WITH BODY AND SOUL: AN INTRODUCTION
TO THE ECSTATIC DANCE OF THE HASIDIM

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by
Jill Marsha Gellerman, B.F.A.
The Ohio State University
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Approved by
Shirley S. Wyman
Adviser
Division of Dance

Adviser
Department of History
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INTRODUCTION

Dancing is religion conceived rhythmically. It is the coordination of the physical faculties with the feeling of ecstasy. It is that self-forgetful union with the not-self which is the highest form of religion. A dim vision of its rapturous and intoxicating effect must have already been present in the mind of the Hebrew poet-king when he exclaimed, "All my bones shall say, Lord, who is like unto thee?"¹

Indeed, from time immemorial music and dance as religious ritual have been important in Judaism. The Bible records numerous examples, including a message from the Psalms: "Praise Him with psaltery and harp; praise Him with timbrel and dance." But it was with the birth of Hasidism,² a mystic movement of Jews which rose up from Eastern Europe during the eighteenth century, that the real spirit of the Jewish dance was revived. As exemplified in the oral tradition and culture of the Hasidim, to "serve the Lord with joy" was a vital aspect of ecstatic worship. What better way to lift man's soul toward the highest Heavens, to receive His spirit, than through the joyous expression of song and dance?

So unlike the graceful gliding and pretty pose, the elegant eighteenth century demeanor of the European court, the Hasidic dance was no social pastime, but a form of sacred service. As such, neither mixed dancing nor mixed praying was permitted. Often, only the men danced during religious worship since it is said in orthodox Jewish Law
that men and women shall neither rejoice nor mourn together. Thus, for the Hasidim, dance—as passionate "service" to the Almighty—had a vital function, and its meaning was accepted by the entire community.

Casting off the "outer garments" of reality and taking the "inner garments" of the spirit unto themselves, the Hasidim, the "Pious Ones," achieved mystic states through their movement—in effect, a unity with the mystic powers of the Divine. Like their forefathers, their dance affirmed only one Spirit and all shared in His power. As one disciple expressed it, "Man aspiring to heights must reach for them through others, with their help and helping them. If all of Israel's children joined hands, they would form a chain and touch the celestial throne."³ Indeed, as in the past, so, too, in the present, the Hasidim join hands. From the swaying of head and trunk to the violent movements of the feet, they hold on to each other's shoulders or girdles with a warm enthusiasm and sense of community characteristic of common folk.

Hasidic literature is filled with proof-texts and parables indicating the great role which dance played in its historical development. For recorded in the memories of their participants, these ecstatic expressions of joy were prayers ascending upwards, and the higher worlds were stimulated and nourished by them. Not so stimulated were the hostile opponents of the Hasidic way. As we shall see,
such displays of religious enthusiasm were but another cause for many a battle in the history of Hasidism.

Many of the tales contain references to the dance of the Hasidim in the everyday existence of the people. Although life of the Jewish masses under the Polish and the Russian dominations was full of suffering and sadness, hundreds of occasions in their social and religious world were accompanied by some form of dance or ritual movement. On the Sabbath and festivals, at weddings and gatherings, and even on the anniversaries of a Rebbe's death, the excitement of the Hasidim would mount to such heights of religious fervor that body and soul were united and spirits broke forth in joyous ecstatic dance. Thus, with the ecstatic dance of prayer and feast, based upon a unique history and philosophy, did Hasidism capture its world. In tale and parable its oral tradition tells the story—utterances attributed to the leaders and disciples of a religious movement which originated among the Jews of Podolia and Volhynia in Eastern Europe during the middle of the eighteenth century.
NOTES TO INTRODUCTION


2It should be noted here that many Hebrew words have more than one correct English spelling. For example, the word "Hasidism" has been spelled "Hassidism," "Chasidism," or "Chassidism" by various authors. The same is true of the Hebrew spellings of the Jewish holidays and so on. Thus, within the context of this paper, I have endeavored to use the most common or popular English spellings, the only exception being in the use of direct quotations. In such cases the authors' original spellings have been retained.

CHAPTER I
THE BAAL SHEM TOV

With the appearance of Israel ben Eliezer (ca. 1700-1760), the "Master of the Good Name," the "Baal Shem Tov" or the "Besht," as he came to be known, Hasidism, and its oral tradition, was born. Legend has it that Israel was orphaned at an early age. Free of parental control he grew to love nature much more than his books. Particularly fond of children he became a teacher's assistant while still young in order to earn his keep in the community. It is told that he won the hearts of his small charges by loving-kindness, singing to them songs which he had composed in the woods. No longer dragged or driven to the Hebrew school, the children were led by the "pied-piper" in a daily procession singing and marching on the way to school, a sight which surely must have pleased the Almighty.

However, Israel soon left the village of his birth, plunging into the forests of the Carpathian Mountains in Southern Poland where he spent many years as a clay-digger and recluse studying mystic lore and communing with nature. In the mountains the Baal Shem was frequently interrupted in his work by visions and long spells of mystical revelations. Believing himself to be God's "divinely-endorsed intermediary," he emerged from the forests about 1736 and began his career as a baal shem or faith healer in the
Carpathian provinces of Podolia and Volhynia. In curing the sick he resorted not only to herbs and incantations, but also to fervent prayer. A rabbi and a kabbalistic wonder worker, he distinguished himself by his holiness from most other baale shem, a profession common in those days among a people spiritually poor, ruled by superstition and fear. Communicating his teachings by word of mouth, partly in the form of tales and parables steeped in symbolic meaning, he began to preach a simple and unsophisticated brand of religious reform.

A man of striking magnetism and sage human insight, the Besht drew liberally from the Bible and the Kabbalah, principally the ethical, joyous, ecstatic elements. Renewing the religious teachings concerning charity, humility, selflessness and loving-kindness, he preached a message of pious ecstasy and joyful affirmation of the Law and of life. The presence of God is everywhere, said he, and in all things, diffused throughout Creation. His belief that prayer performed with fervor and ecstatic joy (simcha) would bring man closer to God's presence and effect man's unity with God became the cornerstone of the new movement. Said the Besht: "... if one wishes his prayers to bear fruit, he must offer them with pleasure and joy."¹ "God has sent you into this world on an appointed errand. It is His will that you accomplish your errand in a state of joy. Sadness implies an unwillingness on your part to do God's will."²
Had not the psalmist said, "Serve the Lord with joy--come before Him with singing"? (Psalm 100:2) Had not the Torah commanded: "And thou shalt rejoice in thy festivals and thou shalt be altogether joyful"? (Deut. 16:14) The Besht taught that sincere rejoicing in every occupation of life—if one hallows it with his whole being and aims for the elevation of the body and soul, not unrestrained joy for its own sake—leads to rejoicing in God. In its outward form rejoicing became synonymous with ecstatic movement, dance and song, as exemplified in the Bible.

The Baal Shem was an ecstatic and he taught his followers to place prayer at the center of their lives so that the whole being, and all of its actions, revolved around it. One need not be learned to serve the Lord. Prayer could replace Torah study as the most important medium through which man can attain communion with God. To render this communion perfect, prayer must be fervent so that he who prays may abandon his material self. Such intense enthusiasm and concentration imparted to every action during prayer can best be expressed in his doctrines of kavana (concentration toward God), devekut (communion with God) and hitlahavut (the purifying fire of ecstasy)—the pillars of Hasidic teaching.

No prayer is effective without the emotional value of kavana which is the directing of the self toward God.
"Kavanah is the essence of prayer," said the Besht. "All earthly and material thoughts must be removed, or a formidable wall is erected between God and the worshipper. The prayers will fall on a deaf ear." Devekut and hitlahavut are two additional requirements for successful prayer. The act of binding oneself to God, or "cleaving" unto Him, is called devekut. When kavana and devekut are united, hitlahavut, the ecstatic fire which raises everything corporeal to spirit, occurs. Through the ecstasy, fervor and joy with which prayer is offered, body and soul lose a grip on reality and man becomes one with his Creator. When the emotional "ascent" is reached, man is capable of establishing an intimate relationship, a personal "I-Thou" dialogue, with God.

"That is the meaning of Devekuth that when he fulfills the commandments or studies the Torah, the body becomes a throne for the soul . . . and the soul a throne for the light of the Shekhinah which is above his head, and the light as it were flows all round him, and he sits in the midst of the light and rejoices in trembling." Thus, in "trembling," in the Hasidic prayer which is all movement, one may rise to the ecstatic condition, to the state of devekut and beyond, a dynamic expression of joy and a flowing together of all the senses--mind, body and spirit. To bring it on, one could employ intense concentration and violent bodily motions--gesticulations and swaying, shouts and shaking, song and dance. Turning, spinning, or off-balance movement, hand-clapping and foot-
stomping were further aids, the repetition of which would
induce ecstatic or trance-like states, and, as a result,
bring one closer to God. The highest form of prayer, said
the Besht, is that which not only moves the soul but
sets all the limbs in motion, as it is written: "All my
bones shall say, Lord, who is like unto thee?" (Psalm 10:35)
And in the Torah:

"... 'And the people saw and moved
about,' (Exodus 20:18) Wherefore it was taught
by a Zaddik, "If you see one praying, standing
upright without emotion, know that he does not
pray with thoughts inviolate and with a whole
heart, his mind is not with God." 5

This manner of praying became the distinguishing out-
ward feature of the Baal Shem Tov and his new order. To
recapture the fire, the ecstasy of his devotion each time
that he prayed, he made the hours of prayer more flexible,
prolonging them as long as ecstatic involvement endured.
It is told that the Besht indeed became "God-intoxicated,"
worshipping with fiery intensity. While at prayer he often
screamed loudly and danced ecstatically like a man possessed,
setting his body and soul in such a state of physical
excitement that he grew faint. Working himself up to the
required state of hitlahavut, he often fell into an ecstatic
seizure—his face glowing, his head weaving, his hands
moving rhythmically up and down. His whole body would
shake with violent motions, making gestures and contortions
which he employed as an aid in attracting the attention of
God and as a vehicle for achieving mystic states ("visionary trance")—in effect, a unity with the mystic powers of the Divine. So it is said:

... The Besht began to make terrible gestures, and he bent backwards until his head came close to his knees, and everyone feared that he would fall down. They wanted to support him, but they were afraid to. They told it to Rabbi Ze'ev Kotses, God bless his memory, who came and looked at the Besht's face and motioned that they were not to touch him. His eyes bulged and he sounded like a slaughtered bull. He kept this up for about two hours. Suddenly he stirred and straightened up. He prayed in a great hurry and finished the prayer. ...

Those close to him recalled how the Baal Shem was seen trembling while at prayer. It is told:

On a certain day of the new moon, the Baal Shem joined in the Morning Prayer standing in his own place, for it was his custom to go to the readers' pulpit only when the reading of the psalms began. Suddenly he trembled and the trembling grew greater and greater. They had seen this happen before while he prayed, but it had never been more than a slight quiver running through his body. Now he was violently shaken. When the reader had ended, and the Baal Shem was to go to the desk in his stead, they saw him stand in his place and tremble violently. One of his disciples went up to him and looked him in the face; it was burning like a torch and his eyes were wide open and staring like those of a dying man. Another disciple joined the first, they took him by the hands, and led him to the desk. He stood in front of it and trembled. Trembling he recited the psalms and after he had said the Kaddish, he remained standing and trembled for a good while, and they had to wait with reading the Scriptures until his trembling had left him.

The Maggid of Mezritch told:

"Once—it was on a holiday—the Baal Shem was praying in front of the desk with great
fervor and in a very loud voice. Because I was ill, it was too much for me, and I had to go into the small room and pray there alone. Before the festival service, the Baal Shem came into the small room to put on his robe. When I looked at him, I saw that he was not in this world. Now, as he was putting on his robe, it wrinkled at the shoulders and I put my hand on it to smooth out the folds. But hardly had I touched it, when I began to tremble. I held fast to the table, but the table began to tremble too. The Baal Shem had already gone into the big hall, but I stood there and begged God to take the trembling from me. 

Legends and wonder tales attesting to the miraculous deeds of the Baal Shem and to his joyous piety became widespread. It was said that he could heal the sick, reveal the future, and exorcise dybbuks (restless souls of the dead); that his powers, ranging from mystic revelation to sympathetic magic, were divinely inspired; and that his concentration in prayer could shake the water and cause the grain to tremble. Rabbi Jacob Joseph of Polnoye, one of his disciples, told:

"Once a large water-trough stood in the room in which the Baal Shem was praying. I saw the water in the trough tremble and sway until he had finished."

Another disciple told:

"Once, on a journey, the Baal Shem was praying at the east wall of a house at whose west wall stood open barrels filled with grain. Then I saw that the grain in the barrels was trembling." 

In another version of the above, it was said that his prayers made the barrels dance.

I heard this also from the Hasid, the Rabbi, our teacher Gedaliah, God bless his memory. Once the Besht prayed Minhah in a
certain village in a granary in which there were many barrels full of grain. While he was praying his trembling made the barrels dance. As it is written: "The Lord descended upon it in fire... and the whole mount quaked greatly. (Exod. 19:18). And, thanks to God, I saw in him an image of the soul of Moses, God bless his memory."

That the ways of the Baal Shem, not wholly in keeping with the traditions of the time, were cause for question is a known fact—especially his policy of prolonging prayer to attain to the necessary devekut in trembling motions and gestures. It is told:

... On Sabbath Eve at dinner time, Rabbi Gershon asked his brother-in-law, the Besht: "Why did you prolong your prayer so much? I too prayed with kavanoth. Then I read a portion of the Bible, two verses in the original and one in translation, and I had to lie down to rest. And you stood and trembled, making your gestures and motions."

Soon the Besht's adherents numbered whole towns and villages of poor Jewish common folk seeking cures for the horrible ills society had inflicted upon them. The new interest in joy, gaiety, the song and the dance may have been a compensation for the gloom, rigor and despair of much of their lives. Insistence upon other forms of "divine service"—namely, enthusiasm and enkindlement in worship often achieved through bodily motions, singing, and so on—rather than only on talmudic learning was welcomed as a foil for the austere, formalistic traits of much of traditional Jewish observance associated with the Rabbinic ideal of the day. Indeed, the new faith was one of simple,
genuine piety—full of love for God and fellow man.

Once a Jew in great tribulation of heart came to the Besht, inquiring: "How many days have I to fast, to make atonement for a grievous sin?" The Besht replied: "Not through fasting is the ire of God averted, but through joy of which the Psalms are harbingers. Say the Psalms with inward rejoicing, and you will be quit of your sin."

Men learned in the Law came to the Besht on an errand of dispute. "In times gone by," they protested, "there were pious men aplenty, fasting from Sabbath to Sabbath, and inflicting their own bodies with self-devised torments. And now your Disciples proclaim it to all who care to listen that much fasting is unlawful and self-torment a crime."

The Besht made an answer: "It is the aim and essence of my pilgrimage on earth to show my brethren by living demonstration, how one may serve God with merriment and rejoicing. For he who is full of joy is full of love for men and all fellow-creatures."12

However, the opposition to the Besht and his free and joyful mode of worship was beginning to be voiced by the Misanagedim (antagonists). The new order, without departing from the laws and practices of orthodox Judaism, did differ in many essential points from the old outward forms of the synagogue service, as well as its inner content and spirit. Establishing secret houses of worship, the new Jewish "brotherhood" created a schism. Denounced by their opponents as heretics, they were accused of threatening the stability of the old Jewish community and dishonoring the Sabbath with singing and dancing. This indecorous manner of praying in the synagogue and in the open air was viewed by some as undisciplined rather than free. Likewise,
other customs of their own choosing--such as the use of the Sephardic prayerbook, which differed from the accepted liturgy, and their habit of dressing in white on the Sabbath--scandalized the religious authorities of Rabbinic Judaism.

Leading the battle the great Gaon Elijah of Vilna attacked the Hasidic way of serving God with gladness and prayer as opposed to the traditional "Rabbinic ideal" of Torah study, fearing that the lack of stress on the latter might degenerate into plain laxity in the observance of set prayer ritual. Had not the Baal Shem, a mere am ha-aretz (ignorant one), already made the hours for prayer more flexible, prolonging his worship until the spirit came upon him? Afraid of another onslaught of saint-worship akin to Sabbateanism, the Misnagedim looked upon the "pied-piper" of the people with great contempt, scorning his customs and simple dress and laughing at his odd actions in prayer.

Thus, a vile campaign consisting of open slander and false accusations was launched against the Besht. On this lack of respect, the Baal Shem was said to have replied that when a man is drowning, he cannot be blamed for trying to attract attention by every means possible. He likened the ecstatic movements of the Hasid who prays with the whole of his body, in order to save himself from the evil spirits which try to disturb him, to the movements of a drowning man who tries to escape the rushing waters.
When one sees a person drowning in the water and making all sorts of strange and ludicrous movements with his limbs in order to battle against the surging waves, would anyone think of making fun of him for doing so? In like manner one must not scorn or deride anyone who contorts his body and moves his limbs during prayer, for he only tries to escape from the strange thoughts that pass through his mind, like the stormy water that seeks to engulf him and swallow him alive.13

The Besht also compared those who could not understand his ways to a deaf man who sees people dancing and wonders why, for he cannot hear the music.

"A violinist played melodies for a dance so beautifully that all his hearers began to dance with great ardor. A deaf man who happened to enter the room, could not understand why the people danced with such abandon and enthusiasm. Had he not been deaf, would he not have joined the others?

"Our opponents wonder at the sight of the Hasidim singing and dancing at their assemblies. If they understood our viewpoint, would they not become our comrades?"14

Though the activity of the Besht covered a period of more than twenty-five years, his literary output was, indeed, small, consisting only of a few letters wherein he counselled against asceticism and self-affliction. From a letter the Besht addressed to Rabbi Jacob Joseph of Polnoye, an excerpt has come down to us:

"I received the letter indited by your unsullied hand, and saw from its first lines that Your Worship believes mortification necessary. This shocked me to my innermost soul. By the counsel of God and His Shekinah, I order you to abandon such dangerous practices, which are but the outcome of melancholia and depression. The Glory of God reposes not where there is mourning, but only where joy in His dictates
prevails. For it has been explicitly commanded: 'Thou shalt not hide thyself from thine own flesh.' (Isaiah 58:7)\textsuperscript{15}

As for the teachings of the Baal Shem, which took the form of tales and parables, he wrote nothing down and was skeptical of attempts to do so. Among his disciples he seemed to have found none worthy to receive the whole of his thought.

Once, people asked the Besht to preach to them after prayer. And he did so. While he preached he moved and trembled as if in prayer, and he inserted in his sermon, "God O God, it is known and revealed to you that I do not preach this sermon for my honor (but for the honor of my father's and my mother's families). I know many things and I can do many things, but there is not a person to whom I can reveal them."\textsuperscript{16}

Since he preferred to communicate by word of mouth, and then only what was of the utmost importance and could not be withheld, we possess no genuine, direct message. Nonetheless, the real essence of his "Torah" or teachings has been preserved through the fragmentary notes of his disciples, who faithfully recorded the tales, speeches, narratives and talks from memory after his death.\textsuperscript{17}

Legends of the Baal Shem's life and deeds were passed down orally from generation to generation as well as those of his adherents who perpetuated the tradition of expounding the doctrine in fable and parable.

On the Sabbath friends and apostles would gather at his table for the third meal of the day to hear their
Master expound "Torah."

The Sadigurier Hasid, Reb Leibush Istriker, related the following legend, while seated at the communal third meal of the Sabbath:

"When the Besht was still seeking the proper way to serve the Lord, he found that the observance of the Sabbath according to the injunctions of the later Rabbis practically prohibited any movement, and filled a man with anxiety lest he transgress some strict regulation. He believed that this contradicted the command of Isaiah to 'call the Sabbath a delight' (Isaiah 58:13). He pondered on this for a long time, and in the night he had a dream:

"In his dream the Besht visited the man who was to be his companion in Paradise. He found him living among non-Jews, ignorant of Judaism, except that on the Sabbath he gave a banquet for his non-Jewish friends, wherein he greatly rejoiced.

"'Why do you hold this banquet?' asked the Besht. 'I know not,' replied the man, 'but I recall that in my youth, my parents prepared admirable meals on Saturday, and sang many songs; hence I do the same.' The Besht wished to instruct him in Judaism . . . . But the power of speech left him for the moment, since he realized that the man's joy in the Sabbath would be marred if he knew all his shortcomings in the performance of religious duties.

"Thereupon the Besht meditated on the whole matter, and evolved his new system of observance, whereby God is served in joy which comes from the heart."18

A second tale gives further explanation for the Besht's doctrine of delight on the Sabbath—a doctrine which naturally expressed itself in the mystical experience, in the dance of prayer. For him the ecstatic dance reached its height on the Sabbath, the culmination of the profane days of the week and the entrance of the sacred Sabbath soul—the special "bride" of the Lord.
Once the Besht came to a certain village where he stayed over the Sabbath. When the time for the third Sabbath meal came, he gathered together all the Jews in the village, sang hymns with them and joined them in dancing. When he was asked why he had gathered them together and made merry in their company, he answered in semi-jocular vein: "It is the hope of every Jew that when the time comes for him to die he will breathe his last among Jews. At the time of the third Sabbath meal one senses, as it were, that the extra soul that a Jew receives on the Sabbath is about to leave his body, and it is good at such time to be in Jewish company."19

As a symbol of his passion for God, the Besht taught his following not only to dance joyfully on every Sabbath, but on every festival as well—particularly on the Festival of the Law.

When the Besht for the first time explained to his disciples the significance of Simchat Torah, the festival of the Rejoicing of the Law, he said:

"Jews are wont to spend a large part of the festival of Simchat Torah in sleep. On Sabbaths and festivals they generally sleep longer, and much more so on Simchat Torah because they are fatigued by the hakafoth and the festival meals. But the angels have no work on that day, so they rise early on Simchat Torah as on all other days, but without the souls of men they cannot serve their Creator. So what do they do? They go to the Garden of Eden in order to clean and sweep, but there they see many things which they can't understand how they came about, such as heels and soles and shoe laces, and sometimes even whole shoes. And so they look askance and wonder how they had come there. Generally, they find in the Garden of Eden such things as zizith or tefillin or sometimes a torn tallith—but how do shoes come there? So they go to ask the Angel Michael for an explanation. Says the Angel Michael to them: 'These things are of my doing. These things came hither from the dancing of the Jews with the Scroll
of the Law in their hands.' In this thing the Angel Michael prided himself over the Angel Matatron. Whereas the latter binds crowns for his Maker out of the prayers of Israel, Michael makes crowns out of the shoes falling from the feet of Jews who dance on Simchat Torah."20

Allusion to the holiness of the Hasid's dance on Simchat Torah is drawn from the following tale:

I heard this upon the arrival of the Rabbi of the community of Nemirov. Once on Simhath Torah the followers of the Besht were happy, dancing and drinking a lot of wine from the Besht's cellar.

The Besht's pious wife said: "They will not leave any wine for the blessing of the kiddush and Havdalah," and she entered the Besht's room and said to him: "Tell them to stop drinking and dancing; since you will not have any wine left over for the kiddush and Havdalah."

The Besht said to her jokingly: "Well said. Go and tell them to stop and go home."

When she opened the door and saw that they were dancing in a circle and that flames of fire were burning around them like a canopy, she herself took the pots, went to the cellar, and brought them as much wine as they wanted.21

On Simhat Torah, when the scriptural readings for the year had fulfilled their cycle, it was customary for the Besht himself to join the circle of ecstatic dancers with the Torah in his arms. It is told:

One Simhat Torah evening, the Baal Shem himself danced together with his congregation. He took the scroll of the Torah in his hand and danced with it. Then he laid the scroll aside and danced without it. At this moment, one of his disciples who was intimately acquainted with his gestures, said to his companions: "Now our master has laid aside the visible, dimensional teachings, and has taken the spiritual teachings unto himself."22
Not only on the Festival of the Law, but at the wedding feast as well, the Besht made merry and joked, reviving the dance beyond the confines of the Diaspora-born "Mitzvah Tanz," the handkerchief dance performed at weddings by close kinsfolk of the bride and groom. As one tale relates:

I heard from a man who heard from Rabbi Tsevi, the scribe, God bless his memory, that the Besht had arranged a marriage between two orphans whom he and the famous Rabbi Ze'ev Kotses had educated in their homes... (The Besht) said: "Now it is the time for the wedding." (And he acted as one of the jesters.)

To the Baal Shem Tov the ecstatic joyous song also possessed a spark of holiness. On his frequent trips throughout southern Poland, Moldavia, Wallachia, and surrounding regions, he loved to observe the peasants and ruffians who crowded the taverns, drinking and singing their folk songs at the top of their lungs. Their pulsating rhythmic melodies often lured one to dance and provided good material for the Hasidic dance tune. The Besht held that the bad traits in man could be overcome through the power of such song and dance, as illustrated in the following legend. It is told:

Once when Rabbi Meir Margaliot, the author of the book "Illuminator of the Paths," was visiting the Baal Shem with his seven-year-old son, his host asked him to leave the boy for a time. Little Shaul remained in the house of the Baal Shem Tov. Soon after, the Baal Shem took him and his disciples on a journey. He had the carriage stop in front of a village inn
and entered with his companions and the boy. Inside they were playing the fiddle and peasant men and women were dancing. "Your fiddler is no good," the Baal Shem said to the peasants. "Let my boy here sing you a dance song, and then you will be able to dance much better."

The peasants were willing. The boy stood on the table and in his silvery voice sang a hasidic dance song without words, that went straight to the feet of the villagers. In a reel of wild happiness they danced around the table. Then one of them, a young fellow, stepped forward from among them and asked the boy: "What is your name?" "Shaul," he said. "Go on singing," the peasant cried. The boy started another song and the peasant faced him and danced in time to the tune. But in the midst of his wild leaps and bounds, he repeated over and over in charmed tones: "You Shaul and I Ivan, you Shaul and I Ivan!" After the dance, the peasants treated the Baal Shem and his disciples to vodka, and they drank together.

About thirty years later, Rabbi Shaul, who had become both a wealthy merchant and a Talmud scholar of sorts, was traveling through the country on business. Suddenly robbers attacked him, took his money and wanted to kill him. When he begged them to have pity on him, they took him to their chieftain. He gave Rabbi Shaul a long penetrating look. Finally he asked: "What is your name?" "Shaul," said the other. "You Shaul and I Ivan," said the robber chief. He told his men to return Shaul's money and take him back to his carriage.24

According to the Besht, an essential doctrine of the new movement was life in fellowship, organized community, a consolidation of hearts and the leadership of their master, the Zaddik. The Zaddik, or "Righteous One," is he who fulfills the promise of Hasidism in the highest measure and, thus, comes closer to God than anyone else. His function is that of mediator between the Almighty and the common people—God's messenger and favorite. However,
not only does the disciple need his Zaddik, but the Zaddik also needs his disciple, preached the Besht. Dependent on one another, they bind their souls together for greater unity and might in the service of their Maker. It is told:

When the number of renegades who followed Jacob Frank, the false Messiah, grew greater and greater, Heaven revealed to the Baal Shem that their impure strength was stronger than his holy strength, and that, if he hoped to overcome them, he would have to enlist someone to help him, and that this other was to be Rabbi Moshe Pastuch, which means, Rabbi Moshe, the Shepherd. Without a moment’s delay, the Baal Shem set out for the city to which he had been directed. When he asked for Rabbi Moshe Pastuch, it evolved that the man who bore that name was a shepherd who pastured his flock in the hills beyond the city. There he found him. The sheep were scattered over the slopes, but the shepherd, whom the Baal Shem approached unobserved, was standing over a ditch and saying to himself: "Dear Lord, how can I serve you? If you had flocks of sheep, I should pasture them for you without pay. But as it is, what can I do?" Suddenly he began to jump back and forth over the ditch. Full of fervor he jumped and jumped and somersaulted and cried: "I am jumping for the love of God! I jump for the love of God!" Then the Baal Shem realized that the service of this shepherd was greater than his own.

The Hasidim are partners in all things. Their common attachment to their leader, the Baal Shem, created a bond between them—a bond which was strengthened not only in the festive hours of common prayer and of common meal, but in the close-knit circle of the dance as well.

A workingman was dancing with a Scroll of the Law in his arms on Simhat Torah; he displayed religious joy above all the other worshippers.

The Dayyan asked him: "Have you devoted
yourself particularly to a study of Torah?"
"Even if I have not zealously studied
Torah, you have done so," replied the workingman.
"When my partner has a feast, shall it not be
my feast as well?" 26

Two "miracle tales" which surround the Besht serve
to demonstrate the importance of this bond between Zaddik
and disciple, an inter-relationship upon which Hasidic
teaching depends. In the first account, the strength of
the community, exhibited in the ecstatic dance of the
Hasidim, was able to lift the prayers of its master up to
Heaven—a feat which he alone was not able to effect. 27

It is told:

Once, on the evening after the Day of Atonement, the moon was hidden behind the clouds and
the Baal Shem could not go out to say the Blessing of the New Moon. This weighed heavily
on his spirit, for now, as often before, he
felt that destiny too great to be gauged depended
on the work of his lips. In vain he concentrated
his intrinsic power on the light of the wandering
star, to help it throw off the heavy sheath;
whenever he sent some one out, he was told that
the clouds had grown even more lowering. Finally
he gave up hope.

In the meantime, the hasidim who knew nothing
of the Baal Shem's grief, had gathered in the
front room of the house and begun to dance, for
on this evening that was their way of cele-
brating with festal joy the atonement for the
year, brought about by the zaddik's priestly
service. When their holy delight mounted higher
and higher, they invaded the Baal Shem's chamber,
still dancing. Overwhelmed by their own frenzy
of happiness they took him by the hands, as he
sat there sunk in gloom, and drew him into the
round. At this moment, someone called outside.
The night had suddenly grown light; in greater
radiance than ever before, the moon curved on a
flawless sky.28
In the last tale, the mere act of telling a story in praise of the Besht, namely that he was wont to hop and dance during his prayer, cures a lame man.

A rabbi, whose grandfather had been a disciple of the Baal Shem, was asked to tell a story. "A story," he said, "must be told in such a way that it constitutes help in itself." And he told: "My grandfather was lame. Once they asked him to tell a story about his teacher. And he related how the holy Baal Shem used to hop and dance while he prayed. My grandfather rose as he spoke, and he was so swept away by his story that he himself began to hop and dance to show how the master had done. From that hour on he was cured of his lameness. That's the way to tell a story!"29

Thus, even after death the memory of the holy Baal Shem Tov and his joyous dance lives on in tale and parable—an active force, strong enough to aid and instruct disciples and descendants in the furthering of the Hasidic way for years to come.
NOTES TO CHAPTER I


   See also Gershom Scholem, Major Trends, pp. 49-50. A typical body posture for mystical contemplation is putting the head between the knees. However, the Besht bends backwards, not forward as is common.

   Bodily movements in prayer are an old custom, and are mentioned in Judah ha-Levi's Kitab Al Khazari, translated by N.M. Kaplan (New York, 1927), p. 128. The Hasidim carried this custom to the extreme, moving and pacing in the synagogue with great enthusiasm. The Kabbalah, which they studied fervently, also contains reference to this manner of prayer.
Martin Buber, *Tales of the Hasidim: The Early Masters*, translated by Olga Marx (New York: Schocken Books, 1947), p. 49. Although many of the tales are local legends which accrued to the Besht, we may also assume that many of them are based on actual events and experiences. A careful distinction must be made, of course, between fact and fiction.

For an excellent version of the same tale, see *In Praise*, p. 50.


A more detailed version is told by Rabbi Elijah as heard from the Great Maggid of Mezritch. (*In Praise*, p. 51.) The Maggid said:

"... 'Once, on a holiday—I do not know whether it was the first day of Passover or the 8th day of Sukkoth—I had to say the blessing for either rain or dew. The Besht was praying before the ark with great enthusiasm, I already knew from his best disciples that he used to utter a great cry and pray louder than anyone else."

"The rabbi, the Great Maggid, could not stand it since he was very sick. He left and entered a small room in the beth-hamidrash where he prayed alone. Before the Musaf the Besht entered the small room to put on his kittel. The Maggid said that he realized that the Besht was inspired by the Shekinah (Divine Presence), and that he was not in this world...


In *Praise*, p. 53.

Ibid., p. 60.


"In the psalm we read: 'Rejoice the soul of thy servant; for unto Thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul.' Why the rejoicing? 'For unto Thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul!' It is rejoicing which makes it possible for me to lift up my soul to you."

The teachings of the Besht were influenced to a great extent by the Psalms. However, Rabbinical Judaism
opposed the use of singing and dancing as a form of worship due to the solemnity of the Diaspora.


For a similar version of the same tale, see Newman and Spitz, Anthology, p. 90, citing Kether Shem Tov, Aaron of Apt (Slavuta, ca. 1784). A curious contradiction to what we know of his teachings, it is told that the Besht said (Newman, Maggidim, p. 236, citing Sippure Zaddikim, p. 18):

"Your prayer is worthier if you do not move your body during it. But you are permitted to pray thus if no foreign thoughts assail you."

14Newman and Spitz, Anthology, p. 120, citing Sefer ha-Hasiduth, by A. Kahana (Warsaw, 1922), p. 87.

Rabbi Moshe Hayyim Efraim of Sudikov, the Baal Shem's grandson, relates the tale as told to him by his grandfather. See also Buber, Tales: Early Masters, p. 53; Meyer Levin, The Golden Mountain (New York: Behrman House, Inc., 1932), p. 86. The opponents of the Hasidim believed them to be "madmen."

15Newman and Spitz, Anthology, p. 17.

This excerpt, taken from a letter addressed to Jacob Joseph of Polnoye, may be found in Shivchei ha-Besht, published by S.A. Horodetzky (Berlin, 1922), p. 30.

It is odd, indeed, that Elie Wiesel should speak of the Besht's behavior in later life as one of depression similar to what he had criticized in others. Souls on Fire: Portraits and Legends of Hasidic Masters, translated by Marion Wiesel (New York: Random House, 1972), p. 36.

"... Toward the end of his life particularly, he displayed increasing signs of irritation and depression, expressing himself in ways 'defying the laws of language.' He who had worked so hard to make himself understood, no longer succeeded. Faces, words and incidents were forgotten; he was losing touch with his surroundings. He could be seen knocking his head against a tree or following what seemed to be a strange choreography with his body. ..."

16In Praise, p. 107.

Source: Rabbi Gedaliah.
See In Praise, xxiii, xv. "As there is little information about the life of the Besht, In Praise of the Baal Shem Tov stands as the single most important source of his life and work." (xxiii) It "was the first major crystallization of the tales surrounding the Besht and his followers"--to be set in print. (xv)

"The author of the manuscript of tales was Rabbi Dov Ber (also Dob Baer ben Samuel), the son-in-law of Rabbi Alexander the Shohet, who had been the Baal Shem Tov's scribe for eight years. Rabbi Dov Ber had included in the manuscript 15 tales told to him by his father-in-law, and almost all the other tales in the collection came from sources that the author considered equally reliable. 'In each case,' Rabbi Dov Ber had written, 'I wrote down the name of the person from whom I heard the tale. And praise God, who endowed me with memory, I neither added nor omitted a single detail. . . ." (xv)

The book was printed in the year 1814 by Israel Yofeh, in the town of Kopys, province of Reissen in Poland, prepared in Hebrew manuscript.


Steinmann, p. 150.

Also Newman, Anthology, p. 405, citing Siach Sarfei Kodesh, by J.K.K. Rokotz (Lodz, 1929), iii, 55.

The Besht said:

"The Hasidic custom of eating the third Sabbath meal in company with comrades rather than in the midst of one's own family, is founded upon the following reason: among good Jews, it is eminently desirable that a man offer up his soul in the presence of ten Jews. At the conclusion of the last Sabbath meal, we offer up our super-soul, received by us on the Sabbath. We desire to do this in congenial company."

The meal is still usually accompanied by some form of release--story-telling, song or dance. This occurs on Saturday night. For further information on the Sabbath meals, see Jerome R. Mintz, Legends of the Hasidim: An Introduction to Hasidic Culture and Oral Tradition in the New World (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1968), pp. 95-96.

21 *In Praise*, pp. 80-81.
For a similar version of the same tale, see Buber, *Tales: Early Masters*, pp. 52-53.


23 *In Praise*, p. 146.

24 Buber, *Tales: Early Masters*, pp. 43-44.
See also Wiesel, *Souls*, p. 21, for another version.


Although the ecstatic experience is a very personal, even intimate, one, the "dance as employed in order to bring about mystic states is typically a group phenomenon"--a form of "collective mysticism." "In private, individual attempts to achieve such states, the dance appears to be rarely used and other methods are given preference." Within the "group setting," it is often accomplished through "a shared effort with others--whether of prayer and devotion, of rhythmic singing and dancing or other spiritual exercises, and perhaps usually a combination of several of these."

28 Buber, *Tales: Early Masters*, pp. 53-54.
See also p. 8, and Buber, *Ten Rungs*, p. 45 ("Into Gladness"): "When people are merry and dance, it sometimes happens that they catch hold of someone who is sitting outside and grieving, pull him into the round, and make him rejoice with them. The same happens in the heart of one who rejoices: grief and sorrow draw away from him, but it is a special virtue to pursue them with courage and to draw grief into gladness, so that all the strength of sorrow may be transformed into joy."

For a similar version of the same tale, see Steinmann, p. 87. As *In Praise* points out (pp. 199, 337),
"One of the innovations of Hasidism has been the employment of tales for mystical purposes. . . . Tales, like prayers, had meanings beyond their literal interpretation. This belief was one of the factors which contributed to the development of the rich Hasidic folklore." It is told:

"When there was a berith at the house of the head of a court of the holy community of Horodnya, I heard from the rabbi of the holy community of Polonnoye and then from the rabbi of our community that the Besht said: 'When one tells stories in praise of the tsaddikim, it is though he were engaged in 'Ma'aseh Merkavah'." (p. 199)
CHAPTER II

IN THE CIRCLE OF THE BAAL SHEM: THE FIRST APOSTLES

Thus it was that the Besht gathered a number of disciples around him who became known as Hasidim, "the Pious Ones." They followed his ways without compromise and taught them to their own intimate circles--inciting a return from the arid system of prayers and ritual habits to a meaningful democracy, a free and vibrant Judaism of love for the humble, suffering masses. Offsetting the gloom and hardships of Jewish existence, the Besht encouraged his apostles to accept life with gratitude and enthusiasm, to take true delight in the service of God, to sing and dance in praise of Him. Among the early followers--preachers, shohetim and rabbis--the dance reached the highest level of religious exaltation, even to the point of complete self-oblivion.

It is said of one disciple, Rabbi Mikhal, the preacher (Maggid) of Zlotchov, that his physical ecstasies were his special endowment. Like the Besht, he would wait with praying until he had prepared the kavana within himself. Once accomplished, his soul could rise and "cleave" to the Lord, his body emptied of consciousness. It is told:

In the last two years before his death, Rabbi Mikhal fell into a trance of ecstasy time after time. On these occasions, he went back and forth in his room, his face aglow with inner light, and one could see that he was clinging to a higher life rather than to earthly existence,
and that his soul had only to make one small step to pass into it. That is why his children were always careful to rouse him from his ecstasy at the right moment. ¹

With a fiery enthusiasm, the first apostles broke all bonds of traditional ceremony, dancing when praying and praying through the dance to the tune of the heavenly angels. A new world was opened to them, preserved for posterity through the tales and legends of their wondrous expressive dance. Of one of the most ecstatic, Jecheil Michel, the Baal Shem's son-in-law, it is told that the Besht once sent him on a mission to a land unknown to teach the new doctrine to the down-trodden and the ignorant. Finding himself among strangers on the eve of the New Year (Rosh Hashanah), Jecheil had no choice but to pray in his usual manner, as the tale relates:

... Forgetting he was in a strange city, Jecheil Michel prayed in the same manner and with the same outpouring of heart and soul as in the synagogue at Mezebuz by the side of the Baal Shem. He leaped and danced and clapped his hands, snapped his fingers and shook his body, reciting and chanting in great ecstasy. At times he cried at the top of his voice, shaking his head and waving his hands, running from one end of the room to the other. ²

Another disciple of the Besht, Nahman of Kosov, had a relative named Rabbi Yudel of Chudnov, who was no less enthusiastic in prayer—albeit a bit lazy. Indeed, the Besht used to say that Rabbi Yudel was a reincarnation of Samuel the Prophet. In somewhat humorous fashion, the story is told:
I heard from Rabbi Shneur, the grandson of Rabbi Nahman, that Rabbi Yudel visited with Rabbi Nahman in the holy community of Ladimir. Rabbi Nahman built a beth-hamidrash ("House of Study") there, practically on the water, and the mikveh was next to the beth-hamidrash. On the Sabbath morning, they went to the mikveh. Rabbi Nahman was very diligent, whereas Rabbi Yudel was a little lazy. While Rabbi Yudel was still taking off his clothes in the mikveh, Rabbi Nahman was praying before the ark. When Rabbi Yudel got out of the mikveh, he heard Rabbi Nahman singing "ha-Aderet ve-ha-Emunah," and he became very excited. He ran to the beth-hamidrash dressed only in a shirt, and he danced in the beth-hamidrash for about two hours.3

However, the first disciple to turn dance into the most ecstatic of rituals was Reb Aryeh Leib, "the Grandfather" of Shpola. Serving the Lord in his own way with adoration, with enthusiasm and with great joy, he set the mode for the Hasidic dance which played no small part in his worship. He was its master! Reminiscent of the Baal Shem was the ecstasy and the spiritual intensity which he imparted to his every bodily action. The Hasidim say that, once, Rabbi Abraham, the son of the Great Maggid of Mezritch, watched Reb Leib sway and turn and exclaimed: "His dancing is of greater worth than my prayers."4 Each Friday evening his Hasidim came together to sing while the "Shpola Grandfather" danced and clapped his hands. It is told:

When the "Spola grandfather" danced on a sabbath and on feast-days, his feet were as light as those of a four-year-old. And not a single one of those who saw his holy dance
failed to turn to God at that very instance, and with his whole soul, for he stirred the hearts of all who beheld him, to both tears and ecstasy.

Once Rabbi Shalom Shakhna, the son of Abraham the Angel, was his guest on a Friday evening. They had just made peace with each other after waging a long dispute. Rabbi Shalom sat there as always on the night of the sabbath, wholly surrendered to his clinging to God. The "grandfather" looked around joyfully as always, and both were silent. But when they had finished eating, Rabbi Arye Leib said: "Son of the Angel, can you dance?"

"I cannot dance," Rabbi Shalom replied. Rabbi Arye Leib rose. "Then watch the Spola grandfather dance," he said. His heart immediately lifted his feet and he danced around the table. When he had moved once this way and once that, Rabbi Shalom jumped up. "Did you see how the old man can dance!" he called to the hasidim who had accompanied him. He remained standing and kept his eyes fixed on the feet of the dancer. Later he said to his hasidim: "You may believe me; he has made all his limbs so pure and so holy, that with every step he takes, his feet accomplish holy unifications."

As most of the first apostles of the Besht, he had led a turbulent existence for many years before revealing himself as a Zaddik. Engaged in one occupation after another—an infants' teacher in various villages, a furnace stoker in a number of houses, a rabbi, a synagogue beadle and so on—he finally decided to be a shohet and visited the Besht for approval. However, the Baal Shem had something else in mind for Leib and said:

"... You think to feed the bodies of our brethren with kosher meat; but you did not come into this world for that... Not for bodies, but for the souls were you sent. There are many outcast souls in this world, and since they are part of the basis of your own soul, it rests with you to strive to save them. These
souls are scattered far oyer Russia; most of them are in the Ukraine. . . . 

The way was clear to him. Preparing himself for his "exile," he joined a troupe of wandering beggars, keeping company with the plain, simple folk, helping them to seek God, roaming from village to village where he provoked varying responses, earning applause and welcome or lashes and threats, and always managing to conceal his true identity from the established Zaddikim. For many years he walked a road full of suffering and anguish, his clothes torn, ragged. One day Leib arrived at a village where a Jew's life was hanging by a thread. Having been imprisoned for failure to pay his rent to the overlord of the town, the poor creature was given one chance to live. Before the lord on his birthday, he would have to dance on all fours, dressed in a bear skin. Upon hearing of this, Reb Leib decided that he himself would dance before the lord in this disguise, replacing the old, sick Jew and, thus, saving him. It is told:

Once he arrived in a small town and heard that the nearby Polish Count had jailed a Jew for debt. He learned also that it was the Count's custom to compel his victims to dance at a ball he held on his birthday. If the prisoner danced satisfactorily, he was free; otherwise, he was returned to the dungeon. The Rabbi resolved to free the Jew, secured a dancing instructor, and soon became very proficient. On the night of the ball, he crept to the dungeon and succeeded in entering the basement. Soon he heard the groans of the poor Jew, and prevailed upon him to change clothes when the opportunity came. The Rabbi carefully enlarged
the hole through which food was passed to the prisoner, and thus the exchange was made. When the Count's servants arrived to take the prisoner to the ball, the real victim walked out into the basement, and the Rabbi stepped forward. The deception was unnoticed in the dim light. The Rabbi was brought to the ball, where he was ordered to don a dried bearskin, and to dance opposite the village overseer in imitation of a bear. He was told that if he failed to perform the correct steps, the overseer was privileged to beat him, but if the overseer danced incorrectly, he would be beaten. The Rabbi danced masterfully, and was released after punishing the cruel overseer, who had asked permission to imprison the debtor instead of granting him an extension of time.

The Spoler remained an excellent dancer his whole life.\footnote{Known for his kindness, simplicity and warmth, Reb Leib's surname suited him well. He taught the plain, humble folk as a grandfather teaches his grandchildren with love. He was a master at storytelling and delighted the children with his games and pranks. Even the adults could not escape his talents for making people happy. It is told that his "Purim Games" were especially favored.}

At the Purim festival, the "Spola grandfather" was in the habit of organizing a special kind of games. He had a number of hasidim, carefully chosen and directed by him, disguise themselves, one as the "King of Purim," the rest as his princes and counsellors. These sat together in solemn session, in counsel or in judgment, had discussions, and made resolutions and decisions. Sometimes the "grandfather" himself took part in the masquerade.

The hasidim tell that these games had a powerful effect which traveled through space, that they set at nought doom or the threat of doom decreed for Israel.
Legend has it that the "Shpola Grandfather" was wont to dance on Passover as well, to signify that even in the darkness of the Diaspora God's chosen ones could easily be moved to be merry. It is told:

At the Passover Seder the Old Man of Shepola was wont to read the instruction in the Haggadah: "Kaddesh" and then interpret the word: When the father of the household returns from divine Service in the Synagogue he must recite the kiddush at once... And the Haggadah continues: What is the reason that the kiddush must be recited at once? In order that the infants shall not fall asleep and so be able to ask: "Why is this night different from all other nights?" Indeed, Master of the Universe, in order that Thy infants, Thy people Israel, fall not into the slumber of the galuth and so ask Thee: Why is this night of the galuth different from all other nights of the galuth? And when the Old Man came to these words, he fell weeping...

Speedily, however, he left off weeping and in tones of joy and gladness said:
"No, Father in Heaven, Israel Thy infants have not, Heaven forbid, fallen as yet into a deep slumber. Watch, Father, how Thy infants can dance even in the blackness of the galuth. Watch, and let Thy heart rejoice." Saying this, he broke out in joyous song and lifted his feet in sprightly dance.

Thus, in the service of God and the service of his fellow Jews, a man of deep feeling lived--the "Grandfather" of the ecstatic dance. There were three others who influenced his early life, however, who sought to serve the new order in different ways, although no less ecstatically. While each of them rejected the first advances of the renowned healer Israel Baal Shem Tov, they were at last converted and became his closest disciples--Jacob Joseph
of Polnoye, Pinchas of Koretz, Dov Baer of Mezritch.

It has been said that Rabbi Jacob Joseph was among the most zealous of those who had opposed the Baal Shem from the beginning. Above all, he rebelled against the customs of the new sect—the joy of their feasts, which deemphasized strict law and broke forth in dance and song; the irregularity and eccentricity of their service, where each man spoke to God for himself and in his own fashion, often accompanied, as well, with wild gestures and contortions of the body; and, even more, the ecstasy of the third Sabbath meal. Once converted to the "new faith," however, he adopted the very practices which he had once abhorred.

It is told:

The Fulnoer Rabbi said: "The young son of a lord, while at school, received a splendid gift, which he had long desired, from his father. He would have danced for joy, except that he feared the comments of his school-comrades. Therefore he invited them to a festivity, and they all danced joyfully together."

"The soul of the Jew receives from his Father a priceless gift—the spirit of the Sabbath. It desires to express its delight, but is ashamed to do so unless its mate, the body also enjoys itself. Therefore we are enjoined to give joy to the body on the Sabbath by partaking of the Sabbath meal."¹⁰

Although he lacked the poetic genius of the Baal Shem, Jacob Joseph supplied the necessary enthusiasm which made Hasidism live in the hearts of his intimate followers. A new light and cheerfulness shone forth out of Polnoye from the disciple who had been known for his ascetic practices and gloomy disposition. His hours of study
became shorter, giving more time for prayer and meditation which now became loud and demonstrative. Swinging his body to and fro and carrying out all kinds of ecstatic exercises, he taught his followers as the Besht had taught him— to serve the Lord in joy and gladness. It is said: "His study of Torah, his prayer and all his holy acts he performed with such vigor that his very flesh trembled for him."  

While the Besht gave birth to the Hasidic way, Rabbi Jacob Joseph of Polnoye formulated its literature. In 1780 he published the first classic book of Hasidism, Toldot Yaakov Yosef, in which the spirit and message of the Besht are recorded. With boldness he fought the opposition, attacking the rabbis and scholars of his generation for their corrupt ways and lack of interest in their "flock," with the result that the Gaon of Vilna renewed persecutions on the new order and publicly burned his book.  

But his pen had already left its mark on the people. Read far and wide, it proclaimed the independence of the "new way" and established for it a permanence in the spiritual lives of thousands.  

The dearest friend Jacob Joseph possessed among those intimates of the Baal Shem's circle was Rabbi Pinhas of Koretz—the second major light, a true sage and kindred spirit of the Besht. All of his basic teachings hark back to the words of his master. Said the Koretzer:
Gold and silver become purified through fire.
If you feel no sense of improvement after your
prayer, you are either made of base metal, or
your prayer was cold.\textsuperscript{13}

However, in contrast to the Baal Shem and his disciples,
no physical ecstasies were reported to have been seen while
Rabbi Pinhas prayed. Calm and almost phlegmatic in his
worship, he moved not so much as a muscle, though no less
entranced. When some of his disciples accused him of
having "grown cold," he gave them the following explana-
tion:

A Hasid asked Rabbi Pinchas of Koretetz
why he prayed without motions of the body,
and without a single sound, whereas other
Zaddikim oftentimes prayed with many gestures
of enthusiasm and in a loud tone of voice.
The Koretzer answered: "When a Zaddik
prays, he cleaves in truth to God, and loses
all sense of corporeality, as if his very
soul had departed from his body. The Talmud
(Berakhoth 8) tells us that in some people the
soul leaves the body only after great agonies
and convulsions, whereas in others it departs
as quietly as one draws a hair out of milk
or offers a kiss."\textsuperscript{14}

One cannot consider Rabbi Pinhas apart from his most
devoted disciple, Rafael of Bershad, who spiritualized
the ritual dance circle at every Sabbath. It is said:

On the sabbath, when the first chapter in
the Scriptures, the story of creation, is read,
the hasidim in Bershad sit in a circle all
day, and sing over and over: "Sabbath of creation,
all in one! Sabbath of creation, all in one!"\textsuperscript{15}

The greatest of the disciples of the Baal Shem, and
the actual founder of the Hasidic school of teaching, was
Rabbi Dov Baer, the "Great Maggid" of Mezritch. It was he
who developed and organized the movement, shaping its doctrine and ritual and assuming its leadership after the Baal Shem died in 1760 in the little village of Medziboz. "After the death of our Master Israel Baal Shem Tov, the Shekhina herself shouldered her bundle and stick and moved from Medzebozh to Mezeritch," legend tells us.\footnote{16}

Under the Maggid, the first successor and unopposed Zaďdik, the little town of Mezritch became the new headquarters of Hasidism, transferring its roots from Podolia to Volhynia. Choice men, possessed of sensitive, poetic souls and thinking minds, desirous of spiritual elation and strengthening, flocked to Mezritch from the Poland and Russia of those days to learn at his feet, to warm body and soul at his spiritual fire. Testifying to the ecstatic character of his words, one of the disciples said of the Maggid that he had only to open his lips and all knew that he was no longer in this world, that the Divine Presence was speaking from his mouth:

\footnote{17}{Every time that our master said Torah we sensed that he divested himself of all worldly matters and that the Shekhinah was speaking from his mouth.}

Obviously, the Maggid had always been possessed of a soul given over to ecstasy. However, under the influence of the Besht, this ecstasy had been diverted from ascetic isolation to active teaching in the lifetime of his disciples. With all the passion of which his soul was
capable, he gave himself over to God's will so that his teachings might truly "lift" his disciples toward Heaven. His words, passed down from generation to generation, have been called, indeed, a "Torah personified." It was the Shekinah, the Divine One, said he, who ordered his possessed states:

When a man begins to pray and when he utters the words "O Lord, open Thou my Lips," the Shekinah wraps itself round him, and it is the Shekinah that utters these words. Sometimes, when the divine spark of the Shekinah flares up in man's soul it actually speaks through man's mouth so that it appears that it is not man who makes the effort but that the words emanate from his mouth of their own accord. When this is the case man has attained the highest rank.\(^\text{18}\)

A close analysis of the Maggid's ideas leads one to the conclusion that his aim was to perpetuate the Baal Shem's theories--the so-called Beshtian Hasidism. His belief in the omnipresence of the Shekinah in all things--even in evil--certainly derived from the Besht, who had borrowed such thought from the Kabbala. Like the Baal Shem, for his soul to leave the material dwelling place of his body, he strove to attain unity with the Divine by intense concentration and the abandonment of self. His sincerity and fervor in worship frequently resulted in ecstatic flights of the soul and states of trance. Said he:

In order to offer proper prayer we must feel ourselves encompassed by the light of the spirit.
Through prayer our thoughts may ascend higher and higher to the very seat of holiness. In our prayers we must become so absorbed that we see and hear nothing, . . . 19

Indeed, the Maggid became so absorbed in prayer that he would lose all sense of the here and now, his whole being merely a vessel for the fiery spirit—not the spirit of fear, but of joy. His teachings were filled with the message of ecstatic rejoicing, linking body and soul to the true Spirit. Said the Mezritcher on "Cleaving and Ecstasy:"

Fire-fighters often combat fire with fire. In the same fashion, a man may battle the fires of evil within him, by kindling his ecstasy for holiness into flame. A man's ecstasy for the Lord is not genuine unless he takes joy in it. . . . 20

In imitation of the Baal Shem, he, too, praised the Lord with all his limbs, praying with pronounced bodily movements as a prerequisite for attaining ecstasy and joy. Said the Maggid:

. . . "We read in the Sabbath prayers: 'Though our mouths were filled with song as the sea. . . yet would we be unable to thank Thee . . . Therefore the limbs which Thou hast planted in us. . . Lo, they shall thank Thee.' "There seems to be a contradiction in these two statements. But it may be made clear by the following parable: A king informed one of his generals that he wished to lunch at the latter's home. The general showed the confusion he felt, inasmuch as he did not know the proper dishes for the royal food. The king noted this and added: 'My cooks will prepare the food, in order to save you the trouble.' "Likewise the Lord desires our praise, and we tremble at the thought that our mouths are ignorant of the proper words, and that we lack
the proper spirit. But then we remind ourselves that our limbs have been formed by the Lord, and we feel that He will accept our words through His vessels."21

Although the strife between Hasid and Misnaged still raged unabated—in fact, grew worse—the Maggid would have no part of it. When his Hasidim wished to fight back, he tried to dissuade them in order to prevent a deeper rift and even went so far as to protect the Maggid of Dubno, a fervent Misnaged, from the ridicule of his circle.

It is told:

... the Maggid (of Dubno) was sitting in his room in the inn of a small town, preparing the sermon which he was to deliver to the Jewish community there that Sabbath, when he was suddenly disturbed by noisy shouts and raucous singing. Looking out of the window, he found a large band of Hassidim, wildly dancing around their master, Rabbi Baer, the Maggid of Meseritz. When he saw that they made ready to enter the inn, Rabbi Yaakov began to feel somewhat uneasy, for he immediately suspected that they had come on purpose to annoy him and to make him appear ridiculous in the eyes of the community. And he was right.

Now Rabbi Baer was actually a man of tolerance and moderation. When his Hassidim told him that, at last, they had caught the Maggid of Dubno and would give him the treatment they felt he deserved, Rabbi Baer quickly sent for the Maggid and said to him, "... You are not of our camp, but I still think you are a great Jew. ... I will protect you from their hands, but first you must tell me, immediately, some allegory or parable which would be appropriate for a situation like the one in which you are now."

When Rabbi Baer had given him the promise that he would not be molested, Rabbi Yaakov said: "Your community's turned upside down. All over the rest of the world it's the gypsies who play and the bear dances, but here it is the other way round: it's the Baer that plays, while his wild gypsies dance."22
Nevertheless, these "wild gypsies" became the greatest souls of the second generation of Hasidism. Dov Baer taught them all—among them Aaron of Karlin, Abraham of Kalisk, Rebbe Elimelech, Rebbe Zusya and Levi Yitzhak, and even the most learned of them, Shneur Zalman of Ladi, the great luminary of Hassidism in the North. He drew them away from the austere, rabbinic congregations, encouraging them to find their own way with his counsel. Envisioning a Hassidic network which would span all of Eastern Europe, he trained his disciples to carry out the task. Each was sent to a well-defined region, where only he could succeed, in order to spread the word of the Baal Shem Tov. How was this accomplished? They told tales to those willing to listen, they sang melodies and danced with rapture and joy.

Mysticism and frenzy proved contagious, and the Baal Shem's message swept with torrential speed and power through the densely populated Jewish communities of Eastern Europe in the last decades of the eighteenth century. The secret was no longer to be contained. Numerous villages and towns saw the rise of Hassidic congregations and the establishment of separate houses of prayer, in which divine services, characterized by boundless ecstasy, violent shouts, and reckless gestures of forgetfulness and surrender, transformed the simple and somewhat colorless worship of the synagogue into a frenzied communion with God.
Thus, the Naggid was the answer to the needs of a multitude of obscure regions within Poland, the Ukraine, Rumania, Hungary, Austria and White Russia. His school provided these isolated communities with leaders. Thanks to him, the people had someone to turn to in their anguish: their Zaddik. Zaddikism, which Dov Baer developed after the principles of the Besht, reached heights unknown before; and the office was invested with a new kind of sanctity.

The Zaddik or Rebbe (derived from the Hebrew word for teacher, Rabbi) became the "foundation of the world"—a true saint dominating the communal and religious life of the Hasidim, observed, worshipped and emulated by the masses. According to oral tradition, the Zaddik dwelled in both worlds, spreading the word of God to the people, strengthening them in their hour of need, and joining his prayer to theirs. Never pretending to be a miracle worker, he was often raised to the status of a hero, on the same level as Moses and the prophets, by his adherents. An apparition seemingly from another world, he wore a broad-brimmed beaver hat, a huge billowing kaftan, and his face was ornamented by sideburns descending in long, twisting curlicues—a costume which has, more or less, become symbolic of the Hasidic Jew.

Rather than keeping his Zaddikim dependent on him, Dov Baer wanted them to reign as sovereigns and in his name. Each Zaddik went on to establish his own dynasty, which
became a hereditary institution, a school bearing his seal, expressing his own views about man's destiny in general and his own nation in particular. He, the Maggid of Mezritch, heir of the Baal Shem, furnished the cord of strength and love which united them and kept them ever faithful to their common goal. The Great Maggid did not found an institute of learning. His spirit created only Zaddikim, generations of Zaddikim, and each one an independent personality dancing about one true center—rejoicing in the Lord.
NOTES TO CHAPTER II

1Buber, Tales: Early Masters, p. 156.
Upon reaching this ecstatic state of dissociation, it was as if his spirit had gone beyond present time and space and his body verged on death itself.
Erika Bourguignon has stated (Trance Dance, p. 22) that during the period of dissociation or trance, there is a narrowing and intensification of the field of awareness, and afterwards there is a memory of a sublime and often inexpressible joy and satisfaction. It continues until semi-consciousness is reached, and the experience may even be terminated by a brief period of total unconsciousness.

2Meckler, Miracle Men, pp. 211-212.

3In Praise, p. 134.

4Dr. Samuel Aba Horodezky, Leaders of Hassidism, translated by Maria Horodezky-Magasanik (London: "Hasefer" Agency For Literature, 1928), pp. 74-75.
See also Wiesel, Souls, pp. 45-46.

5Buber, Tales: Early Masters, p. 171.
See also Buber, Legend, p. 21 and Steinmann, p. 106.

6Horodezky, pp. 69-70.

A similar account of the story is given in Horodezky, p. 70.

8Buber, Tales: Early Masters, pp. 171-172.

9Steinmann, pp. 177-178.
For another version of the tale, see Buber, Tales: Early Masters, pp. 170-171.


12Buber, Ten Runes, p. 66.
Another disciple of the Baal Shem also attacked the rabbis and scholars of Rabbinic Judaism:

This is what Rabbi Leib, son of Sarah, used to say about those rabbis who expound the Torah:

"What does it amount to—their expounding the Torah! A man should see to it that all his actions are a Torah and that he himself becomes so entirely a Torah that one can learn from his habits and his motions and his motionless clinging to God."


14Ibid., p. 327, citing Menorah ha-Tehorah, by J. A. Frankel (Prezemysl, 1911), p. 3.
For another version of the same tale, see Buber, Tales: Early Masters, p. 124.

15Buber, Tales: Early Masters, p. 131.

16Wiesel, Souls, p. 56.

17Steinmann, pp. 115-116.

18Ibid., p. 166.
Steinmann also quotes the Maggid as saying (p. 167): "How does one dance before the bride? In other words, how can one dance before the Shekhinah, for surely its honour and divine presence fill the entire world."

Also Buber, Legend, pp. 20-21:
"But the highest rung which is reported is that in which the withdrawn one transcends his own ecstasy. When a disciple once remarked that a zaddik had 'grown cold' and censured him for it, he was instructed by another, 'There is a very high holiness; if one enters it, one becomes detached from all being and can no longer become inflamed.' Thus ecstasy completes itself in its own suspension."

19Newman and Spitz, Anthology, p. 159, citing Torath ha-Maggid Mezeritz we-Sichothay, by S.A. Horodezky (Berlin, 1923), pp. 143-159. The material assembled is based upon excerpts from the older works Maggid Devaray, Or Torah, and the Or ha-Emeth.
20Ibid., p. 91, citing Torath ha-Maggid, pp. 153-164.

21Ibid., p. 325, citing Esser Oroth, by I. Berger (Warsaw, 1913), p. 30. See also Newman, citing Torath ha-Maggid, pp. 9-17.

CHAPTER III

IN THE CIRCLE OF THE "GREAT MAGGID": DISCIPLES II

IN THE NORTH

Having outgrown the first stormy period of growth and revivalism, the history of Hasidism, between 1750 and 1800, turned toward religious expansion and organization. In Dov Baer's last years, the movement produced, with an incredible intensity, a wealth of original minds whose religious energy often vented itself in the ecstatic, joyous prayer sessions. The most powerful personalities, of whom there were a great many in the last half of the eighteenth century, came from the Maggid's circle. Every one of these great and gifted Masters preached a joy and fervor in worship characteristic of the founding fathers, spreading their teachings both in oral and written form. However, each of them had his own special points of emphasis, either placing his own individual seal upon the doctrine preached by him or endeavoring to adapt himself to the habits of the population in his district.

As a result, the Hasidic doctrine branched out rapidly, falling into different varieties and schools of thought—each with its own innovations.¹ Hasidism now had several centers—some flourishing and others fighting to survive. The principal branches of the movement were
two: that of Poland and the Ukraine in the South and that of Lithuania and White Russia in the North. The latter was represented by the School of Karlin in Lithuania, the School of Kalisk in Russia (later in Palestine) and the School of Habad in White Russia, founded by Shneur Zalman of Ladi.

From among all of his disciples, the Maggid of Mezritch chose one of his most distinguished, Aaron of Karlin, to be pioneer and missionary of Hasidism in Lithuania. Hasidic tradition relates that Aaron was strange, peculiar, yet a man capable of deep emotion and enthusiasm. To him, even the coarsest joy was rooted in holiness. His strong sense of religious awe transported him into a state of constant spiritual devotion and mystical ecstasy. Shneur Zalman, his friend and contemporary, thought him a true fountain of love for the Lord. Whoever heard him pray was seized by the love of God.

A talented singer and writer of verse, he became author of many lyrical Sabbath songs. Legend has it that whenever he sang the "Song of Songs" of King Solomon, there was a veritable commotion in Heaven. The angels would cease their singing to gather about him and listen to his holy melody. When Aaron died at an early age, his devotees exclaimed that he had been consumed by the flaming piety of God which burned within him. Furthermore, according to Rabinowitsch, his ecstatic fervor still
lingers on to this day in the praying of the Karlin Hasidim—a custom which the Hasidim themselves attribute to their first leader, Rabbi Aaron.²

Thanks to his fervor, Lithuanian Jewry was stormed by the adherents of Hasidism. Legend became history and Karlin became the seat of a Hasidic propaganda which extended all over the North. The founder of the first sect to gain a foothold in that Northern fortress of anti-Hasidic Rabbinism, Reb Aaron was a son of Lithuanian stock and great in learning. However, this did not prevent the abuses which were hurled at him by the leaders of the communal organizations—the Kahals.

It was not differences of principles but differences of practice to which these Northern leaders objected. They opposed the noisy fervor and bodily contortions of the Hasidic prayer meetings. They opposed the adoption of the Kabbalist liturgy of Isaac Luria in preference to the traditional German ritual. They opposed the belief that Devekut and Kavana could make up for belated services and prescribed punctilious worship. Further, they opposed the tendency of the group to segregate themselves.

With only a smattering of small Hasidic groups in a few villages, Hasidism had failed to take root in Lithuania up to this time. In modest quarters Aaron held his services, privately, secretly—in order to avoid the gaze of hostile Kahal authorities. In Vilna, home of the great leader
of Lithuanian Rabbinism Elija Gaon, Hasidism was considered an illegal, secret organization and its Northern adherents were disparagingly known as "Karliners." Enthusiastically, filled with ardor, Reb Aaron tirelessly made the rounds of towns and villages, braving and challenging the blows of his opponents, establishing networks, small but numerous, wherever he traveled. Only in the suburb of Pinsk, in Karlin, did he succeed in establishing firm roots. It was in Karlin that he boasted of his own synagogue where he reigned as Zaddik and prayed with ecstasy and fervor. Due, in part, to his influence in Lithuania, the first polemical attack on the movement was set off in 1771 at Shklov, and later, in Vilna--an attack which was of extreme importance, playing a vital role in the history of Hasidic dance.

At an assembly in Shklov during the winter of 1771, the first anti-Hasidic proclamation was drawn up, bringing to the attention of communal leaders and the Gaon of Vilna the dangers in the new movement. Particularly objectionable was the Hasidic behavior during prayer, which, to the eyes of the unsympathetic outsiders, seemed strange and unusual. In regard to this, the philosopher Solomon Maimon (1754-1800) reported:

They are engaged in all sorts of mechanical operations, such as movements and cries to bring themselves back into the state of ecstasy once more and to stay in that state without interruption during the whole time of their worship.
It was amusing to observe how they often interrupted their prayers with all sorts of extraordinary tones and comical gestures, which were meant as threats and reproaches against their adversary, the Evil Spirit, who tried to disturb their devotion.3

To Maimon, the way of the Hasidim appeared comical. But the Rabbis at Shklov and the Gaon of Vilna were not amused. According to a letter written by Shneur Zalman of Ladi, the Maggid's brilliant emissary in White Russia, the meeting at Shklov was called primarily on account of the strange conduct of one Rabbi Abraham of Kalisk on his return home from a pilgrimage to his Master and teacher, Dov Baer of Mezritch.4 His undisciplined manner of worship—swaying and dancing, singing, sighing and laughing, and, particularly, turning repeated somersaults before the Ark as the mood seized him—outraged the Rabbis of the North. They condemned him for his gross and repellant habits which destroyed the sanctity and dignity of the synagogue worship and did not conform with their more austere and solemn service. Furthermore, his followers' contemptuous, abusive attitude to the Talmudic scholars not only angered the Rabbis, but even the Great Maggid himself.

In the eyes of the Gaon, these practices made Hasidism appear as a sort of heathenish superstition, falsely hiding under the guise of Judaism. When the famous persecutor of Vilna asked Abraham what he had learned from the Great Maggid,
the Kalisker proclaimed:

"What I learned in Mezeritch? One simple truth: 'vehai bahem,' Torah is given to man so he may celebrate life and everything that makes life a source of celebration."5

Indeed, Abraham and his followers served the Lord with enthusiasm. They celebrated life—with their whole bodies. While Aaron of Karlin propagandized in Lithuania, Abraham of Kalisk—a sensitive man of strong emotions and deep convictions—taught the Hasidic doctrine, especially the discipline involving great fervor in prayer, to a group of young men in White Russia. In order to create the proper mood for daily prayer, he carried the religious ritual to an extreme, teaching his followers to undertake a lengthy period of inspirational preparation through dancing and singing. They were thus given to excessive emotional outbursts of religious fervor, such as exaggerated gesticulation, dancing without shoes and even turning somersaults in the street. According to oral tradition:

For about two years he taught his students. One of the main principles he taught them was self-degradation, to demean oneself, and to be humble, to wear the clothes of simple people. He also taught them to dance and shout at the time of prayer. Finally, in 1770, they became a group of thirty-five brilliant men, strong of heart and highly talented. Their way of worship was ecstatic, and they would stir hearts to the fear of Heaven. But they were boisterous, and they demeaned the honor of learned mitnaggedim... in an effort to show them their haughtiness... 6

Furthermore, in his writings Abraham stresses the re-
quirements of a true worshipper--faith, community and enthusiasm (Hitlahayut)--the doctrine first propounded by the Baal Shem Tov:

For the true worshipper of the Creator... there falls upon him at the time of his worship --enthusiasm (hitlahabut), and he experiences so much delight that all the desires of this world are removed from his heart and are as they had no importance... And all the delights in all the world and all the possible delights of the world are not even comparable to a drop in the ocean of the true delight in the worship of the Holy One, Blessed Be He, and Blessed Be His Name.7

The Kalisker's strange displays reached their height in 1770--adding more fuel to the already smouldering opposition. According to Shneur Zalman's letter, Abraham Kalisker led his group of Hasidim in deliberate defiance of their oppressors, conducting themselves in an unseemly, indecorous manner in and around Vilna:

... They poured scorn on the students of the Torah and upon the learned, inflicting all manner of ridicule and shame on them, turning somersaults in the streets and market places of Kalisk and Liozno and generally permitting themselves all sorts of pranks and practical jokes in public.8

The mood that inspired them and scandalized their opponents was a highly charged emotionalism--a tribal enthusiasm of mystical 'friends of God.'

The actions of his disciple Abraham bore a direct reflection on the Great Maggid. Disturbed, he rebuked his emissary for his lack of self-control. He pointed out to him that dancing should not become an end in
itself, and that self-discipline was inherent in Hasidism. Furthermore, he did not wish to provoke greater hostilities. According to G. D. Hundert, "Both Shne'ur Zalman and Rabbi Schneerson include an account of how the Maggid was displeased. In Shne'ur Zalman's account, the Maggid was angry with the conduct of Kalisker's Hasidim, which he viewed as the cause of the bans of 1772. In Rabbi Schneerson's version:

When the Maggid, our teacher, . . . heard of the matter . . . he called a meeting of most of his students, the Zaddikim . . . And all of them decided to meet [first] with . . . R. Abraham . . . who had also been called to the meeting, to rebuke him for this misconduct. His good friends. . . Lewi Yizhak and . . . Meshulam Zusye . . . tried to ease the judgement of the rest of the comrades. They pleaded especially with R. Menahem Mendel of Horodek to speak out in favor of R. Abraham Kalisker. They were successful . . . and the matter was discussed only in the meeting of the comrades--at great length and in all its details . . . R. Abraham took it upon himself to correct his leadership in the future. And all the comrades turned their eyes toward . . . our Rabbi [Shne'ur Zalman] that he might speak well of R. Abraham Kalisker . . . At that meeting it was decided to uproot and eliminate wildness and rowdiness in 'abodah ['service'] of God."

As stated in Zalman's letter, the fanatical Rabbi Abraham of Kalisk, in the ensuing public debate between the communal leaders of Shklov and the Maggid's disciples, was obliged to apologize. However, the Shklov assembly of 1771 decided to persecute the Hasidim and appealed to the Gaon of Vilna for his support. In the year 1772, after the Passover Festival, the support came. The Kahal
of Vilna succeeded in convincing the Gaon to excommunicate the Hasidim and the first herem, or interdiction, was sternly proclaimed against the entire movement and its disciples. They were accused of slandering Elijah Gaon, the head of Lithuanian Jewry, and becoming over-enthusiastic in prayer, replacing the scholarly Rabbi with an unlearned Zaddik. As legend has it:

When Samael [Satan] learned that the Ladier had achieved great success in disseminating Hasidism in Lithuania and White Russia, he resolved to combat him by arousing quarrels. He induced some Hasidim to become over-enthusiastic, to shout their prayers, insult students, dance on the street and roll on the ground. This aroused the anger of the Gaon. The Samael further induced false informers to declare that the Hasidim turned the 9th of Ab into a day of rejoicing, in imitation of the adherents of the Sabbatai Zevi.

Forgetting that the 9th of Ab chanced to fall on a Sabbath that year, when no mourning is permissible, the Gaon excommunicated the Hasidim without listening to their defense. For this, the Gaon was summoned to the Heavenly Tribunal to give an account of his action. Samael had lost the first battle.11

Thus, the first openly violent clashes between Hasid and Misdaged broke forth. The edict was published and spread rapidly to all congregations. The prayer-houses of the Hasidim were forcibly closed, their preachers assaulted, and their writings burned. Moreover, the formation of new Hasidic groups was proclaimed unlawful. The Maggid's disciples retaliated and fanaticism, approaching mass hysteria, reigned on both sides. Synagogue and street became the battleground, and authorities were summoned in
order to enforce the manner of the conservatives. No one escaped the hostilities!

A month after the proclamation of the herem, the Vilna community circulated a manifesto, signed by the Gaon, through all the communities in Lithuania and White Russia, calling on them to outlaw the Hasidim and to persecute them relentlessly. The document stated:

Our brethren in Israel, you are certainly already informed of the tiding whereof our fathers never dreamed, that a sect of the 'suspects' (Hashudim instead of Hasidim) has been formed . . . who meet together in separate groups and deviate in their prayers from the text valid for the whole people . . . They are the same who, in the middle of the Shmoneh-Esreh prayer, interject obnoxious alien words (Yiddish) in a loud voice, conduct themselves like madmen, and explain their behaviour by saying that in their thoughts they soar in the most far-off worlds . . . The study of the Torah is neglected by them entirely and they do not hesitate constantly to emphasise that one should devote oneself as little as possible to learning and not grieve too much over a sin committed . . . Every day is for them a holiday . . . When they pray according to falsified texts, they raise such a din that the walls quake . . . and they turn over like wheels, with the head below and the legs above . . . Therefore, do we now declare to our brethren in Israel, to those near as well as far . . . All heads of the people shall robe themselves in the raiment of zeal, of zeal for the Lord of Hosts, to extirpate, to destroy, to outlaw and to excommunicate them. We, here, have already, with the help of His name, brought their evil intention to nought; and as here, so should they everywhere be torn up by the roots . . . Do not believe them even if they raise their voices to implore you . . . for in their hearts are all seven horrors . . . So long as they do not make full atonement of their own accord, they should be scattered and driven away so that no two heretics remain together, for the disbanding of their associations is a boon for the world.
That "they turn over like wheels, with the head below and the legs above . . . " was a practice repeatedly attacked in many an anti-Hasidic document, particularly in the above-mentioned "Epistle of Zeal" from Vilna in 1772. According to G. D. Hundert, many scholars have traced this practice to Abraham of Kalisk, based on the aforementioned letter of Shneur Zalman who states that Kalisker's Hasidim were in the habit of "turning somersaults in the streets and market places." However, Hundert continues, this custom was not unique to the Hasidim of Kalisk. Indeed, there is evidence that the practice continued long after the year 1777, when some of the most important Hasidic leaders of White Russia, Abraham of Kalisk among them, emigrated to the Holy Land in defiance of the Gaon:

The practice of turning head over heels at times of great spiritual enthusiasm was not, however, confined to the followers of Abraham Kalisker. It is told that, from time to time during the prayer service, Shne'ur Zalman would himself fall to the ground and roll over and over for a half-hour without stopping. It is known also that this practice was common in the court of R. Hayyim Haykel of Amdor. In addition, these charges are repeated in oppositionist documents in 1781 and 1786, long after Kalisker had left for Palestine.

After the herem of Vilna had been instituted, it was not long before other communities followed suit. The leaders of Brody were the first to respond. Receiving a letter from Vilna urging instant action, Brody excommuni-
cated the Hasidim without delay. As stated in the herem of Brody, the Hasidim were not allowed to dance and leap about, indulging in all sorts of acrobatics at weddings and brisses. The text, similar to that set down by Gaon Elija of Vilna, stated that:

. . . The Hasidic heresy ruins people by its seductive appearance, by its seductive indications or teachings, its frightening gestures, its wild goat-dances, impure thoughts and tempting arts of persuasion. Our Masters have taught that he who raises his voice while praying belongs to false prophets. The Hasidim roar like lions and want to set the entire earth ashaking—hopping, jumping and skipping, bending toward the right and toward the left, bowing to the earth, now sinking down on hands and knees, now jumping up rapidly, now turning towards Heaven, now plummeting down to the abyss. . . . 15

It was signed by the leaders of Brody—Sivan 20, 1772.

The year 1772 was a hard year for the Hasidic movement as a whole, and, in particular, for the Hasidim of the North. At the height of the opposition, Aaron of Karlin passed away—an untimely death which his successor Rabbi Shelomo of Karlin, and indeed, all of the Hasidim, mourned greatly. When the Great Maggid heard of his death, he cried aloud: "He was our weapon in war. What shall we do now?"16

Indeed, the Almighty gave the Maggid little time for thought. At the end of the year, he, too, was called to his Maker. In the same year the Hasidic movement suffered a further blow. The first partition of Poland sliced the land among her three neighbors—Prussia, Russia and Austria—once again bringing suffering for the Jews in its wake and isolating
Karlin even more from her neighboring Russian support.

One might have thought that such suffering and disaster would have dampened the spirits of the young leaders toward the end of an era, but, on the contrary, the effect was exactly the opposite. It was a truly heroic period for Hasidism, characterized by a spirit of enthusiasm and creative religious feeling which knew no bounds. The fact that each region had its own guide, its Zaddik, helped the movement maintain its equilibrium in a time of crises. With one Master, and one center, Hasidism might not have survived.

In spite of the departure of Kalisk and the death of Aaron of Karlin, in spite of the persecutions and the general atmosphere of hatred all around them, the Karlin Hasidim continued their vigorous propagation of Hasidic doctrine among the Jews of Lithuania under their new leader—Shelomo of Karlin. Rabbi Shelomo of Karlin, who was known for his great power in prayer, founded a "school" of ecstatic praying—with a maximum of intellectual intensity (Kavana), emotional fervor and spiritual devotion. He despised the natural piety (non-ecstatic prayer) of the Misnagdim and believed that the greatest miracle was to teach a single Jew to pour out his heart to the Almighty. He used to pray with such fervor, with such concentration of all his strength, both spiritual and physical, that Heaven gave him the task of compensating God for the prayers of all
those who do not pray hard enough, and even those who do not pray at all.

Devoting his whole soul to the Lord, he accepted as his own the Baal Shem's doctrine that before praying, man should prepare to die. It is said that when some of the Hasidim of Shneur Zalman, author of the Tanya, came to see him, they "went into a long ecstasy over the way he recited a psalm before saying grace. The 'Tanya' did, indeed, commend him with the words that he was 'a hand's-breadth above the world'. . . ." 17 In Karlin, melody and dance were on the same level as study and meditation, if not higher.

Rabbi Shelomo's most renowned disciple, who developed his teaching of giving up one's very life in prayer, was Rabbi Uri of Strelisk (in Galicia), called the "Seraph." Like his Master, Rabbi Uri prayed with such impassioned fervor that at times he thought that he might die in the midst of praying. So great was his fire (devekut), so devastating was his experience, that he regularly left his last will at home before departing for the synagogue. It is said:

The Strelisker was a disciple of the Karliner. After his marriage Rabbi Uri left his wife and went to Karlin. His wife was given shelter by the Strelisker Rav. When Rabbi Uri returned home for Passover, he was invited to the Rav's home for the Seder. The Rav noticed the ecstasy of Rabbi Uri's conduct . . . . 18
And later . . .

Every morning before going to pray Rabbi Uri saw to his house, and said his last goodbye to his wife and children.19

With Rabbi Uri, ecstatic prayer ceased to be merely the personal transaction of the Rebbe; it included both the Zaddik and his Hasidim. Their praying, too, was stormy and fiery like the passionate sound of gypsy music. The poorest among them hungered to be close to his Rebbe, and like him, to give away his life in prayer. Said one Hasid to Reb Uri:

"I want the Lord to help me to pray the prayer 'Blessed be He who spake, and the world existed... with as much fervour as when you pray it!"20

As the Zaddik transferred his marvelous praying to his followers, they glorified him as a true visionary, a divine "Seraph" deserving of the title of the fiery Seraphim. Said the Strelisker:

"You, O Hasidim, come to visit me, your Rabbi, and you pour out your hearts before me. I, too, go on visits, I visit my Maker on High and I strive to attach myself to Him."21

Besides Rabbi Uri of Strelisk, Rabbi Shelomo of Karlin had a second distinguished disciple, Rabbi Mordecai of Lekhovitz. He was considered a wonder-worker and added new and concrete features to the teaching of giving one's life to prayer. He taught that he who prays should give himself up to his Lord with every word he utteres:
Man's entire physical being must enter into every word of his prayer so that it may even "rise from his heel." It is said that Rabbi Mordecai's lung was torn by the fervor of his praying.

But his whole attitude toward life was joyful. Only in joy can the soul be truly raised to God, and "he who wishes to serve God with devotion, and divine light, and joy, and willingness, must have a spirit that is bright and pure, and clear, and a body that is full of life."22

The tales of Rabbi Mordecai of Lekhovitz and other Zaddikim are filled with the message of ecstatic rejoicing, linking body and soul to the true Spirit.

This is what Rabbi Mordecai once said in connection with the verse in the psalm: "Rejoice the soul of Thy servant."

"Why the rejoicing?" said he. "'For unto Thee, O Lord, do I lift my soul' -- it is by rejoicing that I can lift my soul to You."23

Often his spiritual elation flowed over into others, transforming their pain into delight and gladness. It is told:

An emissary from the Land of Israel, a devout and honest man, feared that great honors would be conferred upon him (for at that time such was the custom with regard to emissaries) and that he might feel satisfaction thereat. So he prayed to God if that happened, to send him stomach cramps, for the bodily pain would make him forget all about the honors. His prayer was granted. When he arrived in Lekhovitz--it was on a Friday--Rabbi Mordecai received him with great honors. Soon after, the emissary was in such pain that he had to lie down and was unable to sit at the zaddik's table. But from his bed he could hear the hasidim in the next room singing, "They shall rejoice in Your kingdom," the zaddik leading the chorus.

The emissary jumped up. His pains had left him. Just as he was, without his shoes and coat, wearing only the skullcap on his head, he ran
into the room and danced around the table. "Praised be the Lord," he cried, keeping time with the singing, "who has brought me to the right place. I heard it: 'They shall rejoice in Your kingdom.' . . . "24

Rabbi Shelomo's school was at its height in a man who was first Rabbi Mordecai's, and subsequently his son's disciple--Rabbi Moshe of Kobryn. While he did not enrich the teaching, his life and words lent it a very personal, refreshingly vital expression. They are inscribed in the hearts of his disciples. Rabbi Moshe was filled with a profound sense of religious awe. On kavana, the mystical concentration toward God, he said:

. . . concerning . . . the kavvanot, the mystical concentrations, which are directed toward super-human effects. . . . the ultimate signifi-
cance of all the art of the kavvanot is to direct one's heart to God. When a man says: 'The Lord is my God,' meaning: 'He is mine and I am His,' must not his soul go forth from his body?" The moment the rabbi said this, he fell into a deep faint.23

For the soul to leave the material dwelling of his body, Rabbi Moshe strove to attain and possess kavana and devekut in hopes of kindling the all-consuming fire of enthusiasm while at prayer. In order to stress the worthiness of proper prayer to his disciples, he often taught them "A Lesson from Dancers." It is told:

A village innkeeper complained to the Kobriner that he lacked a private room for praying, far enough from the noise made by the patrons of his inn. The Kobriner told him in reply this experience:

"Once I chanced to visit an inn, and the time for the afternoon prayers arrived. It
was a Catholic holiday, and the inn was filled with noisy merrymakers and dancing couples. Still I prayed there with complete devotion, thinking to myself: 'If so much enthusiasm is given to physical enjoyments, why cannot I be even more enthusiastic in activities of the spirit?"  

Although among the few late-born great men of Karlin, the life of Rabbi Moshe of Kobryn sometimes recalled the early Masters of Hasidism. In imitation of the Baal Shem, he often prayed with similar tremblings and pronounced bodily movements as a prerequisite for attaining ecstasy and joy. The strange back contortions of the Rabbi may be compared with those of the Besht. Again, Hasidic tradition relates that:

once, on Rosh Hashanah eve, when R. Moshe stood up in front of the congregation to lead the prayers, he was seized with trembling in all of his body, his teeth chattered, and his limbs shook like the trees of a forest in a strong wind. When he took hold of the pulpit, it also swayed to and fro, and he could not stand up because he was trembling so. Until at last he bent backwards and all the congregation saw how he forced the fear back into himself. Only then did he stand firmly in his place and begin the prayer.  

His followers, although the poorest among the Hasidim, flocked to him frequently, not in order to attain well-being, but simply to pray together with him, to pray as he prayed, to dance as he danced. His message to them:

... "If a poor man realized the great good he acquires from his poverty, he would dance with joy."
The quality of joyfulness—one of the main elements in Hasidism, particularly in Karlin Hasidism—did not play as important a part in Rabbi Moshe's religious outlook as it did with his contemporary, Rabbi Aaron the Second of Karlin. This was the heyday of Karlin Hasidism. Aaron II, the grandson of Rabbi Aaron the founder, explained that Hasidim used the dance as a means of raising themselves above the material interests on earth. When he was asked why Hasidim loved to dance, he replied: "Because dancing enables them to rise above the ground." On festivals, particularly on Shavuot and Simhat Torah, as many as three to four thousand Hasidim—according to one report—would make the pilgrimage to their Rebbe in Karlin. "He who has not seen Simhat Torah in the court of R. Aharon"—so said the Hasidic elders—"has never seen a real celebration of Simhat Torah." As described by an eye-witness:

R. Aharon would be sitting clothed all in white, as was his custom on Sabbaths and Festivals, at the head of the long table that stood in the large courtyard next to his prayer-house. Tens of canopies stretched above the court hardly sufficed as shelter for the crowds of hasidim that came to their Rebbe for Simhath Torah. When, at the maariv [evening] service, R. Aharon himself led the prayers, the worshippers were carried away by spiritual ecstasy, and the 'circuits' of the Scrolls were performed in a frenzy of jubilation that rose ever higher, circuit by circuit, song by song, and dance by dance, as the wine flowed freely. Thus transported, the hasidim would spend the whole night singing and dancing in the courtyard and the nearby streets. Out of this fervent rejoicing
were born many of the Karlin melodies that subsequently became famous in hasidic circles and even throughout Jewry.30

Nor was this the case only at Simhat Torah. The proceeding holiday of Succot was also filled with joyous exaltation. It is recorded:

... once, on the fourth intermediate day of Sukkoth, when R. Aharon and his followers had been rejoicing after their fashion, singing and dancing in the streets of Karlin, one of the leading local mithnaged families--Lourié-- who lived in the neighbourhood, enraged by having their peace disturbed for days and nights on end, used their influence to have the Russian authorities order R. Aharon to leave Karlin. He withdrew to his old place of refuge--Stolin.31

It is evident from this event that sectarian bitterness had not yet completely died away even at this late date in Karlin, a town known for its atmosphere of hostile pressure and actual persecution since the days of the first Hasidim.

Indeed, the fires of hate and persecution, kindled in 1772, still raged unabated. The battle had not yet been won. Having realized that the weapons employed against the Hasidim--the closure of Hasidic prayer houses, the forcible break-up of Hasidic groups and the like--had been completely ineffective, the Lithuanian communities for the second time, in 1781, proclaimed a herem. The renewed conflict which now broke out was even more bitter than that of 1772 and the Karlin Hasidim were now persecuted even more severely. The Rabbis decided to ban them from all social contact with the Jewish community and therefore
decreed that no one should house the "godless men" or have any dealings with them at all.

From 1781 on, many an excommunication was hurled at these sectarians by the regional Kahals. The texts of these later bans reveal what were, still, the major issues. The community of Cracow, for example, in 1736 ruled specifically:

that no one of the members of our community should raise his hand to organize a congregation of his own in order to pray with all sorts of gestures, twisting lips, clapping hands and shaking heads as if they were drunk, or else to introduce whatever change into the ritual which the saints on earth have created for us.\(^{32}\)

In towns and villages throughout the North, if Hasidim were caught on the streets, they were severely punished.

It is told:

Reb Areleah said that in his hasides the Alter Rebbe [Rabbi Shneur Zalman] always spoke about how you have to make spiritual things from material things. One night he was speaking on this topic. There was a large group of hasidim around him. He forgot all about the law at that time, that nobody is allowed to go out on the street. So after he was done saying hasides, they were so engrossed by what he said -that there is no physical world--they all went out that night and of course police caught them. They saw men with beards and peyes and they asked one another, "What can we do with them?"
One policeman said, "Make them dance."
So one of the hasidim said, "If we must dance, let us dance full-heartedly. Let us dance with truth, and not as a punishment."\(^{33}\)

After the death of the Gaon of Vilna in 1797, the strife was further intensified when some of the more zealous Hasidic partisans made a public holiday on the day of his
passing, rejoicing and dancing as though celebrating a great national deliverance from their most merciless persecutor. This provoked even deeper resentment in the hearts of their opponents, who took revenge by informing on them to the Russian Czarist government, charging them with heresy and political agitation. Shneur Zalman was one of the group to be apprehended and thrown into prison. However, it was due to his never-ending suffering and struggle that the war was finally settled. Soon after his release, the Russian government officially sanctioned Hasidism (1804), giving it full autonomy in all of its religious matters and putting a stop to further persecution from without.

In this desperately critical time for the Hasidic movement, Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liozna (and later, of Ladi) came to the fore—the youngest and most spiritually gifted of the Great Maggid's disciples. The main center of Shneur Zalman's influence was in White Russia where he served as emissary, spreading the doctrine to the North. Soon after the Russian leadership had departed for Palestine, he assumed the authority of the Hasidim and succeeded in creating a remarkable system of thought. It came to be known as the Habad brand of Hasidism, an abbreviation of the Hebrew words for Wisdom, Understanding and Knowledge. His Hasidism had a distinctive character of its own which marked it off both from the Hasidism of Karlin and from
that of Volhynia and Podolia in the South.

In the new Hasidic theory, Zalman introduced something of the spirit and character of the North into the doctrine, striving to adapt the emotional pietism of the Besht to the "intellectualism" in which he had been trained. Known simply as "the Rav," or "the Tanya" after the title of his main work, he endeavored to "rationalize" a movement which had become highly inflamed with the personal cult of the miracle man, the Zaddik. In his hands the ecstasy of feeling was transformed into an ecstasy of thinking with reason and intellect reinstated as a way to God. Needless to say, he did not consider the head of a Hasidic community to be a wonder-working Zaddik, as was the case in many a Galician and Ukrainian village, but merely a spiritual guide, a religious teacher and leader.

Thus, Habad represented a kind of compromise, an attempt to reconcile Rabbinism with Hasidism by incorporating both, reason and feeling, in a system of thought. It was the intellectual form of the movement, highly charged with emotion. Rabbi Zalman met with strenuous opposition from the Hasidim of the South who regarded his attempts to give Hasidism a firm intellectual basis a compromise of Hasidic spirituality. But "the Rav," rational philosopher, did not exclude warmth and ecstasy in his religious thinking. He was by nature sensitive and emotional. The Hasidic "flame" burned within his soul, capable of taking
flight at a given moment:

It is told of Rabbi Zalman of Ladi that immediately after his marriage he received free board from his parents-in-law, according to custom. But his solitary meditations and strange ecstatic prayers were an offense to them, and they declared him to be a fool, his great learning notwithstanding.35

We know from his writings that his system incorporated not only the discipline of the intelligence but the passion and longing for God:

He (the Hasid) is constantly in pursuit of his Maker, to merge with Him, as the Zohar puts it, and as is expressed in Habad literature; that is to say, to be included in the Being of the Holy One, blessed by He, and to be overcome by His light and Being.36

In the effort to induce ecstasy, the Habad School attached great importance to song and dance. However, although his Hasidim worshipped with an intensity of fervor and joyous devotion, they did not exhibit the frantic boisterousness that made the Hasidic synagogue ridiculous in the eyes of its critics. In Habad, the mind rules the heart. Shneur Zalman did not teach his Hasidim to suppress feeling, but to use it sparingly and with measure. He taught his Hasidim to be orderly, to master their emotions—a discipline which penetrated to their tunes and their dances, emphasizing in them a profound inner, even esoteric, quality.

For Habad, music and dancing were not only an integral part of Hasidism. They developed into a complex philosophy
unto themselves. "Joy has proven to be the most potent of all medicines," said Rabbi Shneur Zalman, and he stressed that on High there are spheres whose gates are opened only to the sound of song.37 Dancing, as defined in Habad terminology and concept, is the outward manifestation of a most intense feeling of religious ecstasy and joy. According to Habad philosophy, it is impossible for one to leap from extreme melancholy to extreme joy. In order to "elevate" the spirit, he must approach it in stages. In the process of elevation, dance plays a vital role. Within the six stages leading to a purely spiritual state, the second and the fifth stages—namely, "spiritual awakening" and "flaming ecstasy"—are called rikud or dance.38

It is further expressed that everything in the physical world has its counterpart in the world of the spirit. Through dance, one may rise toward, and strengthen, the spiritual realm within himself.

In dancing the entire body moves. The whole body from head to foot is absorbed in the joy and exhilaration of the dance. However, it is the legs, of course, which play the principal part. The concept of "head" and "foot" is to be found not only in the physical body, but also in the soul.

. . . The "head" of the soul is that aspect of it which has to do with the intellectual qualities, while the "feet" are represented by that quality of the soul which is the source of simple faith. It is simple faith which is the basis of the Jew's entire spiritual life. . . . Hence, Chassidic dance emphasises the great quality of simple faith which, like the feet of the body, can lift the whole body with the head.39
According to Habad, this concept may also be applied in regard to the entire Jewish people—united as a single body. While the Rabbis and scholars are the "heads" of the people, the ordinary Jews are the "legs." However, the "legs" cannot be separated from the "head" any more than the "head" can be separated from the rest of the body, if it is to remain alive and healthy.

... There must be complete unity and harmony within the organism. ... if the Jewish people is to be one healthy organism. Thus, Chassidic dance exemplifies this unity. For, in the dance all Chassidim participate and are linked together, both those who are the "heads" and those who are the "feet." 40

Hasidic tradition may further serve to illustrate this point. It is told:

There was a hasid who once dreamed that his previous Rebbe came to him in a dream and told him that one of his children will die. And so he became very nervous and disturbed, and he came to his Rebbe and told him the story and the Rebbe did not answer him. And he went home after Rosh Hashoneh. The whole time he was nervous and disturbed.

Simhes Toyreh came and all the Jews were dancing. And he was standing on the side and the memories of his dream kept returning—until he decided by himself: "Akh, it's Simhes Toyreh. All the Jews are dancing. I'll go also and dance with them."

Then he came back to the Rebbe and he spoke to him again, and the Rebbe asked him, "What did you do on Simhes Toyreh?"

And he answered him that on Simhes Toyreh everyone danced and so he danced also.

So the Rebbe said, "Think good and it will be good. Think good and it will be good." And of course if the Rebbe said so it will be good. 41
Of particular significance is the meaning of the Hasidic circle dance and its pulsating rhythm. Habad Hasidim dance in circles, each dancer placing his hands on the shoulders of two others. The unity of God is symbolically represented by the circle, which has no beginning or end. Habad, however, speaks of the "upper" part of the circle as well as the "lower" part of it:

The "mystic circle" also recalls the famous saying of the founder of Chabad: "G-d converts the spiritual into the material, and the Jew converts the material into the spiritual." In other words, creation is a "descent" of the spiritual into the material, while Divine service good deeds, etc. . . . constitutes the "elevation" of the material into the realm of the spiritual and holy. Jews complete this "cycle" in the scheme of creation, and make the unity of G-d a reality. . . .

The rhythm of the dance and the beat to which the dance is attuned, also have their particular significance in emphasising the pulsating vitality that must animate Divine service.42

No other Hasidic Rabbi has left so distinctive an imprint on the movement as Shneur Zalman of Ladi. He established a dynasty--Lubavitch. He formulated a philosophy--Habad--which, in turn, gave substance, providing a profound and holy meaning, to the ecstatic dance of the Hasidim. The fire, kindled by the Besht and refueled by the Maggid, burned with a new and holy brilliance.
NOTES TO CHAPTER III

1Newman and Spitz, Maggidim, p. 236, citing Sippure Zaddikim, by Z. S. Srebrak, publisher (Vilna, 1909), p. 18:

"Said the Besht: 'My Disciples will be as numerous as the leaves on a tree, and each one will act differently from the other. Yet every one will maintain that he truly imitates and follows my ways.'"

See also Steinmann, p. 21. It should be noted that the basic philosophy and emphasis of a particular dynasty and its Rabbi often had a bearing on the nature of its dance.


See also Buber, Tales: Early Masters, p. 25, and Minkin, Romance, p. 160.


R. Abraham of Kalisk lived in Kolishki, in White Russia and his followers were popularly known as the Talk (-530) Hasidim with reference to the year 5530 (-1769-1770) when they first made their appearance in Kalisk.

5Wiesel, Souls, p. 60.


"Virtually all of the information about Kalisker, his followers and his teachings during this period, comes from this source, which is based on the oral traditions of Hasidim connected with HaBaD, that is, the followers of Shne'ur Zalman of Lyady. Because there was a dispute between Shne'ur Zalman and Abraham Kalisker, . . . it is possible to question its objectivity."

Rabindert, p. 92, citing Hesed LeAbraham, p. 46b.

Rabinowicz, World, p. 58, citing Toledot Ha-Hasidut, by Simon M. Dubnow (Tel Aviv, 1960), p. 112. This is also quoted in Scholem, Major Trends, p. 335 and in numerous other places.

Rabindert, pp. 27-28, citing Schneerson.


Also Rabinowicz, World, p. 60, citing Geschichte des Chassidismus, by Simon Dubnow, translated by Dr. A. Steinberg (Berlin: Jüdischer Verlag, 1931), I., pp. 181-182.

"Even this mass excommunication of the Hasidim did not satisfy the Gaon. 'Had I the power,' he declared, 'I would have punished these infidels as the worshippers of Baal were punished of old.'"

The worshippers of Baal were known for their mad, orgiastic dances, as in the dance around the Golden Calf.


See above, p. 57 and n. 8, p. 79.

The charge was repeated several times in the publication of Zemir Aritzin v' Harbot Zurim ("Uprooting of Tyrants and Flinty Swords") by Aryeh Leib ben Mordecai, a collection of all the bans issued against the Hasidim in 1772. It was also repeated in the Vilna ban of 1781 and the Cracow ban of 1786. The "Epistle of Zeal" from Vilna, 1772, is a section of Zemir Aritzin.


See also A. Wertheim, Hilchot WeHalichot Ba-Hasidut ("Laws and Customs of Chassidism") (Jerusalem: Mosad Ha-Rab Kook, 1960), pp. 17, 103-109.

For more information on the court of Amdur, see Rabinowitsch, Lith. Has., pp. 24-25, 130-132.

Simon Dubnow, Geschichte des Chassidismus, translated by Dr. A. Steinberg (Berlin: Jüdischer Verlag, 1931), I., pp. 181-182, 203.

17. Ibid., p. 30.


23. Ibid., p. 155.


25. Ibid., p. 166.


27. Rabinowitsch, Lith. Has., p. 175, citing Or Yesharim, by M. S. Kleinman, p. 142. See also Buber, Tales: Later Masters, p. 167 for another version.


31. Ibid., p. 85.


36 Steinmann, p. 23.

37 Aron, p. 126.


"The various stages in the process of elevation according to Chabad philosophy are: 1) the outpouring of the soul and its effort to rise out of the mire of sin, out of the evil shell. 2) spiritual awakening 3) the stage in which the individual is possessed by his thoughts 4) communion with God 5) flaming ecstasy 6) the highest state, in which the soul completely casts away its garment of flesh and becomes a disembodied spirit."


Rabbi Shneur Zalman lived first in Liozna, and then in Ladi. Upon his demise his eldest son, Rabbi Dov Baer, assumed leadership of Habad Hasidism. After the Napoleonic Wars, when Ladi was destroyed, Rabbi Dov Baer moved the headquarters of Habad to Lubavitch. Since the center of Habad for most of the years of its existence (102) was Lubavitch, the name "Lubavitcher Hasidim" stuck.

42 *Challenge*, p. 200.

Also Aron, p. 276: "The Besht explained that a circle is without a beginning and without an end, and when the Zaddik
dances with his Hassidim, all are equal links in a chain; old and young, rich and poor, scholars and simple people. In such a manner of dancing, all differences disappear."

Pasternak, II, pp. 7-8: "When a chosid left, after a private consultation with the Rebbi of Lubavitch, his friends formed a circle around him and sang and danced."
CHAPTER IV
IN THE CIRCLE OF THE "GREAT MAGGID": DISCIPLES II

IN THE SOUTH

While the Northern School of Habad developed the philosophy of Hasidism, the Galician and Ukrainian perception of the movement formed its emotional side. The poetic moment, the Ukrainian Hasidic gift of tales and "holy stories"--which serve as the sanctified biographies of the Zaddikim--appeared nowhere more eloquently than in the South. Whereas in the North, Hasidism was faced with a bitter struggle for existence, it was in the South--the Ukraine, Volhynia, Podolia--that the movement captured entire communities overnight. With the exception of a few cities, Hasidic ritual became the norm in synagogue worship and the Zaddikim triumphed over the official Rabbinate.

In general, the Zaddikim of the South had one tendency in common. They emphasized the value of joy and fervor in the service of God. For most of them Hasidism appealed chiefly to the emotions. Religious ecstasy, particularly in prayer, was the good to be cultivated by the Hasid. Trading in miracles and thriving on the fanatic faith of the masses, they implanted in their followers a blind belief in the truths of Hasidism, shunning all theory or thought as harmful to religious sentiment. The principal
disciples of the Great Maggid to uphold this doctrine--Zaddikism--were Elimelekh of Lizensk in Galicia, Levi Yitzhak of Berdichev in the Ukraine, and Baruch of Medziboz, a grandson of the Besht and the most extreme advocate of the Master as "middleman between God and Israel."

Of Baruch it is said:

Once on Simhath Torah the members of the holy group, the disciples of the Besht, were dancing joyfully in a circle and the Shekinah was in flames about them. During the dance the shoe of one of the lesser members of the group was torn. He was a poor man and it angered him that he was prevented from dancing with his friends and from rejoicing in the festivity of the mitzvah.

The Besht's daughter, the pious Edel, who was also in the house, was standing on the side watching their celebration of the Water Libation. She said to that disciple: "If you promise me that I will give birth to a baby boy this year, I will give you good shoes immediately." She could say this because she had shoes in the store.

He promised her that she certainly would have a baby boy. And so it was that the rabbi, our rabbi and teacher, Barukh of the holy community of Tulchin, was born to her.¹

This grandson of the Besht, different from the other Hasidic Masters of his generation, was a proud man. Brought up as a disciple by the Maggid of Mezritch, he, no doubt, considered himself to be the Baal Shem's true successor. His early life was spent in Tulchyn where he was often plagued by fits of anger and depression, a paradox in a world of seemingly happy Hasidim. Remote and different from his contemporaries--the Maggid's disciples--
he declared himself superior to all and his jealousy of them made each appear as his rival. Arrogant, boastful, frivolous and surrounded by a host of blindly enthusiastic, admiring worshippers, he was continually bestowed with gifts and offerings which he immediately added to the particular splendor of his rich palace at Medziboz. To rid himself of his suspicions, distrust and depression, he employed the services of the famous court jester--Hershele Ostropoler.

Baruch was surely no teacher--more an angry, quarrelsome "practitioner"--and yet, his legends attest to the life of a true and impassioned mystic. That he recited his favorite, the Song of Songs, with great fervor and abandon, helps one to gain an insight into his soul. Like his Master, the Great Maggid, it is told:

The Medzibozzer Rabbi said: "If one feels hunger while he is praying, it is a certain sign that he has not prayed properly. The true suppliant cannot feel any material needs when he communes with his Creator."  

However, Baruch was also educated by Reb Pinhas of Koretz, known for his motionless trance-like conditions. This surely must have influenced his manner of prayer to some extent. He once lectured his grandson, Israel, who was accustomed to gesticulate in his prayers:

Said the Medzibozzer . . . : "A wick of linen burns quietly and gives a better light than a cotton wick which burns noisily. Believe me when I say that a sincere movement of your smallest toe is sufficient to show your enthusiasm."  

His life—a contradiction. For he was wont to adapt his service during the Jewish month of Tishri. Then, said he, one must pray with the "whole" of his body.

Said the Medzibozher: "During the Holy days of Tishri we serve the Lord with our entire body. On Rosh Hashanah our Service is with our brain, since memorial is within the mind; on Yom Kippur, with our heart, since fasting weakens the heart most; on Sukkoth with our hands, since we hold the Lulav; on the Rejoicing of the Law with our feet, since it is customary then to dance and march."^4

Certainly, one must rejoice with the feet on Simhat Torah, the Festival of the Law, for had it not been for the dancing of a poor man in the circle of the Besht, Baruch of Medziboz, son of Edel, would not have been blessed from above.

In the South, particularly in the Ukraine, Hasidism persisted on a more normal track. Its major light, Levi Yitzhak (Isaac), the Rav of Berdichev, was perhaps the most unique of the Maggid's disciples and the one who came closest to the people. Author of the book Kedushath Levi (The Sanctity of the Levite), he continued to uphold the traditions of the Besht, manifesting in his work the original fervor of the Hasidic faith. Said he, on the ecstatic nature of the Hasid:

The Hasid is above place and time, above his surroundings and circumstances. Through enthusiasm the Hasid enlarges himself, and by virtue of it he aspires to a higher status. By cleaving unto holiness, the Hasid erases his own self, striving to become no longer what he
has been.  
By cleaving to holiness, the Hasid becomes the type of person to which his capacity entitles him—a man of purity, cleanliness of spirit and holiness.  

In his lifetime this leader of Volhynian Hasidism was the embodiment of optimism, idealism, compassion and democracy. A tremendously popular Zaddik with the people, he extended himself to Jew and non-Jew alike. To him, every one of them was sacred and above reproach. Many a legend has been told of his unbounding affection and fatherly love for his people, hurling himself into ecstasies of prayer until his whole body shook, quivering uncontrollably in order to reach God on their behalf. It is told:

The Berditschever would devote his entire strength into his prayers. He would pray in a very loud voice, and manifested extraordinary ecstasy amid his vigorous motions. His manner of praying would stir his hearers to repentance.  

The strength of his ecstatic transports became a part of his life—a way of life which provoked the hatred of the Misnagdim who bitterly opposed his sensational, dramatic behavior. Particularly, in his early career as Rabbi, he was fiercely attacked wherever he settled for placing simple faith above learning, prayer over study, and heart over mind. Following the example of Rabbi Akiba of long ago, he worshipped with such fiery intensity that he frequently jumped from one corner of the room to the other. It is told:
Once, on the eve of the sabbath, Rabbi Levi Yitzhak prayed before the congregation of a town in which he was stopping as a guest. As always, now too he drew out the prayer far beyond its usual length through the many exclamations and gestures not provided for in any liturgy. When he had finished, the rav of that town went up to him, proffered the sabbath greetings, and asked: "Why are you not more careful not to tire the congregation? Do not our sages relate of Rabbi Akiba that, whenever he prayed with the congregation, he did so quickly, but that when he prayed alone, he yielded himself to his transports, so that frequently he began in one corner of the room and ended up in another." 7

Indeed, the saintly lover of mankind, Levi Yitzhak, sought to "lift" all souls beyond time and space; and ecstatic, rapturous, self-forgetful prayer was his chief means. Pushing and overturning everything in his way, howling, gesticulating, madly dancing, his faithful stood in awe and fear of him, refusing to come too near and often scrambling for cover. Certainly, he was not aware of anyone or anything--least of all, himself. Hasidic legend relates of one "doubting innkeeper" who refused to "budge" from his place:

The owner of a tavern in Berditchev, where mead was dispensed, was not in favor of the hasidic way of life, but liked to listen when hasidim told each other of the deeds of their leaders. On one such occasion he heard them speak of the praying of Rabbi Levi Yitzhak. In the sabbath service, when--so they told--the rabbi came to the words: "Holy, holy, holy," in the chanting of which denizens of heaven unite with men, the angels came to listen to what his lips were saying.
"Do you really think that this is so?" asked the innkeeper.
"Yes, it is so," they said.
"And where do the angels go after that?" he inquired, "Do they remain floating in air?"

"No," they answered him. "They fly down and stand around the rabbi."

"And where do you go in the meantime?"

"When the rabbi begins to sing mightily, and dances so mightily through all the house, there is no room for us inside."

"Well," said the innkeeper, "I shall see this matter for myself. He won't get me to budge from the spot!"

At the Feast of the New Moon, when the rabbi began to burn with ecstasy, the innkeeper came up close behind him. The rabbi—in his great fervor—turned around, seizing him by the coat-tails, shook him, pushed him, and thus, shaking and pushing him alternately, dragged him from one end of the house to the other, and back again. The innkeeper hardly knew what was happening to him. He was almost out of his mind. There was a roaring in his ears as of a tremendous surge. Rallying the last shreds of his strength, he wrenched himself free from the hands of the zaddik and fled. From that time on, he too believed that other powers were involved than merely those of this earth.

Like many Zaddikim, especially in Galicia, the lovable Reb Levi became well known for the originality and fervor displayed in his dancing. Although many of his contemporaries took dispute with him and ridiculed his over-active conduct, he believed in fervor and his own was boundless. According to Hasidic tradition:

The Berditschever Rabbi once visited Rabbi Baruch of Medziboz. The latter watched his distinguished guest as he prayed with many gesticulations and energetic motions. When the Berditschever had finally concluded, his host remarked: "Your fervent prayer does you credit, since it demonstrates your enthusiastic service of the Lord. But, sir, what would have happened if Aaron had behaved in this way when he performed the service of kindling the Menorah? The oil would have spilled over him, and how could he have performed the service assigned to him?"
And another time:

Rabbi Moshe of Zlotzov visited Rabbi Baruch of Medziboz. At the meal he noticed a Hasid imitating the bowings and movements of the Berditschever Rabbi at prayer. Instead of rebuking him, Rabbi Baruch laughed uproariously. Rabbi Moshe reproved him for ridiculing so holy a man.

Rabbi Baruch replied: "I well know his great holiness, but it is for this very reason that I am ridiculing him. The Satan frequently argues: 'What need is there of a Messiah and a Beth ha-Mikdash (Holy Temple), when the divine services of the Berditschever fully equal the divine services of the High Priest at the Holy Temple.'

"Therefore I ridicule his services to counteract the Satan's argument."

Just as the Sabbath held a special place in his emotional life, the holidays for Reb Levi caused his ecstatic temperament to reach the breaking point. On Rosh Hashanah, he often interrupted the flow of the regular service to personally and intimately hold conversation with the Lord. Thus, one Rosh Hashanah, before the cantor's repetition of the Amidah, he suddenly stopped and addressed God in a loud singing voice:

... "Those that dwell on high with those that dwell down below on earth, fear and tremble in awe of Thy name; ... but the righteous in the Garden of Eden sing and chant in honour of Thy name; therefore, I, Levi Yitzhak of Berdichev, have come to pour out my prayer before Thee; ... "

As though transported, he ceased to dwell on earth during the other festivals of the year. Raised to another planet, to another life, he glowed with a holy fire which penetrated his entire being and dulled his senses. It is
told:

On the morning of the Feast of Tabernacles, when Rabbi Levi Yitzhak was about to reach into the chest where the citron and the sheaf of palm, myrtle and willows of the brook awaited the blessing, he thrust his hand through the glass lid, and did not mark that he had cut himself.

At the Feast of Hanukkah, when he saw the holy lights burning, he was impelled to put his bare hand into the flame, yet felt no hurt. At the Feast of Purim, before the book of Esther was read, he danced during the benediction, danced on the desk, and almost on the scroll itself.12

According to Horodezky, his joyous dance on Simhat Torah penetrated to all his limbs, penetrated to the faithful around him, and even penetrated to the very Heavens above:

... When Rabbi Levi Isaac danced on Simhat Torah "all the upper worlds were hushed into silence, and even the Ministering Angels held their breath and stopped their daily songs of praise before the Holy One, Blessed be He, and never was there in heaven such a great spiritual delight."13

In later years, his emotions proved too strong for his body. He often fainted in the middle of prayers, the slightest of devotions exhausting him and threatening his very life. Absent-minded or in a trance, he seemed to lose grip on reality, leaving disorder in his wake. He lived in an "inner world" where he fought pain in his own ecstatic way—with fervent prayer and joyous dance. It is told:

When his son had died, Rabbi Levi Yitzhak danced as he followed the bier. Some of his hasidim could not refrain from expressing their astonishment. "A pure soul," said he, "was given to me. A pure soul I render back."14
With the Maggid's demise, it was Elimelekh of Lizensk who took up the staff and ruled the South for the following thirteen years. Although the Maggid had many disciples and each, in his own way and region, became his successor, Elimelekh was the disciple who kept alive the core of the tradition and preserved the school as such, the true successor of the Great Maggid and third in line after the Besht. Taking the doctrine of practical Zaddikism even further than his Master, he developed the concept and role of the spiritual leader, building a movement around him throughout Poland. He taught his Hasidim that their very first duty was reverence to him. If the Zaddik is supported by his following, he will bless them and heal their sick. In the legendary tradition of the people, Elimelekh reigned as a doctor of souls, a man who could exorcise demons, a truly powerful wonder-worker, counselor and guide.

Rabbi Elimelekh's main work No'am Elimelekh (Elimelekh's Delight) was published after his death at Lvov in 1788 and, consequently, became a basic text for the understanding of Hasidism. In it he emphasized love for Israel, companionship, righteousness, reverence for God, and fervent, joyous prayer. During his sermons, it is said that the world of the spirit was his. He was wont to be in a state of such profound ecstasy that he was not conscious of the meaning of his words, nor of the time in which it took him
to say them. It is told:

When Rabbi Elimelekh said the Prayer of Sanctification on the sabbath, he occasionally took out his watch and looked at it. For in that hour, his soul threatened to dissolve in bliss, and so he looked at his watch in order to steady himself in Time and the world.15

In regard to the notions of Rabbi Elimelekh while at prayer, the following tale is told:

This is what was heard from the holy rabbi, our teacher, Zusya of Annopol, who heard it from his brother, the rabbi, our teacher, Elimelekh, blessed be the memory of the righteous.

Once Rabbi Elimelekh ascended to heaven and met there the author of Hesed le-Abraham, who asked him: "Rabbi, look, with the help of God I wrote ten holy essays which are very highly considered in paradise. Tell me why is there so much excitement in heaven concerning your motions during prayer? Tell me what deeds you have done since we cannot comprehend the depth of its meaning."

His motions in prayer extended as well to the Sabbath meal when he was often consumed with a passion for dancing. It is said:

When Moshe Leib visited Rabbi Elimelekh for the first time, his host honored him at the sabbath meal by asking him to say Torah. Now on this particular sabbath the passage of the Scriptures to be read dealt with God's smiting the Egyptians and passing over the houses of the Israelites. Moshe Leib said: "This cannot possibly mean that God passed over a certain place, because there is no place where he is not. But when he passed through the Egyptians' houses, and saw the corruption of their souls, and then came to a house full of piety and goodness, he was overjoyed and cried: 'A Jew lives here!''

When Rabbi Elimelekh heard this explanation, he jumped on the table, danced upon it, and sang over and over: "A Jew lives here! A Jew lives here!"17
Rabbi Elimelekh had, indeed, five brothers and sisters, but the closest and dearest of companions to him was his brother Zusya. Together they journeyed to Mezritch and together they wandered through Poland without a goal for three years of their youth in search of souls enlightened or ready to be enlightened—in search of their own souls. It was a voluntary "exile," a self-inflicted penance, in imitation of the Divine Presence. Once they spent the night at an inn where a wedding was being celebrated. As legend has it:

One day our two brothers came to a tavern and lay down on the oven to have some peace; the poor fellows were worn out. But they had no peace, because the tavern was full of musicians who danced and shouted and brawled to the point of being disgusting. Suddenly these drunkards remembered that Jew on the oven and decided he ought to be beaten up a bit, the lazy lout. Off they went and grabbed hold of the holy Rebe Reb Sussya, starting with him because he was on the very edge of the oven. They set Sussya on his feet and ordered him to dance for them. The holy Rebe Reb Sussya obeyed, and danced before the musicians like the princess Salome before King Herod. He danced and turned and skipped while they laughed and roared. When he swooned they kept him going with a whip. Nor did they desist until they had the holy Rebe Reb Sussya lying motionless on the floor.18

In time they matured, parted ways and settled down to the leadership of different communities. Elimelekh conquered the world of the spirit, combining it with the activities of an organizer. However, Zusya never completely settled down. Unlike his brother Elimelekh, who,
while under the tutelage of Dov Baer, diligently studied Talmud, Zusya was a dreamer and felt the urge to wander. He spent his days and nights roaming the woods even in old age—whistling a song and dancing for God. Of all the disciples of the Great Maggid, Zusya was the only one not able to pass on what he had learned. At the Maggid's first words, Zusya would fall into a state of ecstasy so loud that he wasn't able to hear the rest of what the Maggid had to say. This was told by Rabbi Israel of Rizhyn concerning Rabbi Zusya's ecstatic gestures:

"All the pupils of my ancestors, the Great Maggid, transmitted the teachings in his name—all except Rabbi Zusya. And the reason for this was that Rabbi Zusya hardly ever heard his teacher's sermon out to the end. For at the very start, when the Maggid recited the verse from the Scriptures which he was going to expound, and began with the words of the Scriptures: 'And God said,' or 'and God spoke,' Rabbi Zusya was overcome with ecstasy, and screamed and gesticulated so wildly that he disturbed the peace of the round table and had to be taken out. And then he stood in the hall or in the woodshed, beat his hands against the walls, and cried aloud: 'And God said!' He did not quiet down until my ancestor had finished expounding the Scriptures. That is why he was not familiar with the sermons of the maggid. But the truth, I tell you—I tell you, the truth is this: If a man speaks in the spirit of truth and listens in the spirit of truth, one word is enough, for with one word can the world be uplifted, and with one word can the world be redeemed."19

Since the Maggid could not teach Zusya the ten principles of service in his sermons, he directed him to learn them from an infant and from a thief. These Zusya never forgot:
... What of the infant? The infant is always merry without even a strain of melancholy: it is never at rest but always moving its limbs, and whenever it desires a thing which is not given it, it bursts into tears. ... 20

Of his devotions, which were often personal and quite unconventional in content, he put that which he had learned from the infant to good use and often did his service by night, as the thief had instructed him. It is told:

Zusya was once a guest in the house of the rabbi of Neskhizh. Shortly after midnight, the host heard sounds coming from his guest's room, so he went to the door and listened. Zusya was running back and forth in the room, saying: "Lord of the world, I love you! But what is there for me to do? I can't do anything." And then he started running back and forth again, repeating the same thing, until suddenly he bethought himself and cried: "Why, I know how to whistle, so I shall whistle something for you." But when he began to whistle, the rabbi of Neskhizh grew frightened.21

Rabbi Zusya grew to be very old, spending the last years of his life in innocence and humility at Hanipol. Always happy, he was worshipped there as a saint and loved as a Zaddik, God's holy jester. His brother Elimelekh was totally different. Yet both, the great figures of Galician Hasidism toward the end of the eighteenth century, were united by legend. Elimelekh, a powerful and great Zaddik, died in Lizensk, where he had settled eleven years before. At the end, it is told by his disciples:

When Rabbi Elimelech of Lizensk perceived that his end was approaching, he made himself master of an extraordinary cheerfulness. One of his Disciples inquired the reason for his unusual mood. The Rabbi thereupon took the
hand of his faithful disciple into his own, and said: "Why should I not rejoice, seeing that I am about to leave this world below, and enter into the higher worlds of eternity? Do you not recall the words of the Psalmist (23:4): 'Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me.' Thus does the grace of God display itself."22

During his lifetime Lizensk had become the fountain-head of Hasidism for all Galicia and Elimelekh, the founder of a major new school. Many called him "a second Baal Shem Tov" for, like him, he preached utter simplicity and modesty, charity and loving-kindness. He was worshipped by his disciples who, in time, founded their own dynasties—among them, the Holy "Seer" of Lublin, the Maggid of Koznitz, Menahem Mendel of Rimanov, Moshe Leib of Sassov . . . .
NOTES TO CHAPTER IV

1In Praise, pp. 223-224.

"In ancient times, probably biblical as well as post-biblical, the festivity of water drawing and libation took place in Jerusalem during the holiday of Sukkoth. [See B. Sukkah 51a.] Thus, the writer refers to the celebration of Simhath Torah with this mishnaic term." (p. 339)


3Ibid., p. 328, citing Butzina De-Nehorah, by Rabbi Baruch of Medziboz (Lemberg, 1880), p. 32.


"But even on such solemn days, the Hassidim are far from being sad or grieved, because their doctrine forbids them to sorrow, and exhorts them to rejoice. . . .

"Through joy, we unite ourselves with God." Therefore the Hassidim organised dances on the high holidays: round-dances, in which the Zaddik himself sometimes joined. The reality of life became as nothing to them, they forgot everything, turned round and round for hour after hour, and felt no fatigue."


7Buber, Tales: Early Masters, p. 213.

8Ibid., p. 208-209.


11 Steinmann, p. 189.

12 Buber, Tales: Early Masters, p. 205.


14 Buber, Tales: Early Masters, p. 231.
See also Wiesel, Souls, p. 102 and Aron, p. 171-172 for similar versions.


16 In Praise, pp. 103-104.

17 Buber, Tales: Later Masters, p. 83.

18 Langer, p. 118.
See also Buber, Tales: Early Masters, pp. 239-240 for a somewhat similar version and Wiesel, Souls, p. 114.

19 Buber, Tales: Early Masters, p. 236.
See also Wiesel, Souls, p. 116. Buber writes in Legend, p. 18:

"Repetition, the power which weakens and discolours so much in human life, is powerless before ecstasy, which catches fire again and again from precisely the most regular, most uniform events. Ecstasy overcame one Zaddik in reciting the Scriptures, each time that he reached the words, 'And God spoke.'"

20 Steinmann, pp. 163-164.
See also Buber, Ten Rungs, pp. 55-56.

21 Buber, Tales: Early Masters, p. 246.

Rejoicing gives way to song and dance. According to Wiesel, Souls, pp. 36-37, the Baal Shem, too, displayed a great joy before departing:

"... feeling the end approaching, he gave his intimates detailed instructions for his burial. He requested them to sing at his bedside and invited a minyan for the last service. 'I have two hours to chat with God,' he said. Seeing tears on the faces of his faithful, he
added: 'Why do you cry? I am leaving by one door only to enter by another.'"
CHAPTER V

IN THE CIRCLE OF ELIMELEKH: DISCIPLES III

Hasidism was born in the second half of the eighteenth century, but it was the turn to the nineteenth century which marked the advent of the Golden Era of the movement. Lizensk had meant practice over theory. Lizensk had meant total concern, total involvement on the part of every Hasid for his fellow man. From its school came the disciples of Elimelekh, the Zaddikim of Sassov, Koznitz, Riminov, Lublin—the Hasidic leaders of their generation. Although some of these "fathers" of Hasidism had been late disciples of the Great Maggid and others, they all reflected the religious views of Lizensk—prayer, study, kindness and compassion. Pious leaders, fervent healers, ecstatic preachers, joyous dancers, their Divine gifts of parables and symbolic legends were shared by all Jews—unlocking the doors to their souls, their lives.

Of Rabbi Moshe Leib of Sassov, it is said that he became the personification of Hasidic humility and also the symbol of Hasidic joy, longing and love of God, expressed by means of song and dance. Growing up in Apt (Opatov), he spent his early life as a merry lad. To the chagrin of his father, he would often leave his lessons at the call of his lively companions for play and fun. It is told:
In his youth Moshe Leib sometimes secretly changed his dress of an evening, left the house unobserved, and shared in the amusements of some young men of his own age, singing and dancing with them.¹

The "father of widows, orphans, the sick and the needy" was the long title that Hasidic lore applied to the life and activities of the extraordinary Rabbi of Sassov. And it was with good reason. He would spare no effort to help the poor and to raise funds for the redemption of captives. Few could equal him in his love for his neighbor --the guiding principle of his life. By sundown, he would distribute for charity all the money he had accumulated on that particular day, explaining that if money remained in his home, he would have a sleepless night. Legend has it:

A zaddik who was near death got up and danced. And when those around him tried to get him to stop, he said: "This is the time to dance." Then he related: "When Rabbi Uri of Strelisk was traveling around to collect money for some charitable purpose, he called on the rabbi of Sasov. 'I have no money,' said the rabbi, 'but I'll dance a bit for you.' He danced the whole night through and Rabbi Uri did not take his eyes off him, for in every step was a holy meaning. When morning dawned Rabbi Moshe Leib said: 'Now I'll go and collect some money in the market places and streets.'

"He left and did not return until after two days. When they asked him where he had been, he said: 'When I was young, I once needed money to ransom prisoners and started out to collect it with a boy who was to show me where the rich people lived. The boy did his job so cleverly and well that I soon had the required sum. Because of this I promised him that I should once dance at his wedding. Now when I arrived in Zlotchov I heard the sound of gay music, followed it, and learned that the boy I had traveled with was celebrating his wedding.
And so I danced and made merry with the merry until now."

"And that is why I say," the zaddik who was telling the story added, "when they come to you with a demand, it is time to dance."2

When Rabbi Moshe Leib danced, prayers were answered and the sick were healed. His marvelous dancing became infused with an inner light, as if the Holy Spirit had joined in. When he tried to effect a cure for his friend Levi Yitzhak of Berdichev:

News was brought to Rabbi Moshe Leib that his friend the rabbi of Berditchev had fallen ill. On the sabbath he said his name over and over and prayed for his recovery. Then he put on new shoes made of morocco leather, laced them up tight and danced.

A zaddik who was present said: "Power flowed forth from his dancing. Every step was a powerful mystery. An unfamiliar light suffused the house, and everyone watching saw the heavenly hosts join in his dance.3

What does one say about his sacred dances? His movements were steeped in the Holy Spirit. To him the whole world was nothing more than a singing and a dancing before the Holy One, blessed be He. A Hasid related:

"I was at the wedding of Rabbi Moshe Leib's grandson and there were many guests. When they formed the ring for the bridal dance, a man in a short peasant's smock with a short peasant's pipe in his mouth suddenly leaped into the ring and danced alone in the very middle. I was just about to take him by the sleeve, for I thought he must be out of his mind to break into a circle of zaddikim; but when I saw them all watching him in silence, I let him be. After the dance, I found out that it was the rabbi."4

Moshe Leib believed, like many a Hasidic Master before him, that the time of death—hilulla—was not a time for
tears but a time for joyous festivity. Upon departing, man leaves a material world of sorrows behind, rising to the spiritual world of tranquility and joy. Threatened with the prospect of death, he replaced his fear with a dance. It is told:

Rabbi Schmelke and Rabbi Moshe Leib of Sassov were traveling on a ship. A dangerous storm threatened to destroy the vessel. Rabbi Schmelke went over to the Sassover and perceived that he was engaged in a joyful dance. "Why are you dancing?" inquired Rabbi Schmelke.

"I am overjoyed at the thought that I shall soon arrive in the mansion of my Father," replied the Sassover.
"I shall join you, then," said Rabbi Schmelke. But the storm spent its force, and the ship reached port in safety. And another version approaches a miracle tale:

A grandson of the rabbi of Radotshitz told this:

"In his youth Rabbi Yiskhar Baer had been a disciple of Rabbi Moshe Leib of Sasov. The rabbi of Sasov used to take him along on his trips to ransom prisoners. Once they were on the Vistula, when a storm broke out and almost capsized the boat. The rabbi of Sasov rose and cried: 'We are going to our Father!' and clapped his hands as wedding guests do during the bridal dance. They were saved. . . . "

Thus it was that Reb Moshe served his family of Hasidim all the days of his life, served them even after life—with love, and joy, and dance. It is told:

Some guests who had attended the wedding of the daughter of Rabbi Shmelke of Sassov, who was Rabbi Moshe Leib's son, paid a visit to Rabbi Meir of Primishlan on their way home. He questioned them eagerly as to what special thing they had seen at the celebration, refused to be satisfied with what they told him, and kept on
asking: "And what else happened?" Finally they said: "While the traditional dances with the bride and groom were going on, an enormous man completely disguised as a bear leaped into the circle and did a most magnificent bear's dance. Everybody marveled at his really wonderful bounds, and there was a great clapping of hands. And then just as suddenly as he had come, he was gone. No one knew him."

"I'll tell you," said Rabbi Meir. "That was none other than our holy teacher Rabbi Moshe Leib of Sasov--may his memory help us--who came down from the uppermost paradise to rejoice with his family."

The legacy of Rabbi Moshe's ecstatic dancing passed over to his most noted disciple--Rabbi Hayyim of Kosov, the son of Rabbi Mendel. Every Sabbath he would dance before his flock, and every step was filled with holy meaning. It is told:

On every sabbath eve Rabbi Hayyim of Kosov, the son of Rabbi Mendel, danced before his assembled disciples. His face was aflame and they all knew that every step was informed with sublime meanings and effected sublime things.

Once while he was in the midst of dancing, a heavy bench fell on his foot and he had to pause because of the pain. Later they asked him about it. "It seems to me," he said, "that the pain made itself felt because I interrupted the dance."

Besides the saintly Rabbi Moshe Leib of Sassov, Elimelekh was blessed with three outstanding students who were known as the "commanders-in-chief" of Hasidism in the original Polish provinces--Rabbi Israel of Koznitz, Rabbi Mendel of Rymanov, and Rabbi Jacob Yitzhak, the "Seer," of Lublin. According to Hasidic legend, when Rabbi Elimelekh died he bequeathed each of his students a spiritual
legacy. To the "Seer" of Lublin, he left his keen perception and foresight; to Rabbi Mendel of Rymanov, his mental and spiritual powers; and to Rabbi Israel, the Maggid of Koznitz, he willed the strength and endurance of his heart.9

Legend relates that the Baal Shem promised a bookbinder and his wife the birth of a son in their old age, for they had gladdened his heart by their joyful celebration of the Sabbath. The son was none other than Rabbi Israel, the Maggid of Koznitz:

Rabbi Sabbatai, the father of the Koznitzer Maggid, was a bookbinder. . . . When he became old, he could do little work and lived in great poverty.

It happened once that he lacked even a penny for the preparation of the Sabbath, but he resolved to accept no charity and to fast, if need be, on the Sabbath. He persuaded his wife to accept nothing from her neighbors. When he returned home, however, in the evening, he found the room lighted, and the table laid with courses of fish and meat. He asked his wife why she had failed to keep her solemn pledge. She denied she had broken her word, and told him that as soon as he had left, the following had occurred:

Having nothing else to do, she began to rummage in the cabinet-drawers, and discovered there a pair of long-lost gloves, with silver buttons. She sold these, and with the money, provided for the Sabbath meals. Rabbi Sabbatai was overjoyed that he had been able to dispense with charity. He placed his arm about his wife, and together they danced in their happiness. When the Besht heard of this, he blessed the aged pair, and said that a son would be granted them in their old age.10

In another version of the tale, Reb Sabbatai the bookbinder holds a conversation with the Baal Shem, revealing the rea-
son why he had danced and laughed three times at the Sabbath meal. Said Sabbatai:  

"Master, when I heard that my eyes filled with tears, so great was my joy. I threw myself down and thanked the Lord that He had remembered my Sabbath... Then I became warm, and I forgot the many wretched days. I seized hold of my wife and danced with her around the room. After that I ate the Sabbath supper, and my mood became ever lighter and more thankful; then I danced in joy and laughed a second time, and when I had consumed dessert, I did the same for the third time... but if, Rabbi, it was an unworthy piece of foolishness that I danced thus with my wife, then give me a merciful penance, and I shall not fail to perform it."

... The Baal-Shem said to his disciples, "Know that all the hosts of heaven rejoiced with him and turned round with him in dance. And I, who saw all this, was moved to laughter the three times." Then he turned toward the two of them and said, "A child of your old age will be born to you who are childless. Call him Israel after my name."

Thus it happened. This boy became the Maggid of Kosnitz, the great man of prayer."

Indeed, great was the Maggid's prayer. His form of praying, often personal in content, was one of the expressions of his sanctity. He used to assert that nothing gives a man such great pleasure as a hearty prayer and a joyous dance. It is told:

Whatever the rabbi of Koznitz said sounded as if he were praying, only weaker and in a lower voice. He liked to hum to himself proverbs and sayings current among the Polish peasants. After a Purim feast, which he had presided over in great happiness, he said: "How right, what the people say:

'Doff your coat, dear soul, and prance Merrily at feast and dance.'
But how curious a coat is the body!"
The prayers of the Maggid of Koznitz were so potent that his congregation gazed in awe at that frail body, sickly all through life, as though at a victorious general. So weak that he had to be carried to services on a stretcher for a number of years, he regained his strength only while praying in the house of worship. With an intensity almost reaching the power of Rabbi Shelomo of Karlin, he cited the words of the Talmudic giants with fear and trembling. Singing and dancing feverishly, he became a changed man, his body rejuvenated and well again. It is told:

Rabbi Israel was in poor health from childhood on. . . . On Mondays and Thursdays, the days on which the Scriptures are read, he walked in prayer shawl and phylacteries, the scroll of the Torah in his arms, so lightly and quickly through the two rows of waiting people, that the servants who accompanied him carrying the candles could hardly keep up with him. With dancing motion, he leaned toward the holy Ark into which he put the scroll, walked with dancing step to the desk on which the candelabrum stood, and set the candles in it. . . . After prayer, when the servants carried him home in his litter, he was pale as one dying, but his pallor was luminous. That was why they said that his body shone like a thousand souls. 13

The rest of the time Rabbi Israel spent in bed, nestled in piles of heavy blankets, receiving admirers and disciples, and if need be, interceding on their behalf. People came to him from all over--Jews and Christians, peasants and nobles--to receive his blessing or just to look on his holy face. As a miracle-maker and wonder Rabbi, he had no equal since the days of the Baal Shem.
No Zaddik had so many cures of the possessed placed to his credit. No Zaddik preached such a message of gentle kindness toward his fellow man. He became the "heart" of his generation, one of the powerful pillars of Polish Hasidism.

Rabbi Hayyim Meir Yehiel of Mogielnica, the grandson of the Maggid of Koznitz, was the most notable among the disciples of that holy man. He was wont to say: "I have no use for spiritual rungs without the garment of the body," an utterance which aptly characterized him. Although he was not an independent thinker, he had a strong and independent soul and a spiritual intensity which he imparted to his every bodily action. It is told:

On a certain Passover before the Seder celebration, Rabbi Yisakhar Baer called his guest the rabbi of Mogielnica, a grandson of the maggid of Koznitz, to the window, and pointed to something outside. "Do you see, Rav of Mogielnica?" he said. "Do you see?"

After the feast was over the rabbi of Mogielnica danced around the table and sang in a low voice: "The holy old man, our brother, has shown me a light. Great is the light he has shown me. But who knows, who knows how many years must pass, how long we still must sleep before it comes to us, before it comes to us."

The second of the renowned pioneers of Poland was Rabbi Mendel of Rymanov. According to Hasidic lore, Elimelekh said of his beloved disciple that he prayed with such devotion that sparks flew through his forehead. Therefore, the Rabbi of Lizensk left him, as an inheritance, "the soul of his own brains." While his Master was
still alive, Mendel would often visit him, even in times of great difficulty. Legend has it that once, on young Mendel's way to Lizensk, he hopped and sang in praise of the Lord in order to keep warm. It is told:

The only way young Mendel could manage to travel from his home to the city where Rabbi Elimelekh lived was to hire himself out as servant to a coachman. . . . It was a bitterly cold day. The driver and his passengers were warming themselves in the inn, eating and drinking. Rabbi Mendel in his thin coat and his shoes full of holes walked back and forth beside the carriage and rubbed his hands. "Praise be to the Creator," he sang to himself, "that I am cold. Praise be to the Creator that I am hungry." He hopped from one foot to the other, and sang his song of praise as though it were a dance tune.16

In later life when further misfortunes befell him, it was still the ecstatic joy which he achieved through his prayers that carried him onward and upward in the face of despair, ever closer to the Lord. Said Rabbi Mendel:

. . . "Lord of the world, you took my wife from me. But I still had my daughter and could rejoice in her. Now you have taken her from me too. Now I have no one left to rejoice in, except you alone. So I shall rejoice in you." And he said the Additional Prayer in a transport of joy.17

Of all who surround the Zaddik, Rabbi Mendel was most concerned with his congregation of Hasidim. He watched over them, taught them—sometimes, not without reproof. His disciples were many—among them, Rabbi Hirsh, his servant, and later, his successor. Rabbi Hirsh once said to his
Hasidim:

"When a man rises in the morning and sees that God has returned his soul to him and that he has become a new creature, he should turn singer and sing to God. My holy master Rabbi Menahem Mendel had a hasid who whenever he came to the words in the Morning Prayer: 'My God, the soul you have placed in me is pure,' danced and broke into a song of praise." 18

Although one of Rabbi Mendel's Hasidim danced and sang every morning as a service to the Almighty, as a symbol of his passion for God, there were others among the Rabbi who had great fear of him. He was solemn and strict with his Hasidim, issuing to them his own guidelines for their proper conduct and respect. They remained silent and still in their studies with him in order to avert his wrath—except, of course, for Rabbi Shelomo of Lentshno. It is told:

"... When [Rabbi Zevi of Dynov and Rabbi Shelomo of Lentshno] were studying with Rabbi Mendel in Rymanov, everyone there was so overcome with fear that not even the greatest dared raise his eyebrows. But he, Shelomo Leib, took off his shoes and danced on the table in his stocking feet, right in front of the rabbi, who sat there, and watched, and never uttered a word." 19

However, Rabbi Mendel could, indeed, be adamant in regard to what he considered improper behavior. One of his disciples recounts:

"When I went to Rabbi Mendel (in Rymanov), I had to bring along in my head all the sacred writings. In Lublin, on the other hand, I went with my comrades to the tavern and we drank mead. There are evidently different ways to the goal. One had always to approach Rabbi Mendel
with the utmost reverence. The Rabbi of Lublin might scold a little; nevertheless he enjoyed one's jokes. Once Rabbi Mendel came to Lublin and watched us as, according to our custom, we made a merry din and successively danced on the table. He cried out to us: 'Well!' Fear of him overcame us and we were hushed and still. When our Rabbi of Lublin noticed the hush in the room he cried out to us: 'Ho!' Joy welled up in us and we returned to our gaiety with double zeal... "20"

The Rabbi of Lublin—Jacob Yitzhak, the "Seer," whom Elimelekh called "Messiah, the son of Joseph"—was the third member of the holy trio and, in truth, the "father" of Polish Hasidism. His court at Lublin became the key center of the movement. Spreading the word to Polish Jewry, he greatly influenced the illustrious Hasidic dynasties of Poland and Galicia in later years by his life and lessons. Throughout his existence the saint of Lublin was engaged in a struggle with the powers of Evil. It was his custom to prolong the peace of the Sabbath, for even Satan is obliged to hallow the holy day. As long as the Sabbath lasts, the souls of the deceased in Hell may rest. The "Seer" prolonged the third, mystic meal at the close of the day of rest far into the night, teaching his Hasidim to sing and dance in order to engage Queen Sabbath a few moments longer. Hasidic tradition relates:

On the ... Sabbath, ... the younger students as well as a few of the older ones danced, as it were, arm in arm through the streets of the Jewish quarter and sang songs concerning the prophet Elijah, who is the master of all good tidings and concerning whom it is prophesied in Scripture that he
will come before the great and dreadful day of the Lord in order to turn the hearts of the fathers back to the sons and of the sons back to the fathers. . . . When they came to the Jewish Gate they stopped and danced a circular dance. 21

In the presence of the "Seer," people were comforted, happy, hopeful. However, the Zaddik himself was generally of a somber disposition. He inspired confidence in others, but had little confidence in himself. Perhaps, that is why he employed a court jester, the badhan Mordecai Rakover, who, with quips and rhyming jests, merrily poked fun at the "Seer" and his guests at weddings and other festivities.

Diligently and with devotion the "Seer" served his Hasidic community, and from this he derived a special joy and satisfaction. "Perhaps I have performed one good deed in life," he reflected, "and can rejoice in that. I have arranged the marriage of forty orphans." To the "Seer" this was a most sacred service. He praised one of his Hasidim, an ordinary catman, for following his example: "I see a lustrous glow above this man's name," cried the holy "Seer." The driver, "dancing and leaping like one possessed," related:

". . . I came to the market. There was to have been a chagune (a wedding; weddings always take place in the open air). But as the bride was an orphan she could not afford to buy the usual gift of a prayer mantle for the bridegroom. So the bridegroom's parents refused to give their consent to the marriage and stopped the wedding at the last moment . . . . The poor bride wept so much, it touched
my heart... So I took out the money I'd earned... on the journey and bought a nice 
		
talis (prayer mantle)... and gave it to the 
		
bride for her bridegroom..."

Thus saying, he went whirling off again, 
shaking the very ground under his feet.²²

The whole of Lublin believed in the "Seer." Ac-
ccording to his disciples, the Shekinah spoke from his 
mouth, and every prayer he uttered went up in flames of 
ecstasy. It is told:

One of the disciples was reproached by the 
saint of Lublin with not pronouncing the prayers 
properly; the saint said he "swallowed" them.

"I swallow them because they're sweeter than 
honey," said the cunning fellow by way of excuse.

"Do you think I don't find the taste of 
the words just as sweet as you do? Yet I don't 
swallow them."

"You can't! For your praying--is fire!"
replied the disciple.²³

Stricken by the fear of the Lord, the "Seer" was known 
to move violently as a means of attaining "the highest 
rung" of ecstasy. Once there, however, he remained 
motionless:

A disciple of the rabbi of Lublin told: 
Once I celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles 
in Lublin. Before the paeans of praise, the 
rabbi went into the hut to say the blessing 
over the "Four Plants." For almost an hour I 
observed his violent movements which seemed 
impelled by overwhelming fear. All the people 
who watched thought that this was the essential 
part of the ceremony, a feeling of great fear 
passed over into them, and they too moved and 
trembled. But I sat on a bench and did not 
take the subsidiary for the essential, but 
waited until all the restlessness and anxiety 
was past. Then I rose to see better when the 
rabbi came to the blessing. And I saw how he-- 
on the highest rung of the spirit--said the 
blessing motionlessly...²⁴
Only on Simhat Torah did the "Seer" of Lublin attain the perfection of ecstatic joy, at which time he celebrated the feast with a very great and all but boundless gaiety. When he danced with the scroll of the Torah in his arms, his tread was light and buoyant. It was on his last Simhat Torah, in 1814, that the saint of Lublin, with his two friends and allies Mendel of Rymanov and Israel of Koznitz, determined to break the power of Satan and bring the Messiah to the earth. Combining their powers, magical plans and preparations, they devoted the entire holiday to this end:

In his two previous undertakings the Rabbi had bidden all his assistants, . . . to exercise the most precise inner and outer conformity in the hour of ceremonial action. This time he required of the few, to whom he addressed himself, nothing other than "the perfection of joy."

"Do you expect joy to be effective, Rabbi?" Meir asked.

"Nothing is equally effective," was the reply, "in the matter of the marriage of the higher worlds, on which everything depends. Melancholy divides, joy unites." He declared that he had chosen the day of the Rejoicing in the Law, because now, after the days of judgment, all Israel, being free of the weight of sin, could truly rejoice once again.

Evening came. In the synagogue all the Torah scrolls were taken out of the Ark, as was done every year, and the chiefs of the congregation led by the Rabbi, each one a scroll in his hands, went dancing and rejoicing seven times around the platform. . . . .

Truly, the Hasidim made merry. Outside, in Lublin, the throngs were dancing and singing, rejoicing in the Law. But the "Seer" had retired to his room. At midnight
they found his body lying on the ground—a mysterious fall, a "Divine malediction." The celebration was at its height, but the plot had failed. Punished by God, all three accomplices died during that same year (1814-1815); thus the banner of Hasidism floated over the whole of Poland.

From the school of the Rabbi of Lublin, a number of his closest disciples became Hasidic Masters in their own right, establishing their own dynasties—among them, David of Lelov, the witty Naftali of Ropshitz, Hayyim of Tzanz, the holy Yehudi and his successor, Simha Bunam of Pzhysha. They, in turn, brought more Jews into the fold throughout Poland, each in his own way rejoicing with body and soul.

It is said of the holy Reb Naftali of Ropshitz that he could make the very Heavens laugh. Even the most secret chambers of the Lord were filled with joy and gaiety. Like every real saint, Reb Naftali wanted his Hasidim to be gay and not sorrowful. It is told:

On the day of the Festival of Simchat Torah the Ropshitzer stood at the window, and saw how the Hasidim celebrated and danced in the courtyard. He was in an exalted mood and his countenance was illumined with great joy. Suddenly he moved his hand as a signal that they should cease. They saw that his face had become pale and they were stricken with great fright. Gradually he recovered himself and cried out with great enthusiasm: "And, if a commanding officer of the army falls, is the battle broken off? Friends, continue your dance."

At that very moment his friend, Rabbi Abraham, had breathed forth his soul in Ulanov.
Often doubling as jester (badhan) at weddings and feasts, Naftali believed in music and dancing. To him, all tunes had a holy source and could open the gates of Heaven. The Rabbis of the Ropshitz dynasty used to dance to many a melody, sometimes for hours, at the conclusion of the Hoshanah Rabah morning service of Succot. Their tunes and dances had no ending, repeating over and over until the participants were spent.27

Together with Rabbi Naftali of Ropshitz, we must consider his disciples Feibush Hobnover and Hayyim of Tzanz. Of Rabbi Feibush it is related that he possessed such a fiercely burning desire to serve God that he fell dead while praying:

Rabbi Feibush Hobnover was possessed of a burning desire to serve the Lord. Once he slept in the Ropshitzer’s House of Study. The Ropshitzer told his other Disciples: "Watch and you will see him awake at the dot of midnight to perform the 'Midnight Service.'" At the stroke of twelve, Rabbi Feibush awoke, tore at his collar, and began to shout: "Oh Mother, I am burning."

Later the Hobnover became a Disciple of the Apter. The Ropshitzer regretted this, and said to his intimates: "Feibush is a consuming flame; I strove to cool him a little; but the Apter himself is fiery, and will increase the conflagration." Shortly after, the Hobnover fell dead while praying. His heart could not endure his burning ecstasy.28

As for Hayyim of Tzanz, he admitted that in learning there was nothing in the world but the Torah, and in praying nothing but service. A master in Talmudic debate as well as in ecstasy, Reb Hayyim stood in prayer, light
seeming to radiate from him. He forgot the world around him. He even forgot his ailing foot, stamping it on the floor in his fervor until it bled. In this way did he pour out his heart before his Father:

In his youth Rabbi Hayyim Zans was a disciple of the zaddik of Roptchitz. His fervor in praying was so great that he stamped on the floor with both feet. But one foot was lame. Once when the zaddik's wife had watched Hayyim pray, she went to her husband and said: "What a heartless person you are! Why do you let him pound the floor with his bad foot? Tell him to use only his good foot."

"I could do that right enough," answered the zaddik, "if, in praying, he knew every time whether he was using his good or his bad foot." 29

In another legend Hayyim "paced" in a circle on the Sabbath while he sang a song of yearning for the Divine:

... There was Rabbi Hayyim of Zans, for example, who on a Friday evening, when he had paced around the platform in the synagogue seven times, would sing the rabbi of Kalev's song of yearning for the reunion with the "bride," the Divine Presence, until "his bodily strength failed him, because of the vehemence of his ecstasy." 30

Like Moshe Leib of Sassov, Reb Hayyim lived in an extremely frugal fashion, distributing to the poor all of his money. He became well known for his generous charities and his deep knowledge of human nature. It is told:

A bride gave a dance in Tzanz. The Rabbi's daughter asked him for money with which to purchase new shoes, but the Rabbi refused to give it. He noticed, however, that her companion ... wore old shoes, and he asked her: "Are you invited to the dance?" "Yes, Rabbi," she answered.

"Here, then, take this money and buy your-
self stylish shoes," and the Rabbi urged her to accept his gift.

One of those present inquired from the Rabbi why he treated a stranger better than his own daughter. He answered:

"I know that my daughter's friend comes from excellent parents, yet should she wear old shoes to the dance, she will be scorned. But my daughter will be treated with deference even in old shoes." 31

Among the closest disciples of the "Seer," almost all of them upheld the doctrine set forth at Lublin. At the same time, however, there was an undercurrent of dissatisfaction in the air. The teachings of Lublin, which emphasized acts and deeds more than thought, contemplation and study, became unacceptable to the more sophisticated Jew who felt that a little knowledge of God and some speculation about Him could certainly not be harmful. Thus, the setting was created for the appearance of the Yehudi--and his followers David of Lelov and Simha Bunam--who revolutionized Hasidic thought in Poland and founded the School of Pzhysha.

Rabbi David, Reb Simha and the holy Yehudi had been, and always considered themselves to be, disciples of Lublin while the "Seer" was still living--even though they shared a different point of view. That they were still affiliated with the "Seer" can be surmised in the following tale told by one of the Hasidim of Lublin:

"After the middle of March, a few days before Purim, there came to us to Lublin, after a long absence, Rabbi David of Lelov, the Yehudi, and Rabbi Bunam. They were as merry as though
the Purim masquerades were already in full swing. After they had visited the Rabbi (the "Seer"), they gave a great feast for all who were willing to come... All of us—and many of the hasidim of Lublin were present—grew very merry. We drank and drank and sang gay and holy songs and danced. A hasid of seventy took off his shoes and lifted his caftan and leaped on the tables and danced between the candles and the glasses without touching any of either with his feet. In between stories were told... "32

The Yehudi—the "holy Jew," Rabbi Jacob Yitzhak of Pzyhsha—took up the spiritual leadership of Lublin even before the death of his Master, the "Seer," and moved to Pzyhsha. He emphasized the Northern concepts of thought, study and Torah learning while not forsaking the old ecstatic flight of the soul. Like the Besht, he did not pray at the prescribed hours, but waited until he was filled with kavana, the desire to pray. Absorbed in his devotions, he lost all sense of feeling and induced a trance-like state of ecstasy. The holy Yehudi answered a disciple:

"Do you wish to know what is proper prayer? When you are so engrossed that you do not feel a knife thrust into your body, then you are offering prayer aright."33

At the same time he preached a delight in the Sabbath that often shone forth through the joyous dance. Said he:

"It is almost impossible not to desecrate the Sabbath in a minor fashion, unless one were tied hand and foot. But this would prevent the 'Delight of the Sabbath.'"34
The Yehudi's contemporary was David of Lelov, who was not only an intimate friend and relative by marriage but the Rebbe who was instrumental in introducing the Yehudi to the Hasidic way at Lublin. Said the Lelever: "A joyful countenance is evidence of intimacy with the Lord." For a long time Reb David refused to be regarded as a Zaddik, in spite of the fact that he had numerous reverent followers who compared this modest man to King David, probably not without reason. They would swarm to him on the holidays, basking and dancing in his holiness. It is told:

For many years it had become a custom for the scattered hasidim who adhered to Rabbi David... to set out for Lelov prior to Shavuot, to assemble about a mile outside of the little town and then to proceed on foot, headed by a few musicians. When they reached the little forest just before Lelov, the musicians would begin to beat their cymbals and to play on their little fiddles, so that they could be heard in the town. The hasidim would then sing to that accompaniment and thus they all proceeded to Rabbi David's house. Here they would stand, playing and singing, until Rabbi David came into the yard. By that time it was usually after sundown. The people surrounded him with long, lit wax tapers in their hands and he interpreted Scripture with radiant countenance... Afterwards they danced, and this would often go on until dawn. Finally the Rabbi would address to them the greeting of peace, whereafter they all drank L'hayvim, "to life," and with rejoicing they conducted him back to his door.

Upon the death of the Rabbi of Lelov, it was Simha Bunam who comforted the Yehudi, whose loss was a deep one. Rabbi Simha Bunam of Pzhyscha was the favorite disciple of
Jacob Yitzhak and, eventually, his true successor. He emulated his Master in thought and deed and became renowned for his amazing wit and wisdom. In his service to the wealthy Bergezon family, he often traveled to Danzig and Germany where he became familiar with many European languages and secular knowledge—a rare occurrence among the Hasidim of those days. In truth, he was not a Rabbi, but a certified druggist. Yet, Hasidim flocked to him all the same and he endeavored to continue the tradition of Pzhysha. On New Year's Day when he had returned to his home after the service, Bunam told the following parable to his Hasidim who were waiting for him:

A king’s son rebelled against his father and was banished from the sight of his face. After a time, the king was moved to pity his son's fate and bade him be sought out. It was long before one of the messengers found him, far from home. He was at a village inn, dancing barefoot and in a torn shirt in the midst of drunken peasants.

The courtier bowed and said: "Your father has sent me to ask you what you desire. Whatever it may be, he is prepared to grant your wish."

The prince began to weep. "Oh," said he, "if only I had some warm clothing and a pair of stout shoes!"

"See," added Rabbi Bunam, "that is how we whine for the small needs of the hour and forget that the Divine Presence is in exile!" 37

Just as the Great Maggid had formulated the doctrine of the Besht, so Simha Bunam interpreted the ideas of the Yehudi—and the Great Maggid. Said he:

We may learn three things from the child in serving the Lord. First, the child is always happy at being alive. Second, the child is
always active. Third, the child always cries for anything he wishes. In the same fashion, we should serve the Lord in a joyful mood; we should always be zealous to perform the Lord's commands; we should tearfully implore the Lord to fulfill our aspirations.38

Once Rabbi Bunam began seriously to teach, his teaching became his most vital function—one he discharged with a strong sense of responsibility. He shook and revolutionized the entire lives of the young men who arrived from everywhere, begging permission to remain close to him, to attach themselves to him. Out of his school came the important leaders of later generations—Menahem Mendel of Kotzk, Yitzhak of Vorki, Yitzhak Meir of Ger, Hanokh of Alexander. Then, there were others, whose courts still persist to this very day.
NOTES TO CHAPTER V


2. Buber, Tales: Later Masters, p. 91.
   See also Wiesel, Souls, pp. 166-167.

3. Ibid., p. 90.

4. Ibid., pp. 90-91.

   According to the writings of Jacob Joseph of Polnoye (Dresner, pp. 157-158): "'Weep ye not for the dead,' that is, for the zaddik who actually dies. . . . For to the contrary, the actual death of the zaddik is called a 'hilulla,' a time of joyous festivity, because he goes from this vale of sorrows to the tranquility of the next world. . . ."

   Buber writes (p. 27) that "Rabbi Yisakher Baer of Radoshitz was known far and wide as a miracle worker and especially famed for his miraculous cures. Chief among these were his cures of 'dibbukim,' of those who were possessed by demons, and they even gained him the name of 'the little Baal Shem.'"

7. Ibid., pp. 94-95.
   Since it is meritorious to dance before the bride at her wedding, various Hasidic leaders and their followers had wedding dances of their own. A bear's dance was also performed by the Shpola Grandfather (see Chapter II).

8. Ibid., pp. 98-99.


13. Ibid., p. 283.
   See also the same tale in Martin Buber, For the Sake of Heaven, translated by Ludwig Lewisohn (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1946), p. 79 and Wiesel, Souls, p. 131.


15. Ibid., p. 205.
   For a discussion of the significance of the Hasidic dance around the table, see Wertheim, pp. 103-109.

16. Ibid., p. 123.

17. Ibid., p. 137.

18. Ibid., pp. 140-141.

19. Ibid., p. 198.


   For a similar version, see Buber, Tales: Early Masters, p. 309.

23. Ibid., p. 185.


25. Buber, For the Sake, pp. 298-300.
   Citing Mintz, p. 180:

   "The Lubliner Rebbe, the Rimanover Rebbe and the Mezhibezher Rebbe made a pact between them that the three force the Meshiah to come. They set a date on Simhes Toyreh, in the year 5575 (1814).

   Suddenly, before Rosh Hashoneh, the Mezhibezher Rebbe took sick and passed away twenty-two days before Simhes Toyreh. I don't remember what the Rimanover Rebbe did. And the Rebbe of Lublin didn't know the first passed away. He did his part on Simhes Toyreh—he was dancing with the Torah. There was a small window on
the upper floor where he met his hasidim. He went up in the room and closed the door. He was there for hours and hours. The hasidim didn't know what happened. Then they heard yelling in the courtyard. They ran out there, and he was hurt.

'While praying my part,' he said, 'Someone took me by the arm and pushed me through the window. I would have been killed, but the Mezhibezher Rebbe came and spread out his talis like a net and caught me so the fall was not so hard. Then I knew that he was dead. If I knew it before that, I never would have started.'

After that time the Lubliner Rebbe took sick and died on the ninth day of Av, the day when the Temple was destroyed."

This legend was told by a contemporary factory worker from the court of Satmar. It appears that he has confused the Mezhibezher Rebbe (Baruch of Medziboz) with Israel of Koznitz. For another version of the tale, see Wiesel, Souls, p. 139.


See also Buber, Tales: Later Masters, p. 197.

27 See Pasternak, II, p. 18.


29 Buber, Tales: Later Masters, p. 208.

See also duplicate tale in Newman and Spitz, Anthology, p. 328, citing Ohel Naftali, p. 110.

30 Ibid., p. 18.

31 Newman and Spitz, Anthology, p. 305, citing Midor Dor, by M. Lipson (Tel Aviv, 1929), p. 283.

For the same tale, see Aron, p. 221 and Langer, p. 190.

32Buber, For the Sake, p. 165.


According to Buber, Legend, p. 20, "Above nature and above time and above thought—thus is he called who is in ecstasy. The man of ecstasy rules life, and no external
happening that penetrates into his realm can disturb his inspiration.

Such an ecstatic or trance state is also described by Bourguignon and Oesterley in much the same way. Writes W. O. E. Oesterley, *The Sacred Dance: A Study in Comparative Folklore* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1923), p. 135: "... the body, temporarily emptied of consciousness, is believed to be entered by the god or spirit in whose honour the dance takes place."

The same tale may be found, as well, in Garvin and Cohen, p. 27.


See also similar version in Buber, *Ten Rungs*, p. 28.


See also Chapter IV, n. 20. The tale is also attributed to the Maggid of Mezritch.
CHAPTER VI
FROM THE SCHOOL OF PSHYSHA, RIZHYN, BELZ AND BRATZLAV

By 1815—with the demise of the three saintly leaders of Poland, just fifty-five years after the death of the strange and hypnotic Baal Shem Tov—a notable Hasidic era had come to a close. The battle had largely been won. After more than a century of open hostility between Hasidim and their traditional opponents, there followed a period of "ideological truce." By the end of the nineteenth century, Hasidism came to be a respectable partner to traditional orthodoxy, accepted into its Rabbinical associations, aiding in its struggle against the Jewish enlightenment (Haskala), Socialism, Zionism, and all modes of reformist, secularized practice and belief which interfered with strict observance. Hasidism had, indeed, become a part of the establishment and remained so until the days of the First World War—a dominant force, a major movement in Eastern European Jewry.

The Zaddikim now rested on their laurels as teachers and miracle-workers, their dynasties firmly entrenched. Spreading their doctrine quickly and successfully throughout Eastern Europe, they were accepted by the majority of Jewish communities. This was the time when almost every town and many a village had its own Hasidic court. Even the most remote little hamlet in Russia and Poland may
well owe its immortality to the Zaddik who lived there and adopted its name as his title. Though Hasidism had never so intended it, the title of Zaddik became a patent of nobility that was passed on from father to son, and some Zaddikim came to be the objects of blind, irrational worship by their followers.

Prayer and study, instruction in Hasidic doctrine and the celebrations of the community defined the rhythm of the year at the Rebbe's court. Those who were not among the Zaddik's "inner circle," who did not live in the village where his court was established, made a practice of spending at least one festival there each year. From these annual pilgrimages on the part of tens of thousands of Jews, the court was supported. Wrote Mintz:

In the later stages of Hasidism, each hasidic group evolved into a dynastic court (hoyz), comprising the Rebbe and his followers. . . . These courts were often like self-sufficient manors, with their own artisans, storekeepers and ritual slaughterers. The name of the village or town became the identifying name of the court and of the Rebbe as well (e.g., the village of Bobov—the Bobover Rebbe). The centers of court life were the besmedresh (the house of study and prayer) and the Rebbe's house. The court's economic life depended largely on the business and the donations derived from the Rebbe's visitors. . . . Some courts became famous for their talmudic learning, their system of mysticism, their majesty, their vigorous prayer, their restraint, or perhaps their refusal to concede a single point to the changing times. In subsequent generations the circle of influence of each dynasty centered in a particular region (Ger in Poland; Lubavitch, Karlin-Stolin, and Rizhyn in Russia; Belz in Galicia; Sziget in Hungary.)
Each court too had a corpus of oral tradition testifying to the holiness and profound power of their Rebbe. A body consisting of parables and symbolic legends which had once been but "naive improvisations" now attained to literary perfection in many circles, particularly in Bratzlav. In the Hasidic shtieblach (prayer houses) throughout the land, the Hasidim would gather after prayer to recount the miraculous exploits of their Rebbe, to drink to one another's good health, to sing and dance together in a bond of eternal friendship. The "new ritual" made dancing, as well as story-telling, a part of the everyday life of millions of Jewish people.

So it was with Kotzk and Ger, Rizhyn, Belz and Bratzlav. These small towns--focal centers of the Hasidic movement for more than a hundred years--produced unique personalities who moulded the lives of their adherents and lent a new brightness, a new depth to the Hasidic movement and to the Hasidic dance.

In Poland, the place of the holy Yehudi and Simha Bunam of Pzhysha was taken by their disciples, the founders and representatives of new Hasidic dynasties. The most popular among these were the dynasty of Kotzk, established by Rabbi Mendel of Kotzk and that of Goora Kalvaria, or Ger, founded by Rabbi Isaac Meir Alter. The former reigned supreme in the provinces, the latter in the capital of Poland, in Warsaw. Following the tradition of the School
of Pzyhsha, the Polish Rebbes resembled by the character of their activity the type of the Northern, or Habad, Zaddikim rather than those of the Ukraine. They did not keep luxurious courts and did not collect pidyon, gifts or donations of money made by their Hasidim. Although they agreed on the importance of melody and dance in the life of the court, they laid greater emphasis on Talmudic learning.

Rabbi Mendel of Kotzk was known for his sharp mind and brilliant scholarship. After the death of Reb Simha Bunam many Hasidim followed him to Tomashov. Reb Mendel was like an older brother to them, almost like a comrade, who instilled in them his ideas, his thirst for renewal. They danced, they sang, they studied together, sharing joys and discoveries, failures and longings. In truth, a spiritual commune was created. Later, Mendel moved to Kotzk, and to Kotzk his devoted Hasidim followed.

Prayer had as great a significance at Kotzk as anywhere else. Like the Yehudi and Simha Bunam, Rabbi Mendel did not always pray at the appointed hours. "In Kotzk," he said, "we have a soul and not a clock." Proper preparation was as vital as prayer itself, he maintained:

... Reb Mendele, ... --often did not say his "morning" prayers until the evening! Our prayers, you will remember, must be said not only with our souls, hearts and mouths, but with our entire bodies, with every single limb. That is self-evident. As you know, when we pray we stagger about in all directions, shaking ourselves and waving our arms. King David—peace be to him!--says in his Psalms: "All
my limbs tell of thee, O Lord!" This, Reb Mendele maintained, was the reason why we should pray as late as possible. Our limbs, he said, do not all wake up at the same time, and when we get up in the morning some organs of the body go on sleeping. We walk about, talk, eat and work, and these sluggards are still dozing within us. They do not wake up till the afternoon, maybe, or even not till the evening, when we are going to bed again. If then we really want to pray with all our limbs and all our organs we must be patient and wait till the evening. Naturally the people of Kotsk were in agreement with this teaching of their saint. . . . 2

Similar to a thief, said the Rabbi of Kotsk, is the person who makes the slightest movement that is not wholly honest. Some of the more noisy of his Hasidim who exhibited much flame and fury during prayer were without true feeling and without real introspection. The Kotzker claimed that they were "chimneys without houses, which give off a lot of smoke without fire." 3

He himself did not make even a gesture without premeditation and believed that silence was often louder than the strongest scream. It is told:

. . . The whole assembly was praying with fervor. Only Mendl, standing motionless in a corner by himself, prayed without moving his lips. This reticence, this implicit refusal, attracted Yitzak-Meir's attention. He became, and remained, Mendl's friend. [Yitzak-Meir of Ger.]

Mendl, a frantic non-conformist, has his own way of saying his prayers. His way is to remain silent. . . . 4

However silent and motionless the Rabbi remained during the year, he made up for it on Simhat Torah. On
the Festival of Rejoicing he "paced" and circled the pulpit, lifting his voice toward the Heavens as he carried the Torah in his arms.

A hasid told his son:

"Once when I was in Kotzk on the Day of Rejoicing in the Law, the rabbi paced around the pulpit with the scroll of the Torah in his hand, came to where I was standing, and said the verse: 'And in His temple all say: Glory.' Then I felt as though I were up in the temple of Heaven and heard all the angels cry: 'Glory,' I grew faint and I became a different man."5

Once, he observed his Hasidim dance with great enthusiasm on the holiday. He screamed at them, ever more vehemently, urging them to set in motion the very "wheels of their souls," to lose their balance if need be:

One Simhat Torah eve, the Rebbe watched his faithful dance holding the scrolls of the Law. "That's not the way to dance!" he commented, looking angry. To please him, they started over again, this time with more fire. "No," he said, annoyed, "that's not how one dances." After several more failures, the Hasidim froze into an attitude of waiting. And the Rebbe exploded: "Imagine yourselves on a mountain peak, on a razor's edge, and now: dance, dance, I tell you!"6

Of all the Hasidim of the Rabbi of Kotzk, his greatest disciple was Rabbi Hanokh of Alexander. They had once been fellow students in Rabbi Bunam's House of Study. It is told:

In his youth when Rabbi Hanokh of Alexander was living in Pzyshsa as Rabbi Bunam's disciple, it was his duty to act as congregational reader of the Morning Prayer in a house adjoining that of his teacher. Now he was in the habit of praying with vehement gestures and loud cries,
quite differently from Rabbi Bunam, who spoke with his characteristic composure even when he conducted the services for the congregation. Once young Hanokh was praying when the rabbi entered the room, and he immediately lowered his voice and stopped gesturing. But hardly had he done this, when he reflected and said in his soul: "I am after all not concerned with the rabbi; I am standing before God!" And instantly he resumed his stormy manner of praying. 7

Rabbi Hanokh always said that before becoming a disciple at Kotzk, no one had taught him that a Hasid was a human being who asked for the meaning. However, he developed in the teachings of Rabbi Mendel only the old, the original Hasidic elements. He interpreted the Talmudic saying (Erubin 54a), "The world is like a wedding," in terms of life. Every day someone else holds a different celebration. Men's fortunes change from day to day. Rabbi Hanokh told this parable:

A man from a small town moved to Warsaw. From a house near the one in which he had rented a room he heard the sound of music and dancing. "They must be celebrating a wedding there," he thought to himself. But the next day he again heard festive music, and the same thing happened on the day after that. "I wonder who the owner of that house can be," he said to friends he had in the city. "He seems to have a lot of sons he is marrying off!" They laughed at him. "That house," they said, "is rented out every day for the purpose of celebrating weddings. Then the musicians play and the guests dance. Because of this we call it the house of weddings."

And then Rabbi Hanokh added: "That is why our sages compare this world to a house of weddings." 8

Another of Rabbi Mendel's disciples was Yitzhak of Vorki whose son, also named Rabbi Mendel, carried forth the
Kotzk tradition for silence. Menahem Mendel of Vorki was known as "the silent Rebbe." For him, silence was not a rite nor an ascetic practice. For him, silence was a way of life. The Rabbi of Kotzk had called it an "art." There is no doubt that silence was his special kind of fervor--his special kind of dance.

Rabbi Menahem Mendel of Vorki was asked what constitutes a true Jew. He said: "Three things are fitting for us: upright kneeling, silent screaming, motionless dance."9

The teachings of Pzhysha and Kotzk left a permanent imprint on Rabbi Yitzhak Meir Alter of Ger, also known as the "Rym" after the initials of his title and name. He was a disciple in both Houses before becoming a leader in his own right, and combined their doctrines to form his own. In Ger, too, there was no emphasis on miracles and no acceptance of nishyon. The Rebbe was no substitute for personal endeavor. Wealth was no substitute for scholarship and piety. Like the School of Pzhysha, Ger combined the intellectualism and enlightenment of Rabbinism with the warmth, simplicity and traditions of Hasidism.

The "Rym," interpreting the way of Pzhysha, said:

They taught us not to utilize the visible organs alone, for they make only a slight impression. The more lasting and important is the invisible--that which is inculcated within his heart--thus extending and intensifying the religious ecstasy. The intrinsic hithla-habuth, indirectly affects the outer actions of man.10
In Pzhyscha, Yitzhak Neir found stimulating colleagues in Hanokh of Alexander and Mendel of Kotzk. He found, as well, a way of life ideally suited to his scholarly temperament. Arriving in Pzhyscha at a particularly opportune moment, he was chosen as one of five delegates to defend his Master Simha Bunam at a wedding in Ostilla. The doctrines of Pzhyscha had been misinterpreted, attacked. It was due to Reb Yitzhak's outstanding scholarship that he was successful in dispelling a great deal of the causeless hostility. In his debate with the Rabbi of Apt, he emerged victorious. At the wedding feast, it is told:

As the dancing proceeded, the Rym and his colleagues opened with popular Pshykhsar melodies, and, surprisingly, the crowd joined them. When the Apter rose to dance, he called the Rym, and taking hold of his hand danced a Hassidic dance, announcing to those gathered in the circle: "When we claimed in our discussion that the Sabbath awakens a spirit of song, joy, and exaltation, we meant this young Hassid who is 'all Sabbath and all holy.'" The Pshykhsar delegation were now assured of a complete and unequivocal victory.11

When Simha Bunam died, Rabbi Yitzhak Neir transferred his allegiance to Mendel of Kotzk and became one of his closest disciples. However, with the death of Rabbi Mendel, the "Rym" reluctantly accepted election as leader of the Kotzker Hasidim, establishing a Hasidic dynasty in Ger. In time, Ger became the most influential court in Poland. Its descendants can still be found in Israel and America.
to this day.\textsuperscript{12}

The court of Ger, despite its illustrious Zaddik's emphasis on scholarship, piety and ethics, would have been spiritless and lifeless without music, song and dance. From the works of the "Rym," one learns that to stand still in the service of the Lord is man's gravest downfall:

Text: "If you will walk in my statutes, and my commandments guard" (Lev. 25:3). [The Rym explains the use of the word telekhu, (to walk);] "It means that in the service of the Lord one cannot afford to remain standing still."\textsuperscript{13}

Sabbath at Ger was a welcome change from a life of struggle and tension. Thousands traveled to the Rebbe's court to welcome Queen Sabbath with prayers and joyous song. The Rebbe's service was far from cold, quiet or mechanical. The "Rym" himself would clap his hands, gesticulate and dance with joy as he prayed. Often he would rise at the Sabbath meal to begin a Hasidic dance, filled with religious ecstasy and zeal.

... "Dancing," said the Rym, "uplifts man spiritually." "The Hebrew words \textit{meraked} and \textit{rickud} are similar; the former meaning to separate the chaff, the latter a dance. Similarly rikkud, dancing, removes the crust of materialism from the spirit."\textsuperscript{14}

The attitude of the Rabbi of Ger not only reflected the spirit of the Sabbath, but added richness and joy to all the holidays, constantly accentuating the positive aspects of Jewish observance. Even in the face of personal
tragedy, he practiced the joy that he preached. The whole city of Ger was affected by the ruach (Hasidic spirit) emanating from the Zaddik's residence. One observer, in later years, remembered:

... The Hassidim ... came in throngs—literally thousands. There was dancing in the streets on various holy days, particularly on Simhat Torah when Jews rejoice over the completion of the annual reading of the Pentateuch. A city usually objects to over-boisterous and noisy tourists, especially if they become intoxicated. But not the residents of Ger, who looked forward to the ecstasy and joy created by the visitation of the Gerer Hassidim.15

In Russia, the court of Rizhyn (later, Sadagora) reigned supreme in the truest sense of the word. Rabbi Israel Friedman, great-grandson of Rabbi Dov Baer, the Naggid of Mezritch, rapidly gained fame as a saint and miracle worker, wielding almost the power of a Tzar among his adherents. His magnificent castle was always crowded with throngs of Hasidim, and his court held sway over the masses until the First World War. At the expense of thousands of poverty-stricken followers, he lived like a king, his family like royalty, in wealth and luxury. Unlike the way of Kotzk and Ger, he was the greatest and most impressive figure of classical Zaddikism. According to legend, the soul of the Baal Shem was returned to earth after forty years, reincarnated in Rabbi Israel. And in many ways the Rabbi of Rizhyn resembled his great namesake. Like the Besht, he was orphaned at an early age.
Life was his teacher; nature, his inspiration. He who does not serve the Lord with joy, he maintained, is forgetful of the Almighty:

"Strength and gladness are in His place" (I Chron. 15:27): He who wishes to attach himself to the Almighty, cannot be melancholy. He who forgets joyfulness, shows that he has forgotten the Lord of the Universe.16

As strongly as he advocated joy, so did he strongly oppose asceticism of any sort, believing that to afflict one's body was to endanger not only one's physical being, but one's soul as well. In his court, despair was raised to joy. It is told:

Once when the Jews were passing through a period of great stress, the rabbi of Apt who was then the eldest of his generation issued a command for a universal fast, in order to call down God's mercy. But Rabbi Israel summoned his musicians, whom he carefully selected from a number of different towns, and night after night he had them play their most beautiful melodies on the balcony of his house. Whenever the sound of the clarinet and the delicate tinkle of the little bells floated down from above, the hasidim began to gather in the garden, until there was a whole crowd of them. The music would soon triumph over their dejection and they would dance, stamping their feet and clapping their hands. People who were indignant at these doings reported to the rabbi of Apt that the day of fasting he had ordered had been turned into a day of rejoicing...17

In regard to worship, Rabbi Israel preferred that his Hasidim pray quietly. When he noticed one of them praying loudly and with many gestures, he said to him gently: "My friend, try first the quiet way." Although he himself
prepared to receive the holy spirit by prolonging the hour of his devotions until he was seized with fervor, he urged his followers to pray at the times prescribed by the Codes. It is told:

A number of young men came to Rizhyn from a distant town in order to spend the Days of Awe near Rabbi Israel. When they noticed that he did not keep the prescribed hours for prayer but waited until he was seized with fervor, they wanted to imitate him and also waited, though they did not quite know what for. After the Feast of the Rejoicing in the Law, they went to the rabbi to take leave of him. He gave them his blessing and said: "See to it that you do not delay your prayers, but say each at its proper time. I shall tell you the story of the man whose wife served him a dish of beans for dinner year in, year out, day after day. Once she was delayed and the meal was put on the table an hour late. When her husband saw the beans, he grew angry and cried: 'I thought that today you were going to serve me an especially fine dish, and that the cooking of it had taken up so much time because it required many ingredients and particular care. But I am not in the mood to wait for the beans I eat every day!'" With that the zaddik ended his tale.18

Rabbi Israel's special contribution to Hasidism cannot be found in books for he left none behind. Instead, he left six sons, each establishing a distinguished Hasidic dynasty in his name. The noblest among them was Rabbi David Moshe of Tchortkov. Tender and humane to all creatures, Rabbi David followed in his father's teachings the concepts of love and joy. His tales are filled with the message of ecstatic rejoicing, uplifting his Hasidim, binding them to one another, and to their Rebbe. It is told:
Once on the eighth day of the Feast of Booths there was great rejoicing at the table of the rabbi of Tchortkov. He laughed and asked: "Why are you people so exceedingly happy? Have you had a drop to drink?"

"There hasn't been time to drink," they replied. "We stayed in the House of Prayer for a long time, and then we came straight to the rabbi's table. We are just happy because of the festival and because we are with our rabbi."

"It is true," said he, "that the moment the people of Israel feel the least bit of revelation, they are filled with an overwhelming joy."19

"Once a new Torah Scroll was being dedicated in the House of Prayer." The Rabbi of Tchortkov "held it in his hands and rejoiced in it."20 Even the anniversary of a Zaddik's death to Rabbi David Moshe was a time for ecstatic joy. Explaining why the Hasidim celebrate this anniversary (Yahrzeit) with a joyous banquet, he said:

... "The soul of a Zaddik is of a lofty quality and does not require residence in This-World to exalt it. It is sent from on High to elevate other souls of lesser quality. But while the Zaddik's soul is within its body, there is always the danger it will fall into a lower status. Therefore, when its mission is done and the soul is liberated, it is filled with joy because it returns to Heaven in purity. For this reason we also joyously celebrate the anniversary of a Zaddik's death."21

In Galicia, Shalom Rokeah, disciple of the "Seer," became Rabbi in Belz, thus founding the famous dynasty which existed there until the early days of World War II. Shalom guided his followers for forty years. From the Rabbi of Belz one learned the importance of sincerity and simplicity. From the Rabbi of Belz one learned how to
pray. His followers observed him at his devotions and discovered true worship. For Shalom prayed with such intensity that phrases poured from his mouth with lightning speed. The Rebbe of Belz attached great religious significance to the dance. "I cannot tell you the reason for dancing on Simhat Torah," he said, "but I can tell you that all the prayers that did not ascend to God during the whole of the year will ascend to him on this day through these dances."22

The Hasidic House of Belz became, in time, a tremendous spiritual and social force which flowed over the borders of eastern Galicia and reached the Jewish masses in the nearby Ukraine, far-off Hungary and Czechoslovakia. Rabbi Shalom was a powerful leader and so were his first successors, particularly Issakhar Dov Baer. In the early nineteen-hundreds, a boy from Prague set out for the small town of Galicia to attach himself to Reb Issakhar and his court. His name was Jiri Langer. Jiri's brother, Frantisek, describes his return a few months later:

... My brother had not come back from Belz, to home and civilization; he had brought Belz with him.

... He said his prayers aloud, in a sing-song voice, running round the room in a sort of trance.23

Jiri himself describes his life at the Belzer court with the saintly Reb Issakhar, grandson of Rabbi Shalom. Sabbath at Belz made a particular impression on the youth.
People would travel for weeks, he recalled, to spend one holy day in the presence of their revered Rebbe. At dusk the synagogue would be crowded, all awaiting the arrival of the Zaddik. Finally, he came:

With long, rapid strides he makes straight for the bimah, or reading desk, and the strange Chassidic service begins.

"O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good; for His mercy endureth for ever."

It is as though an electric spark has suddenly entered those present. The crowd which till now has been completely quiet, almost cowed, suddenly bursts forth in a wild shout. None stays in his place. The tall black figures run hither and thither round the synagogue, flashing past the lights of the Sabbath candles. Gesticulating wildly, and throwing their whole bodies about, they shout out the words of the Psalm. They knock into each other unconcernedly, for all their cares have been cast aside; everything has ceased to exist for them. They are seized by an indescribable ecstasy.

Do I dream?—I have never seen anything like this before! Or maybe I have? ... Have I perhaps been here before? ... Everything is so peculiar, so incomprehensible!

"... Come then Beloved, come to meet thy Bride, let us hasten to greet the Sabbath!"

The old man throws himself about as though seized by convulsions. Each shudder of his powerful body, each contraction of his muscles is permeated with the glory of the Most High. Every so often he claps the palms of his hands together symbolically.

The crowd of the devout swirls and streams, hums and seethes like molten lava. Suddenly, as though at a word of command, all remain with their faces towards the west, towards the entrance of the synagogue, bowing their heads in expectation. It is at this moment that the invisible Queen of the Sabbath comes in, and brings to each of us a priceless heavenly gift: a second, new, festive soul.

"Come, Beloved, come to meet thy Bride..."
The service ends. The ecstasy is over, the mystic vision has melted... Now we are again in this world. But the whole world has been made sublime. Joy sparkles in the people's eyes. There is a festive, carefree atmosphere—the peace of the Queen Sabbath. 24

Among the entire Belzer dynasty, many a Zaddik from Reb Shalom to his present-day successors was widely known as a worker of miracles, a healer of men sick in mind or body. Rabbi Aaron, the fourth in line, who settled in Israel after losing his entire family in the Nazi holocaust, was known for his great powers in healing victims of hysteria and schizophrenia. Many Jews, as well as non-Jews, turned to him when such illnesses occurred in their families. According to Hasidic tradition:

There is a story about the Belzer Rov in Israel. A Yemenite woman started screaming. I don't know the case exactly, but they heard a voice in her. It was talking. And they took her to the Belzer Rov. And the Belzer Rov went out into the yard and he chased the dybbuk out. That was one story that was just recently. 25

The dynasty of Belz continues to this day in Israel and in America.

Rabbi Nachman of Bratzlav—poet, rebel and genius—was a figure quite apart from the rest of Podolian Hasidism. Zaddik and dreamer, Nachman was a great-grandson of the Besht, but was far too original to repeat his teachings, or the teachings of his disciples. Thus, he was obliged to begin afresh, to create his own unique prayer:
Master of all the worlds, Fountainhead of all happiness, . . .
Help me to immerse my meditations and all the impulses of my heart, and the depths of my thought in the mysteries of joy. . . .
And grant, O my creator,
That I believe with complete faith that all fires of suffering
And all the nine measures of destitution and illness and pain, and the heaps of trouble in this world, and punishment in the next world, and
All the deaths—
That they are as nothing;
As absolutely nothing
As absolutely nothing
Against the wondrous joy of clinging to Thy Godliness,

. . . .
And give strength to strengthen myself in spite of everything—
To strengthen myself with great happiness,
With happiness that has no end,
Until my heart lifts up my hands to clap, to clap, to clap, and my legs to dance until
the soul swoons, swoons, swoons.
And help me ever to make a new beginning and to be a flowering well of Torah and Prayer,
To work always with quickened spirit,
And to stand with powerful strength against the scoffers and mockers,
Who go about in our days—days of double darkness. . . .
But oh, against all the troubles and burdens, Thy joys, and Thy delights, are strong and powerful. . . .
On our great Father, home of delights and wellspring of joy. 26

Bratzlav became the center of a new Hasidism, a new doctrine essentially different from the other Hasidic teachings. Hundreds of Hasidim left their former comrades and went to Bratzlav, a town which became to them the "Holy of Holics."
Young and enthusiastic, Nachman sought to call back the original vigor of Hasidism. In his intimate circle, he was wont to preach, or rather to meditate aloud, on the reign of the spirit, on the communion of the Zaddik with his flock in religious ecstasy. Nachman taught that the Zaddikim resemble their Creator. However, in contrast to the Rabbi of Rizhyn, one senses an obvious concern for the spiritual aspects of Zaddikism in his remarks. As of the first Master of Hasidism, so of the last, he spoke in epigrams. His sayings took shape and blossomed forth beyond teaching into fables, folk tales and legends, so that we possess no genuine, direct message. He was the first real storyteller of the Hasidim.

Nachman's expressed contempt for the contemporary Zaddikim on the one hand, and his exaggerated praise of himself on the other, led to a great deal of ill feeling. It started a controversy and a movement against him. In the tradition of the Besht, the Rabbi of Bratzlav repeated a famous parable to his Hasidim:

... "We... are like a musician who plays and the people around him are dancing,—those who do not understand the beauty of the music cannot contain themselves for astonishment. Why are the people running after the musician, why are they dancing? And in the same way they cannot understand why you are running after me." 27

Out of the fragmentary reports of his disciples, who noted down his speeches, talks and narratives and described his life, we are able to construct a somewhat
incomplete image of Reb Nachman's reality, his ecstatic vision.

"There is no such thing as despair!" cried Rabbi Nachman. "One must not despair! I implore you, do not despair!" A great joy had been kindled within him... he bid them strike up the song, "I will sing praises"... "Thus we have seen," the disciple writes in his narrative, "how God's concealment is transformed into grace."28

Nachman's prayers were self-forgetful, filled with ecstatic rejoicing. They poured forth from his throat and entered into his limbs. Said the Bratzlaver:

"Praying in a loud tone of voice brings feeling into all of your limbs. Through joy will your prayer enter the Palace of God. He who prays with all his strength will be heard. Before prayer let your soul cleave to your Maker. A joyful prayer has a sweet fragrance to God. A man can offer more adequate prayer if his eyes are turned Heavenward. Forget everybody and everything during your worship. Forget yourself and your needs. Forget the people of whom you have need. Then in truth you may worship the Lord. Feel your words in all your bones, your limbs, and your nerves.

... just as your fervor arouses a similar fervor in your fellow-worshipper, so it arouses fervor in yourself again and again. If you feel no joy when you are beginning your prayers, compel yourself to be joyful, and real joy will follow. A joyful melody is of genuine aid."29

Rabbi Nachman was wont to say: "We captured Bratzlav with song and dancing."30 Through music and dance, the Rabbi dispelled the heavy clouds of sorrow that overcast the Jewish skies at the time. Melody occupied
a very important place in his life. He found in it the essence of all thought. He discovered melody in the whole universe, in every man's soul:

... "Nature is saturated with melody, heaven and earth are full of song. The man who hears this melody becomes purified and inspired to lead a new life, especially if he can understand also the dance, which produces a complete harmony through its rhythm. Every limb of the body contains in itself a rhythm which corresponds to the rhythm of the melody. There is a rhythm in the movement of the head, in the movement of the whole body, of the feet and so forth, all according to the rhythm in the melody. The melody appears more complete if it is fitted with words, because the rhythm of verses in combination with the melody produces a harmony. How splendid it is to hear this and to see it supplemented by dancing."31

Among all the Zaddikim there was no one like Rabbi Nachman, so enthusiastic about melody, song and dance. He held, moreover, that "the root of all blessings is to be attained only through dances."32 Nathan of Nemirov, the Rabbi's personal scribe who recorded his tales and teachings, tells us that his Master often used to dance while he sang:

He used to sing his own composition, and suddenly found himself dancing joyously to his own accompaniment. He who has not seen his dancing has not witnessed joy in his life.33

Said Nathan of a Hasidic dance in which he had participated: "I danced with the soul, and the heart carried my feet."34

Though Rabbi Nachman met an early death in 1810, he lives on in the memories of his disciples. They, in turn, are called the "Dead Hasidim," for Nachman left no
successor. Yet, his followers speak of him as they would of a man who is alive and always among them. Most who survived the horrors of World War II journeyed to Israel and America, where they remain today, cheerful, happy Hasidim. Weiner writes about his visits to their synagogue in Jerusalem:

... I was no longer disturbed by the shouted phrases, heavy sighs, and occasional outbursts of clapping which punctuated Bratzlaver prayer. It now appeared obvious to me that such bodily expressions of feeling were more natural than the inhibited schoolboylike recitation with which most of us are familiar. Long before William James, Hasidim had discovered that outer physical expressions stimulate inner feeling, hence, the fervent weaving and bending of the body during prayer and study.

... Since the service also contains many formulae which the congregation must pronounce together, the total effect resembles the style of a gifted jazz band where individual variations and improvisations alternate with moments of orchestrated unity. I had also come to enjoy the perhaps therapeutic release offered by the simple dance which concluded every service, ... 35

On Sabbath mornings Weiner recalls participating in the quiet dance which closed every prayer session. He remembers listening after services to the weekly readings from Rabbi Nachman's thirteen stories, which Bratzlaver Hasidim study all their lives. Relates Weiner:

The "collected teachings" of Rabbi Nachman ... reminded the rabbi about the time a Jew in Russia made a wager with his comrades that their rebbe could not, despite his claim, always distinguish a Jew from a non-Jew. To prove his point, a Hasid dressed up a bearded non-Jew in the broad-brimmed hat and long cloak worn by Jews, then sat him at the table
during the third meal of the Sabbath. After
the meal, everyone said the postmeal blessings.
The non-Jew followed his instructions to look
at his prayer-book and pretend to join them.
Later, the rebbe asked who had invited the

gov.
"How did you know?" asked the Hasidim.
"By the fact that he didn't move when he
said his prayers," the rebbe answered. "A
Jew can always be distinguished by the fact
that he is physically moved by a Jewish word.
A Jew is not a stone." It seemed to me that
Reb Eliyahu looked toward me as he concluded
the story, as if replying to the criticism
often made of the gyrations that accompany
Hasidic prayer.36

Thus, the Hasidim still recount the tales of their
saintly Zaddikim. They still sing and dance with body and
soul at prayer and feast wherever they may abide. Implicit
in their faith, enthusiastic in the service of their
Maker, they fulfil the precepts of Judaism with a special
fervor, with a special sense of grace, with an extra
measure of wholeheartedness. The Hasidim have kindled
a torch that will never be extinguished. To this day we
are sustained by their soaring ecstasy and joyous, radiant
dance, left-overs, as it were, from the Grand Festival,
the Golden Era of Hasidism.
NOTES TO CHAPTER VI

1Mintz, Legends, p. 28.

2Langer, pp. 254-255.
   See also Rabinowicz, World, p. 116 and Aron, p. 254.

3Steinmann, p. 197.

4Wiesel, Souls, p. 240.

5Buber, Tales: Later Masters, p. 274.

6Wiesel, Souls, pp. 235-236.
   See also Aron, p. 254.

7Buber, Tales: Later Masters, p. 312.

8Ibid., p. 314.
   See also Rabinowicz, World, p. 145.

9Ibid., p. 302.

10Lipschitz, p. 123, citing Torath Hiddushei Ha-Rym, by Yitzhak Meir Alter of Ger, p. 29.
   To an even greater extent than his Master, Simha Bunam, the Gerer placed reason above ecstatic prayer.
   See also Newman and Spitz, Anthology, p. 477, citing Ramathaim Tzofim, by S. Shinaver (Warsaw, 1881), ii, 58.


13Lipschitz, p. 290, citing Otsar Hamahshavah Shel HaHasiduth, by Samson Weiss (Tel Aviv, 1949), p. 43.

14Ibid., pp. 168-170, citing Ramathayim Tzofim, by Samuel Shinvar, p. 76.
15 Ibid., p. 62.

16 See Aron, p. 213 and Rabinowicz, World, p. 121.

17 Buber, Tales: Later Masters, p. 55.

18 Ibid., p. 64.
   See also Rabinowicz, World, p. 123.
   Says Rabinowicz in Guide, p. 120-121:

   "Yet there were Zaddikim (like the Rizhyner
   and the Sadagurer) who were calm... in their
   worship. 'There are Zaddikim,' it was said,
   'who serve God with all their limbs and there
   are Zaddikim who fear God so much that they
   are terrified to move as much as a muscle during
   the service.'"

19 Buber, Tales: Later Masters, pp. 77-78.
   See also Newman and Spitz, Maggidim, p. 201,
   citing Mekor Baruch, by R. Margulies, publisher (Lwow,
   1931), p. 28.

20 Ibid., p. 76.

21 Newman and Spitz, Maggidim, p. 242, citing Mekor
   Baruch, by R. Margulies, p. 49.

22 Rabinowicz, World, p. 198.

23 Langer, xv.

24 Ibid., pp. 6-7.
   This dynamic pattern is common to most ecstatic
   dancing of the "visionary" type. Erika Bourguignon has
   written in Trance Dance, p. 22 and Oesterley in Sacred
   Dance, p. 135 that the dance may begin quietly and without
   any indication of what is to come, but the intention to
   increase it gradually to an extravagant pitch is there
   from the start.

25 Mintz, Legends, p. 301.
   A further discussion on this area of belief is given
   in Mintz, p. 132.
   According to Erika Bourguignon, this phenomenon,
   connected with the belief in the possibility of demoniac
   possession and exorcistic cure, involves evil spirits
   which cause illness and must be rooted out of the body
   by exorcistic rituals. This form of the ritual ecstatic
   dance is termed possession trance. The dance may be used
   in connection with the impersonating of these spirits as
part of the ritual leading to and including the exorcism in possession cults.


27 Horodedzky, p. 89.
For a similar version of the parable of the Baal Shem as told by Rabbi Nachman, see Martin Buber, *The Tales of Rabbi Nachman*, translated by Maurice Friedman (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1956), p. 28.


30 Steinmann, p. 53.

31 Horodedzky, pp. 96-97.

"Just as there are various movements in a melody, so are there also various movements in every part of the human anatomy which are suited to the tones of a melody, and every chozid who desires to understand a nigun must be able to dance to each tone with a different part of the body."


34 Aron, p. 277.

35 Weiner, p. 218.
Weiner talks to a young man in America (p. 193) about his preference for Bratzlaver over other brands of Hasidism.
"The others, for example, try to run away from their sadness and the work by a dance. But not us. We don't run away."

"What he means," added Rabbi Rosenfeld, "is that the Bratzlav way is to seek out the joy that is in the sadness—not to forget the sadness."

CONCLUSION

The study of man through his oral tradition as an accepted anthropological approach was established over fifty years ago by Franz Boas, who proved that the events, beliefs, values, and customs within a culture—the details of daily life—are reflected in tales.¹ For over two hundred years a rich oral tradition of tales and legends has flourished within the Hasidic culture, first in Eastern and Central Europe and now among the Hasidim who have emigrated to Israel and to the United States. Embodying Jewish traditions, beliefs and customs, the tales reflect the vital role which dance has played within the Hasidic world.

This, in itself, is proof of the existence of the ecstatic dance as a part of religious ritual and joyous festivity—from the first Master of Hasidism to the present Masters of the movement. However, there is further proof in the eighteenth century polemical literature of the Misnagdim as well as in the twentieth century participant observations of Weiner and others. Thus, historical fact and contemporary observations substantiate and broaden our knowledge of the Hasidic dance as drawn from tale and parable.

From the life and legends of the people, the development of the dance as worship and supreme joy, in exor-
istic rite and in trance, has been traced through the history of Hasidism. We have seen it evolve from the frenzied movement of the Baal Shem Tov to the "motionless dance" of the Master of Yorki. Analogously, the history of Hasidism extends from its birth in times of great stress and struggle through times of peace and acceptance as a part of the religious establishment. A direct relationship between the history of the movement and the development of its dance may thus be drawn.

Moreover, the Masters—the Zaddikim—have often had a great bearing on the nature of the Hasidic dance. Hasidism has been, and still is, governed by its Zaddikim, and the dance has changed with the personality of each leader. Within the basic philosophy and emphasis of a particular dynasty, its Rebbe alone determines what the dance will be like. However, not only have the personal characteristics of the Zaddikim, and their differences in philosophy and practice, served to distinguish the differences in their dance style. But the geographical environments from which the various Zaddikim have come may have influenced, as well, the particular form and style of their dances.

We have seen in the course of its development that the Hasidic movement branched out in two distinct directions. From the South came the "emotional school," the system of the Besht. From the North came the more
"rational school," the system which is chiefly known as Habad. Whereas a more lively dance quality is characteristic of the first, a more subdued, pensive, introspective quality may be discerned in the dance of the second region. Simcha (joy) is the predominant feature of the Beshtian School in the South, while devekut (union with God) is the principal characteristic of the Habad School in the North. Thus the differences in the ways of the Northern Zaddikim and their Southern counterparts have come forth in their movement.

Generally speaking, the dance has been seen in its multiple forms as expressive of ecstasy. Religion, art and medicine have all intermingled here. In the ecstatic dance of prayer, the Hasidim have striven to attain mystic states, to see visions ("visionary trance"). There is a heightened sense of participation in the mystic powers of the Divine. All proclaim one Spirit; all share in His power. As a further means of inducing joy, the Hasidim have danced at festivals and weddings, in rings and processionals--achieving a form of "collective mysticism." However, even this more social, secular type of dance has been rooted in religious ritual, in the communal bond.

During the trying times of Jewish life, and even today, the sole purpose of all of these practices--whether of prayer and devotion, of rhythmic singing and
dancing at feast and wedding, or other spiritual exercises—has been that of attaining Unity with the Divine, of achieving a state of strengthened hope, of a feeling of brotherhood, of salvation. The shared experience, the community, has been most important in lifting the dance toward the Heavens.

Quite a different use of the ritual ecstatic dance has also been pointed out in the case of "possession trance." This form of illness was believed to be caused by the demonic possession of a soul. The dance has been used in the exorcistic cures to banish the demons and often involved experiences of trance or dissociation.

In conclusion, ecstatic dance has played a significant part in the life of Hasidic society, as a means of inducing joy and Unity with the Lord, as a means of effecting exorcistic cure, and as a means of acting out the prescribed behavior during such states. It will remain for the dance historian of the future to evaluate in totality this unique phenomenon within a movement which is today thriving with renewed vigor in many Jewish communities throughout the world.
NOTES TO CONCLUSION

GLOSSARY

Badhan: Master of ceremonies and merrymaker at weddings and other celebrations.

berith (bris): The circumcision of a Jewish infant boy which normally takes place eight days after birth. This is a festive occasion.

beth-hamidrash: "The House of Study" In Eastern Europe this consisted of a room, a house, or a school used for study and prayer.

daven: to pray, customarily with a slight rocking motion.

Day of Atonement: Yom Kippur. The most solemn occasion of the Jewish year, falling on Tishri 10.

Dayyan: a judge.

dybbuk: The restless soul of a dead person which possesses a living man or woman. The concept appeared in Judaism in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Jacob Frank (Frankism): The most notorious of the pseudo-Messiahs of the eighteenth century (1726-91). Frank joined the Donmeh (Turkish for "Apostates") the Judeo-Moslem sect derived from the followers of Shabbetai Zevi.


gaon: An outstanding Rabbinical scholar.

goy: A non-Jewish person.

Hasidism: The teaching that evolved among the Hasidim; the movement espousing Hasidic teachings.

Haggadah: Literally "telling." The Haggadah is the book which tells the story of the Exodus from Egypt and is read at the family table on the first two nights of Passover.

Havdalah: A prayer which is recited at the conclusion of Sabbaths and holidays to mark the conclusion of the sacred day and the beginning of the profane time.
Hoshana Rabba: Seventh day of the Festival of Booths or Succot.

Kabbalah: Jewish mystical doctrines and their systems which developed in Southern France and Spain from the twelfth century on, and subsequently spread to Eastern Europe.

kaddesh: A prayer recited by the reader before and after certain sections of the service. It is best known as the mourner's prayer.

kiddush: A prayer and a ceremony by which the Sabbath and holidays are sanctified. The prayer is recited over wine and hallah.

kittel: A white robe worn by the officiant at the Musaf, Additional Service, on the first day of Passover, and the eighth day of Succot and by members of the congregation during prayer on the High Holidays.

kosher: Food fit to eat according to the Jewish dietary laws.

Ma'aseh Merkavah: A term applied to the principle subject matter of Jewish mysticism in the Tannaic and post-Tannaic periods. In Hebrew it means "work of the chariot," and it concerns Ezekiel's vision of the divine throne—chariot.

Maggid: The itinerant preachers who would travel through Eastern Europe, from town to town, and deliver messages of instruction and exhortation in the synagogues to their fellow Jews.

mikveh: A bath or a bathing place for immersion in water for purposes of ritual purification.

Minhah: The afternoon daily prayer. It can be recited from noontime until sunset.

Musaf: An additional morning service recited on the Sabbath, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Succot, Passover, Shavuot, and the New Moon.

Passover: The Festival commemorating the liberation of the Jews from their bondage in Egypt. The festival is kept for eight days from the 15th of Nisan to the 22nd.
Purim: Literally "Lots." The festival which is celebrated on the fourteenth of Adar in commemoration of the deliverance of the Jews in Persia from the hands of Haman.

Rav: A religious leader appointed by religious scholars.

Rebbe: A term applied to the Zaddikim and Hasidic leaders.

Seder: The "order" of the festive meal on Passover.

Sephardic (pl. Sephardim): A term applied to Spanish and Portuguese Jews and their descendents who, after the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492, settled in Mediterranean countries and in smaller numbers in Western Europe.

Shekinah: God's Indwelling Presence.

shohet (pl. shohetim): A ritual slaughterer of animals and poultry. He is licensed by the Rabbis.

Sivan: The third month of the Jewish calendar.

Succot: The festival commencing on the fifteenth of Tishri. It commemorates the wanderings of the children of Israel in the wilderness.

tallith: A woolen or silk rectangular prayer shawl with fringes at the four corners and blue or black stripes at the ends. It is worn over the head or around the shoulders.

tefillin: Phylacteries, two black leather cubes fastened to leather straps and containing four passages from the Bible written on parchment. They are worn on the left arm and the forehead during the weekday morning service.

"torah": The exegetical commentaries and teachings of the Hasidic Rabbis relating to the Bible, the oral tradition and to Kabbalistic literature.

Torah: The Pentateuch as well as the teaching of law in the Talmudic literature and the commentaries.

zizith: The fringes of entwined threads worn by Jews on the four corners of the tallith in accordance with Deuteronomy 22:12 and Numbers 15:37-41.
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Legendary Material


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APPENDIX

THE ECSTATIC DANCE OF PRAYER AND FEAST IN CONTEMPORARY CULTURE: HASIDISM IN BROOKLYN, NEW YORK, 1971-1972
INTRODUCTION

When I first began my study of the Hasidim, I plunged wholeheartedly into a vast store of historical and legendary material. However, after a short period of research, I realized that the endless rows of volumes in the library would never give me a complete picture of the ecstatic dance. It was necessary to see the Hasidim in action. Having come to this conclusion, I immediately phoned a friend in New York, the heart of the Hasidic community today. She suggested that I come for a visit on, perhaps, the most joyous of Jewish festivals--Simhat Torah. Caught up in her enthusiasm, I was on a plane bound for Brooklyn to view the Hasidim on the Festival of Rejoicing. The result of my field work undertaken during that visit of October 10-13, 1971, is contained in the following article and Labanotation sampling.

Inspired anew, I returned again for the holiday of Purim, and, once again, to participate in a Lubavitch Farbrengen (gathering) and several Lubavitch weddings. The photographs of Lubavitcher Hasidim which complete this study were taken during my last trip to Brooklyn, in March of 1972, at one of the weddings which I attended.

At this time I wish to thank the many helpful people who made my visits to Brooklyn so rewarding. The Benjami family not only introduced me for the first time to
the various Hasidic communities in their neighborhood, but lovingly taught me much in terms of Orthodoxy. I am greatly indebted, as well, to Rabbi and Mrs. Nissan Mangel for their helpful comments and suggestions, their great warmth and general encouragement. It remains for me to acknowledge the many members of Lubavitch for making it possible for me to attend their functions, and the many people at The Ohio State University who encouraged me to go to New York. I am most grateful for the encouragement and enthusiasm of Lucy Venable and Mary Jane Evans of the Dance Notation Bureau Extension for their help in preparing the Laban and undertaking the copy work of the notation.
THE HASIDIM DANCE ON SIMHAT TORAH

On the evening of October 10, 1971, the "Festival of Rejoicing" (Simhat Torah) began for Jews all over the world. Commemorating the completion of the Law (the Torah), the "Festival of Rejoicing" or "Festival of the Law," as it is often called, falls on the last day of the Succot or harvest festival. The end of the yearly cycle of readings from the Five Books of Moses and the beginning of the cycle anew is celebrated as the traditional seven circuits (Hakafos) are made around the reader's desk inside the synagogue. During each of the seven circuits, there is a feeling of contained excitement as the men of the congregation are honored by being asked to carry the Torahs. Only among the Hasidim, however, is the real spirit of the holiday kindled. In ecstatic worship their excitement mounts to such heights of religious fervor that body and soul are united and spirits break forth in the joyous expression of song and dance.

Such gaiety on the eve of the Festival is not an uncommon sight in Brooklyn, New York, where, after the Holocaust, many of the adherents of the religious sect moved—following their Rebbes (Hasidic rabbis or spiritual leaders) or joining another Rebbe if theirs had been killed in the war. A significant number also settled in Israel, but New York is now the largest Hasidic center in existence
with over thirty thriving communities of varying size in Brooklyn's Crown Heights, Boro Park, and Williamsburg sections.

Each of these Hasidic communities or "courts" (a group of Hasidim attached to a particular Rebbe) is part of a separate dynasty that goes back to a founding Rebbe in Eastern Europe. Moreover, each dynasty (and Rebbe, as well) derives its name from the particular town or area in which the founding Rebbe once lived. Tracing their antecedents to the "Baal Shem Tov" (the founder of the Hasidic movement) or to one of his disciples, the Rebbes wield an enormous power and influence over their flock, who consider their leaders to be unusually pious men (Zaddikim). They have passed down from one generation to another the basic teachings, social forms and rituals of Hasidism which unite all of the communities. But differences in philosophy and practice, as well as the personal characteristics of the Rebbes themselves and the geographical environments from which they have come, serve to distinguish one court society from another. Some groups are particularly noted for their intellectual bent, while others for their restraint, for their refusal to change with the times or for their vigorous prayer. Such variety of customs, along with some basic similarities, among three of the major Hasidic communities of Brooklyn—the Lubavitcher, the Bostoner and the Bobover—may well be reflected in the
form and style of their dances on the "Festival of Rejoicing."

At nine o'clock on the rainy Sunday evening of Shemini Atzeret, the large Lubavitcher "shul" (synagogue) at 770 Eastern Parkway was already aglow with holiday spirit. The best organized of all Hasidic communities, and also the largest and most influential court in Crown Heights, the powerful Lubavitcher movement derives its name from the town of Lubavitch in White Russia, home of the eldest son of Rabbi Schneur Zalman, founder of the group in the eighteenth century. The present Rebbe, Rabbi Schneerson, considered by his followers to be an infinitely intelligent, noble Zaddik, is a direct descendant of Rabbi Zalman.

That the weather was bad did not seem to stop the Lubavitcher Hasidim who came in droves to be close to their Rebbe on the most joyful holiday of the year. The women, although not allowed to pray with the men or to take part in the dancing according to Orthodox Jewish law, were no less enthusiastic. Relegated to the much-too-small balcony of the synagogue where they could see the men by means of a one-way glass window, they crushed together, perching precariously atop chairs and risers, pushing and shoving, sometimes to no avail, just for a glimpse of the festivities below.

The conditions of the men were only slightly improved. Hundreds were standing on risers which almost reached the
ceiling along all four sides of the room, and even more were packed into the middle area. All eyes were focused on the bima (the center platform of the synagogue) from which the circuits (Hakafos) around it emanated. At the beginning of each circuit, a new procession was made as a few Hasidim, garbed in their traditional long black coats, wide-brimmed hats and yarmulkes (skullcaps), carried the Torahs aloft single file, cutting a small path through the pressing crowds of singing men.

Although the Lubavitcher Hasidim usually dance after prayer, tonight (Shemini Atzeret) was an exception, as well as the following night (Simhat Torah), particularly during Hakafos when dancing with the scrolls of the Torah. At one point a dignified figure appeared from one of the processions with a Torah in his arms and a white prayer shawl completely covering his head and face. More space was cleared for him as he danced alone in a circular path for a few moments, his feet half-shuffling, half-running. Stepping briskly around he miraculously circumscribed the circle without falling until, exhausted, he disappeared into the marching procession of Torah-bearers.

Such displays were not frequent during the processions among the Lubavitcher Hasidim on the eve before the big festival of Simhat Torah. Perhaps, they were saving their energy for the following evening when their spirits must soar to the highest peak. However, contrary to some Hasidic
groups, the Lubavitcher are not known for their extremes of ecstasy but rather for their rational intellectualism, an important characteristic of the movement since its inception. That their joy was consciously controlled without sacrificing any of the "inner fervor" may have also been due to the crowded quarters which deterred them from more enthusiastic merriment.

With great difficulty the processionals of Hasidim managed to make their way slowly through the throngs, keeping time to the infectiously rhythmic music. Since there was little room for exuberant dancing in the central area of the synagogue, the movement was, at best, limited to a very small shuffling step, the feet hardly lifting from the floor. The knees bent slightly with each shift of weight, producing a small spring to the walk. Such a shuffle step appeared time and again—a recurrent theme in at least three Hasidic groups throughout the holiday—as the men danced in circles or in lines, in groups or alone, with or without their Torahs.

Accompanying the older Hasid and the Torah processionals, the crowds of men and boys sang niggunim (Hasidic songs) with spirit, clapping their hands and wagging their heads to the pounding duple rhythms. Most of the melodies that initiated the dancing were short, simple tunes, repeated over and over in lively fashion with an ever increasing tempo—some with words and some without. The wordless
variety seemed to predominate since they are considered by the Hasidim to stimulate a higher degree of ecstasy and religious expression. A single song continued until the completion of the Hakafa (single circuit) in progress, the Hasidim repeating the melody with increasing intensity and volume until the climax of the circuit (usually toward completion) and their fervor was attained. Voices then slowly simmered down, the melody dying out at the end of each Hakafa, only to begin again with another procession and another song.

Carried away by the strong rhythms and their own emotions, the crowd had a characteristic dance entirely different from that with the Torah. Packed together on risers and in the center area with barely enough room to breathe, the men could only move in one direction—up. With heads "yes-ing" and "no-ing" and hands clapping, rising higher and higher overhead, they bounced up and down, following their Rebbe's lead with spellbound attention. As the excitement became contagious, spirits rose and, likewise, so did the movement, until their bouncing became jumping which quickly generated such powerful rhythmic momentum that the floor shook.

On the fringe of the congregation was a curious mixture of generations as some young "newly religious" boys were encouraged to dance by a few of the "more seasoned" Hasidim. Most of the patterns and steps closely resembled those
performed at typical Lubavitch weddings. For example, a massive circle dance was in progress. With one hand, or both, resting on the shoulders of the dancer in front, the boys followed their elders. Moving with small shuffling steps in time to the music, they broke off from and entered into the circle at will. Often interrupting the pattern as the music gained strength, they formed several smaller circles, some performing the hora; others, a Russian kazatska and still others, a kind of pinwheel dance.

Beginning at a moderate tempo, the hora, a familiar Israeli folk dance which originated among the Rumanian peasantry, uses the grapevine step (a kind of side-back-side-front running step) followed by jump-hops or small balance steps on alternating feet. However, the dancers were soon whirling around at such great speed that their excitement reached a high pitch. Disoriented and ecstatic, they broke the circle. Another lively dance, the kazatska was originally performed by the Russian Cossacks where the Lubavitcher may have picked it up, subconsciously imbuing it with their own unique spirit. In the center of a circle of men, clapping and stamping out the rhythm of a particular tune, a few dancers bounced vigorously up and down, almost sitting on one heel while the other leg extended in front of them—the foot flexed and grazing the floor. With hands on waist or arms held straight to the side, their legs alternated out and in with each accent of the music. Indeed, the pinwheel dance "flew" as small groups
of Hasidim, with right arms linked tightly in a fixed center to form an imaginary axle, whirled around in rotary fashion with ever increasing speed, until completely losing themselves in the rhythmic power of the movement. Exhaused, yet spiritually lifted, the men drifted home soon after midnight for a few hours of sleep. Tomorrow, the eve of Simhat Torah, there would be none.

Throughout the following day and evening of the "Festival of Rejoicing," it is customary for Hasidim, after prayers (at kiddush), to walk from house to house, visiting friends and relatives, eating, drinking and singing with the utmost enthusiasm in preparation for the night's festivities. Many of Brooklyn's modern Orthodox congregations have been so strongly influenced by Hasidic customs which surround them that they participate in the celebration of the evening almost as fully as their neighbors.

In the "Young Israel" synagogue near Boro Park, such influences were truly evident. From the street one could hear the jubilant singing and clapping of the participants who were holding services in a small shul above a store front. They sang Israeli songs in place of the traditional Hasidic nigunim and danced the hora with such wild abandon that even the Hasidim would have found it hard to equal. The partition separating the men from the women had been partially lifted in order that the women could more easily view the Torah processionals. Even the young girls were
dancing a "typical wedding dance" in a corner of the
women's section; it looked somewhat like a modified hora
performed in two lines. Everywhere a spirit of joy and
good cheer filled the air.

In central Boro Park, near the Hasidic shtieblach
(prayer houses) of the Bostoner and Bobover, the celebrating
outside was incredible! Jews gathered in the street after
the evening prayers in numbers that the police estimated
at "the multiplied thousands" to rejoice in the joy of the
Torah. Filling the whole avenue and spilling over into the
surrounding areas, Hasidim--as well as other Jews, young
and old alike--sang songs and danced horas with unbridled
gaiety, talking among themselves or with visitors. The
street was unrecognizable, the crush worse than it had
been inside the huge Lubavitcher synagogue, and the evening
had just begun.

At about 11:30 P.M., festivities at the meeting place
of the Bostoner community were well under way. Located
on Forty-ninth Street in Boro Park, the Bostoner unit--
especially a small close-knit group--received its name
from its Rebbe who came to Brooklyn by way of Boston.
Most of its members appeared to be younger on the average
than the other Hasidic groups, and their piety was the most
informal and enthusiastic. Applying themselves to their
duty with gladness, they fulfilled the Hasidic commandment
of joy that night, drank beer and wine freely and even
joked during the **Hakafos**. Children were everywhere, running and playing about the room. Some of the younger girls were even permitted to leave the women's section for a brief period to be closer to their fathers.

In contrast to most of the young Lubavitcher Hasidim who comb their beards and try to wear more modern garb, the Bostoner appeared in the customary attire. Some wore earlocks (**peyos**) and a number had beards. There was even a **shtraimel** or two in the crowd. (A round fur hat sometimes made of mink, the **shtraimel** was once worn by Polish landowners as a symbol of their status. Supposedly, they were copied by the Jews who had worn them in Eastern Europe.)

Much of the excitement that evening, it was rumored, was due to the arrival of a few young Hasidim from Israel and Russia. Bursting with happiness and joy, they initiated numerous songs throughout the night, encouraging the others to pick up the tunes. One such melody called "Yosele" consisted of eight bars of music in rapid 4/4 time. Repeated over and over again while gradually building to a climax towards the end, the song got louder and ever faster. Naturally, it was accompanied with dancing.

Compared to the powerful Lubavitcher movement, the much less refined dances of the Bostoner were characterized by greater vigor, freedom and abandon. The smaller Bostoner community had a much less crowded **shul**, enabling more of the men to join the Torah-bearers during the **Hakafos** in their
processionals around the bima. As a result, a large circle filled almost the entire room as the men, some with Torahs and some without, placed hands on each other's shoulders and shuffle-stepped easily in time.

As one of the new arrivals danced along in the procession circle, he reached out to shake hands with the older Hasidim sitting along the sides of the room. With a mischievous grin, he occasionally succeeded in pulling a few of them off their feet and into the moving mass. It was not right that any member should be sitting out on such a joyous occasion. Those who managed to escape the clutches of the clever prankster and remained along the sides banged out the time with jubilant force on a table or chair nearby, as there were no other musical instruments to provide accompaniment. The jubilation was accented by Indian-like shouts and hand clapping as everyone yielded to the melodies, taking pleasure in each other's company and in his own high spirits.

Unlike the other communities, the Bostoner Hasidim seemed to possess a whole variety of dances in their repertoire for Simhat Torah. Moving more freely and more frequently during the celebration, almost the entire congregation performed the simple dances with a boisterous vitality and spirit unparalleled by any group observed that evening. As the rhythms built during the traditional Hakafos, a few of the men would break away from the large
circuit, spontaneously forming small groups or dancing in couples. Holding hands as they faced each other, or with hands on shoulders, twosomes spun round and round, their small shuffling steps transformed into lively runs.

Occasionally, the circle motif was abandoned in favor of more lateral movement. Still holding each other in the same fashion, couples would simply bounce from side to side, letting their bodies respond to the sway of the movement. As spirits lifted, sometimes so did feet, until the men’s bounces became hops. With bodies erect, their legs kicked behind them vigorously as they danced from side to side or as a rotating unit. A third person often joined in the fun, enthusiastically flinging his arms around the necks of his fellow worshippers. Then, all three, with arms around necks and heads close together, bounced and hopped, kicked and made merry as they pumped right and left or circled together, their faces flushed with ecstasy.

At one point later in the festivities, an excited Israeli Hasid jumped into the center of a dancing circle and started to sing a specific traditional melody which triggered the proper response. Immediately, a line dance ensued. As two facing rows of Hasidim clapped and stamped to the tune, the singing Israeli and his new friend skipped down the center path made for them and back to the top again. They proceeded in this fashion several times, stopping at intervals along the way to sing a new verse or
to urge the men to respond in the chorus.

That element of human contact—of spirits joined, by which, through sheer unity, all prayers might be lifted to Heaven—seemed to be most important in all of the dances with the exception of one—the Rebbe's dance. He alone performed a solo, circling around himself while stepping slowly on the same spot. With his long white tallis (prayer shawl) completely enshrouding him, his arms were lifted high in the air. His hands, now freed from the shawl, seemed to dance by themselves as he whirled around with ever-increasing speed. The Rebbe's dance marked the end of the formal processionals, but the dancing and merrymaking would continue well into the night.

At the synagogue of the Bobover Rebbe, who was originally located in Galicia, Southern Poland, but now lives only a block away from the Bostoner in Boro Park, the celebratory dancing had not yet started. Hundreds of bearded men, many of them displaced persons from other courts, were standing and seated in the sizeable inner area listening to and praying with their Rebbe. By one o'clock in the morning, however, the hakafos were already in progress and another round of singing and dancing had begun. At the Bobover celebration, as at other Hasidic places of worship, many men were wearing the shtraimel as well as handsome black holiday coats (kapotas) tied around the waist with black silken cording (gartels) to distinguish
between the "higher" and "lower" spheres.

Although it was late, many small boys moved around the floor or sat high along the wall, watching the festivities. Occasionally, a little girl or two, who had been mercilessly shoved out of the crowded women's section by the pressing, pushing hordes, was also lifted to an empty spot along the wall of the men's section where she could see the action.

Like the Lubavitcher Hasidim on the previous night of Shemini Atzeret, the large Bobover congregation, with nowhere to move, was bouncing up and down in unison to the tune of the Rebbe and displaying an inner intensity appropriate for the occasion. At the opposite end of the scale from the small, unrestrained Bostoner unit, the customs of the Lubavitcher and Bobover communities were formal and controlled. Perhaps the size of the community bears a direct relationship on the comparative freedom or restraint of its worshippers. But, in the case of the Bobover, other forces may have had greater influence, such as the break-down of the present Rebbe's congregation--few survived World War II.

Even so, the traditional forms of the Rebbe's dance and the concluding circuits that followed still remain and are uniquely Bobov. The custom of the Bobover Rebbe, who came to Brooklyn after the war, was to perform the first dance of each of the seven circuits by himself. After
singing a passage of prayer, he placed his prayer shawl over his head, then, weaving, danced in a narrow rectangle that the pressing crowd cleared for him. With a shuffling step, he proceeded to the bottom of the pathway, turned, and made his way back to the top again amidst the clapping, bouncing crowds of Hasidim. His dance was both of measured control and an almost glowing inner intensity. He seemed to glide as he danced, the image of one close to trance—completely uplifted beyond present time and space.

As if the ritual had been held with the same strict formalities for thousands of years, all of the men followed their Rebbe at the completion of the last circuit. With hands on the shoulders of the dancer ahead, "the whole house" shuffle-stepped into lines behind him in a very orderly fashion, filling the center of the shul. Gradually, the lines moved outward, forming, first, elliptical shapes within shapes and, finally, circles within circles, widening until they filled the entire room with dancing and almost threatened to extend beyond the very walls themselves.

At three o'clock in the morning, the celebrations at Bobov were nearly over. But rumor had it that the Lubavitcher Hasidim in Crown Heights were still making merry after carrying their Torahs—all twenty-five of them—outside the synagogue, dancing and singing in the street for over an hour.
At 2:30 P.M. on Tuesday afternoon, festivities at the huge Lubavitcher synagogue were slowly coming to an end. The dancing was nearly finished as a few men with Torahs, and some without, shuffle-stepped in the ritual circle—as if to delay the conclusion of the holiday and their own good spirits. Again, the pinwheel dance, characteristic of the Lubavitcher Hasidim, was performed, some of the men breaking off to form twosomes in the center of the circle. A few stragglers with Torahs entered the group sporadically as others, completely exhausted, left for home. In a last spurt of energy, a couple whirled around in rotary fashion, their hands on each other's shoulders.

In other parts of the room, some remaining Hasidim had turned into workmen as they noisily rearranged tables and chairs in preparation for the post-holiday Parbrengen (Hasidic gathering at which the Rebbe customarily speaks) which was to occur at approximately 9:00 P.M. that evening. Still, a few lone Hasidim, oblivious to the noise around them, rocked back and forth rapidly, praying with their last bit of strength in fierce devotion as the holiday hour came swiftly to a close.
THE DANCE DURING HAKAFOS: A COMPARISON OF THE
LUBAVITCHER, DOBROVER, AND BOSTONER GROUPS

Men's Processional (Shuffle Step)

KEYS:

\[ \begin{align*}
196 & \quad \text{= any number of people} \\
\downarrow & \quad \text{travelling forward} \\
\circ & \quad \text{in a file formation}
\end{align*} \]

\[ \begin{align*}
PF & \quad \text{= person in front} \\
T & \quad \text{= Torah} \\
\circ & \quad \text{= return to one degree flexion in the legs}
\end{align*} \]

BOSTONER (SHUFFLE) PROCESSIONAL

Key for Bostoner Shuffle \[ \begin{align*}
\text{\# to } \text{\#}
\end{align*} \]
THE DANCE DURING HAKAFOS: A COMPARISON OF THE LUBAVITCHER, BOBOV, AND POSTONER GROUPS

Men's Processional (Shuffle Step)

LUBAVITCH, BOBOV (SHUFFLE) PROCESSIONAL

Alternate Versions (Hold)

Ark

Bobov

Ark

Lubavitch

(feed into end of line)
THE DANCE DURING HAKAFOT: A COMPARISON OF THE LUBAVITCHER, BODOVER, AND BOSTONER GROUPS

Solo Figures: Lubavitch, Bostoner

LUBAVITCH

Bostoner

4 = 100-176  R = Rabbi

BOSTONER

Key for Bostoner Shuffle = # to #
Solo Figures: Bobov

\[ R = \text{Rabbi} \]
LUBAVITCH WEDDING DANCE WITH GROOM
LUBAVITCH PINWHEEL DANCE
DANCERS "LIFTED," BODY AND SOUL
HANDS RISE, FINGERS SNAP, FEET STAMP
CLAPPING FOR JOY