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in Early Hasidism"

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Entitled: "The Development of the Leadership Principle

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The Toldoth Yakov Yosef of Jacob Joseph of Polnoy is an important work. It is at the same time an unusually difficult work. It is important because it is the first literary document of the Hasidic movement and because it was written by one of the foremost disciples of Israel Baal Shem Tov, the Besht. It is a difficult work because it is thoroughly unsystematic and pilpulistic. The author freely moves from topic to topic, from proof text to proof text, from garrulous aside to garrulous aside. Jacob Joseph is a mighty wielder of learned texts; and he wields them with an exuberant abandon. He is a devotee of an esoteric mystical doctrine, and he communicates this doctrine with consummate clarity. He is a worshipful disciple of the Besht whom he quotes more than 250 times, but nowhere does he attempt to systematize his teachings. Yet this unwieldy work has locked within it the data essential for the historical reconstruction of early Hasidism and of its founder, the Besht.

Mr. Robert M. Seltzer has attempted to extricate some of this data, and he has made an effort to solve some of the problems that still surround the origins of the Hasidic movement. He is especially concerned with subjecting to analysis the dominant image of the Besht, an image which pictures him as the wonder-working Baal Shem Tov who turned his back on the dominant rabbinic learning of his day.

Mr. Seltzer shows conclusively that the Toldoth Yakov Yosef is a work that could not have been read, much less understood by the masses. Only a very learned and erudite rabbinic scholar could even begin to follow the pilpulistic mode that characterizes this work. Jacob Joseph was attempting to win over the learned class to a new concept of leadership. He insists that true talmid haham is a member of an elite and towers in every way above the masses. He claims however that many learned rabbis have forfeited their right to the high status because they cater to the wealthy and neglect the masses. They fail to shatter the kelipoth, the husks, and thus abandon their people to the sovereignty of evil. The true leader, or zaddik (not yet a title) is one who is dedicated to the task of elevating the spiritual level of all. He achieves this by virtue of his own elevated status with respect to the Shechinah.

Mr. Seltzer argues from the formal and literary characteristics of the Toldoth--even the mystical elements testify to a thorough mastery of the mystical literary tradition--to the appropriate historical image of the Besht. The quotations cited by Jacob Joseph in the name of his revered teacher reveal a Besht who was as thoroughly versed in rabbinic and mystical literature as his disciple. Here is revealed no simple Baal Shem, but a highly erudite mystic who was appalled at the collapse of rabbinic leadership, and not of rabbinic learning. He was interested in destroying the kelipoth and redeeming the Jews from the degraded state to which they had fallen. The Besht was thus a very learned scholar who had no intention of belittling the value of the sacred rabbinic and mystical texts. He insisted, however, that the talmid haham and the zaddik not hide behind the tomes, nor subordinate themselves to the well-to-do. Instead, they must actively lead the people in their efforts to find the

Shechinah hidden behind the words and letters of the Torah and behind the evil which is rampant.

What then of the popular image of the Besht as gleaned from the widely circulated Shi'ur haBesht? Is this pure propaganda or is there something of the historical Besht here too? Mr. Seltzer raises the question, but does not answer it. This was not the purpose of his study. What he has succeeded in doing is to make clear the fact that no image of the Besht can be adequate that does not take into account the eruditeness which emerges out of the pages of the Toldoth Yakov Yosef. Mr. Seltzer has also effectively demonstrated that the principle of a leadership elite, elevated above the masses even as it appealed for their support, is at the very heart of the doctrine of the Besht. Indeed the Besht appealed precisely to the scholar class to reform itself and win the support of the masses.

There is much more of value in Mr. Seltzer's thesis than has been noted here. He is to be highly commended for having undertaken so difficult a task; the ability to comprehend the Toldoth is in itself worthy of special recognition. To have both comprehended and to have formulated a fruitful hypothesis is indeed a testimony to the high caliber of his scholarship and to the mature cast of his mind.

The only criticism that is in order touches on the style. In part, certain cumbersome paragraphs are the outcome of the wrappings with the translation of the original. The difficulty of rendering passages of the Toldoth into lucid English is all too apparent to anyone who has read a folio of the text. However, even in the exposition of the thesis, Mr. Seltzer does not always present his ideas with that vigor and that clarity which they deserve. A careful rewriting of some of the most crucial parts would make this thesis worthy of publication.

It is with great pleasure that I recommend the acceptance of this thesis by the Faculty.

Ellis Rivkin  
Referee

"The Development of the Leadership Principle  
in Early Hesidism"

Robert M. Seltzer

Thesis submitted in partial  
fulfillment of requirements for  
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--  
1961

Referee, Professor Ellis Rivkin

## THESIS DIGEST

A reconstruction of the Besht must give priority to the Toldoth Yaakov Yosef in which the Besht's disciple Jacob Joseph of Polnoy, in the course of his own discussion, recorded his master's principal teachings. The Toldoth is a collection of kabbalistic homilies for the parashoth of the Torah, written by a master of rabbinic literature in the classic pilpulistic style. Jacob Joseph was concerned by the alienation of the masses from the scholar class and he demanded of his scholarly audience that they take the initiative in repairing these ties. To this end he suggested certain theological-kabbalistic doctrines and activities that would bring the saintly tsalmid hanam, the zaddik, into the ordinary life of the masses and thereby restore social harmony. These contributions provided a theoretical justification for the institutional role of the zaddik in mature Hasidism.

The Besht was responsible for his disciple's doctrine of the zaddik; moreover, the Besht also provided an important solution for the vexing problem of sinful thoughts for which the older kabbalistic Hasidism had developed a system of extraordinary penances. He taught a doctrine of sublimating "strange thoughts" through raising the spark of Godliness in each of them. His followers were thereby able to justify the moderate ecstasy of individual physical pleasure and group abandon which proved so successful in capturing the hearts of the masses.

The form of the Besht's quotes in the Toldoth and Jacob Joseph's frequent expressions of regard for his master clearly indicate that the Besht was a respected kabbalistic scholar. All the other testimony for the early stages of Hasidism and for the Besht lend support to this reconstruction if the tendency of each source is understood. This analysis makes it possible also to reconstruct the role of Jacob Joseph and the Toldoth in the development of Hasidism and the emergence of the popular image of the legendary Baal Shem Tov.

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I wish to express my appreciation to all my teachers at the Hebrew Union College whose kindness and encouragement have made it possible for me to see into worlds that not long ago I hardly knew existed.

My special gratitude to Dr. Arie Kahana who gave me hours of patient and good-natured guidance and who initiated me into the most difficult book I ever opened.

Above all, my debt is to Dr. Ellis Rivkin who, through the clarity of his science, his passion for truth, and the scope of his fresh insight, guided me in ways I cannot hope to acknowledge. He offered the gentle and subtle inspiration that led the student to search freely for his own identity.

The idea I have explored is his; I only aim to develop some of its implications.



## INTRODUCTION

"Clearly we do not know what this man Israel was like; he left no writing or book for the Congregation of Israel..."

From an attack on Hasidism  
in Shever Poshim, circulated  
around 1798.<sup>1</sup>

"Once a certain fellow wrote down the teachings he had heard from the Besht. Later the Besht saw a demon walking with a book in his hand. He said, 'What is that book you carry in your hand?' The demon answered, 'This is the book you composed!' Whereupon the Besht understood that someone was writing down his teaching. He gathered all his men together and asked, 'Who among you is writing down my teaching?' The fellow confessed and brought out the writings. The Besht examined them and exclaimed, 'There is not one word here I said.'

A legend of the Hasidim,  
from Snivne haBesht,  
published in 1815.<sup>2</sup>

This is the quest for the historical Besht. Hasidism succeeded in the turbulent anarchy of the last four decades of the eighteenth century to effect a radical reformation in the structure and content of Jewish religious life, and the Besht was considered in some way to have been the genesis and the symbol of this reformation. Mature Hasidism sang his praises with passionate devotion and recounted the legends of his adventures and originality. Most reconstructions of the development of Hasidism depend on these late chronicles. I will try to redefine what kind of man the Besht was according to the earliest and most extensive evidence, the Toldoth Yaakov Yosef of Jacob Joseph of Polnoy, the Besht's only literary disciple. I cannot bypass Jacob Joseph himself

because he edits and explains his master's doctrines in connection with the exposition of his own teachings. Therefore I must start out by investigating the character of the Toldoth Yaakov Yosef and the mind of its author.

Every literary work has a code to decipher if one is to understand the individuality of its author and the significance of his creative effort. The code consists, first, in the system of concepts by means of which he selects and refines his experience; secondly, the code includes the logical systems with which the author organizes his information into sentences, paragraphs and chapters. The code ultimately provides a way to reconstruct the underlying historical reality that is transmitted through the mind of the author and which has aroused the dilemma which the author seeks to resolve. Therefore I will ask questions about Jacob Joseph's language, his authorities, and the assumptions of his thought in order to reach, to the extent that it is possible, his doctrine, his emotions, and his personal environment. Then I can turn my attention to Jacob Joseph's master and determine what can be asked about him and what answers seem probable. Finally, I shall construct a model with which to understand the role of the Toldoth Yaakov Yosef and the Besht in early Hasidism - a model that takes account of all the relevant evidence I can gather.

## CHAPTER ONE

### His Mode of Thought

The Toldoth Yaakov Yosef is an extremely complex work which treats of many different subjects and problems. Its only unifying purpose is to transmit the religious speculation of its author, Jacob Joseph of Polnoy. The Toldoth is his published notebooks, the first and largest volume of his collected papers, the literary culmination of years of study and teaching. For the most part the content of the Toldoth is objective, scholastic discussion and contains only fleeting and fragmentary autobiographical data. Therefore it presents both intimate and anonymous aspects of Jacob Joseph's mind. On the one hand, one has immediate access to the world of his ideas, which no calendar of events in his life could provide; on the other hand, one is at a loss to discover the detailed personal experiences that stimulated and challenged him, and must have been crucial for the development of his thought. A great deal of what we might like to know about Jacob Joseph as an individual is irretrievable.

The Toldoth represents a digest, for publication of thoughts written down over a long period of time. He refers to events in "this year" "N"ph (1753)"<sup>1</sup> although it was published in 1761. The Toldoth was the first, largest and most comprehensive of his writings, but he refers the reader to his "big book"<sup>2</sup> and his "other book."<sup>3</sup> Several times he corrects himself by noting that he later

## PART ONE

### The Disciple

found authority somewhere for his own idea:<sup>4</sup> for example, "after writing this I found it in the Tikunim, page four, column two."<sup>5</sup> There are even traces of funeral eulogies incorporated into the body of his work.<sup>6</sup>

The Toldoth is organized by Torah portion; the discourse for each parashan may run anywhere from one to over fifteen pages. A letter from an early enemy of Hasidism in the Ukraine sent to Vilna immediately after the publication of the Toldoth informs us that it was originally expounded "according to their [i.e., the new sect of Hasidim] custom from the weekly portion of the Torah at the third meal of the Sabbath,"<sup>7</sup> and both early Hasidic tradition and Jacob Joseph's own views with respect to the mode of preaching seem to agree. The Toldoth was probably composed of homilies delivered over many years; fragments of later sermons were superimposed over earlier. The form of the Toldoth is awkward for the development of a systematic structure of ideas. (Some scholars, indeed, have relegated it to the category of popular moralistic literature.<sup>8</sup>) Jacob Joseph takes a few verses, a passage, a narrative or a commandment from the Torah portion (or a passage from the Talmud or midrash) and either interprets it directly or utilizes it as the starting point for discussion. His exposition may lead him to discuss verses from other Torah portions. In the parashan Berashith, for example, the identification of the name "Israel" with the scholar and "Jacob" with the masses offers the possibility for elucidating a new meaning for the

first few lines of Shemoth. This discussion takes up three pages and only then does Jacob Joseph return to the verses in Berashith. In the course of this digression on the verses in Shemoth he elaborates interpretations that are not at all related to his original topic. It is reminiscent of a "stream of consciousness" technique; he seems determined to capture all his associations in the order of their occurrence. He is drawn from thought to thought as he writes, and he frequently acknowledges that he discusses this quotation more fully in some other (always unspecified) place in the Toldoth.<sup>10</sup> Like most nominalistic writers he has a few favorite verses which please him greatly and recur again and again in many contexts.<sup>11</sup> He weaves many threads, drops them, catches them up again; works out a second or a third implication for a once-used parable, epigram, or controversy from the Talmud, Bible, or his master. Similarly, rather than discuss an idea thoroughly once and for all, he hints at it, touches it in passing, returns again and again, each time pointing up an aspect that may not have been clarified previously, qualifying it in a way he has not yet done, or simply reminding the reader that he has mentioned it before. One has great trouble summarizing his position. Scholars who do so in order to construct a "philosophy," impose on his mode of thought a pattern of logical progression which is foreign to his intent. Consequently they create out of the text a systematic formulation that is alien to his method. It is impossible to deduce from these summaries the original form and style of the Toldoth. The historical Jacob Joseph

is thus obscured by these efforts at systematization and our reconstruction of the origins and development of the Hasidic movement is badly distorted. This is particularly apparent with respect to Jacob Joseph's views on social conditions; he expresses a number of pained criticisms and a notion of what should be, but he certainly does not present a program for a social movement.

The Toldoth is a fine example of Polish rabbinic pilpul.<sup>12</sup> The building blocks for its construction are quotations from authorities who dwell on the same problem in contradictory ways. Jacob Joseph sets out to show that there is no conflict of views, rather that each authority addresses himself to another aspect of the problem and in some way supplements what his predecessor offered.<sup>13</sup> In his discussion, for example, of the commandment, "Be fruitful and multiply," he brings in the Tosefot, Rashi, Mahar-shei, the Tur, Rambam and R. Asher ben Yehiel.<sup>14</sup> In his comments and quotations, the term pilpul (if dedicated to Heaven) has an honorific sense:

Behold, there are two kinds of study which the perfect man needs to complete every day, as did the R. Ari (may his name be blessed in the future world). First he learned halachah with pilpul in order to break the keliqoth....i.e., to remove the black garments from the Upper Bride and adorn her with garments of Torah, garments of holiness. Afterwards he learned the second way, so as to unite With the halachah and to cleave with his essence and inner self to the inner essence of the Torah without any garment.<sup>15</sup>

For the most part Jacob Joseph's pilpul dwells on doctrinal, moralistic and mystical matters, rather than halachah; yet

its pilpulistic character is evident throughout.

Even when he turns aside to comment on the world about him he does so through a maze of verses and allusions: only very rarely (in passages which have become famous in scholarly writings as "typical" of his book) does he comment on a social problem without introducing a Biblical verse between every phrase.<sup>16</sup> He is obsessed with the problem of religious leadership and the alienation of the masses, and in every parashah he turns to aspects of this discussion, but always in the context of a verse or a quotation. For example on Lam. 1:1 he says:

And thus we understand What is meant by HOW DOES THIS CITY SIT SOLITARY. It refers to the men of the city who remain alone without joining themselves (hitpaaruth) to the zaddikim within it and this brings about the situation THAT IT WAS FULL OF PEOPLE, which means that it was full of opinions, (as it says in the midrash there). Hence The verse continues HOW SHE HAS BECOME AS A WIDOW, not a real widow but as a widow in that she is not joined with her husband. Like- wise, the people do not join with the zaddikim who are called "master" and "husband," and this brings about THE LORD SEPARATES HIM UNTO EVIL Deut. 29:20. So it seems to me.

Jacob Joseph's book is brilliant pilpul that the best minds of his generation could respect and delight in. His scope is broad, subtle and earnest in the context of his world.<sup>16</sup>

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An enumeration and classification of the authorities and sources Jacob Joseph refers to give us compelling evidence of the scope of his learning.

Jacob Joseph refers to his master, the Besht, about two hundred and fifty times in the course of his book, twice

as often as he quotes all other contemporary figures. The Besnt is always called "MY TEACHER" in the body of the text; only on the second page, usually reserved for approvals, does the term "Besnt" appear. In the first edition of the Toldot Dubnow found "And Joseph (the author)...a man of God for whom the earth was illuminated from his wisdom...by our teacher the ray R. Israel Besnt, may his memory be for a blessing."<sup>19</sup> In most editions the title, a clever play on Genesis 37:1, THIS IS THE HISTORY OF JACOB: JOSEPH... is supplemented by verse 3: AND ISRAEL LOVED JACOB, another oblique reference to the master.

Jacob Joseph quotes a number of other contemporaries. Six times he says, "I HEARD FROM MY RABBI(S)." Six names are cited once; four men are cited twice; three men from three to five times. He quotes R. Nahman Rotszover fifteen times, R. Leiv Pizener thirty-one times, and the Maggid Menaschem of Bar thirty-three times. He mentions fifteen contemporaries in all.

Jacob Joseph refers to many long-established authorities by name: Moses Alshet on various books of the Bible, Joseph Yawetz on the Torah and Avot, Nachmanides, on the Torah and the law, all over fifty times; Asher D. Yechiel, Solomon Luria, Isaac Alfasi, Moses Isserles, Nissim Gerondi, Yom Tov Lippman Heller, all between ten and thirty times. Three authorities are quoted between three and five times each; six authorities appear twice, and eight appear once. A total of more than twenty-five names are mentioned.

Jacob Joseph uses the most familiar rabbinic sources

frequently: the rabbinic Bible with commentaries; the Talmud, Tosafot (and Marheban one hundred and fifteen times). The tannaitic midrash and all the other major midrash collections. Occasionally he cites the Jerusalem Talmud.

He calls on the books of Hayim Vital over eighty times, and he refers to various anonymous writings of the Ari about two hundred times. Jacob Joseph knew the Zohar well; he quotes the Zoharic literature about four hundred and fifty times, frequently by page, and covering all its major individual parts. He refers to seven other important kabbalistic sources and six moralistic tracts or commentaries, each from five to seventy times. By way of halachic literature, he cites Maimonides' Mishnen Toran two hundred and thirty times, as well as all the important commentaries on it, and Maimonides' other books (including the Guide to the Perplexed). He quotes the Arukh Turim of Jacob D. Asher forty-five times and all its important commentaries, and the Shulchan Aruch or its commentaries as often. Moreover, he quotes at least once or twice, by title, nine other kabbalistic books and twenty other works in various categories; moralistic literature, commentaries, books on calendation, novellas, and the like.<sup>21</sup> He had access to about seventy different titles, in all.

The full catalogue<sup>21</sup> gives us a glimpse into his education and his library, or, at least, some of the books he had access to. The scope of the Talmudic and legal literature in the Toldot suggests that we visualize Jacob Joseph as a figure of considerable fluency and literacy in the intellectual world of rabbinic authorities.

The importance of the mystic literature in our lists suggests that he was an experienced kabbalist. And many other aspects of his method lead us to place him in the mystic tradition. Particularly his preoccupation with the hidden and private levels in Torah:

The garments of the Torah /The letters of the alphabet/ are not called "Torah," rather is the inner essence called "Torah." Hence it says TORAH IS LIGHT (אור) /Prv. 8:23/ which is the gematria for secret (סוד), אור equal 207. The secrets of the Torah are called "Torah."

The secret, inner aspect of the revelation speaks to the few in a way that the many cannot appreciate:

I have already explained, HE WHO UNDERSTANDS THE WORD WILL FIND GOOD /Prv. 16:20/, i.e., that Torah is both hidden and revealed. (See there.) AND MOSES WENT AND HE SPOKE TO ALL ISRAEL AND HE SAID TO THEM means MOSES WENT to each according to his capacity, AND HE SPOKE the revealed part TO ALL ISRAEL in general; but the hidden part HE SAID secretly TO THEM who are worthy of it. It is easy to understand.<sup>23</sup>

The Torah serves as both a means and an object for that state of consciousness which mystics experience as ecstasy, self-annihilation, devekuta (cleaving); a mental experience modeled to some extent on the physical bliss of sexual orgasm.<sup>24</sup>

For the bride has several kinds of ornaments to stir up the desire for intercourse, but during intercourse she is stripped of garments. /Then/ one cleaves to his wife and is one flesh, without garments. Thus the ornaments of the Torah, study in pilpul or learning for some ulterior purpose - even to acquire the future world - are not the principal end. All this is ornament for the Upper Bride that she stir up the Upper holy union. Then she is

stripped of her clothes and /they/ cleave essence to essence just as man cleaves himself to the forms of the letters of the Torah, the Bride. The cleaving of his essence with the inner essence of the letters of the Torah is true union (zivug), naked, without clothes or face (panim), profit or reward, for its own sake, for the love of cleaving to her. This principle is the end of everything, as it says, CLEAVE TO HIM, which is the root of all the six hundred and thirteen commandments.<sup>25</sup>

The phrases, words and letters of the Torah are the fascinating ornaments of the Bride; contemplation of these ornaments is the essential preliminary to ecstasy. Jacob Joseph pours over the text, probes it, fancies it, coaxes meaning after meaning from the letters. He runs the gamut of all the kabbalistic conceits. In Appendix 1, I included a striking passage that uses hidden correspondence of gematria and allusions derived from the roshe levotz of successive words in a Biblical phrase. Eliezer Jacob Joseph recombines the letters of mysterious words for esoteric significance:

Behold the word אור has three combinations: אור, אור, אור. The intention of God when he said to Noah, אור MAKE THE ARK, was that he change אור into אור. אור comes to sweeten the decrees of judgement in their root, it seems to me. Thus the sages say that the zaddikin change the attribute of judgement into the attribute of mercy.<sup>26</sup>

He even dwells on the significance of "אור," the letters of the alphabet with special final forms,<sup>27</sup> and of the vocalization of certain words.<sup>28</sup>

Similarly with combinations of words, descriptions, and events:



Does the Torah of God come simply to relate historical incidents? The Torah is eternal and this portion must be found in every man, in every age. One must pay attention to understand this.<sup>29</sup>

Each noun acquires a symbolic referent: the moon, for example, is "Israel"; the sun is "the nations." Each proper name becomes a code of hidden meaning: Jacob is "the humble," Israel, "the proud." Concrete verbs become processes in the soul: אָפֿהָרִיבֿ for sacrifice means to "ascend spiritually to Heaven," אָפֿהָרִיבֿ physically to "descend to the Geninnom." Certain sets of correspondences remain constant throughout the book,<sup>30</sup> allowing Jacob Joseph to discuss aspects of the same problem many times. Thus the scholar is represented, variously, by the words שׂוֹמֵר מִצְוֹת וְעוֹלָם שׂוֹמֵר מִצְוֹת וְעוֹלָם. The commandments demand the greatest attention of all:

The commandment for purifying the leper.... Since a commandment in the Torah is from God's Essence...just as He, may He be blessed, was, is and will be, so a commandment of the Torah holds for all time, past, present and future, and for all men (each a microcosm). How does the commandment for the purifying of the leper hold here for this age when there is no Temple?....<sup>31</sup>

"We have already found a revealed and a hidden reason for the [other] commandments."<sup>32</sup> Thus as Jacob Joseph passes through the Pentateuch, he picks up selected commandments that challenge him and essays their mystical meaning<sup>33</sup> in special little chapters at the end of the parashan.

Jacob Joseph uses all the central concepts of the Lurianic Kabbalah,<sup>34</sup> including: "shattering the vessels"

(sh'virath hakelim) and "raising the sparks of holiness from the nuskas" (kellipoth)<sup>35</sup> for "repair" (tikkun); the doctrine of the four worlds of atziluth, beriah, yetzirah and assiyah; "metempsychosis" (gilgul),<sup>36</sup> the configuration of the first two and last two letters of YHWH and His aspects of Arieh Angin and Zeir Angin,<sup>37</sup> and others. His work is replete with common stylistic mannerisms of the mystical literature: the constant repetition of "secret" (sod)<sup>38</sup> and many formulae for an obscure hint.<sup>39</sup>

It is evident, therefore, that Jacob Joseph belongs to the high kabbalistic tradition. He has nothing to do with the folk magic of the popular mind: amulets, angelology, cures, demons and the like.<sup>40</sup>

Moreover, Jacob Joseph was an experienced and recognized member of the intellectual classes. The title page of his book lists four congregations that he served as rabbi.<sup>41</sup> He apparently came from a family of standing.<sup>42</sup> The Toldoth was followed by his other books soon after,<sup>43</sup> suggesting that he was a man of sustained literary ambition. His book is published by a press that was engaged in printing the classics of Lurianic Kabbalah for the first time in Poland.<sup>44</sup> The Toldoth was issued without the usual rabbinic recommendations; his publishers claimed that they did not have sufficient time to obtain them in the rush of getting the book to press. Their apology implies that it would have been more fitting had Jacob Joseph had all the credentials he was entitled to.

His audience was the scholar class of his generation,

and he appealed to them with all the devices they respected.<sup>45</sup> Only the scholar class could appreciate the wealth of citations from all the classic Jewish writings, many of them merely alluded to by a few key words. Only the learned could follow the mass of abbreviations, formulae, and rabbinic-kabbalistic shorthand. Only the erudite could understand the kabbalistic doctrines which Jacob Joseph developed and modified for his own use. The Toldoth was written to be studied carefully by those who had the appropriate background.

## CHAPTER TWO

### His Critique of Society

It is necessary to draw limits around Jacob Joseph's key concepts for classifying people in order to understand the context of his social criticism. He uses several traditional Biblical and rabbinic words in his own special ways.

Jacob Joseph's universe of discourse is constituted of two mutually exclusive and complementary categories: scholars and non-scholars:<sup>1</sup>

It seems to me that there are no exemptions from this commandment /The study of Torah/ either for the talmid nahan or the am nasretz. While the talmid nahan works with the Torah and the Kethubim and is literally called "worker in the Torah," the am nasretz suffices with words of Torah in the form of laws and musar explained in their /the masses'/ language, according to the speech of the hamone am, so that they /as well as the scholars/ should know and understand.<sup>2</sup>

Furthermore by the term "masses," Jacob Joseph means both the rich and the poor. In explaining the verse AND GOD MADE THE TWO GREAT LIGHTS, THE GREATER LIGHT TO RULE THE DAY AND THE LESSER LIGHT TO RULE THE NIGHT /Gen. 1:16/ Jacob Joseph says:

For this one is a talmid nahan and that one is an am nasretz, but it is fitting that they all know the Torah from the least to the greatest... and it is the Creator's will that the one give in abundance from his wealth and the other give in abundance from his Torah and musar, and for this reason they are together called GREAT LIGHTS. Each one gives his light to his fellow...although



really there is only one GREATER LIGHT and one LESSER LIGHT. The talmid hanam who gives of his Torah is the GREATER LIGHT, while the masses are the LESSER LIGHT, but when the אֲנִשֵּׁי הָאֶרֶץ gives of his wealth he is also fittingly called GREAT and is included in the phrase TWO GREAT LIGHTS.

Both these classes are necessary for the functioning of creation:

Just as the talmid hanam should not say that there is no need for anise hamone am, for on the contrary, they are his feet... it is obvious and a fortiori that the anise hamone am should not say they have no need for the talmid hanam. The two of them should be as one in a union of the good, like the body with the soul.

Indeed this dyanotomy is part of his ontology of form and matter:

Thus it is in the totality of the universe: there are anise hamone am called nomer, with anise an'lon Yisroel possessors of tsuran. They must give in abundance to each other so that there is a bond between nomer and tsuran in the totality of the universe. Because anise hamone am give of their money to the poor talmide hanamim and the talmide hanamim give of their Torah to the nomerim, they cause abundance from Above to be continually distributed to all.

The distinction between the men of tsuran and the men of nomer is metaphysical, cutting through all other economic and social differences.

Jacob Joseph defines more exactly whom the class talmid hanam includes:

Let us interpret the passage in b.H.1: "Rabban bar H. Hana says... 'Where heaven and earth touch each other,' which means, when there is union and touching between the anise na'ir and the talmid hanam, rosn ha'ir - for the latter is

called "heaven,"...and the former is called "earth." Together they cause two kinds of abundance....for by means of tsedakah I WILL OPEN FOR YOU THE WINDOWS OF HEAVEN (Mal. 3:10) and also by means of tokhanah and musar there is blessing in the world. And Rabban bar H. Hana left there where heaven and earth touched a basket of bread," i.e., that there be a rav or maggid or mokhian to open the channels of abundance....

Apparently Jacob Joseph includes the preachers as well as the rabbinic proper among the talmide hanamim.

He evaluates the members of the scholar class differently on moral grounds:

There are three kinds of galuth. First, the galuth of Israel among the nations, secondly, the galuth of the lumdin from the ame nasretin, and, thirdly, the galuth of the talmide hanamim הַכֹּהֲנִים הַגִּבּוֹרִים from the הַכֹּהֲנִים הַנְּעִימִים.

The talmide hanamim who do not fear God hate the talmide hanamim who fear God.

Just as the world is composed of homer and tsuran, which are spirituality (רוּחָנִי) and materiality (חָמָד); so, among human beings there are two kinds: the anise am who are engaged in material needs and the talmide hanamim who are engaged in the needs of form and spirituality, for they are busy with Torah and prayer. But these two categories each are divided into two. Among those who are engaged in material needs there is he who is concerned with his selfish benefit only...he only cares that he be honored and prevail over his enemies, and there is he who is concerned with Heaven. So it seems to me. Similarly with him who is engaged in study are there two categories. First, he who is concerned with his own benefit, that he become great and glorified by means of work in the Torah and be famous. And in the second category is he who loves the Shechinah.

The moral term Jacob Joseph uses most comprehensively for the morally good scholar is zaddik. In many passages the contrary of zaddik is אֲשֵׁר:

That which is considered pleasure for the zaddikim by way of worshipping God is considered judgement and punishment for the rasha'im, who cannot bear the time spent in the beth hakeneseth and the beth hamidrash.

Thus we will understand that riddle, "When he is alive his voice is one and when he is dead his voice is seven." Answer: the lamb. Two horns (trumpets), two thighs (hairs), his skin for a drum, his intestines for both a lyre and a lute.<sup>137</sup> For the zaddik is called "alive," for the power of the intellect and the good impulse dominates him whose "voice is one." The intellect is stable and holds one state whether in youth or old age. When he is zaddik he is unified with the root of the Upper Unity, hence "his voice is one." Not so with the ra'shan, who is "dead," for the power of the imagination and the evil impulse dominates him. He is different in youth and in his old age; his voice is not one. Also in his aim the uncleanness of his deeds causes separation and he is in the world of separation.<sup>14</sup>

At times the masses even qualify to be called zaddikim:

I explained, YOUR PEOPLE ARE ALL ZADDIKIM (Is. 60:21). He who gives in abundance is called zaddik. BLESSINGS ARE ON THE HEAD OF THE ZADDIK (Prov. 10:7). The namone am gives money and the talmid hanam (called zaddik) gives Torah and musar. Thus it says that they (the former) should be in this category of zaddik. They are all zaddikim, only not at one time.<sup>15</sup>

All this said, Jacob Joseph does not always strive to find the very best word in every context. At times his mixture of concepts is bewilderingly erratic:

It seems to me that this has three facets. ONE: The secret of what is written by our teacher Moses, peace unto him, that THE PEOPLE AMONG WHOM I AM NUMBER SIX HUNDRED THOUSAND ON FOOT (Nu. 11:21). The world in general is called one visage (parsur); the namone am are the feet of the visage while the zaddikim are the eyes of the congregation. Hence the world in general is called A LADDER, for the namone am are SET UPON THE EARTH and are called the feet of the world, with the talmid hanam the head (hence, AND ITS HEAD REACHES THE SKY (Gen. 28:12).) Since they are all a complete stature (koman sheleman), the visage of one man, therefore the ANGELS OF GOD the zaddikim, who have not been unfaithful to the mission of their Master, GO UP ON IT. If the generation acts worthily, then the roshe nador go up to a higher degree, as we find with respect to Mount Sinai (gematria

sulam, ladder, Both equal 307)...THE SECOND FACET: 777 419 591 who have merited a high rung cannot stand continually on one rung....for the talmid hanam (called "Sinai," gematria sulam) is set UPON THE EARTH AND HIS HEAD REACHES THE SKY (so that he is able to go or not go up to a higher rung. Thus the Shechinah with the Holy Chariot (called ANGELS OF GOD) go up and down through him (the zaddik.) In any event, God stands by the zaddik regardless of the rung he is on, to keep the zaddik from sin during his descent to unite himself with the namone am. (So that he should not learn from their deeds...) God will save from sin the zaddik who comes to acquit the many. It is easy to understand.<sup>16</sup>

Talmid hanam and zaddik are used interchangeably in this passage. Some of his formulations became very important in later Hasidism:

The zaddik is the foundation of the world, called "peace." He comes to unite opposites. He is called "peace," since peace mediates between a man and his fellowman.<sup>16a</sup>

But note now, in the following famous passage, he uses the word talmid hanam and not zaddik:

The talmid hanam is the channel to direct abundance downward to the worlds alongside him, as it says "all the world is sustained by Haninah, my son." This means all the world is fed by means of the channel and the path (777) that R. Haninah, my son, opened.<sup>18</sup>

In later Hasidism the term zaddik is the title used by a class of saint-rabbis. The zaddik or "rebbe" is the central social role in an institutional complex that included a "court" of disciples and pilgrims with special ceremonies and sources of revenue. Eventually the title was passed on in dynastic succession. In Jacob Joseph's writings the zaddik is a moral term, informally identifying the good, saintly talmid hanam, just as the gaon, the brilliant talmid hanam, was honored among experts in the Halachah.

We have one more conceptual problem, the term nasid.

It is written THAT I MAY CAUSE THOSE WHO LOVE ME TO INHERIT SUBSTANCE AND THAT I MAY FILL THEIR TREASURIES. וְאֵלֶּיךָ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ Prov. 8:21. For he who gives abundance is called nasid, lover of nesed. He causes unification and the influence of Tsuran on nomer and nomer on tsuran, THAT I MAY FILL THEIR TREASURIES. (The gematria of נְסִיד is ת"ס /600/ 27. We can also understand this verse according to its simple meaning: with respect to the talmid nasim who has a Torah of nesed called נְסִיד (the same number as nesed), and yet "I cannot be filled," for He is Infinite (Ayn Sof); and with respect to the ashire na'am who are called THOSE THAT LOVE ME, He is called וְאֵלֶּיךָ /opposite of Ayn Sof/ that I may cause THOSE THAT LOVE ME TO INHERIT וְאֵלֶּיךָ. Fine and easy to understand.<sup>19</sup>

Here nasid is not used for the follower, the receiver of grace, but for the leader and dispenser of grace.

Indeed, nasid can have a more elevated application than zaddik:

Benoid, we have remembered that after the bad attributes have been removed and one has acquired good attributes, then one enters in the category of zaddik to carry out all six hundred and thirteen commandments and the seven practical ones. Afterwards one enters into the category of nasid to show oneself faithful to one's Master, dealing faithfully with the Sneeninan....not for one's own benefit.<sup>20</sup>

Finally, nasid can be used for the spiritual elite, in contrast to the masses:

A defect in the thought of the haside Yisroel 21 causes a defect in the action of the hamone am.

- - -

Jacob Joseph's criticism of his contemporaries must be viewed in light of what he felt ought to hold true for society. Jacob Joseph viewed man sub specie aeternitatis; given the nature of divinity, holiness and revelation,

what was right for society was true for all time (at least until the end of time). Let us define this state of proper social balance before we turn to the ways this balance had been upset:

Accordingly the above explains that when mercy and truth meet there is union (hituv) between the rich of the masses who are called "earth" and the scholars, called "heaven." This means that the rich are men of mercy in supporting the scholars and giving of their abundance to them, while the scholars give Torah and musar to the rich and the masses. If the latter hear and receive the musar, they cause unity (vinud) Above....<sup>22</sup>

When there is a state of mutuality between the spiritual elite and the laity, even Heaven benefits.

Jacob Joseph feels that the unequal distribution of worldly and spiritual riches between the classes is evidence of God's wisdom:

Why, on the whole, are the masses rich and the scholars poor and destitute?...Why are they not all equally wise?...For the rich are to give abundantly and deal mercifully from their wealth to the scholars who are poor, while the scholars give Torah....to the rich.<sup>23</sup>

Had not God so created the world, the "naves" would find no opportunity to earn merit by their charity to the "have-nots."

In fact, this is the way those who are spiritually defective can earn their share of salvation:

Because the whole concern of man is to purify the sparks, one must understand, therefore, the reason the poor purify only a little merchandise, a few sparks, while the rich purify much merchandise, many sparks, and why the one differs from the other. It seems to me that it is known from the verse LORD, MAKE ME KNOW MY END AND THE MEASURE OF MY DAYS; LET ME KNOW HOW SHORT LIVED I AM, Psalm 39:2. FOR THE LORD IS A GOD OF KNOWLEDGE /I Sam. 2:3/ who knows how many

sparks one must purify and He thus gives him the measure of his days. The poor have already purified their sparks in the preceding metempsychosis, and now have left only a few sparks to purify; the opposite is the case for the rich. The lesson that follows from this is that the poor should not envy the rich, for no man should touch that which has been prepared for his fellow-man. The artisan should not hate his fellow-artisan; the storekeeper his fellow-storekeeper; the innkeeper his fellow-innkeeper; the sage his fellow-sage. This caused the destruction of the Temple - undeserved hatred; in order to merit that the Temple be rebuilt (may it come) God must send Elijah who shall turn the hearts of the fathers to the children which is the final repair" (tikkun)."

Jacob Joseph is no social revolutionary! He attributed the cause of societal conflict to the personal and psychological: hatred of man for his fellow, jealousy, pride, arrogance.

Every man must recognize his proper place in society to ensure stability:

YOU ARE STANDING...ALL OF YOU BEFORE THE LORD YOUR GOD, YOUR HEADS, YOUR TRIBES, YOUR ELDERS, AND YOUR OFFICERS, ALL THE MEN OF ISRAEL. Deut. 29:9. Each should recognize his worth. YOUR HEADS first, afterwards YOUR TRIBES, and then, ALL THE MEN OF ISRAEL. Each one should hold fast to his rung, which is not the case if each says, "In my stubbornness I will walk; I am as worthy as a HEAD or a TRIBE!"<sup>25</sup>

Jacob Joseph is concerned with the welfare of the masses, but he expresses this concern with an attitude of nonlesse obligation:

As I wrote below in a note on the verse BECAUSE THEY HAVE FORSAKEN MY LAW Jer. 9:12, the scholar shall walk before them to show the masses the way in the light of the Torah.<sup>26</sup>

The role of the spiritual elite is to offer direction and instruction:

One must first bind oneself to the Holy One and then to the men of matter (nomer) to raise them up.... This is the secret of WHEN YOU RAISE UP THE LAMP No. 8:2; you wish to join the men of matter to the men of form IN FRONT OF THE LAMPSTAND, for the middle lamp are the scholars who turn to enlighten everybody.<sup>26</sup>

The scholar is an intermediary between God and man to save all of Israel. The scholar has the authority of direct revelation: "If you receive my Torah (they are the scholars), then fine."<sup>27</sup>

One of Jacob Joseph's favorite quotations is the exposition in the Mekhila on Moses and God:<sup>28</sup>

THEY BELIEVED IN THE LORD AND IN HIS SERVANT MOSES. If you say they believed in Moses, is it not implied by a fortiori that they believed in God? But this is to teach you that having faith in the shepherd of Israel is the same as having faith in Him Who spoke and the world came into being.<sup>29</sup>

Jacob Joseph notes:

Just as Moses was head for his whole generation...thus in every generation the heads are the worthies who are from the sparks of Moses, our teacher.<sup>30</sup>

In the following passage we see a crucial use of that verb "to cleave" which represented the ecstasy (devekuth) of the mystic with God:

TO HIM THOU SHALT CLEAVE Deut. 10:20 - to the scholar, for by cleaving to the scholar who has already cleaved to God through his Torah and worship of Him, he the masses can reach the level of cleaving to God Himself. Also in the matter of fear. It is possible to join all the degrees of the different kinds of fear to their root only through fear of the scholar.<sup>31</sup>

The fear of God as well as the love of God can be attained through the fear and love of the scholar by the masses. If the masses cannot know God, they can at least know the flesh-and-blood scholars who know Him. Jacob Joseph thus develops an idea which was very important in the subsequent history of Hasidic thought.

The world in which Jacob Joseph lived and which he tried to understand was the reverse of the ordered, stable kingdom his vision of truth demanded. His concern for the social decay and conflict of the age comes through obsessively whenever a pretext presented itself in the course of his discussion. Jacob Joseph manages to transcend a very unwieldy form and construct a manifesto, communicating to his audience of scholars the outrages he has observed. As we try to reexperience the bewilderment he felt, we must remember that he is groping to express his observations in a vocabulary highly developed for some uses, but not for others. His vocabulary is highly developed for the purpose of preserving a formal unity with authoritative texts; most of his concepts originally characterized phenomena in quite different social structures, and he is able to preserve a similar verbal scheme in the analysis of his own structure. Furthermore, his vocabulary offers many synonyms and alternative substantives for the religious concepts of individual sin, pride and corruption, but he has a very primitive language for social, economic and psychological behavior. His mode of thought did not permit or encourage him to analyze propositions in sequences that would build a system for accounting for the interrelationships of phenomena. It is to be noted that Jacob Joseph's protest is a symptom of the collapse that he sees through a haze of emotion and the manipulation of verses. Its value for reconstructing the social conflict in the 18th century Polish kahal must be seen in this context.<sup>32</sup>

There are many kinds of galuth, exile: "The galuth of Israel among the nations, the galuth of the scholars from the masses....the galuth of the scholars faithful [To God] from those who learn not for God's sake but in order to be [personally] glorified."<sup>33</sup>

The scholars are forced to flatter the community leaders:

Another rhetorical interpretation (halatsah) for MY HEAD IS ASTIR WITH A GOODLY MATTER, וְנִי אֶסְתִּיר בְּחַסְדִּי וְנִי אֶסְתִּיר בְּחַסְדִּי represents the initials of rabanim, hazanim, and shamashim, whose livelihood comes from the men of the kahal and the elect. They [the scholars] are of a mind to flatter them so they should not spoil their livelihood. They exhibit [the authorities'] good deeds and the glory of their wisdom in a way that they [the scholars] profit from them. They are warned, MY HEAD IS ASTIR WITH A GOODLY MATTER: the direction of their thoughts should be toward Heaven....These three pillars should direct themselves toward Heaven: the rabbi, who is engaged [in study and is considered] the pillar of the Torah; the prayer-leader (an'lian tsibur) who prays, [and is considered] the pillar of worship; the shamash who serves to gather those who do charity. All of them, as one, are warned....<sup>34</sup>

The scholars frequent circles they should avoid: [Note] the "you," to whom his advice is directed, his scholarly audience, in this selection.<sup>7</sup>

Another interpretation of this mismanah: When you desire to prevail in Torah and the worship of God "like a lion to do the will of your Father in Heaven," be an'li like the tail of a lion. This is not the case when you walk in the way with them [The wicked], eating and drinking with them, jesting, etc.<sup>35</sup>

The rabbis must resort to open corruption and cannot carry out their moral obligations:

[The verse] COMMAND AARON AND HIS SONS [Lev. 8:27] means that they should preach to the people, but in our day the sage must scatter [money] from his pocket to the authorities so that he be [appointed] the head of the beth din in the city. Hence he is deterred from preaching [for this would cause] the inhabitants of the town not to favor him and this might subtract from his livelihood, Heaven forbid.<sup>36</sup>



These jobs, bought with bribes, are very profitable:

On the contrary, he who engages in the affairs of the community does not lose his wealth; mightily his hand is filled in acquiring wealth and increasing his riches. Our eyes saw such behavior on the part of the rabbis and of the leaders who engage in community affairs which was so scandalous that it cannot be written down....<sup>37</sup>

In a number of famous passages, Jacob Joseph asserts that the scholars who at one time went around at Hanukan instructing the villagers in spiritual matters, now receive "voluntary" Hanukan contributions collected by force and brought to the cities by the order of the government. He accuses the hazanim of becoming sinners, rather than prayer leaders; he charges that the school teachers take more pains flattering the parents than teaching the students.<sup>38</sup> He attacks the shochtim for slaughtering improperly, the congregants in public synagogues for praying "by rote," and the rabbis for using their positions to arrange for themselves profitable marriages.<sup>39</sup>

Jacob Joseph was aware of the economic struggle and the poverty that threatened many:

I heard that in the past the evil impulse tried only to thrust one out of the world-to-come. This is not so now. He has become wise and thrusts man out of this world and of the world-to-come through the anxiety for livelihood which subsides neither day nor night. One has no rest in this world.<sup>40</sup>

Jacob Joseph describes a world in which scholars resort to any means to preserve their income:

If Israel the scholar knew this that Providence, and not one's own efforts determined fate, there would be no need to hate his fellowmen for spoiling his livelihood. Each artisan, innkeeper and storekeeper would not hate his trade, for he would know that all his livelihood and trade is like a manger - - the vessel by which his livelihood is given him by his Master, the Blessed One. If He shut up this manger, cannot their Master make another one? For the manger is not the essential, but the Master is the essential...and if Israel were to give attention to this, they would not hate each other; he who receives would not have to flatter him who gives...or have to make his Torah and worship a show for men.<sup>41</sup>

The result of the social conflict: scorn from the kanal leaders;

The sages chase after the nobles and the nobles find cause therefore to despise the wisdom that was said to be preferable....<sup>42</sup>

and from the common people:

Why are scholars despised by the common people? Because the scholars despise each other. Then the common people scorn the scholars, and they are likewise despised by the nations.<sup>44</sup>

The most fatal sin of the scholars is arrogance:

As the commentator to the Rambam explains in chapter two of the laws on the Foundation of the Torah: "When one reflects on then his soul hungers to cleave to Him, and all the commandments were given only that he arrive at this stage CHOOSE LIFE SO THAT YOU MAY LIVE, TO LOVE THE LORD etc. (See there.) And in the passing of time the minds who understand and are enlightened by this have grown few. They have made the Torah a crown with which to become great and to gain glory, and these masters of repentance make a show of their excellence. He who learns one halachah lords it a bit and when he learns more he lords it more, and when he learns the legal authorities and the kabbalah he becomes more prideful and grows farther away from God, as it says in Sotah: "Concerning the naughty, I and he cannot dwell in this world together etc." The scholars tramp about from city to city...

and thus we understand the verse: למה יחלל?  
 Apparently to read WHY WILL YOU TRAMP MORE? In  
 I:7 that they tramp about (למה יחלל)  
 to go to the veshivan to study AND CONTINUOUS TO  
 REBEL למה יחלל, growing farther away and turning  
 aside from God. Easy to understand....AND JACOB  
 LIVED means when the scholar is lowly (למה יחלל)  
 from למה יחלל and humble, then he cleaves to  
 God, the Life of Life, as in the verse I SHALL  
 DWELL AMONG THE LOWLY, למה יחלל. But when he  
 glorifies himself with the title "Israel," למה יחלל  
 "I am head, למה יחלל" rearranged to למה יחלל  
 it is fitting for me to seem the head, for I am  
 an accepted scholar," then, THE DAYS OF ISRAEL TO  
 DIE GREW NEAR.<sup>45</sup>

The narrow pride of certain scholars arouses Jacob  
 Joseph's especial anger. Perhaps he was the object of their  
 contempt and condescension. He certainly fluently expresses  
 his scorn for those classes of scholars he condemns. (In-  
 cidentally, this passage was twisted by the early opponents  
 of Hasidism to yield an attack on all rabbinic learning. A  
 strange attack that must use so many accepted rabbinic con-  
 ceits to state its point!)

In sum, the scholars, not the worst of the people,  
 should rule:

The scholar and the fearer of sin, called  
 "head," has been demoted to the lowest.  
 "The wisdom of the scribes stinks and those  
 who fear Me are scorned; youth insult their  
 elders." The masses, called "tail," rule,  
 for the violent prevail.<sup>46</sup>

This disturbance of the proper order has grown so  
 serious that Jacob Joseph seems at times to despair of its  
 ever being restored:

From the natural side unity between a Jew  
 and his fellowman is impossible, for there  
 is an abyss between a Jew and his fellowman,  
 and this abyss will be permanent unless He  
 sends Elijah, the prophet, who will then turn  
 the hearts of the fathers into the children,  
 etc.<sup>47</sup>

Jacob Joseph certainly had no new organizational form in  
 mind for his generation.

What could be done to correct the disturbed? Implicit-  
 ly, and sometimes even openly, he makes demands on his fellow  
 scholars, and he suggests new modes of relationship between  
 the scholars and the masses.

There are two approaches at present, Jacob Joseph says,  
 both inadequate:

There are two groups among the scholars. The  
 first isolates himself to direct himself, but  
 not others; the second corrects himself and also  
 others, and leads many to repent from sin as a  
 result of the chastisement and preaching he  
 makes public in the gate. Behold, while the  
 first group is beloved by human beings because  
 it is hidden, it is not so with the second...  
 But as Solomon weighed in his wisdom: BETTER  
 IS OPEN CHASTISEMENT THAN HIDDEN LOVE למה יחלל,  
 27:17. The first kind loves only himself;  
 the second kind loves God more than his body  
 and he loves למה יחלל human creatures למה יחלל  
 he thinks that perhaps they will merit that  
 God finds pleasure in למה יחלל them if they repent...<sup>48</sup>

The disinterest of most rabbis is wrong:

I explained that the disease is spreading  
 among the rabbis - that they expound למה יחלל  
 on Shabbata haGadol and Shabbata Snuva. The  
 point of the sermon is to show the proper way:  
 we learn למה יחלל from the legal authorities and  
 the Talmud and even more from Moses, our teacher,  
 who showed the people who were unclean how  
 to become sanctified for God's service through  
 the Passover sacrifice, thus showing the people  
 for all time how to sanctify themselves for  
 God's service. This is not the case now.  
Now the rabbis expound the simple meanings  
of the text with sharp points to show the  
 people their cleverness and expertness, and  
 finally on Passover they describe a few laws,  
 but on the Sabbath of Repentance nothing!  
 This is contrary to the Talmud and the author-  
 ities.<sup>49</sup>

But the answer is not to chastise:

He is not to thunder against his generation, for he himself is the cause... Thus DO NOT RAISE UP SIN ON HIM /Lev. 1:17/ casting sin on him while removing oneself from the whole. One should join oneself with them.<sup>50</sup>

The people have rejected the chastisers:

A saying of the masses: "It is impossible that it should be as bad as they make it out in the books of musar which /are written to/ terrify a man."<sup>51</sup>

The scholars should ally themselves even with sinners among the common people:

Even though they are wicked and judged bad by Heaven, even so, they are /considered/ good when they are joined to the good scholars (zaddikim) and there is peace between them. Then their fate is joined with the good scholars and they are saved by the multitude of them. This is not the case when they date the scholars....<sup>52</sup>

The responsibility of the scholars is to avenge peace:

It seems to me that he hints that the scholars (who are אגליו יצא, servants of Solomon) must be at peace (והיו) with the innocents of the city, which is not the case with him who speaks equity and chastisement of musar to the people, thereby causing them to hate him.<sup>53</sup>

Although he expresses admiration for the staunch honesty of the angry popular preachers of musar, Jacob Joseph does not find this a useful model for his generation of scholars:

It seems to me that there are two kinds of musar: one for the scholars and one for the masses. He must talk to each according to his character and level....<sup>54</sup>

The good scholars and the learned should hear /true/ musar for "I shall speak hard things to them." But this is not the case for the masses. Indeed, they should hear "soft words of my mouth and a way of persuasion."<sup>55</sup>

The masses will be saved only by sweet preaching and conciliation.

The function of the scholar is best served by becoming involved in the daily lives of the masses:

I heard an explanation of IN ALL YOUR WAYS KNOW HIM: also in common talk. If the scholar dedicates himself to his fellow in order to draw near to him, then if /that scholar/ should require of him a commandment, /the scholar/ will see that he will get his request - because he has already drawn near to him through common talk of worldly matters (אשר ידבר עמו).<sup>56</sup>

Therefore, when he /the complete man/ is in this state /strict judgement/, engaged in Torah and prayer, fasting, sackcloth and weeping, and he goes forth to the atmosphere of the world and sees men that do not behave thus, he stirs up strict judgement against them. But this is not the case....when he is /in the state of/ mercy, because then he mixes with human creatures and makes unifications with them through common talk and through other matters he knows from /the principle/ IN ALL YOUR WAYS KNOW HIM. One can know God from other activities than/ work in Torah and prayer. It is possible that men in their temporal concerns do not leave off from eternal ones. Their thought, like /the scholar's/, cleaves to Him, the Blessed One. /The complete man/ can thus obtain merit for them. This is not the case when he is not in a state /of/ union with the masses; then he cannot obtain merit for the world.<sup>57</sup>

This idea forms a central part of Jacob Joseph's theology proper. The scholar's involvement with the masses has a metaphysical character: the scholar includes himself in the sins of the masses to attain forgiveness for all of them:

And thus Maazel said when she called his name אשר ידבר עמו GOD GATHERED UP (אשר ידבר עמו) MY DISGRACE. The Aishkeh questioned, "And the word 'gathering'?" For our discussion this is fine: He GATHERED all the DISGRACE there is in man; everything is attached to Me and is My DISGRACE. Easy to understand. Thus we comprehend these verses JOSEPH BROUGHT EVIL REPORT OF THEM UNTO THEIR FATHER...unto their Father in Heaven, for of all the EVIL REPORT which he saw in them he attached something from it to himself. /When/ he confessed before his Father in Heaven, he included himself with them in the secret of the zaddik. Understand.<sup>58</sup>



They [the scholars] cannot teach repentance unless they learn to include themselves with them in all the stages...and this is the principal purpose of man and by this future generations will learn a great way in the worship of God. I remembered and received this verbally FROM MY TEACHER and it cannot be explained in a book. Know and understand.<sup>59</sup>

This is a theology resembling vicarious atonement through a spiritual elite. In another comment on that riddle we noted above Jacob Joseph expounds:

"When he is alive his voice is one," means that he [the scholar] is called "alive" when he stands on one rung, but his superiority is not as great as when he is called "dead," when the scholar (zaddik) descends from his level he is called "dead." This is the secret of "vay bending under nay to raise it..."<sup>60</sup> "When he is dead his voice is seven;" he descends in order to raise the level called seven. Understand. When the scholar (zaddik) descends from his level he is in a state of mercy in order that he can unite with the masses who are many, to raise them. "When he is alive his voice is one," means he has only one merit, for himself. This is not the case when he descends (called "dead") in order to obtain merit for the many he has joined with to raise; his voice is seven for they are many...and the merit of the many hangs on him. Understand. Hence the verse WHO CAN BRING THE CLEAN FROM THE UNCLEAN? [Job 14:4] The scholar (zaddik), called clean, at times finds in himself something unclean to join with the unclean to lift them up to cleanliness.<sup>61</sup>

This is the new role for the scholar. He is to obtain for the masses, first, faith in himself, and then help them gain salvation by sharing their guilt. Thereby he unites the Shechinah and God and incurs the ultimate "repair" of the most fundamental cosmic Galuth:

Interpreting the Talmud: "If he spurns the scholar there is no cure for his wound." I heard....that the scholar (zaddik) descends by way of Genennom in order to lift up the

wicked who hold on to him, which is impossible for him who scorns the scholar. Fine words!... Thus there are two aspects to the verse [THE LORD KILLS AND MAKES ALIVE; HE BRINGS DOWN TO SHEOL AND BRINGS UP. I Sam. 2:6.] First: HE KILLS AND MAKES ALIVE for some sin occurs to the scholar (zaddik) so that he can join himself to the masses to lift them up; HE KILLS in order that HE MAKES ALIVE. This is from the side of mercy and kindness. Second: HE BRINGS DOWN TO SHEOL AND BRINGS UP, for the soul of the scholar (zaddik) descends to Genennom in the secret of metempsychosis in order to lift up from there the souls of the wicked.... Samuel dressed himself in the garment of Israel and said, "I HAVE SINNED." [I Sam. 15:30. Actually Saul says this. Samuel] repaired himself to raise them and renew the kingdom with them, to raise the Shechinah to the [sephiran of] Thought which is the renewal of the kingdom.<sup>62</sup>

This doctrine of the spiritual role of the saint-scholar proved very fruitful in the developing ideology of the Hasidic movement.

## CHAPTER THREE

### The Historical Besht and the Road to Myth

I want to use our evidence, both from the Toldoth and elsewhere, to characterize the Besht as best I can, to define some aspects of his identity with high probability, others with reasonable probability, and eliminate the improbable. The use of negative evidence is a crucial problem in this reconstruction. I must use negative evidence to sketch in the blank spaces between points established by inference from the positive (i.e., presently observable) evidence. This shall be the rule: the case for a reconstruction must be made on positive evidence and may acquire additional legitimacy from the absence of proof to the contrary. Although there is, for example, no extensive testimony of the Besht's Talmudic training, he may have been conversant with the Talmud, if this would be consistent with what else is known of him. I will avoid reasoning that because there is no evidence of the Besht was tall, most certainly he was short! The foundation for a case cannot rest on a silence with which the rest of the evidence is somehow reconciled.

Jacob Joseph was an experienced kabbalist. What do the nearly two hundred and fifty quotations from his master in the Toldoth indicate? Roughly ninety-eight times the Besht gave an interpretation of a verse (usually from the Bible, also from the Talmud or midrash). Four times he quotes Namanides; once the "Kitve naAri."<sup>1</sup> Sixty-Four

## PART TWO

### The Master

times the Besht uses a terminology or method highly characteristic of the kabbalan:<sup>2</sup>

I HEARD FROM MY TEACHER with respect to the secret of tzimzum which is from Him Himself, and the secret of the three heads.....<sup>3</sup>

One must battle strange thoughts, break the kelipoth and lift up the inner essence to Holiness. I HEARD FROM MY TEACHER something that cannot be put in writing, although I jotted it down elsewhere with hurried shortness.<sup>4</sup>

The Besht discusses the three souls (נפש, רוח, חיה) of man rolling through the seven sefirot; he uses the various names of God in their kabbalistic connotations;<sup>5</sup> he makes elaborate mystic word-plays on the names of Jacob's twelve sons,<sup>7</sup> he uses the secret of the alphabet and the five final letters,<sup>8</sup> and so on.

Jacob Joseph's loyalty to his teacher was didactic and personal. He treats him with great respect; he presents many quotations from his teacher with mysterious hints alluding to hidden depth and subtlety.<sup>5</sup> He is at pains to quote him exactly; once he even apologizes to his audience, "if this is not his true meaning, anyhow it is the meaning of his words."<sup>10</sup> Elsewhere he says, "I have heard the interpretation of this statement BY MY TEACHER and it is a great rule on the worship of God. But now I have completely forgotten it."<sup>11</sup> Strong testimony to his devotion to the Besht is to be found in the appendix that concludes the Toldoth: "These words which I HEARD FROM MY TEACHER I wrote only as chapter headings because I was afraid and also because of forgetfulness."<sup>12</sup> Almost the entire appendix is devoted to the Besht's teachings. Jacob Joseph must pass on as much of his teacher's doctrine as possible.

The formula he constantly uses suggests the awe and respect Jacob Joseph felt for the Besht. I HEARD FROM MY TEACHER recalls the writings of Hayim Vital who called the Ari, MY TEACHER.<sup>13</sup>

It seems, therefore, that Jacob Joseph admired the Besht as an excellent kabbalist with many profound ideas. There is no evidence in the Toldoth that the Besht was a lower class kabbalist of the practical variety. Jacob Joseph mentions no details of the Besht's miraculous cures or his visions into the future. He writes to his audience without any tone of apology or justification. I would not insist that the Besht could not have been a healer of the common folk, but I do not see any reason to forego all the other evidence and reconstruct his identity on the title "Ba'al Shem" alone. (Further on I shall try to account for the usefulness of this term in building the image of the Besht in the lower Hasidic tradition several generations later.)<sup>14</sup>

Some scholars<sup>15</sup> reconstruct the Besht as a quasi-Messianic figure who brought a secret doctrine of Redemption to his disciples the details of which they were afraid to publish explicitly. These scholars point to the mysterious phrases of respect in which Jacob Joseph implied there were hidden depths to his teaching. In the appendix Jacob Joseph refers to a "well-known trip" by the Besht after which his teacher gave the Besht secret names.<sup>16</sup> Previously Jacob Joseph had identified that teacher:

There is one source for these two kinds of preachers. Anijan the Shilonite who received the tradition from Moses his teacher and was

of those who left Egypt. Afterwards he was of the beth din of David the king, and the rabbi of Elijah the prophet, and the rabbi of my teacher, may his name be blessed.<sup>17</sup>

Even more portentous is the famous letter to his brother-in-law in Palestine that the Besht gave Jacob Joseph to deliver. Jacob Joseph included the letter at the end of his second book, Ben Porath Yosef, in the same manner that he included those assorted sayings of the Besht in the appendix at the end of the Telmoth. The letter is dated 1747, and in it the Besht describes his ascent to heaven. The wicked there

all of them as one sought from me and appealed to me unto embarrassment, "To the noble excellence of the glory of your learning; God is gracious unto you with abundant understanding to obtain and know of these matters. Ascend with us and be for us help and assistance"....

and when the Besht ascends and talks face to face with the Messiah and asks, "When are you coming, sir?" he is told

"When your learning is published and you are revealed in the world, and your fountains are scattered abroad of what I taught you and you obtained, and they too are able to make unions and ascents like you...then all the Kelipoth will be finished and it will be a time of favor and salvation"....

The Besht concludes,

"I learned when I was there: three special remedies (seguloth) and three holy names"...

which he was forbidden to teach.

It is worth noting the parallels to the Vilna Gaon and Isaac Luria. The Gaon was also a great kabbalist; he wrote kabbalistic commentaries to the Bible.<sup>19</sup> But he believed in incantations, amulets and evil spirits<sup>20</sup> and thought one could make a golem with the right combination

of "names."<sup>21</sup> It was commonly acknowledged in his day that he received a revelation by Elijah.<sup>22</sup> The Ari called himself "a spark of Moses" and dreamed about caves and tombs around Safed where great Biblical and Talmudic scholars studied and were buried. He sent his students out to these places to "unite with them."<sup>23</sup> Luria's kabbalah purports to be an authentic interpretation of the Zohar via Elijah's revelations.<sup>24</sup> Conversations with those in heaven were not uncommon. Once Hayim Vital met the soul of Moses Cordovero in a dream and Cordovero assured him that the system of Vital's master, the Ari, was the essence and principle of the true kabbalah studied by the learned in the world of souls.<sup>25</sup> These visions and inspirations were de rigour for a kabbalist of stature and part of the tradition his pupils would pass on. A great kabbalist would wish for and perhaps be convinced of such notions. He might even hint about them to his disciples.

If the Besht did pass on a totally new Torah of Redemption we might expect Jacob Joseph to have chosen a different form in which to present it. He only leaves very rare hints in passing among his own sermons.<sup>26</sup> We certainly would not expect all of the Besht's other students to be so nonplussed. Of all the Besht's students only Jacob Joseph recorded his teachings for publication. The Maggid Dov Baer, the Besht's second most famous pupil, initiated the organization of the nascent Hasidic movement, but, according to Tainberg,

neither in Lekute Amarim nor 'Or Torah is the Besht at all mentioned with the title

"my teacher." The few times the Maggid speaks of the Besht he says 7"7, 7"7 1'7 79X or 7"7 7"7 7"7 7"7. And many of the sayings of the Besht, especially the most important ones, are not brought in the sermons of the Maggid in the name of their author.<sup>27</sup>

Even the teachings of the Besht in our most reliable source, the Toldoth, are problematic. Many sayings and explanations are attributed both to the Besht and some of his students.<sup>28</sup>

Therefore, although the Besht can be visualized as a central figure in a kabbalistic study group, many of his disciples were men of high calibre. The group probably attracted scholars and preservers who came to study the contributions of all its members.

The hypothesis that the Besht preached a messianic doctrine to the few raises more problems than it solves.<sup>29</sup>

The usual impression that "Hasidism is a typical revivalist movement whose founder was innocent of higher rabbinical learning,"<sup>30</sup> might seem to be confirmed by the short, apophthegmatic form of the Besht's quotes in the Toldoth. No gilgulist could be so terse! However, some of his quotes are rhymed, <sup>31</sup> and, moreover, the form of the Besht's statement in the Toldoth is certainly not identical with the original utterance. Even if Jacob Joseph accurately preserved the Besht's ideas and language, he does not claim to pass on a record of the Besht's lectures; he offers only chapter headings of the Besht's teachings in the course of his own thought. (As for form: neither can one imagine the original of the Talmud or the Maharshan from the Toldoth.)

The Besht may have made legal decisions; he does quote halachic authorities occasionally. More likely he did not need or care to publish responsa. There was a role in the scholar class for kabbalistic intellectuals who specialized in the mystic way rather than in legal problems. Such intellectuals would need to know Talmudic and halachic sources. (They could not read the kabbalistic literature without a rabbinic education!) These scholars served as teachers for the societies for kabbalah study<sup>32</sup> and religious leaders for the artisans' guilds and the charity associations that proliferated in the seventeenth and eighteenth century keniloth, and provided much of the leadership and something of the structural pattern for the emerging Hasidic "courts."<sup>34</sup> These societies offer a possible setting for the Besht's activity.

As for other contemporary testimony which mentions the Besht: the Besht is spoken of by four established scholars, in passing, as a respected kabbalist.<sup>35</sup> All the accusations that he was an am maretz come from the late eighteenth century anti-Hasidic polemicists.

How do the Hasidic traditions on the Besht fit this reconstruction?

The Seivne Hasht, the book of legends on the life and activities of the Besht, was first published in 1617, fifty-five years after his death. Its character is immediately apparent:

When he [Israel's father, coming back from many years of exile] was on the road, Elijah revealed himself and said to him, "By this merit a son will be born to you who will enlighten the eyes of Israel. Because of

him Israel will be established is that I  
 /GOD/ WILL BE GLORIFIED THROUGH YOU. /Is.  
 49:3,7 He came to his house and found his  
 wife, who with God's help was still living,  
 and the Besht was born to them in their old  
 age when the two of them were close to one  
 hundred years old.<sup>36</sup>

The Shivhe naBesht is a masterpiece of charm and pathos. It presents an understandable and attractive portrait of the Besht for the simple, untutored Jew. Unlike most Jewish heroes, the Besht has a childhood. His parents were captives of war; they left him an orphan. He avoided the neder, preferring to play in the out-of-doors. Even as a youngster he loved music and gently taught the other children to sing and pray. His first wife died soon after they were married. Later, he and his second wife lived humbly in the Carpathian forest, digging mud and carting it to the town to earn a meager living. When he returned to Galicia he ran an inn and worked as a melamed.

The legendary Besht praised humility and poked fun at the naughty scholars. He came to marry his second wife dressed as a peasant in order to fool his dignified brother-in-law. In a disputation a hostile rabbi asked him, "Does one repeat the whole shmoneh service if he forgets the prayer ' Yi Yi Yi Yi '?" The Besht replied: "I would never forget; you would forget again even the second time!" However, he showed great respect for the lowly. In one typical legend he recognized and proclaimed that a simple, honest shoemaker was the true foundation of his synagogue until the advent of the redeemer. The Besht of these folk stories loved horses and saved sinful women, walked in the market, puffing on his pipe, spinning parables for the village men and women.

There is a second aspect to the Baal Shem in the Shivhe naBesht. The simple Jew who could identify with the Besht would also be dazzled by his extraordinary destiny and talents. The Besht's father, on his deathbed, proclaimed, "Remember all your life - God is with you. Fear nothing!" As a child the Besht secretly studied kabbalistic texts all through the night; mysterious scholars came from afar to bring him mystic documents long-destined only for him. He lived seven years of solitude in the Carpathians, speaking to birds and trees; the very mountains met as he walked over canyons and boysses and only sank further in his meditations. Robber bands stood in awe of him. He saw scenes at great distances and understood the affairs of Satan and the heavenly court. He tried even to redeem the soul of Shabtai Zevi. Of course he cured diseases and exorcised demons.

This mixture of identification and projection was delightful entertainment for the Hasidic public. Dinur notes that the Shivhe naBesht is propaganda literature par excellence; the Hasidic masters encouraged storytelling to "strengthen faith in the zaddik." "If I recount the good attributes of the zaddikim I thereby bring good things into the world." The legends represent an idealization of the origins of Hasidism set in the court of the zaddik in its heyday.<sup>37</sup> The Hasidic tradition on the Besht is a collective picture, a social composition of the mature movement,<sup>38</sup> although the model for some of the traditions may go back to the Ari: the seven years of solitude in the Carpathians, for example, is



parallel to the seven legendary years of solitude on the banks of the Nile.<sup>39</sup> In any event the Snivne haBesht offers no help in understanding the historical Besht.

Let us list the intermediary steps. The Besht died in 1760. The Toldoth appeared in 1761. The Snivne haBesht in 1815.

In 1764 the first edition of Ketner Shem Tov was published by an editor who collected the scattered sayings attributed to the Besht in Jacob Joseph's writings; they made up a book of about forty pages in large type. (The proportion of quotations from the Besht in Jacob Joseph's work is very small; the Toldoth alone runs nearly four hundred pages of small print.) In 1764 and 1762 the Lekute Amrim and the Lekute Yekarim, respectively, were published by two pupils of the Maggid Dov Baer. In 1766 a new printing of the Ketner Shem Tov included the Besht's sayings by way of the Maggid. The Will of Rabbi Israel Baal Shem appeared in 1793. It was not a will (so said R. Shneur Zalman) but only one more collection of sayings. A literary heritage had been created for a man who left none.

In the 90's of the eighteenth century, a number of polemic pamphlets were circulated, proclaiming the Besht an ignoramus:

I remember he was famous as a non-scholar, just a baal shem, writer of amulets. He went into the markets and streets with a staff of pride, pipe in mouth, speaking with the masses.<sup>40</sup>

Several dependable people who knew him said that he was not numbered among the learned at all. He determined, by himself, to be a prophet

and a seer. He knew something of remedies and names, as is the custom with baale shem.<sup>41</sup>

There are two other testimonies in the same vein both confused and very late.<sup>42</sup> All these later sources in denouncing the later Hasidism charge that their founder was a poor. But in the earlier attacks, published during the 70's and the 80's, in all the herems and circular letters, the Besht is nowhere mentioned. Not until thirty years after his death, after the Toldoth and the apocryphal literature under his name were circulating, did the Besht begin to figure prominently in the debate. The charge that he had been an am haaretz proved an excellent theme for the legendary Besht - along with the title baal shem which meant healing and curing, the basis was ready for the image of identification that could appeal to the hearts of the masses. The famous letter on his ascent to heaven, the name of his teacher and the mysterious hints throughout the works of Jacob Joseph encouraged awe and amazement. We can therefore account for the emergence of a latter-day am haaretz Besht even though we decide on an early intellectual Besht.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### The Mind of the Besht

I can now approach an analysis of sayings of the Besht. Since he may have been a man of literary and mystical sophistication, I shall analyze the fragments of his teaching for these depths.

The problem of "strange thoughts" is our key, because only in the context of the kabbalistic intellectual system can we see its full significance:

As I RECEIVED FROM MY TEACHER: If one has strange thoughts - thoughts such as the appetite for sexual intercourse - he should cleave to his root, which is needed. The Glory of God hides the matter.<sup>1</sup>

We can identify these strange thoughts with a similar phrase from the literature of the Sabbatian movement: massim zarim, "strange or paradoxical actions," which run counter to religious law.<sup>2</sup> The sin of "strange thoughts" is much more severe than the innocent phrase in English indicates. (Similarly, lesson nare in the Tolotov was a serious sin, representing the possibility of a community of ignorance and dilapidation rather than mere passivity.) "Strange thoughts" were powerful sensual appetites, sexual fantasies, and inchoate, repetitive desires to rebel against the demands of the Father in Heaven and His law. All three protest movements in seventeenth and eighteenth century Poland were involved with this problem; the Sabbatians alternated periods of license with extreme asceticism; the Hasidim devised a system of controlled

ecstasy; the Frankists exploited a preoccupation with and fascination for man's lusts into an open nihilist revolt against the law.<sup>2a</sup> Whatever may have been the structural conditions for these revolts, their ideological form dealt with that psychic problem. Apparently this was a problem that Polish rabbinic Judaism, heavily attached to the kabbalan, inculcated and sometimes failed to provide relief from.

We are particularly interested in this problem as it affected the mystic intellectual; it could assume the form of a crucial obsession in his search for salvation. The mystic, and the Besht as an example, endowed the realm of thought with a greater status than the realm of objects or even the realm of words. The aim of his life was a state of mind in which he contemplates the inner essence of the world of matter, and thereby transforms himself into pure form, turning matter into spirit, and ego (אני) into infinity (אין):

According to what I RECEIVED FROM MY TEACHER, the principal work in the Torah and prayer is to cleave oneself to the inner essence of the light of the Ayn Sof who is within the letters of the Torah and the prayer. This is called "study for its own sake." Hence R. Meir said, "He who engages in Torah for its own sake merits many things," and the secrets of the Torah are revealed to him. He knows futures and the secret meaning of all events in the Torah and knows how to conduct himself properly with the Torah and the worship of God, in addition to seeing the Upper worlds, etc. THIS I HEARD FROM MY TEACHER.<sup>3</sup>

One might even say that the mystic became like God in his knowledge as he penetrated to the inner knowledge. Through uniting the world of action (maaseh) with the world of



thought (dehashavan) in the Upper Knowledge (Da'ath nadiyon)

AS I HEARD FROM MY TEACHER, by this means one can cancel all bad decrees, because this is when he ties Kingdom the lowest sephiran called "J X" with Thought called "K". Understand!<sup>4</sup>

And this process is part of the unification of God, necessary for the Redemption:

I wrote IN THE NAME OF MY TEACHER his interpretation of EVERYTHING YOUR HAND FINDS TO DO, DO WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH: when one does a material action and ties it to Thought upwards in the Upper knowledge, he makes a unification for the Holy One, etc.<sup>4b</sup>

This process of tying one's thought to directing a material action, a ritual, a commandment or a prayer, is the crucial matter of kavannah. Kavannoth are the exercises by which mind and body are concentrated and directed toward their spiritual function. They are forms of thought control, imposed by the mystic on himself in an effort to achieve that absolute unity and stability in himself that he demands of the universe. Therefore an innocuous, often-repeated statement of the Besut has a certain deep significance:

Benedic, I HEARD FROM MY TEACHER the place where the thought of a man is - there he is completely.<sup>5</sup>

On the one hand, by achieving this state of perfect attention, he has achieved, as it were, a place in Infinity; on the other hand, if one is seized by a "strange thought" he is reduced to the reality of the grossest material acts, lusts, appetites or rebellion.

This kabbalistic system can, under certain conditions, place impossible demands on the believer. The kabbalist seeks self-annihilation<sup>7</sup> before God, but he cannot completely censor out the unconscious. There is no guarantee of perfect mental control; no amount of fasts, immersions and sleepless nights insures total dominance by the super-ego. (How could the mystic control his dreams? Were the midnight watchmen attempts to discipline sleep too?) Given a man who takes the task of earning salvation with total seriousness and a frustrating social environment which does not seem to make sense, the believer can be plunged into a profound state of unworthiness, uncleanness and uncertainty. He experiences a violent depression and he searches his honesty over and over again for signs of insincerity. He is willing to undergo anything to feel sure that he worships God יהוה. The kabbalists adopted a complex and severe system of penances to purify themselves. Solomon Maimon gives a revealing account of them, worth quoting fully:

In my youth I was of a rather strong religious disposition; and I observed in most of the rabbis a good deal of pride, quarrelsomeness and other evil qualities, they became objects of dislike to me on that account. I therefore took as my model only those of them who are commonly known by the name of Chasidim, or the pious. They devote the whole of their lives to the strictest observances of the laws and moral virtues. I afterwards saw that these for the most part do harm, less indeed to others but all the more to themselves, inasmuch as they throw out the baby with the bathwater, as in seeking to suppress their desires and passions, my italics they also suppress their powers and cramp their activity to such an extent that in most cases, by their exercises, they bring upon themselves an untimely death.

Two or three instances, of which I was myself an eye-witness, will be sufficient to show what I mean. A Jewish scholar, well-known on account of his piety, Simon of Lubtsch, had undergone the severest exercises of penance. He had already carried out the T'shuvath Hakana - the penance of Kana - which consists in fasting daily for six years and avoiding for supper anything that comes from a living being (flesh, milk, honey, etc.) He had also practiced Golath, that is a continuous wandering, in which the penitent is not allowed to remain two days in the same place; and, in addition, he had worn a hairshirt next to his skin. But he felt that he would not be doing enough for the satisfaction of his conscience unless he further observed T'shuvath Hamishkal - the penance of weighing - which requires a particular form of penance proportionate to every sin. But as he found by calculation, that the number of his sins was too great to be stoned for in this way, he took it into his head to starve himself to death. After he had spent some time in the process, he came in his wanderings to the place where my father lived, and without anybody in the house knowing, went into the barn, where he fell upon the ground in utter exhaustion. My father came by chance into the barn, and found the man, whom he had long known, lying half dead on the ground, with a Zohar (the principal book of the kabbalists) in his hand. He brought him at once all sorts of refreshments but the man refused them. My father came several times and repeated his urgent request that Simon would take something; but it was of no avail. My father had to attend to something in the house, whereupon Simon, to escape from his attentions, gathered all his strength, raised himself, went out of the barn, and eventually out of the village. When my father came back into the barn again, and found the man no longer there, he ran after him, and found him lying dead not far from the village. The affair became known among the Jews and Simon was looked on as a saint.

Joel of Kletz proposed nothing less than to hasten the advent of the Messiah. To this end he performed strict penance, rolled himself in snow, undertook night watches and similar severities. By all sorts of such operations he believed that he was able to accomplish the overthrow of a legion of evil spirits, who kept guard on the Messiah, and placed obstacles to prevent his coming...<sup>2</sup>

As Maimon says, the kabbalists, the early Hasidim, suppressed their desires and passions; they repressed these aberrations from the desired spiritual perfection. And the aberrations returned, transformed from the thought into the evil impulse behind it, then to the personified Satan behind the impulse and the host of wicked spirits and malicious devils that populated their folklore.

The Besht seems to have insisted that this invasion of the unconscious be taken with the utmost seriousness. He tells a parable about the yetzer hara:

I HEARD FROM MY TEACHER a parable about these two groups. There was on the way through a certain forest a settlement of bandits, and it was very dangerous for all who passed through there. It happened that two men were walking through that forest. One was drunk with the drunkenness of Lo and the other of settled mind. The two met the bandits who attacked and robbed them, beat and wounded them. The two escaped, only with their lives, and after passing from there they met other men. Some asked the drunk if he passed through the forest peacefully or not. He answered, "Peacefully. There is no danger there!" And they asked him, "What are these wounds and cuts and bruises?" He did not know how to answer them. Some asked the alert one and he said, "Heaven forbid, be careful, for there are bandits there." He gave them a lengthy warning. The moral is: the alert one knew how to warn those Others to proceed only with caution and arms, etc. Which is not the case with the drunk, who did not know how to warn at all. Thus the zaddik, servant of God, knows from his wars with the yetzer hara and such bandits that the way to worship God is dangerous. He always lives a life of trouble in order to be saved from the traps of the yetzer hara's net. The zaddik knows how to warn about the danger of the bandits. He THAT INCREASES KNOWLEDGE INCREASES SORROW Ecc. 1:18. This is not

the case with the wicked. They continually rejoice in the joys of the yetzer nara and say, "Peace. There is no danger in this world." Also in the world-to-come are there these two opposites....<sup>8</sup>

We are to take these dangers seriously. Then the Besht makes a favorite observation about what we might call the mechanism of projection:

I HEARD FROM MY TEACHER the interpretation of the misnagim: "Who is wise? He who learns from every man," by way of a parable: he who looks in a mirror knows his defect. He who sees a defect in the other should know that there is a bit of him - a particle of himself of it in him.<sup>10</sup>

Even the fanatic scholar who considers himself holy and brutally castigates the sinner for violating his standards has sin in his mind. Preoccupation with the sins of others is another form of the strange thoughts that disturb the mystic's serenity.

The Besht has his own solution to the problems of strange thoughts:

I HEARD FROM MY TEACHER: If some nullification of Torah or prayer happen to the complete man, he must understand that even here it is God's hand who thrusts him away; in order to draw him closer, in the secret of HIS LEFT HAND <sup>11</sup> IS UNDER MY HEAD AND HIS RIGHT HAND embraces me.

Strange thoughts, sublimated, can become a means of attaining salvation rather than an absolute obstacle to it:<sup>12</sup>

Behold, I RECEIVED FROM MY TEACHER: when evil causes good it becomes a footstool for the good and everything is completely good, almost the nullification of the kelipot, as in the future. Also there are deep matters here for the subject of strange thoughts.<sup>13</sup>

This is the full significance of the Besht's monism (which is not by any means a pantheism of nature). Behind every entity and event of experience was Something unifying the world and eternity:

AS I RECEIVED FROM MY TEACHER: in every one of man's troubles - physical and spiritual - if he take it to heart that even in that trouble is God himself there, the garment is removed and the trouble is cancelled along with all bad degrees.<sup>14</sup>

Since the world of objects and the world of words are only "garments," Satan and pain are garments, and the appetites for food, drink, and sexual pleasure can be used to reach the state of ecstasy that is with God:

MY TEACHER EXPLAINED that every aspect of this world has an inner purpose.<sup>15</sup>

The Besht takes the ontological model of Lurianic Kabbalah, a spark of holiness within a shell of matter, and applies it to emotions and thoughts. Even emotions and thoughts are veils and curtains for the inner God.

Jacob Joseph turns to that verse, so fruitful for religious thinkers from Paul to Luther, and even the Hasidim, who are concerned with justification by faith. Jacob Joseph says "THE ZADDIK WILL LIVE BY HIS FAITH; The zaddik believes that all individual events are controlled by Providence, All events are from Him, may He be blessed."<sup>16</sup>

AS I HEARD FROM MY TEACHER: when Heaven wishes to bring a punishment on him who deserves a punishment, then they take away from him his degree of faith (his faith). Therefore it is fitting to pray to God that He strengthen one's faith in Him.<sup>17</sup>

Absolute trust in God is the sine qua non of salvation. This faith was especially necessary when the environment became even more unstable and undependable, and left man with the feeling he needed miracles to survive.<sup>18</sup>

We acquire this state of faith through "sweetening the judgements" (לְשׂוּת הַדִּינִים) which seems to mean rather than changing the divine decree, coming to perceive apparent severity as mercy and reorganizing one's feelings to accept with love and peace the gestures of Providence. The Besht's mysticism is a form of spiritual quietism:

It seems to me that I wrote below that the Ramban questioned, how does prayer change the decree from bad to good? Is there, Heaven forbid, a change of will?...MY TEACHER IN THE NAME OF HIS TEACHER SOLVED THIS: prayer is to sweeten the judgement in its root, to the judgement of the Kingdom the lowest sephira with Intelligence one of the highest. Then one is another man...MY TEACHER EXPLAINED further that the decrees are the letters and the messenger can really make another combination for these letters.... that prayer helps, for he can reverse by means of prayer the letters of "pain" (אִי) into "acceptance" (קַבְלָה).<sup>19</sup>

I HEARD IN THE NAME OF MY TEACHER...what he explained in the writings of the Arizal...to sweeten judgements at their roots, which means, if he finds in a judgement a root of mercy, then the whole becomes mercy, and the judgement is sweetened by this root of mercy in it.<sup>20</sup>

The Besht did not develop the doctrine of Joy (simcha) that became so characteristic of early Hasidism. He neither attacks penances nor proposes enthusiastic behaviors of movement, song and dance.<sup>21</sup> He may have encouraged these practices among his group as part of those secret teachings

that could only be put down as heads of chapters but were inappropriate to publish fully. Probably the Besht's doctrine of accepting the pleasure of the senses in order to transcend them suggested to his followers the usefulness of enthusiastic physical movements. As the nascent Hasidic movement gathered popular support, the enthusiasm generated by group song and dance served to consolidate its emotional solidarity. The leaders of the New Hasidism were very much alive to successful techniques (as we saw with respect to their propaganda literature) and they quickly realized the effectiveness of these behaviors.

The Besht did participate in Jacob Joseph's doctrine of unifying Divinity through ordinary talk with the masses, which permitted the ideological transformation of the old aristocratic kabbalah into a Hasidism with mass following:

Thus there are unities also in all words and stories, AS I HEARD FROM MY TEACHER that he unites himself with the sister of the Matron (the Shechinah) by means of ordinary talk. (וּבְשֵׁם הַמַּלְאָכִים)<sup>22</sup>

The Besht was likewise involved in developing a new role for the scholar:

Behold, I HEARD FROM MY TEACHER that the principal means of repairing the repentant is through the great men of his generation who can raise him the repentant up and tie him in His God's root.<sup>23</sup>

If there is a spark of God everywhere, He is there too in the souls of the masses and it is the scholar's duty to lift them up with himself to Heaven.

## CONCLUSION

This study was limited to a reading of the Toldoth Yaakov Yosef for what it could tell us of the intellectual climate in the Besht's circle. But I would like to say something of the effect of the Toldoth in history and the role it played in the development of the Hasidic movement. It became something of a classic in later Hasidism. Pinchas of Koretz was supposed to have said, "With an I HEARD FROM MY TEACHER it is even possible to revive the dead,"<sup>1</sup> and he also wrote, "Of all the books that have been written in the past seventy years, none are altogether truthful except the works of the rabbi of Polnoy. There is no book in all the world which can compare to them."<sup>2</sup> Hasidic legend tells us that the burning of the book in Brody in 1761 raised a scandal in Heaven; Jacob Joseph ascended there himself to protest and the Besht intervened personally.<sup>3</sup> Better recommendations no one could want.

Historians tend to think of the book as the first Hasidic literary blast against the ancien regime. More likely Jacob Joseph had gone his own way after the death of the Besht. Later Hasidic legend (and modern scholars!) have great trouble explaining why the Besht did not pick Jacob Joseph as his successor, and they have difficulty accounting for the silence between Jacob Joseph and the Maggid Dov Baer. They may not have been enemies; perhaps they were individual entrepreneurs, each developing his own notions in his own setting. The scandal and investigation in Vilna, Brody and elsewhere in 1772 preceded the publication of the Toldoth as

sight years, yet one looks in vain to find any clear - or even obscure - reference to them in Jacob Joseph's book. Between 1772 and 1780 a lot happened in Hasidic circles: one group settled in Palestine, others approached the Gdan to dispute with him, and many famous Hasidic rabbis, Levi Yitzhak, Shneur Zalman, etc., were preaching and travelling in many parts of Poland.<sup>4</sup> Maimon testifies to a widespread missionary fervor even in the 60's and the early 70's. There is no hint of this in the Toldoth.<sup>7</sup>

Jacob Joseph was not in the "mainstream" of Hasidic development while he lived.

According to Hasidic legend Jacob Joseph, as is usually the case with an author of the "classic work in its field," had some trouble selling the book.<sup>5</sup> When the Toldoth reached Vilna the authorities reacted violently to it in light of the persecutions they had already commenced a decade previously. In the herem of 1781 the book appears in the list of other offenses. Its message was completely ignored; in a critical report, apparently sent from the Ukraine to the authorities in Vilna, the book is roundly denounced:

I write you regarding the book which has reached your land in the month of Menachem Av 1781, which the rav of the community of Polnoy, Jacob Joseph, has written. It contains moral teachings and novel expositions which they [The Hasidim] expound from the weekly portion of the Torah at the third meal of the Sabbath, according to their custom. It represents a new way which they have learned from their teacher, called Israel Beal Shem, regarding whom [Jacob Joseph] writes I HEARD FROM MY TEACHER (and they received concerning him that his teacher was Anijon the Shilonite.) His [Jacob Joseph's] purpose is to entice all Israel to walk in their path; but they do not walk in the path.

of our Holy Torah, the path of our ancient ones (may their memories be for a blessing). Their main goal is to destroy the study of the Torah, whether it is the Talmud or the kabbalah, which they aver are not necessary... He calls the book Beth Yaskov Yosef (sic) /which is printed<sup>7</sup> without any approval. I shall quote for you some passages - you may read them without end - which are fit to be burned....<sup>10</sup>

The author of this report quite deliberately and very cleverly takes Jacob Joseph's comments out of context. He insists that Jacob Joseph taught that "one shouldn't accustom himself to be diligent in study....for study brings one to naughtiness," and "Why do they [the scholars] wander to study Torah in the yeshivot; do they not by this increase rebellion?"<sup>11</sup>

After the book burnings in Vilna in 1732 and Brody<sup>12</sup> the role of the Toldoth in the history of Hasidism was assured. Perhaps the Toldoth's failure to reach much of its intended audience encouraged the Hasidic leadership to adopt it wholeheartedly. The uproar that greeted Jacob Joseph's book made the Besht famous and encouraged the later Hasidim to develop him as their eponymous hero.

The early Hasidim and their opponents were not very concerned with the Besht. There is no mention of the Besht in any of the herems or letters in the first polemic pamphlet of the Admonition, Zemir Arizim (no. 1) published after the Vilna episode in 1772.<sup>13</sup> In a letter to a meeting of kanai leaders in 1784 Shneur Zalman speaks of Dov Baer (then dead over ten years), and not the Besht, as the leader of his movement.<sup>14</sup> It seems likely that the new Hasidim did not

realize what a treasure they had in the Besht until Jacob Joseph's books became famous; whereupon he then came to assume his proper place in their hagiography.

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The Toldoth Yaskov Yosef stands in the center of a great period of ferment and collapse. In the last decades of the eighteenth century feudal Poland was torn by wars between rival armies, plundered by roving bands of Cossacks, and broken by the antagonism of its medieval estates and the collapse of its economy.<sup>15</sup> The Jews were subject to massacres, libels and riots in the countryside and the city, and open exploitation by the ruling families of the kehillot. The Jewish nobility used their alliance with the Polish monarchical and noble authorities to assure their control of Jewish economic and religious life and enrich themselves through taxes and debts heaped on their helpless subjects.<sup>16</sup> Into the decade of crisis generated by the disappearance of Poland among neighboring empires and kingdoms and the collapse of the old Polish and Jewish orders, a discontented and marginal segment of the scholar class,<sup>17</sup> bright, dedicated young men, stepped. This new generation of leaders effected a reformation of Judaism that converted protest and hostility into enthusiasm and ecstasy. In the evolution of the new ideological and structural pattern the Besht and his disciples opened fertile possibilities for the mutation of the old kabbalistic esoteric study groups into courts of charismatic saint-rabbis. Their villages and towns



became centers for devotion, study and pilgrimage over wide areas of the countryside. Hasidism brought a measure of piety, dignity and the warmth of a little joy into those dismal years.

## REFERENCES

### Introduction

1. S. M. Dubnow, Toldoth ha Hasiduth (Tel Aviv: T'v'n), p. 73.
2. Shivne haBesht, Samuel Abs Horodezky, ed. (Berlin-Charlottenburg: 1922), p. 97.

### Chapter One

1. Toldoth Yaakov Yosef (New York: I'v'n) (Afterwards referred to as T.) T.34b. Samuel H. Dresner, The Zaddik (London, New York, Toronto: 1900), p. 245. This occurs more frequently in his other works. Dresner surmises that the reference to "my teacher, may he live forever," rather than "may his name be blessed in the future world" suggests these passages were put on paper while his teacher was still alive.
2. T.135a, twice.
3. T. 10b, T.37b, T.70b.
4. T.30a (Seder Lekute'Or); T. 140a (Nof' d'vz Hayim); T.102b (Kaya Menemna).
5. T.135b.
6. T.100a for R. Leib Listener. Dresner, p. 253, notes other analogies in his later books.
7. From Shever haPoshim, Dubnow, p. 140.
8. Dubnow, p. 97: "Jacob Joseph's derashot do not differ at all in style from the rest of the rabbis of that period"; Benzion Dinur (B'mifne haDoroth, Jerusalem: 1955) p. 99, characterizes the mussar literature in all its forms as reworkings of original sermonic material.
9. T.10a - 11a.
10. See T.11a, where he alludes to his favorite quote from Shabbath 118a, "Lend on Me and I will pay for you," to which he returns many times under many contexts. For style see T.141b.

"The rest of the problems with this interpretation I wrote in many places. (See there.) Incidentally we will interpret the verse WE ARE UNCLEAN THROUGH TOUCHING THE DEAD BODY OF A MAN; WHY ARE WE KEPT FROM OFFERING THE LORD'S OFFERING?....Nu. 9:17

and I wrote about this matter also in many places (see there.)"

Such expressions as "I wrote about that in my writing below and there I wrote at length; here in brief," (T. 68b) are frequent. See Appendix II where he says, "Understand, because I have shortened."

11. He refers to the problem of the relation between the death of Miriam and the Red Heifer commandment that follows it in the Biblical text on T. 122a, 145a, 154b, and other places. A mishnah in Kiddushin, Chapter I, recurs in T. 10b, 17b, 22a, and many other places. Once, on T. 42a, he even apologizes for the lack of order:

"Behold, I have written this without ordering each matter as it should be. He who understands will set the matter right."

12. Dubnow, p. 94, note 1, says that legal essays are included in Jacob Joseph's Ben Porath Yosef, p. 253-94. They date from Jacob Joseph's yeshivah days.
13. See Appendix II for a fine example, where he brings a number of Talmudic passages each to clarify the other, and draws on Rashi, the Rif, Maimonides and the Mahashan.
14. T. 11b - 12b.
15. T. 134b. See also T. 167a,

"When two men study together, their pilpul especially should be for the sake of Heaven. We do not need to say that it should not be to provoke each other or to gain glory, for then it would have been better had he the pilpulist not been born."

There is another example on T. 107b,

"He loves God and not himself with pilpul. This means that he should not decorate himself with pilpul to become famous among scholars."

16. See Appendix III where he comes to speak of the social situation only by way of an explanation of a passage in the Zohar. Note especially the way he interprets each aspect of the Zohar's explanation although it confuses his own complaint.
17. T. 164a.

18. He touches on calendrical and astronomy when discussing the holiday of Hanukah on T. 36a. He even turns to grammatical analyses, T. 155a.
19. Dubnow, p. 95, Note 4.
20. Dresner, p. 254, notes twice when Jacob Joseph seems to take issue with his quotes. T. 91b, "I HEARD FROM MY TEACHER....but I say...."; T. 147a, "The Rav Magid Menachem explained....but I explained."
21. The full list for this discussion is reproduced in Appendix IV.
22. T. 142b.
23. T. 191b.
24. Gen. 2:24, THEREFORE MAN WILL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND CLEAVE (DAVAK) TO HIS WIFE AND THEY WILL BE ONE FLESH.
25. T. 133b.
26. T. 15b.
27. T. 132b.
28. נתיב; T. 57b - 58a.
29. Many places, e.g. T. 10b.
30. T. 10a. Note how he transforms portions of the creation story into the zaddik's struggle with the vetzer hars in Appendix I. Another good example is the passage on Gen. 12:1, T. 136a - 137a.
31. T. 91b. Another good example comes with the commandment of separating milk and meat, T. 67a-b.
32. T. 151a.
33. In effect, the mystics transform the halakha into a sacrament, a set of mysterious acts that work secret effects on the soul of the believer. Gershom G. Scholem, Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism, (New York: 1954) p. 29.
34. Ibid., p. 265 ff.
35. See Appendix I.
36. T. 31b.
37. T. 34a.



ספר שער שוקן ידן וקט

38. T. 26b: ספר שער שוקן ידן וקט  
29b: ספר שער שוקן ידן וקט  
and many more.
39. ספר שער שוקן ידן וקט  
See Dinur, p. 101, note I, for more examples and discussion.
40. As he did in the Shivne haBesut.
41. Sharogrod, 1747 - 1748; Haskov, 1748-52; Nemirov, 1752-70; Polnoy, 1770 until his death, probably in 1782. Dubnow, p. 94, note 3, suggests these dates.
42. Samuel Aba Horodezky, naHasiduth v'naHasidim (Berlin: 1922), vol. 1, p. 105: From the family of the kabbalists R. Samson Ostropoli and R. Joseph Katz, author of Yesod Yosef, and the family of the Gaon Yom Tov Lippman Heller. Horodezky gives no source for this information.
43. Ben Poratn Yosef on the book of Genesis and legal material including responsa and pilpulim, and several sermons from Shabbatin Shuvan and Shabbath haGadol; Zemnat Panean on Exodus, Dresner, p. 249. The fourth book under his name, Klonein Passim, is either posthumous or a forgery, Dresner, p. 250.
44. Dubnow, p. 130-3, in 1770 and soon thereafter they published the Zohar, the Sefer Yetzirah, Pardeis Rimonim of Cordovero, Sefer Hama'amar of H. Vital and the writings of the Ari.
45. Dinur, p. 145, agrees.

## Chapter Two

1. His thought is characterized by a number of such dichotomies: form and matter, ascent and descent, and holiness and unholiness.
2. T. 134a.
3. T. 118 - b.
4. T. 133a.
5. T. 137a.
6. See T. 5b and many other places where this distinction is applied on three levels: within the individual, within Israel, and Israel among the nations.

7. Baba Batra, 74a. The whole passage that Jacob Joseph twists in his special way recounts the story of Rabbah b. Bar Hana when he speaks to an Arab merchant, who says to him, "Come, I will show you where heaven and earth touch one another." Rabbah b. b. Hana says, "I took up my bread basket and placed it in a window of heaven. When I concluded my prayers I looked for it, but did not find it. I said to him, "There are thieves there?" He replied to me, "It is the heavenly wheel turning. Wait here until tomorrow and you will find it." In his full passage Jacob Joseph inserts note 3 of Bayit Hadash in a way impossible to render in English.

8. T. 9b in note.
9. T. 29b.
10. T. 33a.
11. T. 121a.
12. T. 17a.
13. Kinim 3. Quoted in Sefer haAggadah, H. Bialik and Y. Harnitzky (Tel Aviv: 1946), p. 605.
14. T. 38a.
15. T. 3b note.
16. T. 26b.
- 16a. T. 137b.
17. At times he uses these terms arbitrarily. T 33b:

"There are anshe shloime Yisroel who are in the holy part and Yisroel Yisroel in the kelipah, and men part kelipah of brightness some of the time cleaving to holiness and some of the time to kelipah."

Perhaps this whole investigation is what Solomon Maimon, Autobiography (London: MCMLIV), p. 78, had in mind when he wrote,

"For the kabbalists maintain that the kabbalah is not a human but a divine science; and that, consequently, it would be a degradation of it, to explain its mysteries in accordance with nature and reason. The more reasonable, therefore, my explanations proved, the more were the kabbalists irritated with me, inasmuch as they held that alone to be divine which has no reasonable meaning."

16. T. 194a.
19. T. 137b.
20. T. 21b. See Dresner, p. 275-6, note 16, where he points out this use of these terms. He concludes that nasid here is a higher rung than zaddik.
21. T. 151b.
22. T. 13b.
23. T. 75b.
24. T. 42b.
25. T. 191b.
26. T. 141a.
27. T. 49b.
28. Mekhilta Bassanilla; Parasha 7. Jacob Z. Lauterbach, ed. (Philadelphia: 1949), Vol. 1, p. 252.
29. e.g. T. 30a.
30. See Appendix III.
31. T. 50a - b; also 47a, 125b, and many other places.
32. Therefore we **do not** offer a complete survey of his criticisms, but, rather, representative selections. For more see Dresner, Ch. 4, pp. 75-110.
33. T. 103b.
34. T. 186a.
35. T. 49a.
36. T. 85b.
37. T. 194a.
38. T. 65a - b.
39. See Appendix III.
40. T. 13a.
41. T. 103b.
42. T. 175a.

43. T. 131b.
44. T. 167b.
45. T. 38b - 39a.
46. T. 47b.
47. T. 46a.
48. T. 136b.
49. T. 60a.
50. T. 191b.
51. T. 191a.
52. Ibid.
53. T. 40a.
54. T. 107Ab.
55. T. 105a.
56. T. 70a.
57. T. 28b.
58. T. 33a.
59. T. 131a. See Dresner, p. 206, for a full development of this idea.
60. Dresner, p. 292, note 30: The meaning of this phrase is, "the letters vav and hey are the last two letters of the divine name YHVH. It is the symbol of the zaddik, who is really higher than the people, descending below the people to raise them as the vav does the hey." No source given.
61. T. 36a.
62. T. 145a.

### Chapter Three

1. T. 15b.
2. As for the rest, twenty-one times he presents a parable; twenty-three times a relatively expository statement independent of a text; and thirty-four were incomplete, unclear, or otherwise unclassifiable.

3. T. 54a. Scholem, Major Trends, p. 260 ff.
4. T. 36b.
5. T. 17b.
6. T. 20a.
7. T. 32b, T. 37b.
8. T. 195a, also Appendix I.
9. Especially לך לך ה' תלך on T. 50a. Dinur, p. 181, gives a full list of the phrases, e.g., "In order that you understand this I will account only a tiny bit of what I HEARD FROM MY TEACHER," 44a. "And HE SAID there are depths in this, wonderful things, and the enlightened will understand," T. 33a. "This is what I remembered and received FROM MY TEACHER verbally and it is impossible to explain in a book. Know and understand," 131a.
10. T. 56a.
11. T. 98b.
12. T. 194b T.
13. Samuel Aba Horodezky, Torath haKabbalah shel Rabbi Yitzchak Askenazi-Ari v'Rabbi Hayim Vital-Ranav, (Tel Aviv: רמחמ), p. 11.
14. There seems to be no significance to the "lov" part of the title Esal Shem Tov. G. Scholem, "The Polemic Against Hassidism and its Leaders in the Book Nezed naDema," (Zion, XX), Jerusalem, 1955, p. 80. Scholem argues that the term was used thirty years before the Besht for other tsale shem.
15. Dinur especially.
16. T. 195a. The destination of the trip is unspecified.
17. T. 154b. Anijah the Sionite is mentioned in I Kings 11:26 ff, where he predicted to Jeroboam that he would get ten of the twelve tribes for his own kingdom; I Kings 14 where he repudiated Jeroboam and predicted the death of his child. Perhaps it was oneupmanship on those mystics who claimed Elijah for their teacher, to claim Anijah.
18. Alongside this Jacob Joseph records the fragments of another letter describing another ascent, dated 1750, where the Besht pleaded for mercy toward several "provinces and congregations" threatened with destruction. These can be correlated to certain Cossack outbreaks, and lends the other letter a certain authority. The letters are quoted in Israel Tsinberg, Toldoth Sifrut Yisroel (Mernaviani 1959), Vol. 5, pp. 180-2.
19. Ben Zion Katz, Rabbanuth, Hasiduth, Haskalan (Tel Aviv: 1958), Vol. 2, p. 25-31.
20. Katz, p. 38.
21. Katz, p. 21. He even figures in a cycle of legends written down from oral tradition fifty-five years after his death.
22. Katz, p. 23, see note 15, p. 253.
23. Horodezky, Torath haKabbalah, p. 19.
24. Ibid., p. 48. Scholem, Major Trends, p. 260.
25. Horodezky, Torath haKabbalah, p. 24.
26. Vital's presentation of his master's kabbalah is quite different. He organizes his books by subject rather than by Torah portion.
27. Tsinberg, Vol. 5, p. 185. Note that the Maggid did not publish his teaching; his pupils issued several versions of his sermons after he died.
28. See Dinur, p. 203-4, especially note 54. Also Jacob Joseph attributes the principle that "It is better to give a cure by means of a drink sweeter than honey" and "The main principle is to remove sadness and to seize joy" to Nahman of Horodenka, T. 195a. The important teaching,  

"This is how to act in a state of mercy with every man, if he see anything ugly in any man - he should pay attention that there dwells God - there is no place free of Him - and, therefore it is to his good that there is a bit of it in him. He should set his mind to repent."
- T. 22b, is introduced by "I RECEIVED FROM MY RABBIS AND MY COLLEAGUES" Moreover that number of 250 quotations attributed to the Besht in the Toldoth covers many duplicates, e.g., Ecc. 9:10 WHATEVER YOUR HAND FINDS TO DO, DO IT WITH ALL YOUR MIGHT, which the Besht uses to teach the unification of action with thought, is cited on 20a, 120a, 101a, 105a, and many other places.
29. Malmon who got a glimpse of at least certain Hasidic groups and was a very perceptive critic, says nothing about any

messianic secrets. Once he mentions the medical cures of a "Joel Baal Shem" who may or may not have been Israel Baal Shem, as some suggest, Maimon, p. 170.

30. Scholem, Major Trends, p. 325.
31. E.G., 1/2a.
32. N.B. 140a: "One must say the truth as I HEARD FROM MY MASTER on the problem in the Tard Zanaa."
33. Dinur, p. 104-4; Scholem, Major Trends, p. 205, for the significance of miannan study for mystics; miannan societies constituted only one form of these groups.
34. Several of the distinctive customs of the later Hasidim were already part of kabbalistic behavior, including prayer from the sidur of the Ari, special psalm inserts, frequent sessions in the mikveh, white garments on the Sabbath, sessions on the Sabbath afternoon in kabbalan, attention to slaughtering knives, Dinur, p. 107-8. Cf. T. 10a: "This is the secret of the kabbalists who study kabbalan on the Sabbath."
35. Dubnow, p. 74-7. Meir Margoliot, an important rabbi in the Ukraine, in his book on the kabbalan, Sefer Yochin u'Boaz, published in 1794, calls Shem HaGedolim "his friend." He says that he knew the Besht from childhood and speaks highly, if briefly, of him as a kabbalist.  
The lexicographer Hayim Azulai in Shem HaGedolim (published 1794-6) speaks of him with respect as an admirer of a Jerusalem kabbalist.  
Solomon Isaac Heller in the introduction to his father's response Sefer Yechiel (in manuscript) remembers "the distinguished rey, expert in the wisdom of God, our teacher Israel Baal Shem, "who announced that his father sprang from the soul of Alfasi."  
Dinur, p. 207-8, quotes a rather confusing document from Meziboz that gives testimony to the Besht, a responsum in Mayim Hayim by R. Meir D. R. J. Linden of Constantine. He speaks very highly, with incomprehensible rhetoric, of the Besht. Scholem, "The First Two Testimonies on the Hasidic Societies and the Besht" (Tarbiz XX), Jerusalem, 1949, p. 236, disagrees with Dinur's dating and explanation. Even so, for our purposes this item agrees with the others.
36. Shivne haBesht, p. 12-13. Later the Besht says, "Fourteen years I was separated in bed from his wife and her son; my son was born by means of speech." Ibid., p. 131.
37. Dinur, p. 30-31.

38. Dinur, p. 141.
39. Dubnow, p. 45.
40. Zotn Torah haKinsuth (manuscript) assembled 1798-1800. This is quoted in one of the letters in this collection by D. Makrev; Dubnow p. 74, note one.
41. Zemir Aritzim II, published 1795; Dubnow p. 49, note 1.
42. A Berkin maskil, Jacques Calmanson, in his book Essai sur l'etat actuel des Juifs de Pologne et leur perfectibilite, (Varsovie: 1795). He calls them a group of fanatics founded twenty years before in Meziboz (sic) by a fanatic rabbi who cured sicknesses by means of remedies from the kabbalan and deceived the masses. Even so, Calmanson says, his followers grew. The Besht is not mentioned by name or title, Dubnow, p. 71. The other is even more confused. It is written by a mitnagid, Israel Leibel, in Sefer haVikuan, 1798: He says Israel Baal Shem Tov was more successful after his death than in his life! He calls him an "empty well with no water of Torah...." It is written in their heretical books that Anijah the Snlonite, the rabbi of Alijah, taught the great heretic Rabbi 1 ... How can this be true if he was an am haaretz all his life?" Dubnow, p. 71-2.

#### Chapter Four

1. T. 56a.
2. Scholem, Major Trends, p. 291.
- 2a. Ibid., p. 310-5.
3. T. 28a. See Appendix I for the process whereby God envelopes Himself in the letters, beginning with aleph through tau, and then in material objects.
4. T. 33b.
5. Hayim Vital's book, Peri Eyz Hayim, one of his two most important works, has thirty chapters, each devoted to the kavanan for a particular prayer, ritual, or holiday.
6. T. 132a. On T. 23a it occurs with one of those little emphases that Jacob Joseph used for key expressions:  
"As I heard explicitly (m'furash) FROM THE MOUTH OF MY TEACHER: Where a man thinks, there he is completely."
7. P. 166.

3. Maimon, p. 51-2.

9. T. 190a, also 179b. Jacob Joseph has a lot to say about the yetzer hara who stands around trying to catch scholars in his net, T. 107Bb.

10. T. 76b. He uses it in reverse at times. T. 33a:

"I HEARD IN THE NAME OF MY TEACHER a private moral that includes everyone: if a man wants to blame some creature or man, he should blame himself; if he wishes to praise some man, better he should praise God."

11. T. 32a.

12. And so with the yetzer hara. T. 31b:

"I HEARD FROM MY TEACHER ON I CONSIDERED MY WAYS AND TURNED MY FEET UNTO YOUR TESTIMONIES (Psalm 119:57) that at the beginning one's Torah, prayer and commandment must be with the yetzer hara, not 'for its own sake,' and then the yetzer hara will not incite him, and he can finish 'for its own sake.'"

13. T. 48b.

14. T. 74a.

15. T. 180a.

16. T. 71b.

17. T. 63a.

18. Dinur, p. 157.

19. T. 15b-16a.

20. T. 15b. The importance of this thought is emphasized by the form he gives it on 40b:

"Thus we come to explain the verse I APPEARED TO ABRAHAM, ISAAC AND JACOB AS EL SHADDAI AND MY NAME YHVH I SHALL NOT MAKE KNOWN TO THEM... If I were not afraid to write down what I HEARD FROM MY TEACHER, awful things with respect to sweetening the judgements, laying with the bride (? וְשׂוּ) and procreation (? וְיָבִי) and sweetening thoughts by means of the name Shaddai and exchanges of the Torah and also the name YHVH in exchange. I wrote down heads of chapters on paper by itself and by this also our verse will be understood. God will redeem."

21. The major evidence for such behavior comes from the accusation at Vilna in 1772 when the Hasidim came under fire by the Kahal authorities and the Gason. In a book by Jacob Emden, (Mitpanash haSefarim, published in 1765) the author describes the sect of the New Hasidim in Volynia and Podolia, some of whom have come recently to Germany: (from Dubnow, p. 77.)

"All of whose work is in the Zohar and the kabbalistic books, and they spend half the day in prayer....clapping with their hands and nodding their heads to the side, bending backwards, with their faces and eyes faced upward."

Dubnow and Dinur (p. 83) argue that this must represent early observation, for there is evidence that the book had been written by the 50's, though not published until later. This is hardly unambiguous evidence for the Besht's personal activity and teaching.

Neither are the two testimonies in Scholem, "The First Two Testimonies on the Hasidic Societies and the Besht," pp. 220-240, very clear. He brings two musar books, one published in 1740, the other in 1751, and finds reference to groups indulging in strange motions and emphasizing kabbalistic behaviors. Scholem argues: whom else could this be but the Besht's circle? Therefore he identifies them as the earliest evidence on Hasidism.

Maimon's account is the best. He apparently describes conditions in the early 70's. He visited the Maggid Dov Bear before he died (1773) and before Maimon left for Germany (1774), Dubnow, 62-3. Maimon assumed that the campaign by the Vilna authorities was successful and Hasidism had been wiped out! (Maimon, p. 179.) He says nothing at all about strange motions, etc., except that some of the Hasidim wandered about in the public streets naked, attending to the wants of nature in the presence of others! (p. 179.) He does characterize them as strongly anti-socialist (p. 160).

"About this time I became acquainted with a sect of my nation called the New Chasidim which was then coming into prominence....They maintained that true piety does not consist of chastisement of the body, which disturbs the spiritual quiet and cheerfulness necessary for the knowledge and love of God. On the contrary, they maintained that man must satisfy all his bodily needs, and seek to enjoy the pleasures of the senses, so far as may be necessary for the development of his feelings, since God has created all

for his glory. The true service of God, according to them, consists in exercises of devotion with exertion of all our powers, and annihilation of self before God...."

Maimon wants to describe them to his German audience as "Epicureans," in contrast to the old Hasidim, the "Stoics."

There is a definite Hasidic tradition that both Jacob Joseph and the Maggid Dov Baer (Tainberg, Vol. 5, p. 195, p. 181) were staunch ascetics before they met the Besht, but this could be a later invention. The Snivne naBesht includes a letter to Jacob Joseph from the Besht abjuring him with "decrees of angels and unions of the Holy One and His Snechinan, not to enter himself into this danger and insist that he /Jacob Joseph/ has to fast." (It is quoted nowhere in Jacob Joseph's writings.) (Snivne naBesht, p. 30.)

In the last part of "Joy in Hasidism" (Zion AVI) Jerusalem, 1951, p. 40-43, A. Shochet abstracts several faint references to ecstasy in the Toldoth. Shochet concludes that the Besht accepts penances in moderation and said nothing startling on the matter of joy.

22. One very minor proof that Jacob Joseph did not participate personally in the development of the movement: there is no melody in the Hasidic tradition associated with him, Dresner, p. 95. He stood outside the movement and only reentered after his book was published.
23. T. 40c, also 27a for a similar comment in a different context.
24. T. 144c.

#### Conclusion

1. Quoted in Dresner, p. 95.
2. Ibid., p. 74.
3. Dubnow, p. 101.
4. E.G., Dresner pp. 59-62: Scholars have been able to find only one quote in Jacob Joseph's later books about the "Hasid Dov Baer Tertziner." Dov Baer never mentioned Jacob Joseph, Dubnow, p. 101.
5. Dubnow, p. 115-125.

c. A group of rabbis had an emergency meeting in 1772 in the city of Rovna after the herem in Brody. The Maggid was still living and was present at the meeting. Jacob Joseph was not mentioned at all in connection with it, Dubnow, p. 126-7.

7. Maimon, p. 168. He himself made a pilgrimage to the Dov Baer, p. 73-6.

8. Dresner, p. 95.

9. Dubnow, p. 142: "The new books that have just come." Also, p. 144. Neither place is the Toldoth identified by name.

10. Dresner's translation, p. 97, with a few small changes.

11. Dubnow, p. 140-141.

12. Horodezky, Hasiduth, p. 128-9.

13. Dubnow, pp. 114-125. There is a mention of "The Hasidim of the Besht and their students" in a proclamation from Moniev on the Dnieper (dated 1778) but Dubnow has reservations about the accuracy of the copy of its original. P. 136-7.

14. Dubnow, p. 103. Also p. 111 and note 1. He notes Zemir Arizim calls the "conspirators" by the name Mezritzer or Karliner.

15. Rafael Mahler, Toldoth haYenudim B'Polen (Mehavia: 1950), pp. 210-221.

16. Ibid., pp. 357-415. Mahler, Divre Y'mei Yisroel (Mehavia: 1955), Book III, pp. 161-160.

17. Maimon usefully contributes an analysis of the kinds of leaders attracted to the Hasidic movement, pp. 177-8.





The wise will understand and the enlightened will know how to interpret the passage, BERASHITH GOD CREATED THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH, AND THE EARTH WAS TOHU VAVOHU ... AND GOD SAID, "LET THERE BE LIGHT AND THERE WAS LIGHT."

It seems to me that there is written in the Talmud, "On rosh hashanah Yosef came out of prison, because the verse teaches, HE MADE IT A DECREE (EDUTH) IN Y-SEF (B'YEHOSEF) WHEN HE WENT OUT OVER THE LAND OF EGYPT, [Psalm 81:6]."

To explain this I have written below, quoting the Tikkunim: "FOR I THE LORD DO NOT CHANGE, [Malachi 3:6], (for the good,) but, for the wicked, the Holy One, Praised be He, changes and hides himself in several garments, veils and husks (kelipoth), which are tohu and vohu and hosech; therefore it is written I WILL HIDE MY FACE FROM THEM [Deut. 32:10]. However, He will never change for those who depend on Him and His Shechinah. (See there.)" Thus there are several garments and veils in which the Holy One, Praised be He, hides himself. Indeed I have written below that I HEARD FROM MY TEACHER (MAY HIS MEMORY BE BLESSED): "If one knows that God is hidden there, then this is not true hiding, for ALL PEALE AVEN SHALL BE SCATTERED [Psalm 92:10]; when the verse says I WILL SURELY HIDE MY FACE [Deut. 31:18] from them, it means that He will hide from those who do not know that God is there hiding." (The words of the wise win favor.) Similarly, I HEARD FROM HIM that the initials of the words קללך אשך שרך ארך זרך [Ex. 15:9] are five alephs, wherein the Master of the world, (Aluf shel olam), hides in the secret of these s(c)iroth." (The words of the wise win favor.) After one knows this great principle -- that there is no

wall dividing him and his God in the hour of Torah and prayer -- then, if certain strange thoughts should rise up before him, they are [seen to be only] garments and veils in which God hides. Since one knows that God is hiding there, He is not really hiding. So it seems to me.

Behold, the gematria for "hashanah", [260], is equivalent to that for "satan", [259], plus 1, an aleph, which stands for the Master of the world, (Aluf shel olam), who is hiding there also. So it seems to me. Thus we understand, "On rosh hashanah Yosef came forth from prison." It means: after Yosef knew, on rosh hashanah, that "hashanah" equals the gematria for "satan" plus One, (the Master of the world: Roah haShanah), who is hiding there in the kelipoth (who are satan) by means of the secret HIS KINGDOM RULES OVER ALL [Psalm 138:10], [Yosef was ready] to subdue the kelipoth. Well that it [written] "Roah haShanah," for thus one will know that [God is hiding here] and ALL PEALE AVEN SHALL BE SCATTERED, for the kelipoth are the prison of the Shechinah. Therefore Yosef comes out of prison physically when he really broke [his] bonds (kelipoth) with this knowledge. The verse begins AN EDUTH B'YEHOSEF: by means of this knowledge, (the secret of knowledge, [in our verse: eduth] ed'uth, is "y'ho"), the letter "hey" was added, (nithyosef), to [Yosef's] name so that he be called Yehosef. Hence his name [was B'Yehosef] WHEN HE WENT OUT OVER THE LAND OF EGYPT.

Behold, just as there are twenty-two letters in the speech of Torah and prayer, so there are also twenty-two letters in all material and substantial objects in the world by means of which the world and everything in it was created, as it is written in Berachoth: "Bezalel knew how to join the letters by means of which the heavens and the

earth were created." Just as the letters were clothed with the material objects of the world in several garments, veils, and keliqoti, so inside the letters [themselves] dwells the Fine Substance of the Holy One, Praise be He, whose "glory fills the earth" and everything that is in it. "There is no place empty of him," as explained in the Tikkunim. He is in hiding, and, as men of knowledge come to understand this hiding, it is no longer hiding and change for them. This is what the Tikkunim meant (above): "That the Holy One will never change for those who depend on Him." Understand this!

It is known that the letter aleph is wisdom (hochmah) and thought (mahavah), as in the verse from Exod. [Job 33:23 aleph], I WILL TEACH YOU WISDOM, ( אנין חכמה ). Thus the word berashith and its translation b'hochmah will be understood: it is the letter aleph with which God created the heavens. For all twenty-two letters are garments for each other; the aleph is covered by the letter beth, for beth is two alephs, gimel three alephs etc. AS I HEARD FROM MY TEACHER, (MAY HIS MEMORY BE BLESSED): The beginning of creation was by means of the letter aleph which is hochmah. He created everything by means of hochmah, as it is written, B'HOCHMAH HAD THOU MADE THEM ALL, [Psalm 104: 23], The letters are diffused from above to below, and thus He created all created things by means of the twenty-two letters from aleph to tau. Everything closer to the emanating letter, [namely, aleph], is superior; that which was created from tau, the last letter, is the lowliest creation among all created things. If a man draws near to God, he should be transferred within the letter tau to the letter shin by the secret of "tsahrah", [reversal of the alphabet], until he draws near the letter aleph, wherein is the Ruler of the World. Thus the

verse: OUT OF THE BELLY OF SHEOL I CRIED. [Jonah 2:3]. Behold the Fine Substance of God is within the letter aleph and He wrapped himself in it and He created light, ( אור ), from aleph, the light of emanation. Then He wrapped Himself with the letter aleph into the letter beth and he created the world of Beriah, as it is written in Kanfe Yonah (see there.) Then he wrapped himself up with the letter beth into the letter gimel and he created worlds below the world of Beriah, until he wrapped himself up in tau and created the lowest worlds called "Kingdom": ( מלכות שבעולות ). Thus it is written, BERASHITH, (with hochmah, which is the letter aleph), GOD CREATED AK (aleph plus tau) THE HEAVENS, i.e., the twenty-two letters from aleph to tau, (within which is the Fine Substance of God, may He be Blessed), which are called "heavens." Then the Holy One wrapped and dressed Himself within these twenty-two letters and created "earth," all material objects of the earth, by means of four hundred veils from aleph to tau which is the lowest earth of which there is nothing lower. Afterwards the Holy One returned and hid himself in several coverings and keliqin [sic] which are tohu, vohu and hoshach, as is written in the Tikkunim (see above), AND THE EARTH WAS TOHU, VOHU AND HOSHECH means, after He had dressed himself in the four hundred garments which are the letter tau and with these garments had created the earth, He returned and hid Himself in several keliqin. Thus THE EARTH WAS TOHU, VOHU AND HOSHECH, for He looked and saw that there were to be generations of wicked men, so He secreted the above-mentioned light and hid it from the wicked in several keliqin. But (this is not so) for the good, ( אשר יצא ), who are called "elohim" (The good are called elohim), as we find with respect to Moses, (SEE, I HAVE SET YOU AS ELOHIM TO PHARAOH [Ex. 7:1])

and Jacob, ([THERE HE ERECTED AN ALTER AND CALLED HIM EL ELOHE-YISROEL [Gen. 33:10]), and similarly with the rest of the good. The Holy One did not hide Himself from (the good). AND GOD SAID: "LET THERE BE LIGHT" AND THERE WAS LIGHT, means, immediately when it occurs in the thought of the men of knowledge, who are called elohim, that the Blessed One, (called "Light"), hides himself there, then, ALL FOALS AVERN "WILL BE SCATTERED, and God's light is revealed. Hence, AND THERE WAS LIGHT. Understand! God will redeem!

This is all general. In particular I wrote somewhere else IN THE NAME OF MY TEACHER, MAY HIS MEMORY BE BLESSED, that he explained the controversy between Beth Shammai and Beth Hillel thus: "What do we sing in her praise when dancing before the Bride [here, the Shechinah-]" Beth Shammai says: we describe the Bride as She is: in general one knows that His Glory, may He be Blessed, is hidden everywhere. (So it seems to me.) Beth Hillel says: we describe the Bride as beautiful and lovely: in particular, when one knows how the light of the sparks of holiness fell into the kelipoth. When strange thoughts come at the time of prayer, to repair them one must divide and put off the kelipah and raise up the holiness in it to adorn Her, that the Bride may be beautiful and lovely. (See there.) (I have written elsewhere how to repair this. See there.) And thereby will be understood why, after He says, AND THE EARTH WAS FORM, God said, "LET THERE BE LIGHT," which I consider a general statement. Immediately following he makes a particular statement: GOD SAW THAT THE LIGHT WAS GOOD AND GOD DIVIDED BETWEEN THE LIGHT AND THE DARKNESS... AND THERE WAS EVENING AND THERE WAS MORNING ONE DAY. And the object of GOD SAW is the zaddik who is called by His name, elohim, it seems to me. ELOHIM SAW THE LIGHT THAT

IT WAS GOOD means, that when a bad thought arises in one's mind during a period of Torah and prayer, one should know and understand that the Holy One, who is LIGHT THAT IT IS GOOD, is hidden and secreted there within the kelipah, (the bad, strange thought which is called hoshech.) Therefore elohim divided between light and hoshech, for one must divide and put off the external kelipah and hoshech, (the strange thought), to take out the light of holiness which is hidden in it. After one makes this "separation," then the pleasure and advantage which proceed from the hoshech make it a footstool to the [holiness]. As I wrote below IN THE NAME OF MY TEACHER, (MAY HIS MEMORY BE BLESSED IN THE WORLD TO COME), when he interpreted the midrash AND THERE WAS EVENING: these are the deeds of the wicked, etc." (See there.) When it says AND IT WAS EVENING AND IT WAS MORNING - ONE DAY, it means after the "separation" "EVENING" becomes a footstool to "MORNING," then the two of them, included in the "EVENING," are called "ONE DAY." Understand!

THE LORD SAID TO MOSES: "TAKE A CENSUS OF THE SONS OF GERSHON ALSO, BY THEIR FAMILIES." [Nu. 4:1] But this is the order of their precedences: THE SONS OF LEVI: [first], GERSHON, [second], KOHATH, and [third], MARARI [Gen. 46:11]. Why are the sons of Kohath accounted for here [in our passage in Numbers] first, and [only] afterwards the sons of Gershon? Moreover, there is no need for [the word] "also" [in our verse]. Furthermore, [if] the Torah is eternal; what does this parashah mean now? Likewise, [since] man is called a microcosm, how is he to be found in this parashah? To clarify this we will explain how the account of the "four flags" is in every man and at every time: THE FLAG OF THE CAMP OF JUDAH FORWARD TO THE EAST; THE FLAG OF THE CAMP OF REUBEN TO THE SOUTH; THE FLAG OF THE CAMP OF EPHRAIM TO THE WEST; THE FLAG OF THE CAMP OF DAN TO THE NORTH. And, incidentally, how there are four kinds of Israelites, but three kinds of Levites. In order to do this we will explain the mishnah in Avoth [51:6], "Judah ben Tema says: 'Be as strong as a leopard, as light as an eagle, as fast as a gazelle, and as heroic as a lion - to do the will of your Father who is in Heaven.'"

It is written in the book Shelot Ephraim (Ma'amar 236, p. 49): "There are four reasons that bring a man to repentance and they are divided by degrees. FIRST DEGREE: he who turns to God from his good disposition and free choice. This is the finest repentance. TWO: He who turns to God from fear [aroused by] preachers, (like the children of Nineveh who did not repent until the prophet chastised them.) THREE: He whose ear is shut against the voice of reprovers until he sees sufferings come on others; then he takes to the lesson lest he become like the sufferer. FOUR: He who, with all this, does not turn

aside until sufferings come upon him, as is written in the mishnah: "And when he suffers he should entreat the favour of God..." (Our sages of blessed memory already compared these degrees to a servant who flees from his master: one returns of his own free will and repents, etc.) All four degrees are alluded to in the section on repentance in the parashah Nitzavim: ONE: TO KEEP ... HIS STATUTES WHICH ARE WRITTEN IN THIS BOOK OF TORAH, IF YOU TURN TO THE LORD, [Deut. 30:10.] As a result of his Torah study he returns of his own free will. TWO: He who repents [after hearing] preachers: RETURN TO THE LORD YOUR GOD ... AND OBEY HIS VOICE, [Deut. 30:2], because he listened to the voice of preachers like me. THREE. THE LORD YOUR GOD WILL PUT ALL THESE CURSES ON YOUR FEET and, therefore, YOU SHALL AGAIN OBEY. [Deut. 30:7-8]. FOUR: WHEN ALL THESE THINGS COME UPON YOU [THE BLESSING AND THE CURSE WHICH I HAVE SET BEFORE YOU, AND YOU CALL THEM TO MIND] ... AND RETURN TO THE LORD YOUR GOD. [Deut. 30:1-2]. By way of contrast, there are four reasons which deflect man from the ways of repentance and they are also alluded to in this parashah. ONE: He whose sins are too severe and hidden from him; he does not know in what he has sinned. Certainly he will not seek a cure for his wound, (unlike David the King, peace be upon him, who said, MAY MY SIN BE BEFORE ME ALWAYS...I KNOW MY TRANSGRESSION, [Psalm 51:6].) THE SECOND REASON is the opposite: there are some who despair of repentance because they think that every day [their sin] increases and grows up to the heavens. This way cannot be. THREE: Those who are found sunk in the pleasures of this world; they postpone the time of repentance from day to day until a free period. But he [sic] will never find a free period; he



will be found all his life in sin! REASON FOUR: The merchants and traders who postpone [repentance] till they sell their goods according to their desire, but one business matter causes a second, so that he will die in sin. [Each of these reasons has its verse: first], [FOR THE COMMANDMENT WHICH I COMMAND YOU THIS DAY] IS NOT TOO HARD [FOR YOU]; that repentance will not be found by him whose deeds are too severe; (this with respect to the first reason). For the second reason, [sic, really the third], NEITHER IS IT FAR OFF, for those who push off the time of repentance. (DO NOT BOAST ABOUT TOMORROW [Pr. 7:1-2]). And with respect to the third group, [the second]; IT IS NOT IN HEAVEN, for he thinks his sins have grown to the heavens. For the fourth it says: NEITHER IS IT BEYOND THE SEA, [Deut. 30:11-12]; these are the merchants." (The words of the wise win favor.

By this understand that the mishnah, "he as strong as a leopard" applies to these four types. Likewise, the matter of the four flags and the four kinds of union (zivug) described in Avy Hayyim: ONE: Union of back-with-back; TWO: front-with-back; THREE: back-with-front; FOUR: front-with-front. TYPE ONE returns in repentance of his own free will to God. (RETURN TO GOD! [Deut. 30:10]). Naturally this is union face-to-face: the flag of the company of Judah who are carried forward to the east, which is called "face," (as against the west which is called "back," according to the secret, THOU DOES RE-ET BE BEHIND AND BEFORE [Psalm 130:5]). THE SECOND KIND is he who returns [after hearing] the preachers. This is union back-with-front, which is turned away: MY BELOVED [God] IS LIKE A GAVELLE [Song of Songs 2:9] Who turns to His people Israel, for perhaps they will return. Every day a Heavenly Voice, (Bath Kol), proclaims, "Return, rebellious children," but still he, [this type], turns away and not forward. He is the camp of Reuben.

[Proof: Psalm 45:11, which reads:] HEAR, OH DAUGHTER, (BATH), CONSIDER, (HAET), AND LISTEN, to hear the voice of the preacher, and listen to the Heavenly Voice who shows the love of God to Israel -- for every day the above-mentioned proclamation goes forth. [Hence the verse really signifies:] Hear the Heavenly Voice, (bath kol, for bath, which proclaims "Return, rebellious children," ("child", ben), and thus [this type is] (re'u, las ben.) They camped to the east because "his right arm is extended to receive the repentant." THIRD TYPE: He who does not listen to the preachers until he sees suffering come on others [is called] union front-to-back. When God, may He be Blessed, turns away from them, suffering comes. He who turns away and then comes back in repentance is called front-to-back; this is the camp of Ephraim to the sea, to the west, which is called "back" and not "forward." This type is called "Ephraim". [Gen. 41:52: THE NAME OF THE SECOND HE CALLED EPHRAIM], FOR GOD HAS MADE ME FRUITFUL IN THE LAND OF MY AFFLICTION. Because there was suffering and affliction in that land I set myself to turn in repentance, and HE MADE ME FRUITFUL IN THE LAND OF MY AFFLICTION. TYPE FOUR: He who does not repent until suffering comes upon him: this is union back-with-back, and the flag of the camp of Dan to the north; BUT I WILL BRING JUDGEMENT ( בְּיָמָיו ) ON THE NATION WHICH THEY SERVE [Gen. 15:14]. Just as He already administered and brought judgement over those who had oppressed Israel, AS I HEARD FROM MY TEACHER, OUT OF THE NORTH EVIL SHALL BREAK FORTH. [Jer. 1:14]. These four groups include him who is not hurt by the pain of his fellowmen.

Since there are those who do feel pain as if the sufferings of their fellowmen come on them, there is no need [to enumerate] the FOURTH TYPE, and the [middle] two types mentioned above are sufficient.



It is understood then that for the sons of Levi, (an expression of connection, hibur), there are only three kinds. For [the name] Kohath, (an expression from "יְקֹהָת עֲמִרָם" [Gn.49:10]) according to Rashi means "assembly."

First of all we found that Esther commanded, GO, GATHER ALL THE JEWS, [Esther 4:16], the opposite of Heman's opinion, "THERE IS A CERTAIN PEOPLE SCATTERED AND DISTERSED, [ibid 3:8], [for] there is separation (perud) between them, and this, Heaven forbid, causes THEIR HEART TO BE FALSE, NOW THEY MUST BEAR THEIR GUILT. [Hos.10:1]. I heard the interpretation of the Talmud on Isaiah 29:15, [BEHOLD I WILL AGAIN DO MARVELOUS THINGS WITH THIS PEOPLE], WONDERFUL AND MARVELOUS, (אֲדֹרָה), which are initials for אֲדֹרָה אֲנִי יְיָ אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, separation of men's minds, which causes, Heaven forbid, that THE WISDOM OF THEIR WISE MEN SHALL PERISH, [ibid.]. Accordingly, the book Sheloth Eshraim, p.54, interprets, BUT IF THEY BLOW [THE SHOFA] ONE [TIME]...THEN THE LEADERS SHALL GATHER THEMSELVES TO YOU, [Nu.10:4], a simple, (pechitah), sound on the shofar indicates unity (abduth), as in the piyut "n'shot one heart." This primary unity indicates the unity of the leaders of the congregation: BUT IF THEY BLOW ONE...THEN THE LEADERS SHALL GATHER THEMSELVES TO YOU. They shall be in one union (avudah), for this is the first of all the "repairs." When they are in one union, then they will agree to return many from sin and lead them on the road of repentance. [The opposite is the case if EACH DOES THAT WHICH IS RIGHT IN HIS OWN EYES, and this one prohibits and that one permits,) WHEN THE HEADS OF THE PEOPLE WERE GATHERED, causes ALL THE TRIBES OF ISRAEL TO BE TOGETHER [Deut.33:5] in repentance." (The words of the wise win favor.)

Thus Kohath comes first, [meaning] that the heads of the people he gathered together and return in repentance, (TYPE ONE), and then TAKE A CENSUS OF THE SONS OF GERSHOM ALSO, for they are the rest of the people, who are considered as proselytes, (gerim), when they hearken to the leaders of the people, (hence TYPE TWO.) And afterwards when he does not [sh] listen to their voice, then they will hear [of] TYPE THREE, called Merari, FOR THEY MADE BITTER THE LIVES [Ex. 1:14] of their neighbors, TYPE THREE. Then, certainly, they will feel pain in their [neighbors'] pain as though these pains had come on themselves, for he is of the type of Levi, and he will join and turn in repentance. Thus there is no need [to enumerate] the FOURTH TYPE mentioned above. Thereby the following verse: [Lev.10:6] AND MOSES SAYS TO AARON AND ELEAZAR AND ITZHAR HIS SONS: "DO NOT LET THE HAIR OF YOUR HEADS HANG LOOSE AND DO NOT REND YOUR CLOTHES", LEST HE BE WRATHFUL UPON THE WHOLE CONGREGATION; YOUR BROTHERN THE WHOLE HOUSE OF ISRAEL SHALL BEWAIL THE BURNING WHICH THE LORD HAS KINDLED." Why should you wait [to repent until you are included in] TYPE FOUR, [meaning] that wrath should come on the entire congregation (in the future)? Is it not better that he should be of the type Levi, that he should be included in the sons of Levi, and that there should be union (hibur) and unity (abduth) between them, so that they should be pained in their suffering and turn in repentance, as TYPE THREE? Again, there is no need [to list] TYPE FOUR, mentioned above. This is easy to understand!

Furthermore, it is necessary to note that the Rambam has written in the Laws of Fasting [Chapter 1:1-3] "It is a positive commandment... to cry out and to sound 'out' on a trouble which comes on the

congregation. WHEN YOU GO TO WAR IN YOUR LAND AGAINST THE ADVERSARY WHO OPPRESSES YOU, THEN YOU SHALL SOUND AN ALARM WITH THE TRUMPETS, [Nu.10:9]...This is of the ways of repentance, for when trouble comes and they call out about it and sound out, all shall know that because of their evil deeds, it has become bad for them, ( YOUR SINS HAVE TURNED THESE AWAY [Jer.5:15],) and this will cause the trouble to be removed from them. But if they do not cry out...and you say [the trouble] is accidental, as [they do] in the verse [IF IN SPITE OF THIS YOU WILL NOT HEarken TO ME], BUT WALK CONTRARY TO ME, THEN I [WILL WALK CONTRARY TO YOU IN FURY, AND CHASTISE YOU MYSELF SEVENFOLD FOR YOUR SINS. Lev. 26:27-28.]

FROM CALAMITY THE ZADDIK IS TAKEN AWAY. [Is.57:1]. There are two explanations of this verse. [First:] To defend, [expiate by their death the community's sins. Second:] Heaven forbid, that they [the zaddikim] should not see the evil [about to befall the community.] But, behold, the person who hears [of the zaddik's death] may say that he will be safe and he will bless himself in his heart. Therefore, YOUR BROTHERS THE PEOPLE HOUSE OF ISRAEL SHALL BEWAIL THE EVENING WATCH THE HOUR BE BEMOURED. Thereby all shall know that because of [all] their evil these good men were taken and the calamity was turned away so that it should not come at all; (which is not the case if they say that [the zaddik died] to defend [them] and, then they bless in their hearts, [and do not realize their evil deeds cause the trouble.]) Therefore the advice was given above [to weep, by the Ramban.] It is easy to understand.

But yet we can question the value of the crying for THE WHOLE HOUSE OF ISRAEL. See Chapter 3 of Shabbath [Shabbath 105b]: "R. Joshua

ben Fazi says: R. Joshua ben Levi in the name of Bar Kappara: "All who weep tears on [the death of] a worthy man (adam kasher), the Holy One counts [the tears] and lays them in his treasure-house; BUT MY TEARS [IN A BOTTLE, ARE THEY NOT IN YOUR BOOK? Psalms 56:8.]" Two questions: First, how does the Talmud prove that this [verse] refers to [crying] for the dead? Maharabah explains that if it were not for this verse, it would be prohibited for a man to be pained and to weep, etc. But it is permitted to be pained and to weep for one's sins; therefore how do we know that [this verse] means weeping for the dead? Furthermore, we have to question the counting [of the tears. What is its significance?] To [answer] this we must understand the continuation of the passage from Shabbath: "It is taught: However, his small sons die so that he will mourn and cry for a worthy man. It is asked: do they [in heaven] take a pledge of him? [Take his children, so that at some future time he would mourn over the death of worthless!] Rather, because he didn't cry and mourn for a worthy man. [In the past they took his children.] Everyone who mourns is forgiven of all his sins." The difficulties are many, as the Rif notes. (See there.)

It seems to me that this is related to Chapter 3 of Nidah: [24b], "He who discharges semen in vain is like a slayer of children... discharge of semen is caused by two harlots, Mahalath and Lilith, who make men sin by nocturnal emission. The remedy is to subdue Lilith's hand by the tears a man wails over [the death of] a worthy or by prayer, and Mahalath's hand is subdued by the joy of a commandment." We can explain this with the interpretation of our teacher Joshua Meschel of Cracow on [Ex.22:28], YOU SHALL NOT DELAY TO OFFER FROM YOUR FULLNESS, AND FROM YOUR OUTFLOW, (UDOT), followed by, YOUR FIRST BORN SONS YOU SHALL GIVE TO ME. As it is written in the end of his

discussion in Chapter 68: "YOUR FULLNESS, these are the first fruits which you bring to me in joy to subdue Mahalath, and YOUR OUTFLOW are to subdue Lilith so as not to sin through discharging semen in vain; then, YOUR FIRST BORN SONS, the first drop [of semen], shall be for me." (Wise words.)

Thus we understand the Shabbath passage above: "All who weep tears for a worthy man, the Holy One counts them." But there is a difficulty about how we knew [the weeping] was for a worthy; perhaps it was for one's own sins? Moreover, why does He count them? In order to explain the first difficulty with the second, we brought the Talmud passage "His small sons die": [they die] because of the sin of vain discharge of semen, (called child slaying), which he did not remedy. The remedy is to cry over the death of a worthy man whom he knows died because of his sin. Then these tears are a remedy for this sin and his sins are forgiven. Therefore the Holy One counts them; each drop of sperm discharged in vain causing the death of children is [counted] against each drop of tear; a remedy for each drop. He counts them and lays them up in His treasure-house which is called guf. [See Yebamoth 62a: guf is the heavenly storage place for souls unborn. The Messiah cannot come until all the souls in the guf are gone.] Understand, because I have shortened!

In order to understand further, let us examine the difficulties in the verse, IEST HE BE WANTERFUL UPON THE WHOLE CONGREGATION; YOUR BRETHREN THE WHOLE HOUSE OF ISRAEL SHALL BEWAIL THE DURNING WHICH THE LORD HAS KINDLED.

FIRST. [The two priests in the passage these verses deal with] died for the dedication, as it says, [Lev. 10:3, THEN MOSE: SAID TO

AARON] "THIS IS WHAT THE LORD HAS SAID: [I WILL SHOW MYSELF HOLY AMONG THOSE WHO ARE NEAR ME, AND BEFORE ALL THE PEOPLE I WILL BE GLORIFIED." Zebahim 115b notes that the two priests died for the dedication of the Tabernacle. God says, "I will sanctify the Tabernacle with those most dear to me." So why should the people weep on this occasion? This problem we have to solve.

The SECOND problem: Why should He be angry with the whole congregation? Whether, according to Zebahim, [the priests] died to dedicate the Tabernacle, or, according to what is written in Eruvin [83a], [the priests] died for their own sins, what has this to do with the whole congregation?

THIRD. It should have said וְהָיָה כִּי יִשְׁכַּח אֶת הַיָּדָא, Why וְהָיָה וְהָיָה וְהָיָה?

FOURTH. WHICH ADONAI KINDLED. [Adonai] stands for the attribute of mercy. Punishment [as here] is from the attribute of justice. [Therefore the verse should have read, instead, WHICH ELOHIM KINDLED.]

In order to solve this we must explain Chapter 3 of Moed Katan [88a]: "Why does the death of Miriam follow the account of the Red Heifer? To teach that, just as (122) the Red Heifer atones, so the death of the zaddikim atones." Thus the Tosafoth: "It atones for the deed of the Golden Calf. (We read in the midrash the parable of the son of the maidservant. His mother comes, etc. [See Numbers Raba 19:8].)" The Maharshah writes: "This [interpretation of Tosafoth] is unacceptable" and he explains that the Torah calls [the Red Heifer] a sin offering [explicitly] so its proximity to the death of Miriam does not help us derive the lesson that it atoned for the Golden Calf.]

And the Talmud text should say "like" ( 182 ), rather than "just as" ( 182 ). This needs explanation.

In order to explain this, we must turn to Moed Katan, Chapter 3 [26b, also Ethuboth 70a]: "It is taught: R. Heir used to say, 'IT IS BETTER TO GO [TO THE HOUSE OF MOURNING] THAN TO GO TO THE HOUSE OF FEASTING; FOR THIS IS THE END OF ALL MEN, AND THE LIVING WILL LAY IT TO HEART. Ecc. 7:2]. And the living will lay to heart matters about death; if one makes lament, others will lament for him; [if one assists at burial, others will bury him; if one bears the bier, others will bear him;] if one raises, others will raise for him, ( וְיִרְאוּ וְיִתְנוּ  ). (Rashi interprets this: "He who raises up his voice in eulogy, they will eulogize him.") And some read [that the phrase וְיִרְאוּ וְיִתְנוּ  means: ] "He who does not raise himself up, [become haughty], they will raise him, [honor him]; FOR IT IS BETTER TO BE TOLD, 'COME UP HERE,' THAN TO BE PUT LOWER [IN THE PRESENCE OF THE PRINCE. Prov. 14:7]"

Surprising. What does this [interpretation] have to do with [the subject of] eulogizing? We also have to reject Rashi. Maharshah says: "According to this [second interpretation, the phrase, וְיִרְאוּ וְיִתְנוּ  ], does not refer to eulogizing." If so, why is this [interpretation of the Talmud] here? Moreover, why mention "matters about death?"

It seems that the Talmud interpreted there [Moed Katan 70b]: WHEN NOT FOR HIS SIN IS DEAD NOT HUMAN HIM, BUT WHEN BITTERLY FOR HIM WHO GOES AWAY, FOR HE WILL RETURN NO MORE, Jeremiah 22:10. [R. Judah] interprets this: "HE GOES AWAY as he who dies childless...R. Huna said this verse referred to him who sinned repeatedly. (Rashi says: "Weep

also for a live evil person who will never repent and will be banished from the world.") We must understand the difference between the Tanna Kama and R. Huna. It seems to me that the Rif wrote, 'The eulogizer [must] weep for the ones who lose and not for the lost, for the latter has gone to rest and is no more,' [while the former still suffer.] Why should a living man bewail the death of a zaddik? Rather, each for his own sin: each should repent for his own sins and say, "If this great cedar, [the zaddik], fell, [how much the more am I sinful and deserve to die]"

WEEN' N T FOR HIL SIN IS DEAD N R BEMAN HIM. It seems to me that we can explain this after we have brought questions from Rosh Hashanah, Ch.1, [18b]: "It is taught of R. Shimon ben Yochai: "There are four expositions among those given by R. Akiba with which I do not agree. [When he explains Zechariah 8:19: THUS HAD SAID THE LORD OF HOSTS, "THE FAST OF THE FOURTH MONTH, AND THE FAST OF THE FIFTH, AND THE FAST OF THE SEVENTH, AND THE FAST OF THE TENTH SHALL BE TO THE HOUSE OF JUDAH JOY AND HAPPINESS?"]....[Akiba says]: "The fast of the fifth month is the ninth of Ab on which the House of our God was burned...the fast of the seventh month which is the fast of Gedaliah, the third of Tishri, on which Gedaliah ben Ahikam was killed. Who killed him? Ishmael ben Nethaniah killed him, [and the fact that a fast was instituted on this day shows] that the death of the zaddikim is put on a level with the burning of the House of our God."

One must ask, how do we know one is equivalent to the other? [Zechariah] had to list the fasts by month in their proper order. Also [the first fast] is more important than [the second.] Furthermore, the question of Maharshah is difficult: "They should also have appointed fasts for the rest of the zaddikim!" He explains, "By murdering

Gedaliah, [Ishmael] caused trouble for all Israel..." (See there.)

One more question: "Who killed him? Ishmael ben Nethaniah." Why did they ask who killed him? It could be anybody. It seems that the first question can be answered by the second and third. When you know that he who killed [Gedaliah] was Ishmael ben Nethaniah of royal descent, (as Rashi explains in Jer.Ch.41), and [that Ishmael] was jealous of [Gedaliah] for he had become great, you thereby understand that cause of [Gedaliah's] death was put on a level with the destruction of the House of our God. One cause instigated both the burning of the Temple and the murder. When we investigate the cause of the destruction of the Temple and the exile of Israel, we know from what is written in Sanhedrin: "Zeira says in the name of R. Hanina: "the son of David will not come until the haughty, (גוֹאֲזֵי הָאָרֶץ), are finished from Israel as in Zephaniah 3 [11-12], FOR THEN I WILL REMOVE FROM YOUR MIDST YOUR PROMPTLY EXULTANT ONES, AND YOU SHALL NO LONGER BE HAUGHTY IN MY HOLY MOUNT. FOR I WILL LEAVE IN THE MIDST OF YOU A PEOPLE POOR (עָנִי) AND LIMP. THEY SHALL SEEK REFUGE IN THE NAME OF THE LORD." We can prove it was for this reason that the House of our God was burned, as in the midrash, Parashah tzav: "It is a custom and a decree that all who are proud are sentenced to fire, and Judah is exiled because of poverty, (עָנִי): JUDAH HAS GONE INTO EXILE BECAUSE OF עָנִי [Lev.1:3]." Poverty, (עָנִי), is a sign of haughtiness. Therefore in the repair of the disturbed, (מְדַבְּרֵי הַלֵּל), which will finish the haughty, the Son of David will come, as the Alfabet says at the end of Malachi: "BEHOLD I SEND YOU ELIJAH THE PROPHET, which is the repair of undeserved hatred." (See there.)

It is explained in the Zohar [101a]: Israel, a holy people, did not make the Golden Calf, but the mixed multitude [did, at the head of whom were] two men: Jannes and Jambres, who were magicians and [who would exercise their magic] from six hours on, which is minchah gedolah, called erev rav, etc. Come see, all the clouds of glory in the desert covered only Israel, as it says, THE LORD WILL GO BEFORE YOU DAY AND NIGHT. [Ex.13:21]. The mixed multitude and all the cattle went apart. Israel ate the manna and the mixed multitude did not: THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL ATE THE MANNAH [Ex.16:35]: the children of Israel and no one else. [Then] they [the multitude] rose up and said, "Either we become all of us one people, so that we are included within you, or let us have one, [a god, to walk before us.]"\* And this is what the verse, WHO STILL GO BEFORE YOU, [Ex.32:1] refers to. Aaron said: "Heaven forbid if these should join with the holy people [and become one with them]." Aaron intended well, but many of Israel joined and came with them, therefore Moses needed to purify them... (See there.)

Hence just as Israel was divided and separated off from the mixed multitude in two ways: in eating, (they did not eat the same food), and neither did they mix with them, Israel and not the mixed multitude kept apart in the midst of the clouds. This produced the incident of the Golden Calf, with the charge, "Let us be included with your people; why do you make yourself isolated apart from us, praying and studying by yourselves and not eating our food?"

My eyes and no other saw this perpetual war with him who wants to



be holy and separated, praying in a minyan apart, since it is impossible to pray with the congregation, for they perform the commandments by rote, and other similar reasons. As for matters of [proper] food, the present generation has grown worse, for everyone, even he who is not expert in the laws of slaughtering and does not fear God, slaughters. This is contrary to our holy rabbis, both the early and later authorities, who warned that the slaughterer should fear God publicly and privately in the touching and feeling [needed] for the examination of knives, as Rabbenu Jonah writes. (See there.) Certainly he who separates himself from the food of the world will be called "holy." [Today] many are not expert in the laws of salting and soaking from which many ordinances proceed; in our time, [his childhood], there were several preachers who explained the laws of salting in detail to women, which is not the case now. Certainly he who wishes to be holy should not sit down at their tables. As Maharshah warned his pupil, the author of Shnei Luchot haBrit, "Is food more than all." (See there.)

Thus I have heard from one sage that now the yetzer hara has become wiser; he does not need to seduce and capture everyone individually in his net; he has only to capture the individual by means of whom many will stumble. He appoints a slaughterer in the city from his side, [from the side of the aitra shrah] and food is unclean for many. All are thereby caught in his net. Likewise with the prayer-leader, (sheliach zibbur), who is an intermediary between Israel and our Father in Heaven, acting in their behalf; our rabbis, both the earlier and later authorities, warned that the prayer leader should be [chosen from] the best people, but now it is known that they choose the worst

people. There is no need to draw this out; certainly one needs to do as the Rambam writes on, ON THAT I HAD IN THE DESERT A WAYFARER'S LODGING PLACE. [See Hilboth Deoth; Chapter 6:2: "If there were evil men and sinners who did not leave him alone to dwell in a land unless he mix them and act according to their evil conduct, he should go forth to caves, deserts and wildernesses, and not conduct himself in the way of sinners: ON THAT I HAD IN THE DESERT A WAYFARER'S LODGING PLACE. Jer. 9:1.]

And Aaron saw their evil intention to mix with the people of Israel in order to drag Israel to their level. Therefore he said, "If they should join with the holy people, [and become one with them].", This led to [making] the Golden Calf, for the mixed multitude made gods of gold. It says in Sanhedrin, Chapter 1 [7a], "DO NOT MAKE GODS OF GOLD. [Ex. 30:33]. Then those of wood are permitted?" R. Ashi says: "Gods, [rabbis], who come from gold." Maharshah comments in two ways: "They, [rabbis who come from gold], do the evils, for they are appointed for gold which they give the government, and they want to gather gold and silver by means of the rabbinate to fill their loss...and our rabbis have already come [several times, when this blemish and guilt was beginning, with prohibitions, severe punishments, excommunications and fines for this matter, so that they should appoint no rabbi or teacher for gold or silver given to individuals or many, but no one listens or pays attention to the punishments mentioned.]... In the Jerusalem Talmud: "R. Mana says: "Scorn those who are appointed for money." R. Ami calls them "gods of gold; we are not to call them rabbi, and we are not to stand before them, and the talith which is on them is like the saddle on an ass..." (See there.)



Thus the section recounted above will be understood — it was this way in the wilderness and it occurs in every age until our Messiah comes. Scripture says: "THE PEOPLE SAW THAT MOSES: וַיֵּשֶׁב, which is a moral hint for that time and for all generations with respect to the conduct of the masses with their rabbis. The proper heads of the generation work in Torah and worship of God until six hours, (וַיֵּשֶׁב נֶאֱמָר), which is the time of the scholars' meal, the latest of all, as is written in Chapter 1 of Shabbath. Just as Moses was head for his whole generation which was a generation of knowledge, thus in every generation the heads are the worthies who are from the sparks of Moses, our teacher, as is written in the Tikkunim and the midrash, "What was, will be, etc." And also in Likutei Torah [?]: "six hundred thousand foot soldiers, etc," and in this expression [?]: "He who has וַיֵּשֶׁב is called 'Moses.'" Just as it was in the generation of Moses, so it is in every generation, for there is a mixed multitude in every generation, as it says in the Nethibim.

AND THE PEOPLE SAW THAT MOSES וַיֵּשֶׁב; the proper rabbi hesitates to come to supervise the affairs of the Kahal, for וַיֵּשֶׁב נֶאֱמָר, six hours is yet to come; he is still working in the solitude which the era needs. Immediately they [the masses] arose with complaint and said, "מַלְאֲכֵי יְהוָה שֶׁיֵּשְׁבִים בְּפָנֵינוּ", [Ex.32:1], for we are like a city without a ruler; [the rabbi] is busy all the time with his work, the work of God, and we, the inhabitants of the city, are like a flock without a shepherd." When in a certain time they turn to the government [saying] "We need a ruler," they explain, "אֵלֶּיכֶם תָּבוֹא מֹשֶׁה... וְעָלֵינוּ יִשְׁבֵּן מִלְּפָנֵי יְהוָה, [meaning] this Moses who was a hero among heroes in being a leader, now we do not know what became of him,

for he took another path, choosing solitude, and there is now no one fit to be rabbi and leader for us, even if he should return later. We need a leader who should be one with his people in food and in prayer — who should not separate himself from them at any time." That is what the verse, וְהָיָה מִלְּפָנֵינוּ, means. This was not the case with Moses and Israel, "who are separated from us by clouds of glory and the eating of manna..." The hint for all generations: one makes with select men, (וַיֵּשֶׁב נֶאֱמָר), a minyan apart and never eats with them [the multitude] at their tables, causing the mixed multitude to make a Golden Calf, (as it says in the Zohar above.) In all generations this leads to the Golden Calf which are gods, [rabbis], of gold, appointed by the government for money. When he [the rabbi] does not have enough [money] he arranges a proper marriage for himself in the city! As I heard an interpretation of the Talmud: "Moses your leader is a thief or a swindler, for he stole souls in order to marry off 600,000 in Israel, etc.," Therefore, now there are many rabbis in the city who shall go before us, [both] the rabbis and their relatives desire great power, until, because of this, there come quarrels and strife into the city. Therefore Scripture says, וַיִּשְׁמַע יְהוָה הָעוֹלָה [THE VOICE OF THE PEOPLE AS THEY SHOUTED], AND HE SAID TO MOSES, "A VOICE OF WAR IS IN THE CAMP" [Ex.32:15-19,] the voice of war, quarrels and strife. Thus the tablets were broken, for the Torah was taken from the city until, in his mercy, God again sent Moses and he beat the Golden Calf into dust to show them there was nothing in it, even though it had gone before them. They again received him as leader, and he examined [them] as sotahs. (For the explanation of "as sotahs" see later in the dis-

cussion of the commandment of sofah.) And understand well that he separated the good man from the evil, some of whom died by sword, some by plague, some by dropsy. Finally, when Moses stood in prayer and Israel was forgiven, He commanded that the Tabernacle be made from the gold of Israel only, not from [the gold of] the mixed multitude, as it explains in the Zohar. MOSES GLITTERED ALL THE CONGREGATION OF THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL...TAKE FROM AMONG YOU AN OFFERING! [Ex.35:1,5] The hint for all generations: that they should make a both midrash for the select of Israel so that they be separate from the masses, for it is impossible that [the select and the masses] should be one group. This is a remedy for what was previously broken down, [at least] protesting against [this bad state of affairs,] just as there were in the Temple separate courts for priests and for Israelites. Thus we understand why the Sabbath is mentioned together with the objects [needed] for the Tabernacle [in Ex.35:1-3.] The interpretation of the sages is known, and we agree, that the scholar is called "Sabbath." Just as there is a difference between the weekdays when you can do 39 kinds of work and the Sabbath when you cannot, so there is a difference between slaughtering and salting which are of the 39 kinds of work, (Chapter 7 of Shabbath, "He who slaughters, and he who strips, and he who salts etc.") customary on weekdays, (the masses), and the scholars (Sabbath) who are given permission to add an extra reparation. This is the repair of the second disorder. There will be forgiveness of the sin of Israel after they repair and take it on themselves to correct [these] two matters, [the proper state for] which they had upset. It is easy to understand.

And the above happened to me, the author, from the beginning to the end, and indicates why this man ordered the establishment of a both hamidrash in Shargrod.

Sources quoted in the Toldoth Yaakov Yosef

Jacob Joseph quotes the Best 255 times.

He quotes "his rabbi" five times (22b, 94b, 111b, 142b, 159b.) He quotes "his rabbi" once. (142b.) He quotes R. Joel (of Nemerov?) twice (145b, 175a); Rabbi Y. of Giron once (173b); the Maggid I. of Mezibor twice (89a, 171a); R. Samuel Lohish once (81b); R. Ephraim of Brody twice (48a, 10a); R. Gershon Kitover, the brother-in-law of the Best, once (192a); R. Shabtai of Radkov once (67a); R. Naftali once (177a); R. Jonah of Radkov twice (35a, 39a); R. Moshe of Sulov once (91a); and Joshua Beschal of Giron 3 times (93a, 118a, 122a.)

More frequently he quotes the Mekhiah Aryeh Leib Gliner of Polnoy (his grandfather) 5 times (17a, 128b, 159a, 175a, 189a); R. Nathan of Herodenta 5 times (71b, 8b, 132b, 147b, 195b); R. Nathan Kossower 15 times (e.g., 6b, 7b, 7a, 40b, 8a, etc.). His most frequent references are to the Maggid Menachem Mendel of Far-22 times (e.g., 24b, 39b, 44a, 65b, etc.) and R. Leib Zilbener - 11 times (10b, 74b, 37a, 33a, 39a, etc.)

Jacob Joseph refers to these earlier authorities by name: Moses Alshekh about 276 times; SAMUEL (R. Samuel Edels) 115 times; Joseph Jabez 60 times; Nahmanides 50 times; Isaac Alfasi 39 times (e.g., 170b.) R. Moses Isserles 75 times (e.g., 14b); R. Asher ben Yechiel 73 times (e.g., 40b); R. Solomon Luria 10 times (e.g., 78a); R. Nissim Gerondi 10 times (e.g., 36b); Yom Tov Lippman Heller 10 times (e.g., 147b.)

R. Meir Meliff 4 times (e.g., 78a); R. S. Alkvetz once (72a); SAMUEL (Samuel ben Meir) once (188b); R. Yom Tov ben Abraham twice (58b, 71b); R. Moses of Coucy once (40a); R. Solomon b. Adret twice (37b, 197a); Abravanel twice (72a, 144b).

R. Moses Hagiz once (107a); Moses of Trani once (177b); David Abudraham once (80a); Elijah Mizrahi twice (130a, 168a); R. Samson Ostropoli once (148a); Samuel Kaidanover once (10b); the Gaon Isaac de Leon 3 times (55a, 57b, 168a); R. Jacob b. Israel Sason twice (119a, 165a); and Rabbenu Jonah 5 times (23a, 106a, 115b, 176a, 134a.)

Some of his references are so abbreviated as to make identification rather difficult. E. g., פ"ק נ"ז (37a, 117b); ש"ק נ"ז (75a); פ"ק נ"ז (50a, 58b, 133b, 155a, 176b); פ"ק נ"ז (113a); פ"ק נ"ז (15b, 16b); and פ"ק נ"ז (63b).

There are quoted very extensively: Rashi, Mishnah, Avoth, Tosafoth, Targum, Mechilta, Sifra, Sifra, the Siddur, the Haggadah, and the Yivutim. A cursory survey of Talmud tractates noted Taanith, Sotah, Mezillah, Hagigah, Iesachim, Shabbath, Avodah Zara, Kethuboth, Sanhedrin, Berachoth, P. Meziah, Nedarim, and Yebamoth.

Midrash collections (besides Midrash Rabba) include, Yalkuth (Shimoni) 5 times (e.g., 14a, 51b); Tanhuma 10 times (e.g., 131b); Ayn Yaakov twice (e.g., 13b) and commentaries to the Midrash: Mathnaoth Kehunah on Midrash Echah once (10b); Yafe Anaf once (46b); Midrash Shohar Tov on Psalm 10 times (e.g., 9b) and Midrash Shmuel on Avoth 26 times (e.g., 5a, 38a, 110a, 137a, etc.).

Jerusalem Talmud (2b, 7a, 9a, 10b, 45b, 47b, 88a, 92a, etc.). Frequently on the same verse or phrase.)

These are the other books quoted by title. It is worth noting that Jacob Joseph had many of these kabbalistic tracts in handwritten copies. (Scholem, Major Trends, p. 258.) Peri Ezer Hayim 31 times (147a, 153a, 154a, etc.) and 8 times under its subtitle Kayanoth haAri (31b etc.); Ezer Hayim 13 times (11a, 86a, etc.); Likutei Torah 11 times (3b, 13b, 19b, 56b, 101a); Sefer haGulgulim twice (e.g., 21b); Sefer M'voh Shaarim once (57a); Share Kedushah 14 times (17b, 37a, 37b etc.).

He refers to the "Kitvoh haAri" 80 times (written tract circulating under the Ari's name, Scholem, Major Trends, p. 255. They were secret handwritten apocryphal scrolls which the rabbis forbade printing on punishment of excommunication, Dubnow, p. 44.) The name "Ari" is mentioned 70 times (including Siddur haAri: 65b, 169b; Hasagadath Pesach 7b; Tanme haMitzvoh 59b.) "Kethubim" (apparently the same as "Kitve haAri") 110 times (e.g., 100a; "As the Ari says...look in the Kethubim, on the laws of the Shofar,").

The Zohar is quoted 310 times, often by age. The Tikkunim 164 times; the Sifre Torah 2 times (e.g., 60a); the Sifre di Tzenutha once (89b); Midrash haNe'ulam 12 times (e.g., 78a); Zohar Le Shir haShirim 3 times (e.g., 57b, 75b); the Zohar Hadash 4 times (4b, 53b, 106b, 107b). Quite likely this includes also the Maya Mehemma 8 times (157b, 168b, 135a, etc.) and the Izra twice (38a, 75a.)

Shnei Luboth haBrith 15 times (e.g., 9a); Sefer haKaneh 7 times (37a, 96b, etc.); Tamar Devorah of Moses Cordovero 5 times (57a etc.); Be'esei I'Abraham 5 times (4b, 8a, etc.); Sefer haAidim 12 times (67a, 97a etc.); Roshith Hochmah of Eliezer de Vidas 18 times (3a, 56b, 70b,

181a, etc.); Sefer Yetzirah 21 times (4a, 8a, 13a, 16a, 17b, etc.)

These other books, commentaries, sefer tracts and other categories were frequently quoted: Akedath Yitzhak 35 times (15a, 155b, 189a, etc.); Eleloth Ephraim (sermons) 71 times; Bahya ibn Pakuda's Hevot haLevovoth 26 times (22b, etc.); Shema Shelomo (sermons of Solomon Minim Algazi) 5 times (4b, 14b, etc.); Mayhar Peninim of Solomon ibn Gabirol 7 times (97a etc.)

In Lulachit literature he quotes the Vishneh Torah 230 times, as well as its commentaries: Kosef Michnah (Joseph Caro), and Bigdal Or (R. Shem Tov b. Abraham) 5 times (55b, 31a, 83b, 87b, 188a.); and anonymous commentators 12 times (73a, etc.) Mishnah I'Melach 7 times (57a, 65b, etc.); Abraham ben David 11 times (also quoted with reference to the Sefer Yetzirah) 27b, 50a, 87b, etc.) Maimonides' Sefer haMitzvoh 4 times (58a, etc.) And three more times as Sefer Yad haShorashim, Part I of Sefer haMitzvoh: 54b, 55b, 168a.) The Morah Nebuhim is cited 6 times (7b, 137a, 144a, 186b, 189b, 193b.)

Arbaa Turim of Jacob ben Asher 45 times (12a etc.); and its commentaries: Mayith Hadash of Joel Sirkes once (67a); the Beth Yosef (Caro) 20 times (187a, etc.)

Shulchan Aruch 6 times (85a, etc.); its commentaries: Ture Zahav of D. Segal 38 times (11a, etc.); Beth Shmuel of Samuel b. Uri Phoebus once (148b); Sifte Kohen of Shabbtai Kohen 6 times (56b, 135a, 169b); and his Nekudath haKesef once (67b.) Once he quotes Atreth Zekanim to the Shulchan Aruch (36a.) 8 times the Halachoth Gedoloth of S. Koryara (168a.)

These Kabbalistic books are quoted at least once or twice: Sefer haBahir (3a,); Sefer Drith Menuhah (22a, 97a); Sefer Moroth Nathan-Moore Or (8b); Nef Eyz Hayim 8 times (19b, 109a, 137a, 134, 137a); Nanfe Yonah (8b, 10a); Shoshan Sodoth (18b); Rona l'Yakov (139a); Pa'anah Raza (63b); Or Yisroel (122b.)

These musar books and commentaries are quoted at least once or twice: M'hir haYayim of Moses Isserles on Esther 5 times (42b, 45a, 175b, 175b, 104b); the Hokeah of Eleazar b. Judah (70a); Sefer haYashar (51a); Sefer Ben Sira ( 6a); Ikkurim of albo (14a, 162a); Sefer Ben Uri (Uri ben R. Judah Leib - 45b); Sefer Ben Melech v'ha Nazir (41b, 47a); Yad Yosef (sermons by Joseph ben Hayim Tsarfati) 3 times (18a, 26b, 103b); Kafter vaFerah (157a, 137b); Sefer Likute Or (on Roshan and astronomy, 36a); the Lebush of Yordani Jaffe (26a.)

Sit'ah Yitzhak on Pesach laws (155a); Kikayon d'Yonah, Hiddushim (172a); Fehad Yitzhak (154b) and the Seder Olam (88a.)

He also mentions the following books for which there is some bibliographical uncertainty: Sefer Mayan Ganim (possibly sermons and responsa on the RUMAH by R. Reuben b. Hananiah Mizrahi - 188b, 193b); Shaare Musar (perhaps a musar book by Avigdor Katz, mentioned only in Sifte Yesharim, a 17th century index, 81b); Ayn Yehoshua (157a); Shaare Eshraim (103b).

Finally he mentions these general categories: Sifre haMekubalim (78a, etc.); Sifre haKubalah (40a); Derushim (17b); Derashot haMaftorah (167a); Sifre Y'rain (71b, 184b, 190b.)