

THE HEBREW UNION COLLEGE-JEWISH INSTITUTE OF RELIGION  
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THE HASID IN TALMUDIC LITERATURE

by Sholom Singer

The thesis of Sholom Singer entitled "The Hasid in Talmudic Literature" is divided in the following sections: Introduction, the early Hasidism, Normative Hasiduth; Denogations of the Hasid and Conclusions: He deals with the Hasid in the Maccabean period as an introduction to his theme. He clearly defines the characteristic features of the Hasid on the basis of the source material, as distinct from the Christian saint, through the obsence in the former of emphasis upon asceticism and physical suffering as a virtue. The candidate manifests a good understanding of the source material and a wide knowledge of the literature appertaining to his theme. He shows also a critical sense in his criticism of some theories of modern scholars.

I therefore recommend the acceptance of his thesis for the attainment of the M.H.L. Degree.

Dr. Samuel Atlas

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I. INTRODUCTION



Perhaps one of the most modest assessments of the literature shedding light on the identity of the Hasidim , is to be found in the words of George Foot Moore. He says , "...of the origin and the antecedents of the Pharisees there is no record. It is commonly surmized that they were the successors of those who in the earlier generations called themselves Hasidim, literally the Pious or the Righteous , to distinguish themselves as what we call religious men from their worldly and indifferent countrymen. Their temper is illustrated by the fact that, at the beginning of the persecution under Antiochus Epiphanes, a body of refugees of this kind let themselves be slaughtered with their wives and children, in their retreat into the wilderness, rather than profane the Sabbath by raising a hand to defend themselves saying, "Let us all die together in our innocence." (The name Asidean, however, does not occur in this narrative. IMacc.2, 29-38) Before long, however, the Asideans joined forces with the Maccabean leaders, (Ibid.2, 42-44) consenting under stress of circumstances to a suspension of the Sabbath observance to permit fighting in self-defence. (IMacc.2, 40f.)

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"When religious liberty was secured, and a new high priest, Alcimus, was appointed in the room of Menelaus, the Asideans were the first to seek to make peace with him and the Syrian general Bacchides, who came to see him installed in his office. (Cf. IIMacc.14, 6) Alcimus was not disposed to condone their part in the rebellion, (IMacc.7, 13ff.) and, as Judas and his brothers declined his treacherous overtures for a conference, executed sixty of the scribes and the religious who indiscreetly put themselves in his power, to the disillusionment and consternation of the rest." ①

Mr. Moore points out, very truthfully and candidly, that this is all that our sources tell us about the attitude or the conduct of the Asideans in the Maccabean struggle, and that even if the connection of the Pharisees with them were established it would add nothing to our knowledge of the latter.

Some, looking for the origin of the name Pharisees in an historical situation, conjecture that it was originally applied to the Asideans who separated from Judas and his party after religious freedom had been achieved and a legitimate high priest succeeded Menelaus.

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In many of the Psalms, supposedly dating from the Maccabean period, Moore finds that the wicked are synonymous with the rich, the rich being identified as the oppressors of the poor, robbing them by force and fraud, perverting justice... situations for which there is no remedy. As a result of this condition, social strife now deepens into a religious cleavage. The poor and humble are in their own consciousness the 'pious', i.e. the Hasidim denounce their adversaries as ungodly. The ill-treatment they suffer is conceived as persecution for righteousness' sake.

The Psalms of Solomon, which are ever subject to revisions in dating, echo forth the same sentiments even more eloquently in the name of the Hasidim. Moore says that the Psalms of Solomon reflect the attitude of the Hasidim to the later Hasmonean princes and aristocracy, lay and clerical, that surrounded them. (2)

W.O. Oesterley, in his book "The Jews and Judaism During the Greek Period" gives an interesting twist to the well-known information concerning the Hasidim. He says, "Among the earliest of those

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by whom Mattathias was supported were the Hasidim, the godly ones; the mention of them without any word of explanation shows that they were well-known. They appear here as a definite section among the people; but their origin must be sought in much earlier times. They had long been the most ardent upholders of the Jewish faith against those who sought to introduce innovations contrary to traditional beliefs and practices. They are spoken of in IMacc.2, 42 as "mighty men of Israel, everyone that offered himself willingly for the Law".<sup>(3)</sup>

In describing the character of the Hasidim, Oesterley says that during the Maccabean revolt they were already a well formed group within the Jewish community, this being implied by the total lack of information as to who they were. From the few references we have we know that they were, par excellence, the upholders of the Law, though not members of the priesthood. Their ardent love of peace, though not peace at the expense of a principle, is further evidence of their religious character. They are not mentioned again for the simple reason that the Pharisees were their spiritual descendants.<sup>(4)</sup>

Emil Schürer in his magnificent and definitive

work, History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ states that within the Jewish fold, during the sway of Hellenism, in the Maccabean period, there arose two antagonistic parties: the party friendly to the Greeks and the party of the "pious" (Hasidim), who held stoutly to the strict ideal of the Scribes. It was in the face of this foreign cultural opposition that the "pious" formed themselves into a sect to fight off the onslaughts of Hellenism. It was only by the example of the Hasidim that the whole mass of the Jewish people were roused to do battle for the old faith. From the available data it appears that the opposition to the high priest Alcimus was not engaged in by all segments of those who helped to check the inroads of Hellenism. Alcimus was immediately recognized by the representatives of the strictest section of the Scribes and the "pious" (IMacc.7, 13), as the legitimate high priest of the family of Aaron. Only Judas and his adherents persevered in their opposition.

Although identification is tempting, Schurer does not refer to the group refusing to desecrate the Sabbath and suffering martyrdom, as being members of the Hasidim. (5)



In discussing the meaning and significance of the term Pharisee, like most other commentators, Schurer immediately brings into focus the term Hasid. He assumes that it is not likely that the members of the Pharisees gave that name to themselves. He feels that they might have been so named in a reproachful sense by their adversaries, as the "separatists," who for the sake of their own special cleanness separated themselves from the rest of the nation. Schürer then states, "Other positive self-designations would have been more obvious to them, and in fact they first appear in history under the name of Hasidim".<sup>6</sup> After making this identification he proceeds to inform us that Pharissism, when viewed according to its essence, is as old as legal Judaism in general. However, in terms of its first appearance as a sect, as a fraction within the Jewish nation, in this sense, it can be traced farther back than to the time of the Maccabean conflicts. In these the 'pious' (i.e. Hasidim), who plainly formed a fraction within the people, also took part in the rebellion. They fought indeed on the side of Judas for the religion of their fathers, but they were not identical

with the Maccabean party. Schürer also mentions that this is the thesis of Wellhausen, who rightly identifies the Hasidim with the Pharisees. The Hasidim evidently represented, as may be inferred from their name, the strictest party which upheld with special zeal the observance of the Law. "Hence they are the same party, whom we meet again with some decades later, under the name Pharisees." <sup>(7)</sup>

Louis Finkelstein, in his sociological study, The Pharisees, assumes it as a well-known fact, that "the follower of the prophet gave way to the Hasid and the latter was succeeded by the Pharisees." <sup>(8)</sup> To be even more accurate in this matter, it was the plebians who became the Hasidim. <sup>(9)</sup> As to the role of the Hasidim during the Maccabean revolt, he states that they, many of the plebian Hasidim, would not yield to the infamous decrees of the tyrant Antiochus. "Life had given them little but delight in the Law and the commandments, the knowledge that they were serving God, and the hope in a future world; were all of these to be sacrificed



at the whim of a deluded pagan?"<sup>(9)</sup> The Hasidim, left their shops and their markets; many left their possessions behind as they made off for the caves where, "as outlaws from the human ruler, they could better serve their divine King." But here too, the long arm of the tyrannical king sought them out and slaughtered them out in cold blood. Concerning the initial participation of the Hasidim in the armed revolt against Antiochus, Finkelstein declares, that the contagious effect of the example set by the old man Mattathias and his band, overcame even the passivity of the Hasidim, rousing them out of their dreams of consolation to an active assertion of their rights. "Certain Hasideans who, having fled to the wilderness, were attacked on the Sabbath by Syrian soldiers and permitted themselves to be cut down in cold blood, rather than violate the sacred day."<sup>(10)</sup> It is from this point on that Finkelstein develops a novel and most original thesis. After Mattathias had heard about the slaughter, he wept exceedingly. But it was then that they took counsel saying, "Whosoever shall come against us to battle on the Sabbath day, let us fight against him, and we shall in no wise die as our brethren died in the

in the secret places." Finkelstein continues, "to the modern mind this decision seems to be the simplest common sense; to the Hasideans it meant moral revolution. The thousand pietists who yielded themselves up to Syrian attackers were under no illusion as to the fate that awaited them. They had fled to the mountains in order to practice what was forbidden in the cities; their offense was punishable with death. But, filled with the conviction of individual resurrection and regarding this world as nothing more than a prelude to a greater and finer life, they faced their executioners calmly and perhaps even cheerfully. The Hasmoneans who, under pressure of necessity, were prepared to make a radical alteration in the interpretation of the Sabbath Laws, were men of a different stamp. They were warriors and diplomats, planning victory in this world, instead of dreaming of compensation in the next. (11)

Two mutually opposing ideals were momentarily united in the rush of victory. The Hasidean saints, overwhelmed by the boldness of the Hasmonean priests, were ready to forget for a time what their class and

experience represented . But life does not forget. Gradually the cleavage between the plebian followers and the patrician leaders re-asserted itself.

Some Hasideans broke away when Jonathan continued the war after autonomy had been won. Others still remained loyal; but their descendants were ultimately forced to withdraw when King John Hyrkan openly broke with them.

The divergence was the same; it expressed itself in a new name. The Sadducees who rallied about the Hasmoneans vehemently denied the resurrection, while the Pharisees drawn essentially from among the descendants of the earlier plebians, as vehemently continued to affirm it. By their faith in the life beyond death they won adherents throughout the Jewish world. It is interesting to note that Antigonus of Socho is counted among the Hasidim, being one of their most revered teachers. He, like Ben Sira, was one of those who had renounced the privileges of their aristocratic heritage and had thrown in their lot with the despised plebians. <sup>(12)</sup> Finkelstein states that as the Hasideans were faced with extinction and did not dare to anticipate the incredible victory

which ultimately came, the vague and incipient suspicion that their kingdom was not of this world gradually crystallized into rigid belief. It was clear to them that all must perish before better times would come. The doctrine of resurrection which had been held by a few eccentrics and progressives spread to ever wider circles. Finkelstein makes frequent reference to variant strata in the development of the Hasidean sect, he refers to "neo-Hasidism," the "Hasidean Order" and "plebian Masid." (13) Unfortunately, no systematic presentation of the various stages of development is outlined by the author, the terms seemingly used at the authors momentary desire.

In his most recent work entitled, The Pharisees and the Men of the Great Synagogue, Louis Finkelstein presents a most radical speculation. The basic thesis emerging from this book is that Ezra and his co-workers established the Society of the Hasideans, who would, he hoped, become the core of the "Kingdom of Priests and a Holy Nation." The affairs of the Society of Hasideans were to be directed by the

Keneset Ha-Gedolah, (a term usually translated "Great Synagogue", in reality meaning "Great Court"). The constitution of the Society of Hasideans is preserved, but only in part, in Nehemiah chapters 9 and 10. Toward the end of the third century B.C.E., the Society was gradually strengthened, when Simon the Just, associated himself with it, and became its leader. With him a large group of priests, leading and influential men, identified themselves with the Hasideans, and, for the first time in history, the lay scholars of the Keneset Ha-Gedolah became members of the Gerousia or ruling council of the Commonwealth. The union between the high priesthood and the Hasideans was dissolved after Simon's death, when increasing tensions among the various factions in Judah led to the persecutions of Antiochus IV and the Maccabean revolt. Thereafter the followers of the high priesthood called themselves Sadducees (i.e. adherents of the family of Sadok, the first high priest of the Temple) and dubbed their opponents (who remained within the Society of Hasideans), Pharisees or "heretics". In the process of re-organization, the Society of Hasideans (or as we must now call



them , the Pharisees) developed two factions --one pro-priestly, the other anti-priestly. Each was directed by it's own court and head or chief of court, Beth Din and Ab Beth Din. Each group dealt with the Law according to it's own traditions. Finkelstein develops a thoroughly new approach to the whole problem of the Hasidim and their court the Keneset Ha-Gedolah. He gives many particulars concerning their activities such as their observance of the laws of purity, establishing the synagogue and study of the Torah. (H)

In its early days, the Hasidean movement, with its emphasis on local synagogues and lay scholarship, must have been regarded by the priests and the high priests as anti-ecclesiastical. But the movement grew and in the last decades of the third century B.C.E. became so strong that it drew to itself no less a personality than Simon the Just. His association with the movement was of such importance that it changed the character of the Society. So outstanding a personality could not remain anonymous as did the other members of the Society previously. General realization that its head had been a high priest at one time was of the utmost importance for the future of the Order.

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Hence the veil of anonymity was customarily withdrawn from the head of the Order. This practice was followed when Simon the Just was succeeded by Antigonus of Socho, and the latter in turn was followed by the "Pairs".<sup>(15)</sup>

The members of the Sadokite high priesthood, whom Simon the Just had brought into the Hasidean order with himself, remained within it only during his time and that of his successor. Finkelstein continues, "The issues of Hellenism versus Hasidism, the apostasy of the later members of the Sadokite high priesthood, and the division between the proponents of Egypto-philism and Syro-philism which tore the Judean community apart early in the second century B.C.E., made it impossible for many members of the hierarchy to remain within the Order. They withdrew on the grounds that the lay scholars were in fact heretical, "perushim". The evidence seems conclusive that the word, perushim actually means heretics and was used in that sense very frequently in the Mishna".<sup>(16)</sup> Dr. Finkelstein concludes, "Reconstructed in this way... the Hasidean and Pharisaic Orders, become an ordered and intelligible series of events".<sup>(17)</sup>



R. Travers Herford, in his book Judaism in the New Testament Period, develops an interesting aspect which he feels is connected with the rise of the Asidean sect. During the time of Nehemiah, the people pledged themselves to the whole Torah, which included the written text as well as the unwritten tradition. The unwritten tradition indicated the method and interpretation that was to be lent to the written Law. The effect of this new theory was to stop the process by which the Torah was gradually being turned into an archaic relic. The unwritten tradition was to have contained the revelation which God gave to Moses and through Moses to all Israel. Those who looked with disfavor upon this new way of interpreting the Torah were the priests, whose task had been that of teaching and giving instruction to the people from time immemorial. Whereas, in days gone by, the sole authority for interpreting the Torah rested with the priests, who regulated its application to life situations through the instrument of the *halakot*, ordinances; henceforth any layman schooled in the method of the unwritten law, was able to interpret the Torah. The overall purpose of

the priests was to restrict the Torah, through the deadening influence of the priestly ordinances to the written text alone. <sup>(15)</sup> Herford believes that it is quite probable that the first articulate reaction to this attitude on the part of the priests, is to be found in the expressions of the Asidean sect. They are connected with this reaction by their renewed emphasis on living religion and the service of the living God. The Asideans were those who, in the Maccabean revolt, stood for the purely religious ideal, as distinguished from those who united to their religious zeal a fervent aspiration for political freedom. The distinguishing name Hasidim was given only to those who were exceptional in their devotion to religion pure and undefiled by more worldly policy. After the Maccabean revolt had attained both the political and religious ends in view, the Asideans or Hasidim are no more heard of under that name, although the ideal for which they stood did not remain without its defenders. Again the conception of the unwritten law or tradition as an integral part of the Torah along with the written text found its exponents, also its opponents, and both

of these bore names which have become famous.

The former became known as the Pharisees and the latter were the Sadducees. Herford states that it was the Pharisees that followed in the steps of Ezra, the early scribes and the Hasidim.<sup>(19)</sup>

In his work Talmud and Apocrypha, published four years later, Travers Herford includes some stimulating observances with regard to the activity of the Hasidim. The fact that they were known by a special name already marks a distinction between them and the rank and file of the people. It is not said that Mattathias or any of his followers were themselves Hasidim, but the fact proves that the devotion to the Torah was so strong and widespread without being carried to extreme lengths. There is frequent mention of the Hasidim in the Psalms (both in the singular and the plural); but the word Hasid meaning "pious", "godly", was in common use, and does not in any passage in the Old Testament necessarily imply that the person so designated was a member of a particular group. When the writer of Maccabees I speaks of a "company of Hasidim", he had in mind, of course, a company of persons of the kind indicated by the word Hasid; but that there was

a regular sect or party known as Hasidim, in the same definite manner as that in which the later Pharisees or Essenes were a sect or a party, is open to question. "It is significant", says Herford, "that neither Hasid or Hasidim occurs in the book of Daniel. The name Hasidim seems to denote only those devotees of the Torah, amongst the whole number of it's adherents, most strict in their observance, most uncompromising in their loyalties".<sup>(20)</sup> Herford then concludes, "That there was any marked line of separation between them and their more moderate co-religionists is a mere matter of speculation".<sup>(21)</sup> Thus, "When the Psalmist (Ps. lxxvi.2) said: "Preserve my soul for I am a Hasid", there is nothing to show that he meant to imply that he was a member of a special group; he described his own religious attitude by the appropriate adjective. There were doubtless in his time (whenever that was) and in the time immediately before the Revolt (possibly long before) many persons to whom the word Hasid was applicable and was applied, as denoting a special type among Jews generally and adherents of Torah in particular. The name was convenient before the time of the Revolt, because at that time devotion to the Torah, let alone

such strict devotion, was not universal. After the defeat of Hellenism, when the Torah had won it's complete victory, there was no need for any special name even for it's more extreme champions. At a somewhat later date, when the cleavage between different sections of the people in regard to the Torah made itself felt in a changed form, the old name Hasidim was not revived to designate the new party. Instead they were called Pharisees, but to all intents and purposes the Pharisees were the Hasidim over again".<sup>(22)</sup>

Edwyn Bevan in his Jerusalem Under the High-Priests goes along generally with the opinion that the Pharisees were merely the Hasidim of former years under a new designation.<sup>(23)</sup>

Joseph Klausner, in his study History of the Second Temple, devotes a chapter to the consideration of the various sects in Palestine preceeding the Christian era.<sup>(24)</sup> Before the period of Hasmonean rule the Jewish people were divided into three distinct groups; the Am-Haaretz, the Soferim and the Elders or *ḥasidim*. The majority of the people belonged to the group of the Am-Haaretz, they resided in the towns and the hamlets outside and around Jerusalem, they belonged to no one religious sect or group,



fulfilled the Law insofar as their limited knowledge of it made possible. Their religious ignorance was not a result of indifference but rather that of limited time and opportunity for its study. During the Hasmonean wars they served as a tower of strength and support for the Maccabees in their deep seated hatred for the Hellenists who sought to take their lands from them.

The Soferim were the expounders of the Law, and the protagonists of the unwritten law. In the beginning it was primarily a priestly group, but later Levites and laymen from the middle and upper classes entered into her ranks. The fact that laymen were admitted, indicates that it sought to bring under its wing the masses of the people, and it is for this reason that Klausner refers to them as the "Democratic Party" within Israel. <sup>(25)</sup>

The Elders, *זקנים*, were the aristocracy in Israel. Belonging to this group was the high priest and his family, needless to say, the wealthy Jews as well. It was comprised of the propertied classes such as the House of Tobiah and others. Of these many belonged to the Great Assembly *בית דין הגדול*, and later to the Great Sanhedrin. They were naturally less disposed to follow the truly religious dictates of the law and indulged, for

the most part, in worldly and pleasure-seeking adventures and endeavors. Judging from their materialistic outlook they did not conform to the "new" interpretation of the law handed down from the pens of the Soferim, or to their newly contrived doctrines of immortality , reward and punishment in the hereafter, resurrection and the likes. This group Klausner regards as the "Aristocratic Party" in Palestine. (26)

Nearing the time of the Hasmonean period two new groups took the places of the former on the national scene. First of these was the party of the Hasidim the Soferim and the extreme pietists who were prepared to die in defense of the Law rather than contravene a single one of it's precepts and commandments. As the persecutions of Antiochus became more intense, so did the devotion of the Hasid to his Torah become more determined. In their efforts they were joined by many of the priests of lesser rank and station in the Temple hierarchy and income strata. Many of these priest were God-fearing and pious individuals realizing the verities of the Hasid's opposition. Of these priests many came from the outlying districts of Jerusalem,



Klausner referring to them as "Priestly Democrats", in contradistinction to the "Priestly Aristocracy" whom they opposed. The masses of the people , whose beliefs were deeply rooted in the faith of their fathers, supported the Hasidim as they did the Soferim who had preceeded them. "In this sense ", concludes Klausner, "the congregation of the Hasidim was the "Democratic Party" in Israel".<sup>(27)</sup>

On the basis of this analysis the family of Mattathias, the early Hasmoneans, were already spiritually akin to the Hasidim , being that they were priests of the lower class and means, coming from the outlying district of Modin. They too were prepared to die in defense of the Law, with the additional modification that they emulate the zealousness and courage of the zealot Phineas ben Jair, who defended the Law with spear and might. After the slaughter of the thousand innocent Hasidim whom the Hasmoneans had joined, Mattathias decided that it was permissible in this period of desperation to hold battle on the Sabbath, a decision in which he was later supported by the Hasidim. With the rise

of Jonathan , son of Mattathias, the situation in Palestine changed considerably. "It is significant indeed", remarks Klausner , "that just about this time Josephus makes mention of the existence of three distinct sects or groups in Israel, the Sadducees, Pharisees and Essenes, indicating that the unanimous opposition to the Syrian Greeks now slackened and waned during the latter days of Jonathan".<sup>28</sup> Now that the Hellenists had been defeated of what future need was there for the Hasmonean House, the religious ideal for which the Hasidim had fought was now a reality. Reluctant as they were to continue the fight , or even fight at all, for the political end , all the more did they refuse to be instrumental in establishing a non-Davidic dynasty at the helm of the newly established state, namely that of the Hasmoneans. Their belief was that the final liberation and redemption of Israel was the work of the Messiah. It is therefore understandable that they should break with the Hasmoneans and agree to accept the person of Alcimus, for they were religious zealots seeking the perpetuation of the religious ideal , rather than the establishment of a political state , with a "strange" dynasty (i.e. Hasmonean) at it's head. The "Congregation

of Hasidim", as a national party disappeared , but it's spirit continued. It's extreme religious zealotness for the Law found new expression in the Essenes, it's separatism stemming from the scrupulous observance of the commandments found a new outlet in Pharisaism. (29)

Zachariah Frankel in Darke Ha-Mishna states that during the Maccabean Wars the sect of the Hasidim started to blossom, Jose ben Joezer being one of their members. This sect was very strict regarding the laws of ritual purity and impurity, and many such similar laws originated in the midst of this group. Frankel then cites an example of such nature containing an opinion of Jose ben Joezer with regard to one who has become defiled by touching a corpse, (wherein Jose says that the man alone is considered a primary uncleanness , and not that which he in turn touches) to demonstrate that Jose sought to counteract the activity of the ritualistic extremists within the sect of the Hasidim. Thus Jose ben Joezer attempted to set up certain norms for true Hasidic behavior and condemn those who tended toward fanaticism. (30)

"The Earlier Hasidim" פ'ריערע פ'ז'ון, says Frankel, "are always remembered with Rabbinic approval when either their traditions or activities are mentioned, but no legal decisions are ever recorded in their name".<sup>(31)</sup> In view of the fact that one group of Hasidim bears the name "Earlier" this would seem to indicate that there must have been a "Later" group, who are also known as Hasidim. Frankel points out that "Later" group veered from the paths of the Earlier Hasidim and imposed upon themselves extremely burdensome rituals and regulations which they were unable to carry out satisfactorily. They also indulged in metaphysical speculation and the "hidden mysteries" of their day. Honi the Circle-Drawer, a contemporary of Simon ben Shetach, is identified as a member of the Earlier Hasidim.<sup>(32)</sup>

Heinrich Graetz, in his History of the Jews, tells us that during the time of Simon the Just, "There were amongst the nation, some over-pious people who took the vow of the Nazirite to refrain from wine for a given time. They called themselves, or were called, the strictly pious, Chasidim. When the term of their vows had expired they cut off their hair and

went through all the ceremonies . Perhaps the excesses of the Greeks and their Jewish followers, their numerous feasts and orgies, induced them (Hasidim) to impose upon themselves their vows of Naziritic abstention with it's attendant rites. It is certain that as the number of the pleasure-seeking imitators of Greek habits increased in Judea, so did also that of the Chasidim. But Simon the Just was not pleased with this exaggerated zeal, and took no part in the sacrifices of the Nazirites." (33)

In another passage, Graetz outlines the gradual emergence and consolidation of the Hasidic party. In essence they were the upholders of the Law seeking to counteract the pagan effects of Hellenization. "Those Judaeans ," continues Graetz, "who saw with pain and rage the attempts of the Hellenists, grouped themselves into a party which clung desperately to the Law and the customs of their fathers and cherished them as the apple of their eye. They were the "community of the pious", or Chasidim, a development of the Nazirites. Each religious custom was to them of inviolable sanctity." Both Jose ben Joezer and Jose ben Johanan are considered by Graetz to have been teachers of the Hasidim. "Between the two widely opposed parties, the Hellenists and the Chasidim or Asideans, the people took a



middle course." <sup>(34)</sup> Graetz is of the view that the thousand men, women and children killed in the caves by the Syrian commander on the Sabbath, were Hasidim. After this costly price, paid in the untold number of martyrs, the Chasidim decided to cast their lot with the Hasmonean leaders. For a moment, during the appointment of Alcimus, it appeared that the Hasidim would depart from the Hasmoneans, but this was quickly remedied by the betrayal and slaughter of the sixty leading Hasidim who went to the peace conference at the invitation of the newly appointed Alcimus. After the death of Judas one could already discern the beginnings of three distinct parties in Palestine. Whereas the Hasmon-eans were the upholders of the Law and resembled the Asideans in their love for the Sanctuary, they differed from them in their wider view, in their practical judgement and in their manly strength which could not be deterred from its purpose by any adverse circumstances. They were not content with having averted the violation of the Sanctuary, or with having obtained the recognition of their religious liberty; but they longed to rid themselves with the causes which had brought misfortune on their country. They were not content with anything

short of political independence. It was this worldly policy which incensed the Asideans, for they put their trust in God alone. "This discontent, it may be surmised was the cause for the separation of the Asideans from the Hasmoneans, thereby reducing the number of the Maccabean warriors. This circumstance may have brought about the death of Judas." (35)

In his treatment of the "Sects", Graetz describes the period, from 135 B.C.E. to 106 B.C.E., following the Maccabean Wars. "The victory over the Syrians, the expulsion of the Hellenists, the subjection of the Idumaeans, the humiliation of the Samaritans, culminating in the destruction of the Temple of Gerizim, were so many triumphs of Judaism over its enemies, and were sanctioned as such by the champions of the religious party." (36) Continues Graetz, "Religion was still the great underlying impulse in all movements, and showed its strength even in the abuse to which it gave rise when it forced Judaism upon the heathens. The strict religious party of the Asideans withdrew from the scene of passing events, and, in order to avoid mixing in public life, they sought a secluded retreat where they could give themselves up to undisturbed meditation. In this solitude they formed themselves into a distinct order, with strange customs and new views, and received the name Essenes."



Graetz then outlines the split that took place within this party of the pious. "Their example, however, of giving up all active share in the common weal was not followed by all the strictly devout Judaeans, the majority of whom, on the contrary, whilst firmly adhering to the precepts of their faith, considered it a religious duty to further the independence of their country. Thus there arose a division among the pious, and a national party separated itself from the Asideans or Essenes, which did not avoid public life but, according to its strength and ability, took an active part in public affairs. The members of this numerous sect began at this time to bear the name Pharisees." (31)

Kaufmann Kohler's discussions of the Hasidim appear in his book The Origins of the Synagogue and the Church, and in the Jewish Encyclopedia article entitled "Essenes".

Following the lead of Wellhausen, he states that both the Pharisees and the Essenes are offshoots of the pre-Maccabean Hasidim. The term "Heber" or "Haburah", חֶבֶר - חֲבֵרָה, refer to the members and association of the Hasidic order. So closely related were the ancient groups of the Essenes and the Pharisees

that no difference at all is discernible in their respective disciplines. A remnant of the Hasidean brotherhood is to be found in the group called the "Nekiyye ha-Da'at" (the pure minded) of Jerusalem.

In accord with the view of Weiss, he also is of the opinion that the "zekenim ha-rishonim" זקנים הראשונים (the ancient elders) is only another name for the Hasidim Ha-Rishonim. Still another name in use for the Hasidim is the term "Zenu'im" which is at times replaced or explained by the term "Keshirim" כשרים.

Kohler says that the very fact that the name of the Hasidim of olden times is often coupled with that of the "Anshe Ma'aseh" אנשי מעשה, shows that both belonged to the same class. The latter he takes to mean, "men of miraculous deeds".

Kohler points out that Hanninah ben Dosa is referred to as "the last of the miracle-workers", but this should not lead us to believe that their group discontinued with the advent of the Talmudic period; on the contrary "the Hasidim remained wonder-workers in Talmudic times". "In fact", continues Kohler, "there existed books containing miraculous stories of the Hasidim, a considerable number of which were adopted by the Talmud and Midrash, just as there existed secret scrolls and ethical rules of the Hasidim, ("Megillot Setarim" and "Mishanot" or "Megillot Hasidim")

to which allusion is made here and there in the Talmud, and the contents of which have found their way into the pseudepigraphic and early no-Talmudic literature." The Hasidim mentioned in the old Baraitas such as Temurah 15b and Sotah ix, 15, who spent their time on works of charity, are none other but survivals of the ancient Hasidim. The Hasidean traditions may, therefore, be traced from Jose ben Joezer, the martyr-saint and Hasidean leader of Maccabean times, down to Phineas ben Jair, who was both in theory and in practice a deciple of the Hasidim. Kohler believes that the Essene is very closely related to the Hasid. At the end of his article Phineas ben Jair is again referred to, but this time, as the "last Essene of note." (38)

J.H. Weiss in his series of volumes containing his History of the Oral Law states that the Hasidim appear on the stage of Jewish history with the advent of the Maccabean Wars. He is of the opinion that the Essenes derive from them. The Hasidim and the Elders פְּזָזִים, are one and the same to Weiss, they are also referred to as the Hasidim Ha-Rishonim and the Zekenim Ha-Rishonim. (39) Included in the remarks of Weiss is one word of caution, namely, that the Earlier Hasidim were not the sect known by the name of Essenes, for insofar as we know their religious beliefs were in

complete opposition to those of the Essenes. The Early Hasidim were neither a sect nor a brotherhood; they were merely those who took upon themselves added zealousness for carrying out the Law. Their are no proofs to warrant their identification with the Chachamim, פ'נח of that day. Their main emphasis was on the observance of the Law, and they are therefore called the "Anshe Ma'aseh". The Zekenim Ha-Rishonim were also the scribes and teachers in Israel, some of their members being counted among the ranks of the Hasidim. Hasiduth, he says, did not necessarily imply scholarship or erudition. One emphasis of these Early Hasidim was separation from ritually impure things. <sup>(40)</sup> The Hasidim of the Maccabean period are the Early Hasidim. They are also called the Zekenim Ha-Rishonim. In certain references found in the Talmud where the term 'Rishonim' fails to appear beside the name Hasid, Weiss is of the opinion, that it is the Earlier Hasidim that are referred to, this is especially the case where citations from Mishnayoth are involved.

Originally the Hasidim were the supporters of the Law, and it's zealous defenders during the Maccabean Wars. And in all actuality neither one, The Pharisees nor the Hasidim bears the name in the



sense of "party" or "sect" . It seemed rather to be a comprehensive term including the majority of the people who fought in defense of the Law. The term Hasid was applied to all those who were scrupulous in their observance of the Law, including the good and the observant פ'רצ. In later years when the majority of the people sided with the Pharisees the term Hasid was considered to be the designate of the Pharisees. The Essenes were an offshoot of these Early Hasidim. In their early beginnings the Essenes resembled the Hasidim but as time passed , due to their extreme piousness and over-reaching observance they lost all similarity to those Early Hasidim. It is this party of the Essenes or Hasidim in their "deteriorated state" which arouses the ire of the Rabbis and their roundly voiced rebuke. (41)

We will not attempt here to compress into a precis the excellent work of Adolph Büchler Types of Jewish -Palestinian Piety which must be carefully read to be adequately appreciated, and to which we owe a great indebtedness. We shall have numerous occasions to refer to his work , a most excellent one, in the ensuing discussion of our sources.

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An examination of the secondary sources makes this clear: the primary basis for the mere suspicion of the Hasidim as constituting a clearly differentiated religious and political sect or party is the mention of the Asideans in Maccabees I. In this account we are told of people designated by this term as having at one point joined the Hasmoneans in their revolt and later as deserting their cause when a legitimate high priest is installed in office. Nothing more concerning these people is related in the account of Maccabees I. Every scholar and historian writing on this period uses these facts perforce and thenceforth strikes out on his own path of imaginative peregrinations.

The more cautious and circumspect scholar such as Herford confesses that there is no real basis for accepting the Hasidim as a clearly differentiated party and confines himself to the minimal interpretation of the word as "pious" or "godly men" --- men most strict in their observance, most uncompromising in their loyalties. Others more bold and adventuresome are inclined to the enterprise of seeking connections and identifications with other Biblical and Talmudic phrases such as: Kahal Hasidim, Hasidim Ha-Rishonim, Zekenim Ha-Rishonim, Anshe Ma'aseh, etc. etc., and postulating them as

a party with historical denominational antecedents and consequents.

It is the plan of this thesis to examine the term Hasid, whether used in the singular or the plural, wherever found in Talmudic literature, and to analyze them in their proper contexts, in the hope of ascertaining the purport of this term in Talmudic times. We hope to make most judicious use of the sources preferring to extract less rather than more than is warranted by the texts.

A preliminary examination of the sources suggests that the material constituting the subject of our inquiry may derive from various periods and strata. Thus, the activity of a Hasid in one source may not necessarily be identifiable with the Hasiduth in another. The practices of the Early Hasidim (פ'י'ק'ר'י' פ'י'צ'ו'ן) for example, may be far removed from the purport of the term Hasid as applied to a personage of a later date. Our schema, therefore, will be as follows: to analyze as separate categories the sources dealing with (1) the Early Hasidim (2) incidents referring to known personages qua Hasidim (3) Normative Hasiduth. (4) "Derogations" of the Hasid. On the basis of this schematization, we hope to draw certain conclusions as to the connotations and the degrees of congruity of the various sources. Finally, we shall re-examine

and evaluate in the light of our conclusions  
the hitherto existing scholarship.

II. NOTES

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NOTES

Section I

INTRODUCTION

1. G.F. Moore, Judaism, I, p. 59.
2. ibid., II, p. 156.
3. W.O. Oesterley, Jews and Judaism During the Greek Period, p. 27.
4. ibid., p. 244.
5. E. Schürer, History of the Jews in the Times of Jesus Christ, Division I, Volume I, p. 211.
6. ibid., Division II, Volume II, p. 21.
7. ibid., p. 26.
8. L. Finkelstein, The Pharisees, I, p. 3.
9. ibid., II, p. 592.
10. ibid., I, p. 156.
11. ibid., p. 157.
12. ibid., p. 153.
13. The various combinative forms of the term hasid appear in the above work as follows: ibid., II, p. 589.---neo-Hasidism; ibid., II, p. 574. ---Hasidean Order; ibid., I, p. 94.---plebian Hasid; ibid., II, p. 593.---New Hasidism. Finkelstein's statement that it was the plebians who became the Hasideans appears in the above work , volume II, p. 573.



14. L. Finkelstein, The Pharisees and the Men of the Great Synagogue, pages xii and xiii.
15. *ibid.*, p. xiv.
16. *ibid.*, p. xiv.
17. *ibid.*, p. xiv.
18. R.T. Herford, Judaism in the New Testament Period, p. 45.
19. *ibid.*, p. 46.
20. R.T. Herford, Talmud and Apocrypha, p. 83.
21. *ibid.*, p. 83.
22. *ibid.*, p. 84.
23. E. Bevan, Jerusalem Under the High-Priests, p. 121.
24. J. Klausner, History of the Second Temple, (available only in the Hebrew edition) p. 107, Vol. III.
25. *ibid.*, p. 108.
26. *ibid.*, p. 108.
27. *ibid.*, p. 109.
28. *ibid.*, p. 110.
29. *ibid.*, p. 110.
30. Z. Frankel, Introduction to the Mishna, (available only in the Hebrew edition) p. 33.
31. *ibid.*, p. 42.
32. *ibid.*, p. 42.
33. H. Graetz, History of the Jews, I, p. 422.
34. *ibid.*, p. 436.
35. *ibid.*, p. 490.

36. *ibid.*, II, p. 16.

37. *ibid.*, p. 17.

38. K. Kohler, Essenes in Jewish Encyclopedia, V, see  
pages 224 to 232.

39. J.H. Weiss, History of Jewish Tradition, (available  
in the Hebrew edition) I, p. 103.

40. *ibid.*, p. 105.

41. *ibid.*, p. 114.

### III. THE EARLY HASIDIM

In a number of instances the Talmud makes reference to the Hasidim Ha-Rishonim, translated as the First or the Early Hasidim. Weiss, in treating them, says that they are neither a sect nor a brotherhood, merely those who took upon themselves added zealousness for the carrying out of the Law. He observes that this title did not necessarily imply scholarship or erudition and notes that they placed great emphasis on separation from ritually impure things.

Frankel, in his discussion, notes that the Hasidim Ha-Rishonim are always remembered in a favorable light; their activities and customs are recalled in the Talmud with touches of nostalgia. From the use of the term Ha-Rishonim, he deduces that these constituted an earlier group, and that there was, therefore, a later group of Hasidim. "This later group of Hasidim", says Frankel, "veered from the paths of the Earlier Hasidim and imposed upon themselves extremely burdensome regulations and rituals which they were not able to carry out satisfactorily." ④

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In Menahoth 40b <sup>②</sup> there is a discussion as to the procedure for the insertion of fringes (h.3.3) in a garment. An objection to a stated view is raised on the basis of a practice of the Hasidim Ha-Rishonim, and the objection is met by a variant interpretation of the Hasidic practice. Further in the discussion another question of similar nature is asked and the Talmud answers that that practice of the Hasidim is not to be considered a criterion, because those Hasidim "imposed upon themselves additional obligations".

In addition to the knowledge that the Early Hasidim accepted obligations not strictly necessitated by law, the seriousness with which the practice of these men is considered would indicate that Weiss' conjecture as to their scholarship and erudition is erroneous. For if the Early Hasidim were not well versed in the Law they would certainly not be cited as authority for ritual procedures.

The extent to which the Hasidim Ha-Rishonim were scrupulous of observance of the Law is indicated in Niddah 38a <sup>③</sup> where we are told that the Early Hasidim



performed their marital duty in a certain manner, designed to prevent their wives from giving birth on a Sabbath and thus to preclude any possible violation of the Sabbath as a result of such birth. Here too their practice is cited as an authoritative support for a Rabbinic dictum.

The emphasis which these men placed upon physical purity is graphically revealed in Semahoth Chapter 3,<sup>(4)</sup> which relates that the Early Hasidim attempted to evacuate their intestines completely as of twenty days before their demise, so as to appear completely cleansed and pure before their Maker. (We may remark in passing that the desire for a physical cleansing at the time of death may have been motivated by some belief in a physical resurrection.) This source may also be the antecedent basis for the passages in Sabbath 118b and Ketuboth 103b, where we are told that "most of the Righteous (P' 2' 33) die of intestinal illness"; and where R. Jose asks to be of that category.<sup>(5)</sup>

The Early Hasidim expressed their devotion in prayer, Berakoth 30b<sup>(6)</sup> informing us that these men used

to wait an hour before praying in order to concentrate their thoughts upon their Father in Heaven.

Sacrifices played no small part in the Hasidic scheme. Thus in Kerithoth vi. 3,<sup>7</sup> R. Eliezer says that a man of his own free will may offer a suspensive-guilt offering on any day and at any time he pleases, such an offering being called the "guilt offering of the Pious (Hasidim)". And it is told of the Hasid, Baba ben Buta, that he offered of his own free will a suspensive-guilt offering every day except on the day after the Day of Atone-ment. Although in this case the offering is not stated in the name of the Early Hasidim, it accords well with their teachings in Nedarim 10a.<sup>8</sup>

R. Judah said that the Early Hasidim were eager to bring a sin offering, but were prevented from doing this because the Holy One, Blessed be He, never caused them to stumble. So anxious were they, however, to bring this offering that they made a free-will vow of Nezireth to the Omnipresent so as to be liable to a sin offering. R. Simeon, pointing out that a Nazir is a sinner, denies that the Early Hasidim took the vow of

Neziruth upon themselves and says that they brought other kinds of sacrifices. It is interesting to note that R. Simeon, who brands the Nazir as a sinner finds it necessary to defend the Early Hasidim from this imputation of guilt by denying that such was ever their practice. It seems likely, however, that the Early Hasidim did go to such lengths, for the same tradition is related in the Jerusalem Talmud Nedarim I, 36d 48.<sup>(9)</sup> Here again it is told in the name of R. Judah in the same terminology that the Early Hasidim were so anxious to bring a sin offering that they could do so only by taking a vow of Neziruth. In this version, R. Simeon does not deny the fact of the practice, but calls the Hasidim sinners because of it. The Jerusalem Talmud source appears to us the more authentic, for obviously a sin offering could be brought only after the commission of some specific sin no matter how slight or specious.<sup>(10)</sup>

All of the above mentioned sources are concerned with the relations of man to God and the ritual Law. Yet the Early Hasidim can not be characterized as wholly other worldly, for in Baba Kama 30a,<sup>(11)</sup> in a

discussion of the disposal of injurious objects such as thorns and sherds, we are told that the Early Hasidim used to bury these things to a depth of three handbreadths below the surface, so that even the plough might not be hindered by them.

Here we are obviously faced with an ethical consideration for the welfare and property of their fellow-men.

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#### Summary

Except for the one source in Baba Kama 30a, where their ethical consideration for the persons and properties of their fellow-men is indicated by their fastidious care in the disposal of injurious objects, the piety and religiosity of the Early Hasidim is manifested in their relations to God and their zealousness for ritualistic observances.

In the matter of the fringed garment, they imposed upon themselves additional obligations not strictly called for by rabbinic regulation. The observance of the Sabbath was so sacred a concern for them that even though the needs attendant upon childbirth override the Sabbath, the Early Hasidim

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attempted to forestall the giving of birth on the Sabbath.

Prayer for the Early Hasidim was no mechanical matter it being preceded by a period of meditation and concentration.

Death was regarded as some kind of a reunion with their Creator and pains were taken to put the body in a state of purity upon the anticipation of their demise.

The consciousness of sin was highly developed among them and it is most clear that sacrifices were regarded as a most efficacious means for expiation. So great an emphasis, indeed, was placed upon the cultistic offering that even devious excuses were found to bring unwarranted sacrifices. (12)

We may presume that many of the Hasidim must have been men of means in order to be able to offer expensive sacrifices.

We have further adduced that the citing of Hasidic procedure as precedents in legal disputations indicates that the Early Hasidim are regarded as having been men of learning and scholarship.



In none of these sources, however, is there any indication that these Hasidim were a clearly defined or cohesive group with any sort of organization and program. All that we know is that they were men noted for an excessive piety and devotion whose characteristics we have delineated.

#### IV. THE HASID

The next collection of Talmudic sources deals mostly with citations in which the Hasidim cited are Tannaim. Although these sources do not specifically refer to the Early Hasidim, but employ only the general term Hasid, it is safe to assume that these are not radically different from those we have already discussed. In spite of the contrast made in describing one group as Rishonim (Earlier), it is most difficult to define the exact date this group flourished. Buchler points out that the generation immediately preceeding the Bar-Kokba war and the horrors of the Hadrianic religious persecutions is referred to in the Talmud as the "Earlier"; this distinction in the mind of Buchler would also apply to the category of the Hasidim.<sup>(13)</sup>

Many of the passages that follow are introduced in the Talmud by the rubric "it happened with a Hasid" יונה? דרין. As a passing remark the Talmud tells us in Baba Kama 103b<sup>(14)</sup> that whenever this rubric is used it refers either to R. Judah ben Baba or R. Judah ben Ilai.

In Baba Kama 103b<sup>(15)</sup>, in connection with a problem

of legal restitution of property, we are told of a case in which a Hasid is embroiled in just such a problem. In attempting to clarify the exact circumstances of the case the question of a false oath is raised and promptly dismissed, the possibility of the Hasid taking a false oath being considered inadmissible. The text continues as follows:

"nor can you say that he first took an oath and subsequently became a pious man (Hasid) since whenever we say "that it once happened with a certain pious man" he was either R. Judah ben Baba or R. Judah ben Ilai and as is well known R. Judah ben Baba and R. Judah ben Ilai were pious men (Hasidim) from the very beginning!"

Were one so inclined, one might try on the basis of this text to infer that the term Hasid as used here, refers to a member of a well-known group whose initiation into that group at a definite time could be ascertained. It is, however, at least equally likely that the author of these words is merely stating that R. Judah ben Baba and R. Judah ben Ilai were always pious men above reproach.

We will have occasion further on to deal with the text in Sabbath 121b<sup>(16)</sup> where a distinction is made between the Sages ( *P'NCH* ) and the Hasidim and their conflicting attitudes towards a problem of

religious law. We will indicate why we do not consider the opposition there significant in terms of clashing parties. In this connection, however, it is noteworthy that the Hasid, whether R. Judah ben Baba or R. Judah ben Ilai, brings his problem for a ruling to R. Tarphon and R. Akiba, neither of whom are ever designated by the term Hasid. If these Hasidim were differentiated from and in opposition to the Sages, it is hardly likely that they should appear before these men renowned as Sages. On the other hand it is interesting to speculate on the fact that these two great Sages, renowned leaders, are not known as Hasidim. The only possible conclusion it seems to us, is that these men, champions of the Law though they were, did not involve themselves in the excessively pietistic activities attributed to those individuals called Hasidim.

The actual case in Baba Kama 103b is that the Hasid bought an article from one of two men both of whom claimed the purchase money, while the Hasid himself does not know from which one he had made the purchase. When the case is brought before R. Tarphon, he rules that the Hasid should place the money



before the two claimants and withdraw, thus legally absolving himself from further involvement. The latter then brings the case before R. Akiba who informs him that there is no remedy for him but to make double payment. Buchler reasons that R. Tarphon's answer was based on strict law which did not, however, satisfy the conscience of the pious man, who was prompted to bring it before Akiba for another ruling; and that the opening words of Akiba "there is no remedy for you" *אין תרופה לך* indicate that his judgement was not based on strict law, but went beyond the letter of the Law to satisfy the scruples of the Hasid. <sup>(17)</sup>

In Baba Kama 50b <sup>(18)</sup> the Talmud cites the teachings of the Rabbis that a man should not remove stones from his ground onto the public ground. It then relates the incident of a man who was clearing his field of stones and throwing them into the public road. A pious man (Hasid) passing by saw his action, asked him why he threw stones from ground which was not his to ground which was his. The man laughs at the Hasid, but when, a few days later, he is compelled to sell his field and walk the public ground, he realizes that the Hasid had correctly warned him

that as a punishment for his actions he would lose his own fields. Büchler cites the discussion of the matter in the Tosephta where, unlike R. Akiba, R. Joshua declares the farmers action as permissible. Although Buchler over-simplifies the matter (for the question involved is whether the land-owners may dispose of the stones by way of the public road), the Tosephta does indicate, as he points out, that the accepted rule did not prohibit the landowner's actions. Buchler then goes on to remark upon this and the preceeding text:

"But the pious man did not point to any law that could be enforced by the authorities, but warned the moral trespasser on a purely moral consideration of the eventual danger arising for the users of the road; and as human punishment was not warranted by the law, he prophesied to him a severe visitation by God in the form of the loss of his property. So the Hasid not only acted himself beyond the requirements of the law, even when it implied a monetary loss, but whenever the welfare of the fellowman was concerned, expected others also, and tried to persuade them, to follow the same principle."<sup>(19)</sup>

A further indication of the high morality and humanity expected of the Hasid is found in Baba Bathra 7b,<sup>(20)</sup> where we are told of a certain pious man with whom Elijah used to converse until he built a porters lodge--- which lodge preventing the cries of the poor from being heard within his

courtyard--- Elijah ceased to hold converse with him.

R. Jeshebab, who is referred to in Midrash Canticles <sup>(21)</sup> as "of the last of the Hasidim", is reported to have dispersed all of his wealth to charity and is rebuked for this action by Rabban Gamaliel who quotes to him the rabbinic dictum: that one may not give away more than one fifth of one's wealth to the poor. In this case Rabban Gamaliel appears to speak as the official rabbinic representative and some tenuous comparison might be made with the previously discussed case in which the Early Hasidim are called wicked because they took Naziritic vows. The fact, however, that R. Jeshebab does not answer Gamaliel and that in the version of the Babylonian Talmud Kethuboth 50a <sup>(22)</sup> Jeshebab is prevented from dispersing his possessions, definitely shows that Jeshebab was in good repute among the Sages. The entire incident probably reflects an over-zealous attitude in the giving of charity as exemplified by R. Jeshebab. The rabbinical decree <sup>ללא</sup> quoted by Rabban Gamaliel was itself a product of those hectic days of the Hadrianic persecutions and may have been slow to find acceptance.

In Berakoth 18b<sup>(14)</sup> the story is recounted of a Hasid who gave a denar to a poor man on the eve of the New Year in a year of drought and famine. Roundly scolded by his wife, the Hasid leaves his house and passes the night in the cemetery where he overhears the spirits of the dead in conversation and subsequently profits financially from the information which he garners. In Niddah 17a<sup>(15)</sup>, a ruling of the Rabbi's is quoted disapproving of sleeping in graveyards. In the tale of the Hasid, nevertheless, this ruling is not cited and there is no hint of opprobrium in the telling of the story. Indeed, the entire incident is related only to support the thesis of a rabbi who contends that the dead are aware of the activities of the living.<sup>(16)</sup>

In Sabbath 121b<sup>(16)</sup>, the permissibility of killing noxious creatures on the Sabbath is discussed with the Hasidim ruling in the negative and the Tannaim in the affirmative. A Tanna recites before Rabba the son of Huna: "If one kills snakes or scorpions on the Sabbath the Spirit of the Pious (Hasidim) is displeased with them", to which Rabba bar Rab Huna replies, "As to those pious men, the Spirit of the Sages is displeased with them." In spite of the seemingly bitter partisan conflict expressed here, it is hardly likely that real partisan opposition is involved.



For one thing, Rabba bar Rab Huna's answer, mimicking the phraseology of the Tanna, is tinged with sarcasm and opposes not so much the Hasidim as this cited opinion of "those" Hasidim. Apparently the Rabbis (Rabba bar Rab Huna) refused to accept the over-zealous self-imposed restrictions of the Hasidim as a criterion for general acceptance and validity. We may mention here the story told about Hanina ben Dosa who permitted himself to be bitten by a snake rather than interrupt his prayer to kill him, thus demonstrating to his students that it is not the bite that kills but rather sin, which works through the intermediary of the serpent. The saintliness of a Hanina ben Dosa <sup>(27)</sup> might shield him from the serpents venom but one could not expect such grace to be extended to the general population. In any case, the text demonstrates once again the punctilliousness with which the Hasid observed the Sabbath.

Another striking example of the Hasid's extreme attitude towards the Sabbath appears in Sabbath 150b. <sup>(28)</sup> The story is told of a certain Hasid who noticed that a breach had been made in his field. He determined to repair it and was suddenly struck that this was the Sabbath. He thereupon refrained



from repairing it altogether; whereupon a miracle was performed for him: a caper bush grew up in the breach, whence he and his household derived their livelihood. In this case there was absolutely no violation of the Sabbath but the Hasid in an act of supererogation equated the intent or thought with the actual performance<sup>(29)</sup> and was so conscience stricken by his lapse that he refrained from accomplishing the repair even when it was permissible. That his behavior was considered highly meritorious is obvious from the miraculous reward which is his.

We have remarked previously upon the emphasis which the Early Hasidim placed on the bringing of sacrifices ----especially for the purposes of expiation for sins real, imagined or pretended. The Tosephta Peah 111, 8<sup>(30)</sup> tells us of a certain Hasid who expresses his thankfulness to God through the office of the Temple offerings. The Hasid in this story forgets a sheaf of corn in his field, whereupon he tells his son to bring for him two bulls, one as a burnt offering and another as a peace offering. The son, wondering why his father rejoices at the fulfillment

of the commandment of the forgotten sheaf more than over the fulfillment of any other duty imposed by the Torah, questions his father and receives this reply: "While God gave us all other commandments to carry them out with intent, this one is to be fulfilled without intention; for had we acted before God with deliberation, the duty, ( *זכרון* ), would not have offered itself to us." The meaning here is clear: the Hasid obviously takes great joy in fulfilling all the commandments of the Torah. The commandment of *זכרון*, the forgotten sheaf, requiring as it does the absence of deliberation, is only made possible through Providence, and therefore calls for exceptional acts of thanksgiving. Büchler rightly points out that the sacrifices that the Hasid offered were prescribed neither in the Pentateuch nor by the Rabbis, but were the spontaneous expression of his pleasure, and of his gratitude to God for having granted him the opportunity to carry out a commandment and to merit his blessing. He was not contented with merely offering up a prayer of thanksgiving in his own words or with reciting an appropriate psalm,

but felt moved to express his sentiments by giving up to God a part of his wealth.<sup>(31)</sup>

In Baba Kama 80a<sup>(32)</sup> we are told of a certain Hasid who suffered of an illness of the heart and was advised by doctors that the only remedy for him was to suck the hot milk from a goat every morning. The goat was brought, tied to the foot of his bed, and the Hasid would suck its milk. When his associates came to visit him they espied the goat and exclaimed, "A robber in arms is in this house and shall we go in to visit him! " (This remark has reference to a rabbinic regulation forbidding the raising of small grazing animals in Palestine on the ground that they stray from their owners' pastures and make inroads into the property of others; hence the use of the term "robber") The scholars thereupon departed. When the Hasid died his associates sat down and made investigation ( *·12321* ) and found no other sin in him except this keeping of the goat. The Hasid too, at his death said, "I myself know that I have not sinned except in the keeping of this goat, having thus transgressed the teachings of my colleagues." And the Talmud adds that it is already an established

fact that wherever the Talmud speaks of a certain Hasid it refers to R. Judah ben Baba or R. Judah ben Ilai.

The term ·1232/ (they investigated) raises a question as to the purposes of the investigation. The possibility suggests itself that the Hasid may have been suspected of rabbinically disapproved practices, perhaps of an Essenic nature. It seems much more likely, however, that his colleagues were attempting an evaluation of his piety, possibly as a matter of record or for use in his eulogy. Thus in Sotah 48b we are told that when Hillel died he was eulogized as "O' humble one, O' pious one; Samuel the Small was eulogized with the same words; and they wished to have said the same of R. Judah ben Baba but the disturbed times of the Hadrianic persecutions prevented the eulogy"

In our last text we find added indication that one of the most prominent characteristics of the Hasid is his freedom from taint or suspicion of sin. In Sabbath 127b,<sup>(35)</sup> the story is told of a certain pious man (Hasid) who went with his students to ransom an Israelite maiden from captivity. When arrived at the inn he made the maiden pass the night at his feet. On the morrow he went down,



had a ritual bath and then studied with his disciples. When he asked his students what they made of his conduct of sleeping in the room with the maiden and taking a ritual bath the next day, the students' answers reveal that they at no time suspected their master of unchastity.

The emphasis the Hasid placed upon prayer is once again found in Berakoth 32b and 33a,<sup>34</sup> in the story of a certain Hasid who refuses to interrupt his prayer even when accosted by an officer of the Empire, and subsequently saves himself from punishment by convincing the officer of the correctness of his behavior.

The prayers of the Hasidim were considered especially efficacious as related in the Tosephta Taanit 111, 1<sup>35</sup> where a certain pious man was asked to pray for rain and his prayers were answered. Subsequently, however, when he is asked to pray for the rain to cease, he refuses, exhorting the populace to trust that God will not bring a flood upon the world according to God's promise in Genesis ix, 15. It is hardly likely that such a flood was feared by the people. Rather they probably feared that too much rain might spoil their crops or hinder commerce;



and the Hasid's answer is probably to the effect that having prayed for and having been granted rain by Providence, they should continue to trust in his beneficence .

Finally in Taanit 8a. <sup>(56)</sup> we are told that when all else fails to bring rain even the prayers of others, the only thing to be done is to go to the יִצְחָק בְּרַחֲמֵי, the pious man of that generation and petition him to pray for rain.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### Summary

In the sources we have treated in this section, sources in which incidents are not ascribed to the Hasidim Ha-Rishonim but to individual Hasidim, we have found no significant difference in the attributes and attitudes ascribed to either (i.e. the former and the latter). On the contrary, the same emphases and qualities found in the former are shared by the latter. Thus the individual Hasid is regarded with the same approbation as were the Early Hasidim, it being made clear that his character was such as to render unthinkable the possibility

that he would take a false oath or be guilty of unchastity. Of one Hasid, for example, we are told that in all his life he was guilty of but one sin, and that one--- a rabbinic decree--- necessitated by ill-health.

In regard to the Sabbath we find the same excessively scrupulous observance. The Hasid rejoices at the opportunity to fulfill a commandment; and although in the case cited, the commandment of the forgotten sheaf is one whose aim was certainly social amelioration, the joy of the Hasid lies in having fulfilled the commandment according to the technical perscription of the Law. In this case too the Hasid attaches special importance to the offering of sacrifices in the Temple.

The Hasid places great emphasis upon prayer, even jeopardizing his life in its pursuit. We find too that the Hasid is exceedingly generous in the matter of charity and engages in the work of redeeming captives. The Hasid's excessive zeal in some of his attitudes and activities occasionally elicits the displeasure or opposition of his

of his colleagues, but in no case is he clearly an  
object of condemnation.

V. NORMATIVE HASIDUTH



Thus far in our sources we have dealt with historical individuals whether under the rubric of the Early Hasidim or a certain individual Hasid. There are many passages, however, having no reference to actual historical cases but which are didactic, defining the pietistic norm and the pious individual ( א'וה-ח'וה ). The Sages of the Mishna obviously employ various categories and degrees of commendatory behavior. Thus, for example, we have in a number of places the statement of R. Phineas ben Jair:

"Care leads to cleanness, cleanness to purity, purity to holiness, holiness to humility, humility to fear of sin, fear of sin to piety, piety to the holy spirit, the holy spirit to the quickening of the dead, the quickening of the dead to Elijah the prophet."

That these categories were not arranged in a universally accepted hierarchy is indicated by other similar passages with different arrangements.

In all of them, however, Hasiduth is obviously one of the highest degrees of Godliness, as in Aboda Zara 20b where Hasiduth is hailed by some to be the highest of virtues--- א'וה ח'וה.

\* \* \* \* \*

A most striking case of what was considered ח'וה ח'וה "pious conduct", is revealed in Sabbath 120a <sup>(31)</sup> In the case of a conflagration which



takes place upon the Sabbath, a man may save certain amounts of food, prescribed by law, for himself. The Mishna adds that the owner may say to others, "Come and save food for yourselves, and that if they were prudent minded they may make reckoning with him after the Sabbath was over." The Talmud then raises the question as to what can possibly be meant by "reckoning" since the men who rescue this food acquire it for themselves by reason of *חוק* (the law of abandoned property). R. Hisda answers that pious conduct is involved here i.e. that pious conduct would not permit them to profit from the misfortune of their neighbor, even though such profit would be technically within the limits of the law. Thus, the rescuers return the property and are reimbursed for their labor when it is pointed out that pious men would certainly not take payment for services performed on the Sabbath. A distinction is made between "God-fearing men" (*Yare'ei Shamayim*) and "pious men" (*Chasidim*). The God-fearing man is he who will not keep the property, but will accept remuneration for his labors; for since there was

no agreement at the time the rescuing was done that there should be any remuneration, no technical violation of the Sabbath is involved. They merely return property to which they have a legal claim and the householder rewards them for their efforts. The Hasid, however, will not violate even the spirit of the Sabbath by accepting reward for his efforts.

As in the above source, a distinction is made between the "God-fearing" and the Hasidim, so in Niddah 17a<sup>(29)</sup>, a distinction is made between the "Righteous" ( פ' 2133 ) and the Hasidim ( פ' 3107 ). Since clippings of fingernails were considered injurious (it was believed that a pregnant woman stepping over them would suffer a miscarriage), the rabbis recommended careful disposal of them, asserting that one who buries them is righteous, while one who burns them is pious. The statement indicates that Hasiduth involved a higher degree of fastidiousness, inasmuch as the Hasid goes to greater trouble in disposing of the injurious clippings effectively beyond recovery.

In Baba Metzia 52b<sup>(31)</sup>, there is a case dealing

with a man who in exchange for goods or services accepts a coin which afterwards is found to be deficient in weight. The strict ruling is that the man who gave the coin is required to make restitution only until the following Sabbath eve. It is, however, considered a measure of piety if he makes amends even within the period of a whole year. Here the "שילוח שני" or measure of piety has the purport of dealing fairly and honestly with ones fellowman even to a degree not strictly required by the Law. However, a continuance of the discussion indicates that the mere act of making amends alone would not be considered "Minhag Hasiduth"--- for if the restitution is accomplished with bad grace (i.e. with the harboring of resentment) the Talmud says "let him not make restitution and not harbor resentment." So "Minhag Hasiduth" means wholehearted gracious dealings.

Hulin 130b<sup>(40)</sup> deals with a householder who in the course of his travels finds it necessary to avail himself of the provisions of the "gleanings", "forgotten sheaves" etc. etc. in order to subsist.

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R. Hisda says that although legally there is no claim upon him, it is a "measure of piety" for the householder to make restitution upon returning home. Restitution in this case doubtless means, that the householder is to set aside for the poor the value of what he consumes for the gleanings, which are considered the property of the poor. Here again, piety consists in going beyond the letter of the law in order to fulfill it's spirit.

In the tractate Aboth there are four Mishnayoth each of which delineates for types of moral character. Aboth v. 10 reads:

"There are four types among men: he that says, "what is mine is mine and what is thine is thine"---this is the common type, and some say that this is the type of Sodom; (he that says,) "What is mine is thine and what is thine is mine"---he is an ignorant man; (he that says,) "What is mine is thine and what is thine is thine own"---he is a saintly man; (and he that says,) "What is thine is mine and what is mine is mine own"---he is a wicked man."

Whatever be the real meaning of Am-Haaretz, translated in texts as the ignorant man, it is certainly not a term of endearment for the Rabbis and in this Mishna it is employed to characterize the man who makes no distinction in property rights. The typical or average mentality is that which clearly defines the property belonging to one's self and belonging to others. This self-sufficient pose



completely devoid of altruistic sentiment incurs the displeasure of some rabbis who characterize it as Sodomitic. The wicked man is, of course, he who is prepared to despoil his fellow-man. At the farthest end of the pole from him is the pious man (Hasid) who not only makes no claim of his neighbor, but even places his own property at the complete disposal of others. This Mishna represents the most extravagant act of supererogation as regards man's relation with his fellow-man, a norm accomplished as far as we know, only by R. Jeshebab --- and that, at the expense of official rebuke. It is likely, that this Mishna is not to be taken too literally as a prescribed norm for the pious man, but is rather an epigrammatic and stylistic contrast of good, bad and indifferent as regards ethical attitudes to property relations.

In Aboth v. 11, the Mishna again contrasts four different kinds of tempers and characterizes the wicked as the one who is easy to provoke and hard to pacify; while the Hasid, the epitome of forbearance and sweetness, is hard to provoke and is easily pacified.



In Aboth v. 13, four types of almsgivers are delineated:

"He who is willing to give but not that others should give, his eye is evil towards the things of others: that others should give and he should not give, his eye is evil towards his own; he who would give and let others give is pious, he who will not give and not let others give is wicked."

Again in Aboth v. 14, the Mishna describes four characters of them that go to the House of Learning:

"He who goes and does not perform has the reward of going; he who goes not but performs has the reward of doing. He who goes and performs is a saint (Hasid). He who neither goes nor performs is wicked."

Adolph Büchler, by whose circumspect scholarship and lucid analysis we are especially impressed, is highly perplexed by these last two Mishnayoth, quoting and dispensing with Professor Taylor's elucidation, and remaining in a state of perplexity. Addressing himself to the role of the pious man in the last quoted Mishna he wonders "why his slight consideration for the helpless fellow-man should be sufficient to merit for him the distinctive name of a Hasid."<sup>(4)</sup> These Mishnayoth reveal in their stylism an obviously Midrashic nature and in a work of scholarship call for no homiletical treatment.

In these cases, at least, we permit ourselves to be ruled by the Law of Parsimony and are content to learn that the Hasid is a man altruistic and charitable to a fault, gentle of nature and diligent both in study and in practice.

Generally speaking, this last group of sources which we have tested, although not inconsistent with the previous source in the matter of the attributes of the Hasid, do reveal a greater emphasis upon relations between man and man. Büchler states that

"after the year 135 A.D., the Rabbis made an extensive use of the term Hasid, and an imitation of earlier sentences composed before that year in the schools of Judaea, formed new rules in which Hasid merely designated a good, law abiding man, who conscientiously practiced the moral duties."

If by this he means that Hasid became a rather loosely used laudatory epithet, the statement can hardly be contested. Thus, in Baba Kama 30a<sup>(42)</sup>, in an attempt to define the Hasid, R. Judah says that he who wishes to be pious must particularly fulfill the Laws of Seder Nezikin, while another rabbi says, "the matters dealt with in the tractate Aboth", and others still emphasize that he must especially busy himself with the matters dealt with in Berakoth. It is to be recognized, however, that the term Hasid was endowed with a special

nuance which distinguished it from lesser categories such as "Righteous" ( פ' צ' צ' ) and "God-fearing" ( פ' ח' כ' צ' ). These last two terms are used to denote those who in Buchler's words are good law-abiding men who conscientiously practice the moral duties. The Hasid, however, was he who far exceeded the strict letter of the law in ritualistic observances and ethical behavior. (43)

Thus, in Erubin 18b,<sup>(44)</sup> R. Meir says that Adam was a "great pious man" ( פ' צ' צ' צ' ) because when he saw that through him death had been ordained as a punishment, he spent one hundred thirty years in fasting, severed connection with his wife for one hundred thirty years, and wore clothes of fig-leaves on his body for one hundred thirty years. The Hasiduth of Adam in his self-imposed pennance takes the form of the ascetic and self-abnegatory acts of fasting, continence and the wearing of humble garments.

Berakoth 4a<sup>(45)</sup> in a Midrashic passage elaborating on the verse in Psalm lxxxvi. 1-2: "Keep my soul for I am pious" (Hasid), tells us that David's Hasiduth constituted his arising and giving thanks to God while other kings sleep; and while other

kings sit in regal pomp, he soils his hands with menstrual blood in order to declare a woman clean for her husband. These supererogatory activities of both Adam and David can only be contained in the highest epithet of Hasid .

VI. "DEROGATIONS" OF THE HASID



Although our investigation reveals by and large a commendatory (certainly not hostile) attitude on the part of the rabbis towards those designated as Hasidim, there are a number of texts in which the term Hasid is coupled with an epithet of denigration or in which people known as Hasidim are placed in invidious comparison with others. It is our belief that these denigrations and invidious comparisons should be considered apart from the other texts, as not belonging to one and the same historical tradition and not truly reflective of the general attitude of the Rabbis towards the Hasidim.

In three places the "strong men of Israel" (תְּהִיבֵי צִיּוֹן זִיּוֹנִים) are contrasted with the "pious ones of Babylonia" (חֲסִידֵי בָבֶל) to the disparagement of the latter. In Taanit 23b, R. Zerika relates that when rain was sorely needed, the pious men of Babylonia, R. Huna and R. Hisda said, "Let us assemble and pray, perhaps the Holy One Blessed be He may be reconciled and send rain." The great men of Palestine, as for example R. Jonah, would find some pretense for slipping away to some hidden spot there pray for rain, and upon returning home with the coming of the rain, make no mention of his

activity. Rashi comments that the contrast is between the Babylonians who publicized their prayers and took the credit for the providential rainfall and the modest and unpublicized manner in which the Palestinian pleaded for God's favor.

In Megilla 28b, Resh Lakish of the "mighty strong men of the land of Israel" warmly eulogizes a student of great erudition; while in a similar case when R. Nahman, of the "pious men of Babylonia", is requested to eulogize an erudite scholar, he declines to do so, remarking contemptuously: "How are we to deliver an address over him: Alas a bag full of books has been lost." As in this case the respect and generosity of one is compared with the lack of character and contumely of the other, so in Hulin 122a, Resh Lakish raises a question and is answered by a rabbi who quotes the authority of R. Joshua ben Levi; thereupon Resh Lakish as a token of gratitude and mark of respect asks the rabbi to sit down opposite him. When R. Zeira of the "pious men of Babylonia" raises the same question and receives the same answer from a scholar he first ignores him and then when the answer is

repeated, brusquely checks him with the insult,  
"It is the only thing you know, and you have already  
told it to us."

It is our feeling that in none of these cases  
is there any thought of stricturing the Hasidim or  
placing them in an unfavorable light as compared  
with another group of scholars known as Takifim  
(תקיפין). The comparison is rather between  
the accepted leaders, the shining lights of  
Babylonia on the one hand and of Palestine on the other,  
with the intent to laud the modesty and the charity  
of the former as against the ostentation and arrogance  
of the latter. In none of our other sources is there  
any indication that ostentation and arrogance  
were qualities attributed to the Hasidim. Indeed  
Hasid and Anav (אנאב) are coupled in eulogies  
not as opposites but as complements.

In Sabbath 63a, <sup>(46)</sup> R. Abba quotes the dictum of  
R. Simeon ben Lakish, "If a scholar is vengeful  
and bears malice like a serpent gird him to thy  
loins". (This is interpreted to mean cleave to him none  
the less, for one may benefit from his scholarship.)  
If on the other hand, he be an Am-Haaretz who is a

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a Hasid, he is to be shunned completely.

It would be most erroneous to interpret this text as being in derogation of Hasidim. In this statement R. Simeon ben Lakish merely expresses the sentiment that a scholar bereft of charity is yet preferable by far to an Am-Haaretz (an illiterate or one not versed in the Law) who makes pretensions to piety. It appears obvious that the quality of Hasiduth being a much admired one and the prestige of a Hasid high, that pretensions to the title or to that status would be made by many unworthy of it.

Thus, Hillel in Aboth 11. 6 makes the statement that an Am-Haaretz can not be a Hasid. If we take R. Simeon ben Lakish's statement as a comparison of opposites, we find that the antithesis of a scholar is an Am-Haaretz and the antithesis of piety is vengefulness. We may take it then that vengefulness in scholars was both rare and deplored and Hasiduth in an Am-Haaretz equally rare and lightly regarded, culminating in Hillel's dictum that an Am-Haaretz can not qualify for the status of a Hasid.



If anything, these sources only reflect further the esteem in which the Hasidim were held.

In Sotah 21b R. Joshua ben Hananya lists a "foolish pietist" ( גורל 3'07 ), among the types of people that bring destruction upon the world. Here too we would be unjustified in interpreting this as being in general derogation of Hasidim. The Talmud, in clarifying the meaning of characterizes him as a man who witnesses a woman drowning and refuses to help her on the ground that it is improper for him to look upon her. The very qualification of this person as a גורל indicates that Hasidim generally did not indulge in such ridiculous behavior; but that there were those who in simulating piety, so rigorously interpreted the requirements of chasteness as to permit it to interfere with the highest of duties, the preservation of life.

In a rather garbled text, Aboth De Rabbi Nathan edited by Solomon Schechter, <sup>(41)</sup> the story is told of a certain priest who made pretensions to piety or Hasiduth. His Hasiduth apparently lay in his pretention to eat in a state of levitical purity. Upon investigation, it is learned that the priest is not sufficiently versed in the Levitical Laws and



that his pretensions are not valid. The text is, however, so garbled and the information regarding the investigation so limited, that its usefulness is most dubious, serving at best to excite our imagination as regards to the purposes of the investigation of the priest and yielding no clue towards the solution of the problem.

## VII. CONCLUSIONS

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The period which ushered in the Mishnaic code i.e. that immediately following the Maccabean wars, is , except for the accounts in Maccabees, Josephus and Philo, a very dark one. Even in these sources names and terms such as Asideans, Pharisees, Essenes, etc. are found without clear definitions as to their content--- sometimes indeed without any explanatory elucidation whatsoever. It is in dealing with such scanty clues that the scholar should be most circumspect and modest. Unfortunately, however, some are tempted to supply by virtue of their great imaginative powers the gaps which historical records leave completely unabridged. The paleontologist is able, we are told, to construct the whole frame of a dinosaur or a pre-historic man on the basis of a femur, tibia or a jaw-bone. History, alas, has not yet become such a science. It is with great regret, therefore, that we note the proclivities for fiction of such men as Kohler and Finkelstein.

In our collection of Talmudic sources having reference to the Hasidim we have diligently sought for some confirmation of the theories of Kohler and Finkelstein. This quest has been a

completely fruitless one.

Kaufmann Kohler with complete disregard for the terms as found in the Talmud, and limited only by his own will, identifies the Hasidim variously and in varying degrees with the Pharisees, the Men of the Great Synagogue, with Essenes and with "men of works" whatever the last term connotes. To the Hasidim as a body (whom he willfully determines to be the leaders of the Pharisees as a body) he attributes without sanction from the sources many parts of the liturgy and teachings attributed to various scholars never endowed by the Talmud with the title Hasid. With very little basis he is wont to endow certain individuals with the appellation of Hasid and then generalize as to the activities of the Hasidim as a class.

Our warrant for dealing with Kohler derives from the use by him of many of the sources analyzed in our thesis. Although the theories of Dr. Finkelstein are concerned with a period not specifically the subject of this thesis, it is our feeling that did they possess any validity, we should have found some hint, some evidence in their support in the course of our inquiry. In this case too, alas, we must report that no mention is ever made of a "party of Hasidim", (פ'ז'וה) חב, nor is there any



evidence at all in support of his gratuitous assumption that the correct name for the party of the Pharisees is the "Assembly" or the "Assembly of the Hasidim".

We herewith sum up the conclusions which we find amply supported by the Talmudic sources.

The Hasidim were men, usually scholars, who displayed a great devotion to the commandments of the Law and their fulfillment. They were almost certainly an accepted part of the warp and woof of Rabbinic society, consorting with the Sages ( *ס'נאן* ), engaging with them in the study and pursuit of the Law, and highly regarded by these, their colleagues. Insofar as they are differentiated from their colleagues generally called *ס'נאן*, the difference appears to be based upon the following considerations:

The Hasidim are marked by an overwhelming zealousness to fulfill the Law which very often exceeds the requirement of the ritual commandment and conventional ethics, thereby displaying a greater concern for the spirit of the Law rather than for the letter of the Law. Great importance was attached to the states of ritual purity and freedom from taint of sin. To accomplish the latter, great stress



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was laid upon expiation through the instrument of sacrifices. The sanctity of the Sabbath was so vigorously observed that even many activities permitted by Rabbinic standards were shunned. Indeed, this zealousness (as well as their zealousness in such matters of charity) occasionally drew the reproof of more sober-minded rabbis. The Hasidim attached much importance to prayer and the circumstances attached to it, in connection with this, it is clear that the prayers of the Hasid were regarded as especially efficacious not, it seems to us, as a form of magic or miracle-mongering, but by reason of their blameless character and communion with God. Indeed, the closest approach to magic in the case of a Hasid, is the solitary case of the one who overhears the converse of the spirits in a graveyard.

In his relation with his fellow-man the Hasid is altruistic, conscientiously honest and extremely charitable. The Hasid's sense of justice requires of him not only that he go beyond the strict requirements of the Law, but that he do so with a completely gracious and generous spirit.

The high regard and esteem for the Hasid appears to have inspired emulation in many, who, not being qualified by reason of scholarship or character, perverted the Hasidic ideal in their behavior.

We conclude that the best translation for Hasid is not devout or pious, but that term which expresses these qualities in their highest and extreme form is saintly. Marked by multifarious acts of supererogation, this Jewish saint must, nevertheless, be clearly differentiated from the Christian saint in the relative absence in the former of emphasis upon asceticism, hermiticism, physical suffering and celibacy.

VIII. NOTES

Notes

1. Z. Frankel, Introduction to the Mishna, p. 42.

2. מנחות מ:

מיתבי חסידים הראשונים כיון לאנגו בה  
ג' היו מטיילין להם תכלית אימא כיון לצבא  
בה ג' היו מטיילין להם תכלית: אור זילא...

מנחות מא.

אמר ליה לאו היינו כנף זכתה רחמנא  
באורייתא אתא לרייה ואכסי גלימא אחרית  
אמר ליה מ' סבור חובת גברא הוא  
חובת טלית הוא לית כתי לה לימא  
חסידי ליה חסידים הראשונים כיון לאנגו  
בה ג' היו מטיילין להם תכלית: אור  
חסידים במחמני אונקל'הו.

3. ויצה ע"ח.

חסידים הראשונים לא ממעטין מלותיהן  
אלא ברגידי שבת גלא וגלא  
לשותיהן עידי חילול שבת ברגידי  
ותו לא אומא מרגידי אולע: אמר מר  
זוטרא מאי טעמיהו. חסידים הראשונים  
זכתי. ויתן ב' הי' הניח הניח בגמרא  
מאות ורגידי וחב:

4. מנחות פ"ג:

אמר ר' יוחנן חסידים הראשונים הניח מתיסרין בחול מצי  
בדשנין אף הוצק מיתמן כבי למר אור  
בפי' כבי קיבא. ככאין אדתי' עבאן ר' (מא' כ')  
מככר לכסס מכור לזנה ואור  
לפי מהלכו:



5. שבת ה"ח:  
 רובן א' צדיקים מתים בחול' מעיי' :

כתובות ה"ג:  
 מת מחול' מעיי' סיוט ופה לו מפ'ן  
 רובן א' צדיקים מתים בחול' מעיי' :

6. ברכות ל:  
 אין צומצין להתפלל אלא מתוך כבוד  
 ראש חסידים הראשונים הו' שהיו שם  
 אחת ומתפללין כד' שיכולו לעס'  
 לאביהם קהלים אפילו המלך הוא  
 בשמחה לא ויכולו ואפילו לחם  
 כבוד על עקבו' לא ופסוק :

7. בריתות פרה ו' משנ' ג'  
 רבי אליעזר אומר מתוצ' אדם אדם  
 תלוי בה' וק' ובה' עשה עיניו להי'א  
 לקראת אדם חסידים אומר ח'א  
 על קבא' בן בושא קניה מתוצ' אדם  
 תלוי בה' וק' חור' מאחר וק' הכבודים  
 וק' אמה ... :

8. צדיק ו' תוספתא א' א' :  
 רבי יהודה אומר חסידים הנאמנים  
 הו' מתאוו' להביא הכין ודא את  
 לפי שאין תהיה מביא תהיה על  
 וציהק. מה הו' צוין צומצין ומתרגין  
 לגינות מתקין כד' קיתחידו. קרבן  
 חטאת מתקין רבי שמעון אומר



8. cont'd.

לא נדנו. בנזיר אלא הרוצה להביא דולה  
מתנדב ומביא אלוהים מתנדב ומביא קדש  
וארבעה מיני לחמה מתנדב ומביא אדם  
בנזירות לא התנדב. כבי אלא ערסאן.  
חטאין אלא וכו' ערסאן חטא  
על הנזיר:

9. In the Jerusalem version the text is the same as brought in note 8. except for the latter half where R. Simeon's opinion is stated and the reading is as follows:

... רבי שמעון אומר חטאים הין. להין.  
נזירים בנזיר אלא וכו' ערסאן  
אאק חטא על הנזיר חטא זה על  
נזיר אלא ערסאן חטא:

10. In the Babylonian source, where the fact of the vow of Neziruth and the attendant sin offering is denied, the denial is followed by the statement that other sacrifices were brought. This statement is completely irrelevant to the question at hand, namely the bringing of a specific sacrifice---the sin offering.

11.

בבא קמא י"ז.

ח"י חסידים הנאמנים הין מצויים  
הוצותיהם וכו' חסידים בתיק  
אצותיהם ומצותיהם ערסאן.  
כבי אלא וכו' חסידים:



16.

שבת ה"א:

תני תנא המיה דרבא בר רב הונא הנורא  
 נחלים ודקדקים בגת אין נוח חסידים  
 נוחה הימנו. א"ל ואומן חסידים אין נוח  
 חכמים נוחה מהם:

17. Whether Büchler is right or wrong in his interpretation of the two rulings as based respectively on strict law and the spirit of the law is not too important. (The Talmud takes the opinions as a difference in halakha.) The core of Buchler's observation i.e. that the Hasid is dissatisfied with the lax ruling of R. Tarphon in his favor is hardly to be challenged.

18.

קדא קמא נ':

ת"ר לא יסקה אבן מנחותו לרה"ר  
 מנחה באבן אחת שהיה מסת' מנחותו  
 לרה"ר ומצאו חסיד אחת אמר לו ביה  
 מפני אותה מסת' מנחות פאניה חק לנשות  
 חק לנשות חסידים וימין נצרך למכור  
 קצתו. והיה מנהג באותו חסיד ונכנס  
 באומן אבנים אחת יפה אומן יפה  
 חסיד מפני אותה מסת' מנחות פאניה  
 חק לנשות חק:

תוספתא בבא קמא ב, ו':  
 כהצדע;

19. A. Büchler, *ibid.*, p.37.

20.

בבא בתרא ז:

למימנא בבית קדר מללאתא היא  
והא ההוא חסידיא דהוה רגיל  
אלוהו דהוה מללתי בהדיה ערב  
בית קדר וכו'. לא מללתי בהדיה  
לא קלילא רבא מללתי רבא מללתי...

21. L. Grunhut, *Midrash Canticles*, p. 7a.

22.

ירושלמי פסוק פ' א, טו:

מדוע בני ישראל לא יצאו  
לכסוף עמיתם עמו עז רבן שמעון  
אמרנו חומץ מלכסוף עמיתם!  
והחליף את כל

23.

בתובות ז.

א"ר אילעא בארשא התקינו המבצע א"ר  
יבצע ואת מחומץ תניא נמי פכי המבצע  
א"ר יבצע ואת מחומץ תניא נמי פכי המבצע  
ומדגה באומץ עבדך עבדך יאמר מחומץ  
ולא הניח עז חבירו ומני רבי יבצע  
ואמר רבי רבי יבצע ואלו הניח חבירו  
ומני ר' דה יבא:



24.

ברכות ו"ח:

והתניא מדשה בחסיד אחד שנתן צינור לרצו  
 בדרכו כ"ה בשני בצורת והתניסותו  
 אותו והלך וזן בבית הקברות ושמר  
 את כוחות המספרות לו. לו. אמרה  
 חבא לחברתו בא באי וגשש בדולק ונלמד...  
 הלכה היא ושה ובאה ואמרה לה...  
 של כל המוצר בבידה באשונה בכה מלכה  
 אותו הלך הוא (החסיד) ונלמד בבידה  
 שיהא לו כל הדולק כולו לקח לו לא לקח...  
 למה האחרת הלך וזן בבית הקברות ושמר  
 אותו כוחות המספרות לו צ"ל אמרה לה  
 חבלי באי וגשש בדולק ונלמד מאחורי  
 הפנקא... אמרה לה חבלי הניחתי  
 צבנים לביני לביןך כבר נלמדו בין  
 החיים אולם יצא...

25.

לידה י"ז.

אמר כל בן יחי ה" צבנים הן להדולה  
 אותו מתחיל בנפשו וזמן הראשון...  
 והלך בבית הקברות.

26. It does not appear to us that this isolated incident is evidence of miracle-mongering as an activity of the Hasidim. The Hasid does nothing to invoke the spirits nor does the text even suggest that it was a habit of the Hasidim to sleep in graveyards. The source specifically informs us that the Hasid's first visit to the graveyard is only the result of a conjugal altercation.



27. Although Hanina ben Dosa is never to our knowledge, referred to as a Hasid, except by implication in an unreliable source in Aboth De Rabbi Nathan chapter 8, MSS. I, nevertheless his behavior and general conduct is in complete conformity with the ethical and moral life of the Hasid.

28.

שבת ק"ג:

ח"ב מדרגה בחסיד אחד שפירש לו פירוש  
בתוך שבתו ונחלק עליו למיזבזב ונזכר  
שבתו כמאן ונחלק אותו חסיד ולא גזר  
ונצח לו שם זדלתי בן צדק  
וממנה היתה פניסתו ופניסת אנשי  
ביתו:

29. See Taz in Migine Erets Sabbath Laws section 507,

note 14:

מניין איש-הלכות שבת ס' ק"ג  
: ט"ז ס"ק י"ג

The Taz interprets this case to be that the Hasid imposed upon himself the ruling of מחזיק כמדע — a rule which the Talmud does not find applicable in such cases.

30.

תוספתא פאה ג. ח:

מדגה בחסיד אחד ששכח דעת בתוך  
שדהו. ואמר לבניו צא והקריב עלי  
פר גדולה ופר מצחוי השמים  
אמר לו אבה מה נאית למח  
במצוה זו ואת מכל מצות גבורה  
אמר לו כל מצות גבורה נתן לנו  
המקום לצערנו. לאוילן. צדינו. ברצון  
לפני המקום לא בא מצוה זו  
לזיון. אלא הכי הוא אמר "כי  
תקצור קצירך וקצרת צמר גזרה וגו'  
הבדל זה הכתוב דרכה:

31. A. Büchler, *ibid.*, p. 70.

32.

בבא המא פ". תמורה ט"ו:

מדגה בחסיד אחד שהיה גונח מלבו  
ולאילו. לנוכסאים ואמר. אין לו תקנה  
עד ש"תה חלב רותח שחרית  
והביא לו וקדוהו לו בכרמי מטע  
והיה יונק ממנה חלב עמחר וכנסו.  
חבירו לבקרו כיון גראו. הדג אמרו.  
ליסטים מצוין בתוך ביתו ואנו.  
לכנס לבקרו ולבוא ודבר. ולא  
מצאו בו דין אלא שם אולתה הדג  
בלבד ודג הוא בגדת ממנו אמר  
ולבד אין בדגמי שאין בו דין אלא  
שם אולתה הדג בלבד ערבתי עם  
בבוי חבירי גברי אמרו. חכמים  
אין מצלין בהמה דקה בא"י וקוץ  
כל היכא צאמר מדגה בחסיד אחד  
אין רבי יעקב בן בבא אור יהודה דר  
איתעא:

ת"ר מדגה בחסיד אחד שפדה ריבה אחת  
 בת ישראל ולמלאן הקנייה תחת  
 מנהליון אחרי ידו וטבל ומה למחיצין  
 אחר (זהו) בלדה להקביתיה תחת  
 מנהליון בזה חלדונוי אומנו. למאין  
 בנוי תלמיד שאינו בדוק לרבי בלדה  
 קורדני וטבלתי בזה חלדונוי אומנו.  
 למאן מפני טורח הדבר אורד קרי ער'  
 אחרי להם הדבוקה כקא היה ואמך  
 כלם צלמנוי לכך צבות המקום ידיו  
 אומך לכך צבות:

ת"ר מדגה בחסיד אחד שהיה מפלג  
 בדבר באשר אחד ונתן לו חסיד ולא  
 החזיק לו חסיד המהלך לו דב א"ס  
 תפילתו לאחר א"ס תפילתו א"ס ריבא  
 והלא כתוב בגותבס רה הלא רה ומהלך  
 לפי כתוב ונמנית משה לפי אומנו...  
 א"ס (החסיד) המהלך לו דב שאפי"ס בדבריו...  
 מיד לתפ"ס אומנו הלא ונפטר אומנו חסיד  
 גביתו לחסיד:

55.

תוספתא לענין ג, א :

מדעה בחסוד אחר לאמרו. לו התפלל לירדו.  
 למחין אמרו. לו בים להתפללם עליו  
 לירדו. כך התפלל עליהן וירדו להם  
 אמר להם צאו ונאלו אם עמד אצל  
 על קרן אפל משה על ארץ נגלן בנה  
 קדונו. אנו מתפללין על וירדו. למחין  
 אהל בשוחין אנו. לאן המקום מביא  
 אהל עדולם. אמר ולא וביס דוד נחמין  
 אהלו וגו' :

56.

לענין ח.

ואמר ר' אמי... אם כאלו צור להלמין  
 מתכין כנחש מלהוריד טל ומטר...  
 מה לקרנה ולק אצל חסוד גבור  
 וירגה עליו בגפילה...

57.

לבת ק"כ.

חלבון מאי עבדתיה מהפקידא ככא.  
 אמר רב חסדא מצא חסידות מן. כאן  
 אמר רבא חסידא אמר אגנא דבתא גרין  
 אלא אמר רבא הכא בינא למין עסקין  
 ולא נחא ליה דליתיהן מסותחין ובחמ  
 נמי לא נחא ליה דליתיהן והכי קאמר  
 ואם הוין פקחין דידי צכיה לאן גבר  
 לבת הוא עושין דמו חלבון לאחר לבת :

58.

לידה י"ז.

ת"ג ל' זכריה נאמרו בצפונים גורפן  
חסיד, קודקודן צדיק וצירקן לאד:

59.

בבא מצידא ל"ג:

היבא אי בכרכין הא אמת דצ גוראה  
לזולתני אי בכרכין הא אמת דצ  
דגבי אמת אי חסדא מיצג חסידות  
אין כאן אה אמת סיבא אין לן עליו  
אלסא תכדומת זמאן אי חסיד זמן  
קבוצי תיקבסה מתילת זמאן תכדומת...

40.

חולין ק"ל:

ל' געל הבית שהיה צדור חמקון  
למקום וצניק לילת לקד שכחה ופאה  
ומעל צני נילת ולכידת צור ולק צברי  
נ"א אי חסדא מיצג חסידות אין כאן  
אמר רבא תנא תני ולק ואת אמת  
מצג חסידות אין כאן וצור מצר"א  
ליקוק וליתוב...

41. A. Buchler, *ibid.*, p. 40.

42.

בבא קמא ל'.

אמר ר' יוחנן הכאי מאן צדי' למהו'  
חסידא לקיי מילי בלתיאן (יבא) רבינא  
אמר מילי באבות ואמר' מה מילי צדיכות:



43. Aboth De Rabbi Nathan chapter 8, MSS. I presents a rather unreliable text in which פז'ק'ס is used as an attribute of פז'ק'ס. It relates that animals were pious even as were their owners. The story is told of the donkey of Hanina ben Dosa that when stolen by thieves and offered fodder she refused to eat of it. Only when she returned to the home of Hanina ben Dosa did she take of her fodder thus indicating for us once again that scrupulous regard for property which is identified with the epithet Hasid.

44.

צירובין י"ח:

ר' מאיר אומר אצק הראשון חסיד וצד  
היה כיון לאה זקנה נסה ממנו על יצו  
וקב בעצמו ק"ל ונה וכו' מן האוה  
ק"ל מה ונה נה' גנז' גאנים על גזר  
ק"ל מנה ...

45.

ברכות - 3.

לצד שמרה נפלי כי חסיד אולי ...  
לוי ור' יצחק חד אומר בק אומר צד  
לפני הקדש רבנו מן חסיד  
אולי לבי מלי מליח ומענה וקנים צד  
לפני גזרות ואולי חצות לילה אוקוס והוצות  
לפני ואיצק כק אומר צד לפני הקדש ... לפני  
מליח מענה ומענה וקנים אוקוס אוקוס  
בכבוד ואולי יצו מליח כק וקדש  
וקדש כצו מליח אוקוס ...

46.

לגב ס"ג.

א"ר אבא א"ר שמעון בן לקיז א"ר  
 ר' זיקא ונאך כחש חגניהו. על  
 מתקין א"ר א"ר בארץ הוא חסיד  
 על תבואה גבולות:

47.

סוף כא:

רבי יהודה ... הוא היה אומר  
 חסיד קטן וכל ענין ואיזה  
 פניוה ומת פניוה הכי אלו.  
 מרגל דולק:

48. See Aboth De Rabbi Nathan edition by Solomon Schechter,

chapter 12, p. 28b. I have made use of MSS. I.

IX. APPENDIX

### Appendix

There are a number of sources in which the term Hasid or Hasiduth is employed, which are completely non-elucidatory and, to our mind, of nugatory significance. For the sake of completeness we list these references:

Aboda Zara 18a.

Aboth II, 2.

Aboth De Rabbi Nathan XL, p. 64b.

Baba Bathra 15b.

Baba Kama Tosephta XI, 14.

Berakoth 6b; 32b; 45b; 57b;

Derek Eretz III; IX.

Gittin 7a.

Hagigah 14b; 18b.

Hagigah Tosephta II, 3.

Hullin 65a.

Kiddushin 82a.

Moed Katon 17a; 18a.

Nedarim 7b.

Niddah 14a.

Rosh Hashonnah 17b.

Sanhedrin 110b.

Semahoth XII.

Sotah 10b; 48a; 49a.

Sotah Tosephta XIII, 3; XV, 4.

Sukkah 51a; 55a;

Sukkah Tosephta IV, 2.

Taanit 7b; 11b.



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