

Hasidism: Past, Present, and Future 7/13/05- Newton, Mass

* Beijing—who other thn big 3? Q: (Einst/Freud/Marx) A: Eins/Marx /Kissinger

* Early 80s, mr knowldgbl Isr reportr: whom I regard as 3 most imp't Js in world.

* I ans: “importnc” in J lp ~by how much ldr cares about all Js... concerned w all כלל ישראל. In that sense, my candidates=:

A) in polit, **Begin**: not only Likkud/ St-Isr, but...

B) In ת"ת, intellect --the **Rav**...not only M-O, but...

C) In relig—**Lub Rebbe**, not only own Hasm, but... World ldr to death 1994

Will concentrate on Hasm in general, not specifclly HaBaD or “the Rebbe”

None of 3=parochial; transcendd narrowness...yet dominant in 3 differt areas—
Begin-diplmtc scene, Rav-broad intellect'l concerns, Rebbe-purely rel lp

* **HASM**: Besht...gen atmosphr: econ/psycho/socly depressg; gap betw public/ח"ח"...
...מתנגדים; גר"א, phenomenl growth...

* How does Hsm diff'r fr past? Besht: only דרך חדשה בעבודת ה'

* Mitngdm—ldr=ח"ח; Has—צדיק, charismtic; בני חיי ומוזני, & teachg how feel/pr

* ST: diffce Hm/Mitngdm: Talmud ריב"ע=least/youngst discip's Hillel, yet עוף
פורה באויר נשרף...Has: How marvlous Mitngd: Who pays if bird privtly owned

* Much of Hasc spirit pulsates thru stories/music/art/bon mots of Hasc greats, but
there's much solidly intellectl-theologl importnce that=explicit>implicit. (TRTH...)

* Basic issues betw Has as new/growing movemt and Mitngdic establisht: ת"ח > דבקות;
ת"ח > צדיק; *Has group* > commy; *emotion* > int'llection (emotion→motion: shaking/
swaying; was radicalized early on: תל"ק (קייקלין זיך. תל"ק); כוונה (meditt'n) > מעשה (Besht:
“you are where your thoughts are”); joy (song, dance) > somber sobriety;
spontaneity > artifice & formality (R.Elimelech of Lizhensk: “Better die than say I
spoke beautifully”)

* earmarks of romanc>classic form:Hasc emphasis on subjectvty, כוונה, NOT mean
ignore/devalue Hal... But look deeply f untapped sp riches.

* So, sense mystery/depth in recvd txts:in Has as in Kab: פנימיות התורה

* **Zohar**: study Tor like peasant in love princess-tower-reveals,
conceals...*approach w love/patience*

* Thus, just as Tor is complex, multi-layered, so is – Man

* TNY עשר ספירות של הנשמה Thus internalize Sefirot, J version “Know Thyself”

• Hasm. How count השם as מצוה? **TNY**: משה ומסורת: Man=*Homo religiosus*. Hasm identifies inner soul, essence man, as religious

- Transcendence-Immanence....מלוא כל הארץ כבודו...לית אתר פנוי מיניה...
- Besht: "Holy Indifferentism" – שוית, ה' לנגדי תמיד –

* RHV – ת"ת<עבודה, גמ"ח – Has: all co-equal

* Thus: sensvty t humn condition: ST Alter Rebbe/צמח צדק/ baby cries

* Those who acknowledge a certain lack in their lives are searchg for a dimension of the sp'l. Our temperamental age has now come t realizn that our lives lack enthsm/passion/rapture; even those who=religy committd/observt find that their relig experinc=often desiccated/formal, fails to touch heart/uplift the spirit.

* Non-Hasc Orthxy has been makg maj mistake in not learnng from Hasm secret of שמה -pure/unadulteratd joy. Equally – any open expression of emotion, even sadnss/Breavmnt. We of Orthx Middle-Class are too stiff-upper-lipped to cry in the course of prayer – *we don't allow ourselves to cry even at a funeral!* – and so we=anesthetic: w-o feeling... ST of Besht hesitatg t enter abandoned – crowded w dead prayers...

* But Hasm should *nvr be confused w New Age superficiality*, ersatz "Kab".... Serious people will come t apprect that "spl" If, unanchord in law, unrooted in firm ground of sobr thought=ephemeral and, in long run, unsatisfying. They must manifest a respect for cerebation as well as celebration, that very ldrs this romantic/ revivalist movement in Jm recognized that passion cannot survive w=o profound thought, tht Hasm cann't be divorced fr Halakha, that Torah remains the major authenticating element in Jm--even one which raised intention and feeling to new heights of significance.

* Thus As oppsd to "modern" temperament, the negative has postv value..., Alter Rebbe on לכתך אחרי במדבר בארץ לא זרועה...DISCIPLINE

* Jsm – esp Has'm– calls on man t realiz that he=שליח, he bears indelible/ individl mission in world. He may not know what it is, so he must pursue it until he discovrs it, and then dedicate his lf/power to it. Man, for Hasm, is not a purposeless blob of protoplasm, shorn of distinction, deprivd of any transcendnt significnc as he wandrs busily but aimlessly on this petty, noisy, and indifferent globe we call the Earth.

* Man is not a human robot. Jsm: he is an angelic emissary of the One on High.
How do it? Hasm gives its answers, which I outlined. It is worth rediscoverg by mod man, even if not offcly a Hasid.

What follows is material I didn't use in lecture, but may be relevant for future use

... correct certain misconceptions about Hasidism that are part of the popular wisdom concerning this movement which has, in our own day, shown remarkable resiliency.

The Enlightenment considered it superstitious, a throwback to more primitive religion and, in general, an embarrassment to modern, educated, and Westernized

Jews. This biased view is no longer accepted by scholars. The twentieth century, after a halting beginning, learned to be objective about Hasidism... The very features that so repelled the Enlightenment writers now appeared more attractive and more worthy of study: its storytelling, dance, song, and its charismatic leaders. Existentialists claimed it for their purposes, and artists and scholars, each group in its own way, contributed much to its "rehabilitation" for modern Jews, and for non-Jews as well.

6. *The popular attitude to Hasidism contains both opposite elements-- approval and disapproval, commendation and condemnation. Whatever their views, too many observers have failed to appreciate the intellectual power over the last two centuries and more. These have been overlooked partially because of a language problem: some Hasidic thinkers created their own vocabulary; others were regrettably inarticulate. Yet others delivered their discourses orally, generally on the late afternoon of Shabbat (at the Third Meal), and their acolytes who later wrote them down were often distinguished by their lack of literary grace. Moreover, and perhaps most significantly, very few Hasidic masters made any effort to present their thoughts systematically. Habad was an exception....*

1. *Where I come from – TuM; Litvishe Yeshivas; Hasidic-type home (One Zeide-Belz; other--I studied Talmud/admired endlessly, a has 'c type Rav, eminent scholarly rabbi... ties w Hasidic greats his gen 'n, esp Sanzer dynasty. My parents' home, while not Hasidic in practice, was thus filled w lore/love of Has 'm--and a sensitive awareness of both its contemporary relevance and limitations.*