

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

\* Beijing—who other than the big 3? Q: (Eins/Freud/Marx) A: Eins/Marx /Kissinger

\* Early 80s, my knowledge of Israel reports: whom I regard as 3 most important Jews in world.

\* I answer: “important” in Jewish life ~by how much leader cares about all Jews... concerned with all of Israel. In that sense, my candidates=:

A) in politics, **Begin**: not only Likud/ St-Isr, but...

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

C) In religion—**Lub Rebbe**, not only own Hasidism, but... World leader to death 1994  
Will concentrate on Hasidism in general, not specifically HaBaD or “the Rebbe”

None of 3=parochial; transcend narrowness...yet dominant in 3 different areas—  
Begin-diplomatic scene, Rav-broad intellect’s concerns, Rebbe-purely religious

\* **HASIDISM**: Besht...gen atmosphere: econ/psycho/social depress; gap between public/ח"ח...  
...מתנגדים; גר"א, phenomenological growth...

\* How does Hasidism differ from past? Besht: only דרך חדשה בעבודת ה'

\* Mitngdm—leader=ח"ח; Has—צדיק, charismatic; בני חיי ומזוני, & teach how feel/practice

\* ST: difference Hm/Mitngdm: Talmudic=least/youngst disciples Hillel, yet ערף פורה באויר נשרף  
...Has: How marvelous Mitngdm: Who pays if bird privately owned

\* Much of Hasidic spirit pulsates through stories/music/art/bon mots of Hasidic greats, but there’s much solidly intellectual-theological importance that=explicit>implicit. (TRTH...)

\* Basic issues between Hasidism as new/growing movement and Mitngdic establishment: ת"ח>דבקות; ת"ח>צדיק; *Has group*> *communitarian*; *emotion*> *intellection* (emotion→motion: shaking/swaying; was radicalized early on: תל"ק; קייקלין זיך. *כוונה* (meditation)>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 romantic>classic form:Hasidic emphasis on subjectivity, *כוונה*, NOT mean ignore/devalue Hal... But look deeply for untapped spiritual riches.

\* So, sense mystery/depth in received texts:in Hasidism as in Kab: פנימיות התורה

\* **Zohar**: study Torah like peasant in love princess-tower-reveals, conceals...*approach with love/patience*

\* Thus, just as Torah is complex, multi-layered, so is —Man

\* TNY internalize Sefirot, Jewish version “Know Thyself”

• Hasidism. How count the שם as מצוה? **TNY**: Man=Homo religiosus. Hasidism 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"ה – 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 learng 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 ce**re**bration as well as ce**le**bration, that very ldrs this romantic/ revivalist movement in Jm recognized that passion cannot survive w=0 profound thought, tht Hasm cannt be divorcd fr Halakha, that Torah remains the major authenticating element in Jm--even one which raised intention and feeling to new heights of signficance.

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

\* Jsm – esp Has'm– calls on man t realiz that he=שליה, 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 transcndnt signficnc 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 rediscovrg 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.*