of good counsel. I would suspect very few, the reason being that each man discovers wisdom as well as Tsoot (errors) for himself.

The wisdom of the Hasidim and their Rebbe's are for the most as applicable to our lives as they were for theirs.

I have included herein a selection of Hasidim (sages) which anyone may feel free to read and perhaps as a result better understand the mind, heart and soul of the Hasid.

Each saying is a thought complete within itself. Sufficient ideas and images are represented here to convey to the reader, un-knowing in the way of the Hasid, to meet him on his own terms, in his own milieu, and from the words of his own mouth.

I have taken the liberty to select those sayings that could very well be words of modern day Neo-Hasidim. Those who maintain that Hasidism has nothing to say to modern Jews might change their mind. These are selected on the basis of their relevance, timeliness and interest.

A man's evil nature can more readily be ascertained through a mitzvah than a transgression. Once I saw a certain man kiss the womanish not with his hand, but with his mouth, in order to be exceedingly pious. After a while I learned that he was not what he appeared to be.¹

Rabbi Chaim stood by the window, looking outside. He saw someone passing by, tapped on the window with his finger and invited the man in. When he had entered, Rabbi Chaim asked him: 'How would you act if you found a purse full of money and you knew who it belonged to? Would you return it?' The man answered: 'I would return the lost article at once.' Rabbi Chaim rebuked him, saying: 'You're a fool.' A second man passed. Rabbi Chaim called him and asked him: 'And you, what would you do?' The man answered: 'As I a fool, that I should return such a treasure?' Rabbi Chaim said to him: 'You are a wicked man.' R. Chaim called a third

man who was passing by his window at that time. The third man answered: 'Rabbi, when I find the purse I will probably know how to behave. Perhaps I will be able to conquer my evil desire for the money, perhaps no. Perhaps the Name, may He be Blessed, will help me withstand temptation. But so long as I have not undergone this trial I do not know what I would do.' R. Chaim said to him: 'You have given a proper answer, hence you are an intelligent man.'²

In every man there is something of value that is not in another.³

A scholar should possess 1/64th of a measure of pride. The trouble is, there are scholars who are poor at arithmetic.⁴

When one forgets oneself, one can rise above the temporal world, i.e., to the world of thought, where everything is the same: life and death, sea and dry land.⁵

'I am not worried that in the world to come they will ask me why I was not Moses our teacher, and I will not know what to answer. But fear and terror seize me when I think they might ask me why I was not Zusya; at that moment all my arguments will be silenced.' Said Rabbi Zusya.⁶

If one gulps down the bitter herb at the Passover Seder, he has not fulfilled his obligation. When a man, in the service of God, encounters bitterness, he must chew it thoroughly, if he gulps it down without chewing it he has not fulfilled his obligation.⁷

When it was decreed that the Jews of Poland would have to be drafted into the army, Rabbi Shlomo Leib seized his beard and said: 'I swear by my beard that so long as I live in the world I will not let this decree take effect.' That very year he was called to the assembly on high.⁸

Words that come from the heart enter the heart. That is, only those words that re-enter one's own heart and then go thence, can be effective.⁹

A man must say, 'The world was created for me.' and so strenuously commit himself to repentance that he forces the entire world to turn and repent.¹⁰

Whoever wants to be a scholar, Hasid or Zaddik is a lust-filled man, like any other lust-filled man. A man should truly be worthless, a non-entity in his own eyes. He should stand waiting for God's help to come only from Him, May He be Blessed, and say: 'I have nothing, I am nothing, and I trust only in you.'¹¹

Earth, earth, you are better than I. Why, then, do I tread upon you? For when my time comes I will be buried in your midst.¹²

Rabbi Meir Yehiel said the following: In my youth I thought that I had a machine in my mouth and that I could vanquish the world through the power of speech. As time passed I saw that I was mistaken. My father was right when he told me once, as I watched him turn cakes in the oven, 'Know, my son, the more a stove is closed the better it retains the heat.'¹³

This world is similar to a banquet hall. Just as one who has prepared all the necessities for a marriage ceremony with the exception of the ring has labored and prepared in vain so a man who has toiled at worldly affairs for seventy years and neglected to make himself holy, has accomplished nothing.¹⁴

The Zohar tells us: 'As if to say, one who is of little account, even if he is truly so, as in the case of a totally unlearned man, since he knows of himself that he is of little account, is actually great. So the great man, even one learned

in Torah, since he knows himself to be learned, even if he is also great in his piety and knows himself to be great in piety, this man is of little account.¹⁵

A man must always look upon himself as though an axe were suspended above him, ready to lop off his head. And he who does not see himself so - this is a sign that his head has already been lopped off.¹⁶

A thought, too, must undergo nine months of pregnancy, so that it might be properly clothed; one must not express it before that time.¹⁷

Happiness comes to a man of itself; it is what the soul feels from the world of happiness, and needs nothing to cause it. As for joy, that is when a man who wants to be happy, seeks ways to bring it about, as by drinking, listening to songs and dancing. Joy is revealed through the limbs, when a man dances and makes movements. But happiness is essentially in the heart.¹⁸

The Maggid of Mezeritch said: 'Would that I could kiss the scroll of the Law with as great love as the Baal Shem Tov would kiss a Jewish child he tested and found to know the Hebrew alphabet.'¹⁹

I never had need of anything that I did not have, for as long as I did not have a given thing I was certain that I had no need of it.²⁰

Until I remove the habit of hatred from my heart I cannot look upon myself as a proper person and I appear, in my own sight, as one not alive.²¹

Three who are worse than evildoers are: Those who study the Torah only for its surface meaning, those who sin and forgive themselves, and those who pray today because they prayed yesterday.²²

I am a worm, and my Hasidim fear a worm.²³

Our sages said: 'Know what is above you.' That is, what you see above is from you. Everyone creates, out of his soul, the upper image.²⁴

At times a man lies down in his bed and people think he is sleeping, but at that moment he is setting himself apart with the Creator may He be Blessed.²⁵

To trust only in His Blessed Name. Not in good deeds, not in prayer, but only in Him alone. This is security.²⁶

Service of God done through force of habit is equivalent to the behaviour of a monkey.²⁷

When a Jew buys a new house and sanctifies it through study and prayer the house becomes a land of Israel of sorts.²⁸

A man should think, prior to prayer, that he is prepared to die during that prayer.²⁹

Prior to his death, his students asked Rabbi Naftali of Ropshitz: 'Our teacher, when will the Messiah come?' Rabbi Mendel answered: 'Green worms with brass noses will pass

over you before the redeemer comes.³⁰

The Seer of Lublin was wont to say, that those men who went about with long hair, and refrained from cutting it, were acting in a very unbecoming fashion. This was an indication that their sins were as numerous as the hair on their heads.³¹

When in Russia a decree was passed that Jews must change their attire and wear short clothing like the Gentiles, rabbis and rebbes gathered to decide whether or not Jews ought to be obligated to sacrifice their lives, if need be, to defy this decree. Rabbi Israel declared: "Our father Jacob received his father's blessing in Esau's clothes. They will be Jews if God wants Jews, even if they change their attire."³²

Rabbi Pinchas from Koratz spoke: "Deceit has prevailed so much in our world that when a man arises from his bed in the morning and opens his mouth, immediately the deceit breaks out from himself into his mouth."³³

Once the Jew was at the court of his rabbi in Lublin and many Hasidim were there and the press of the crowd was great beyond imagining. The Jew too was among the surging crowd and one Hasid fell upon him and was pushing him vigorously. When the Hasid looked and saw that he was leaning on the holy Jew he became terrified. But the Jew said to him: "Do not be terrified, my brother. Before our holy rabbi we are all equal."³⁴

Rabbi Moshe Lei'b said: "Nine Moshe Leibs do not comprise a quorum for prayer. But ten tailors together make up a congregation that constitutes a quorum for prayer."³⁵

Every night before going to sleep the Jew would recite a special prayer for the welfare of his persecutors and those who hated him.³⁶

Why do we not say a blessing, prior to the deed, over the Mitzvah of giving charity. Lest God-fearing men make preparations prior to the blessing and meditate on certain devotions during the blessing, and the poor man die of hunger in the meantime.³⁷

To leave to the crazy one his craziness, even this is charity.³⁸

Whoever does not have, during the course of the day, one hour that is his, is not considered a man.³⁹

Rabbi Ieheskel said, concerning a certain Rav who would expound on the Torah portion of the week and legal matters, making very many acute observations and engaging in casuistical subtlety, 'He is so busy holding forth that he cannot catch and absorb the teachings of the Torah.'⁴⁰

When God brings about a new insight of practice in Torah or worship, he causes it to stir first in the hearts of the sages and Zaddikim. Afterwards it spreads out and reaches simple men and even women and children. Then the innovation is complete, that is, it is instilled in the hearts.⁴¹

Just as it is a worthy deed to prevent a Jew from transgressing, so it is worthy to warn the infirm against fights. The significant thing is to serve the Lord with truth.⁴²

In the future, two redemptions will take place: one to bring Israel out of the Diaspora, and the second, to take the Diaspora out of Israel. And the latter will be more difficult.⁴³

I assure you that all the days of your life you will not be able to afford a single decent meal. However,

when I lift you above the canopy of the sky, you will then see that the affairs of this world are hardly worth a sigh.⁴⁴

Everything that is important in the world is little.⁴⁵

Scripture says: 'The High Priest, the crown and glory of Israel, must be one of his brothers, one who mingles with his fellows and dwells amidst his people without haughtiness; he must walk with all of them as though they were his brothers.'⁴⁶

A man can pore over the Torah and the service of God seventy years without attaining to the level where he constitutes a minute part of what a Jew should be.⁴⁷

Is it a great thing to perform miracles? Even a man of lower degree can perform miracles. But the great thing is to be a proper Jew. It is difficult to be a Jew.⁴⁸

I would give the entire world for a particle of Jewishness.⁴⁹

A Rav resembles an Eitrog: the more he is handled by congregants' hands the more his splendid appearance diminishes.⁵⁰

Would that all evildoers became rabbis.⁵¹

We have had an opportunity during these last seven chapters to view the Hasid in his daily life. The picture of the Hasid thus far has been one he himself has given us. The understanding we have and the images we see of the Hasidim have been based largely on the sayings of the Rabbis culled from eight volumes of Steinsmann's Ba'er Ha-Hasidut.

The sayings chosen for this work represent only a small percentage of those from which they were selected. It was my hope that the choice would give an overall picture of the Hasidim in their everyday life, showing their favorable and perhaps not so favorable characteristics. It was necessary for me to disassociate myself from those aspects which pleased me - so that I might render an objective characterization of the Hasidim and their Zaddikim.

The Hasidim, it appears, were years ahead of us in pedagogy. They utilized techniques of instruction that induced and sustained one's interest. Through the media of stories, parables, sayings, and allegories that held our attention, there was never a question of our misunderstanding the message they would have for us. Thus it is my belief that one can come to know the multi-faceted and complex life and community of the Hasidim by listening to their words. One soon begins to know which attitudes and opinions are held by most,

and those which are held by few. One also begins to discern one Zaddik from another, because of his constant insights, or humor, or the contrary lack of it. Before long the Zaddik who sees himself among his followers is distinguished from those who see themselves too busy and too heaven-bound to extend themselves to men. One can soon distinguish those who dwell in the world of man and God - and who serve them both with deference and with humility.

Assuming one has never known the Hasid before picking up this thesis - what would he learn about them in seven chapters consisting largely of their own words?

I believe the following would be self-evident: The Hasid, in all areas of his life, has one main purpose - to serve God and render glory to His Name. Every act, whether it be eating, speaking, studying, walking, or praying is simply one more way to express reverence and love of the Creator. The Hasid is happy to be alive - he approaches everything he does with a sense of joy. He is able to accept the good as well as the unpleasant, for the rewards of Heaven are meted out justly. He knows that no matter how much or how little he has - and regardless of the method he chooses to acquire it - that the Holy One Blessed be He looks upon each man with equal Mercy and Justice.

For more important than words are the acts of piety and mitzvot one performs with humility and devotion. Although it appears that he disregards the literal word of law, the Hasid tells us that

God's will and presence are found outside the pages of the Shmichan Aruch - and to fulfill His commandments requires deeds and actions.

The Hasid answers the questions of the Mitnagid, especially regarding the hour of prayer : Why should the Hasid be limited to certain hours to render Praise to his Creator when he is wont to do so more often?

In general it is possible to discern a great influence in Hasidism of the mystical writing of the Kabbalah. One acts to attain Devekut with God - through various levels of ascension. The average Hasid tries to emulate the Zaddik who has attained Yichud- unity with the Divine. The Zaddik in a state of Yichud is an intermediary between God and man. He differs from other religions with mystical influences because he is not detached from his followers. Although he seeks separation, it is not from his followers, it is from himself. He renounces his corporeal being to become nothing. The Zaddik or Rebbe leads the Jewish community. His disciples come from far and near to catch a glimpse of him and feel his holy presence. They support and sustain him, bringing gifts and money accompanied by a note stating their request - for it is through their Rebbe that redemption is received.

Penitence is significant in the life of the Hasid. Some are so inclined that they ask for forgiveness before committing a sin, because perhaps unknowingly they have transgressed.

On the other hand the Hasid approaches life with Hittlahanut,

ectasy, and sheer delight, while on the other he seeks solitude and silence to contemplate how he can best manifest his life in the service of God and for the sake of Heaven.

More liberal and tolerant is the average Hasid than we might be inclined to believe. He takes seriously the commandment to love his fellow - carrying this over to include the non-Jew as well. He recognizes the intrinsic value and worth of each human being. Women are exalted to a level of respect and dignity. Not in one case did I discern a deprecating attitude toward women.

The Hasid directs his heart toward everything he does while attempting to synthesize commandment with intention.

The Hasid lives a significant part of his life in the synagogue, that is the Bet Ha Knesset and Bet Ha Midrash, customarily referred to as the Shtetl or Klaus. Since study, prayer, and social intercourse are the main activities of the Shtetl, it is occupied most of the day, especially the Bet Ha Midrash.

Motivated by a deep sense of Bitachon (trust and faith), the Hasid gave himself with fervor in submission to God's Will.

Notes to CHAPTER I : WHAT IS A HASID

Note : The following volume numbers have been assigned for the reader's convenience to Eliezar Steinmann's Anthology Ba'er Ha-Hasidut in the absence of such categorization by the author:

- ש"ס נחמן, אש"זר. באר בחסידות. כ"א, כ"ג
 I ג' אש"זר, אש"זר
 II ג' אש"זר, אש"זר
 III כמ"ז ונח"מ
 IV סדרה שניה
 V רבי ישראל בע"ט ש"ט
 VI כתב' רבי נחמן מברסלב
 VII משנת חב"ד כרך א'
 VIII משנת חב"ד כרך ב'

With the exception of volumes I and VI, no date of publication is given. All eight volumes were published in Tel Aviv by Knesset Press.

¹Eliezar Steinmann, Ba'er Ha-Hasidut (Tel Aviv : Knesset Press), I, 229.

²SIFRA - Not certain to what it refers. I believe it is the halachic Midrash to Leviticus (whose editorship is frequently ascribed to R. Akiba's School). SIFRA RABA - Also uncertain of its exact meaning, but may possibly refer to SIFRE DEBE RABA, which is a Midrash to Numbers and Deuteronomy believed to have been edited by R. Hiyya. (See Jewish Encyclopedia, Volume 11, pp. 330-332).

³Steinmann, I, 202.

⁴Ibid., I, 256.

⁵Ibid., I, 289.

⁶Ibid., VI, 306.

⁷Ibid., I, 286.

⁸Ibid., I, 22.

⁹Ibid., I, 308.

¹⁰Ibid., I, 287.

¹¹Ibid., I, 289.

¹²CABBALIST - Follower of the mystic writings of Isaac Luria. Dov Baer introduced Luria's prayerbook to the Hasidim. The CABBALAH had a strong influence, especially on early Hasidim.

¹³Steinmann, I, 265.

¹⁴MITNAGDIM - Ardent opponent to Hasidism and its practices. They were followers of Rabbinic Judaism and looked to the Talmud and Shulchan Aruch as their authority.

¹⁵Dynasties - Rabbi Zusya used to say as follows: "A river issues from Eden to water the garden, and from there it divides and becomes four heads." Eden - this refers to Rabbi Yisrael Baal Shem Tov. A river - his pupil Rabbi Dov Baer, the Maggid. The garden - my brother Rabbi Elimelech. And from there - from Rabbi Elimelech - it divides and becomes four heads. (1) The Holy Rabbi Yaakov Yitzhak. (2) Rabbi Yisrael the Holy Maggid. (3) Rabbi Menahem Mendel. (4) Rabbi Yehoshua Heshel. (Steinmann, I, 203).

¹⁶Ibid., I, 203.

¹⁷Code of Jewish Law compiled by Joseph Caro in the 17th century served as a legal authority for the Mitnagdim and other Rabbinic Jews.

¹⁸Steinmann, VI, 46.

¹⁹HABAD - An intellectually oriented group of Hasidim founded by R. Shneur Zalman. It differs from the general teachings of Hasidism in that it presupposes a knowledge of God. HABAD is a fusion between wisdom and understanding, consisting of the three Hebrew letters Het - Hochmah (wisdom); Bet - Bina (understanding); Dalei - Deah (knowledge).

²⁰Steinmann, I, 286.

²¹Ibid., I, 281.

²²GOLEM - an embryo; unfinished vessel; imperfect substance.
It is a body without a soul.

²³Steirmann, I, 285.

²⁴GABBAI - the Zaddik's right hand man who served as his secretary and general assistant. The Rebbe was customarily approached by first going to the GABBAI.

²⁵Steirmann, I, 207.

²⁶Ibid., I, 182.

²⁷Ibid., II, 197.

²⁸Ibid., II, 101.

²⁹Ibid., IV, 338.

³⁰Ibid., III, 88.

Notes to CHAPTER II : THE HASID AT HOME

¹Rabbi Naphtali of Ropshitz, who died in 1827, was the son of Mendel Lisker. He was known as a Zaddik of great wit and insight.

²WHO TAKES HIM - from the Hebrew (She-bee notalst mimem), meaning to have sexual intercourse with him.

³Elieser Steinmann, Ba'er Ha-Hasidut (Tel Aviv : Knesset Press), II, 241.

⁴Ibid., I, 154.

⁵Ibid., III, 56.

⁶Ibid., II, 241.

⁷Rabbi Abraham of Zlotchov, the date of whose death was not found, was a disciple of R. Shmelke of Nikolsburg. He seems to be a relatively unimportant Zaddik.

⁸Steinmann, I, 181.

⁹Rabbeinu Gershom instituted Takkanah prohibiting divorce against the will of the woman; that is, without the husband receiving consent from the wife and stating the reason for the divorce. (i. e. a divorce may not be forced upon a woman.)

¹⁰Steinmann, I, 329.

¹¹Ibid., I, 361.

¹²Ibid., I, 198.

¹³Ibid., I, 199.

¹⁴Ibid., VI, 36.

¹⁵Ibid., III, 267.

¹⁶SHEHAKOL - refers to the Blessing SHEHAKOL YEHIYE BIDVARO - that everything is in accordance with His (Divine) Will.

¹⁷Steinmann, II, 114.

¹⁸Ibid., III, 139.

¹⁹Ibid., I, 192.

²⁰Ibid., III, 210.

Notes to CHAPTER III : THE HASID AT WORK

¹Rabbi Pinchas of Koritz, a disciple of the Baal Shem Tov, was referred to as the "Black Melammad" when he was a teacher of children. He died in 1791.

²Eliezer Steinmann, Be'er Ha-Hasidut (Tel Aviv : Knesset Press), VI, 43.

³Ibid., VI, 50.

⁴Ibid., I, 198.

⁵Rabbi Shmuel Elishu of Volozin glamorized Hasidism by placing it above mundane matters such as earning a living. He may have been related to Voloziner Rav - a Mitnagid.

⁶Steinmann, I, 205.

⁷Rabbi Shlomo HaCohen of Radumsk was a disciple of the Radishitzer Rebbe. He saw the need for a Zaddik to be involved in down to earth matters. He died in 1868.

⁸Steinmann, I, 218.

⁹Ibid., I, 303.

¹⁰Ibid., II, 199.

¹¹Ibid., I, 154.

¹²Ibid., II, 136.

¹³Ibid., II, 136.

¹⁴Ibid., II, 48.

¹⁵Ibid., I, 298.

¹⁶Ibid., I, 307.

¹⁷Ibid., III, 93.

¹⁸Ibid., I, 286.

Notes to CHAPTER IV : THE HASID IN SOCIETY

¹Eliezer Steinmann, Ba'er Ha-Hasidut (Tel Aviv: Knesset Press), III, 34.

²Ibid., I, 281.

³Ibid., I, 104.

⁴Ibid., III, 267.

⁵Ibid., I., 283.

⁶Ibid., I, 148.

⁷Ibid., II, 60.

⁸Ibid., III, 242.

⁹Ibid., I, 281.

¹⁰Ibid., VI, 49.

¹¹Ibid., I, 289.

¹²Ibid., I, 322.

¹³Ibid., I, 199.

¹⁴Ibid., I, 119.

¹⁵Ibid., I, 111.

¹⁶Ibid., I, 324.

¹⁷Ibid., III, 216.

¹⁸Ibid., III, 266.

¹⁹Ibid., II, 196.

²⁰Ibid., I, 360.

²¹Ibid., I, 228.

²²Ibid., IV, 338.

²³Ibid., I, 116.

Notes to CHAPTER V : THE HASID AT PRAYER

¹Eliezer Steinmann, Ba'er Ha-Hasidut (Tel Aviv : Knesset Press), III, 266.

²Ibid., III, 265.

³Ibid., III, 58.

⁴Ibid., III, 266.

⁵Ibid., III, 59.

⁶Ibid., II, 102.

⁷Ibid., II, 99.

⁸Ibid., III, 58.

⁹Ibid., I, 287.

¹⁰Ibid., I, 285.

¹¹Ibid., III, 58.

¹²Ibid., III, 249.

¹³Ibid., III, 209.

¹⁴Ibid., III, 141.

¹⁵Ibid., I, 109.

¹⁶Ibid., VII, 250.

¹⁷Ibid., VI, 298.

¹⁸Ibid., VI, 109.

¹⁹Ibid., I, 86.

²⁰Ibid., VII, 99.

²¹Ibid., I, 312.

²²Ibid., II, 263.

²³Ibid., III, 263.

Notes to CHAPTER VI : THE HASID SERVES HIS GOD

¹Eliezar Steinmann, Be'er Ha-Hasidut (Tel Aviv : Knesset Press), III, 263.

²Ibid., III, 37.

³Ibid., I, 57.

⁴Ibid., III, 37.

⁵Ibid., III, 37.

⁶Ibid., III, 207.

⁷Ibid., VI, 50.

⁸Ibid., III, 91.

⁹Ibid., I, 229.

¹⁰Ibid., I, 230.

¹¹Ibid., I, 87.

¹²Ibid., I, 282.

¹³Ibid., I, 109.

Notes to CHAPTER VII : THE HASID SPEAKS TO MODERN MAN

¹Eliezar Steinmann, Be'er Ha-Hasidut (Tel Aviv : Knesset Press), I, 209.

²Ibid., II, 273.

³Ibid., VI, 33.

⁴Ibid., VI, 282.

⁵Ibid., III, 38.

⁶Ibid., III, 139.

⁷Ibid., I, 87.

⁸Ibid., I, 234.

⁹Ibid., I, 287.

¹⁰Ibid., II, 48.

¹¹Ibid., I, 253.

¹²Ibid., III, 139.

¹³Ibid., I, 329.

¹⁴Ibid., I, 111.

¹⁵Ibid., I, 42.

¹⁶Ibid., I, 108.

¹⁷Ibid., II, 167.

¹⁸Ibid., II, 171.

- ¹⁹Ibid., III, 56.
²⁰Ibid., II, 11.
²¹Ibid., III, 242.
²²Ibid., I, 288.
²³Ibid., II, 110.
²⁴Ibid., I, 58.
²⁵Ibid., III, 39.
²⁶Ibid., VI, 36.
²⁷Ibid., I, 290.
²⁸Ibid., II, 232.
²⁹Ibid., III, 58.
³⁰Ibid., II, 59.
³¹Ibid., I, 23.
³²Ibid., II, 291.
³³Ibid., IV, 333.
³⁴Ibid., I, 355.
³⁵Ibid., II, 42.
³⁶Ibid., I, 86.
³⁷Ibid., I, 109.
³⁸Ibid., VI, 299.
³⁹Ibid., II, 41.
⁴⁰Ibid., II, 281.
⁴¹Ibid., I, 215.
⁴²Ibid., I, 14.
⁴³Ibid., I, 268.

⁴⁴Ibid., I, 110.

⁴⁵Ibid., VI, 43.

⁴⁶Ibid., I, 23.

⁴⁷Ibid., I, 320.

⁴⁸Ibid., I, 86.

⁴⁹Ibid., I, 86.

⁵⁰Ibid., I, 203.

⁵¹Ibid., III, 40.

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 IV סדרה ט"ז

V רג' ישראל גה' שם טוב
VI כתב' רג' נחמן מברסלב
VII משנה חב"ד כרך "א"
VIII משנה חב"ד כרך "ב"