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"MATTER AND SPIRIT"
HASIDIC DOCTRINE ACCORDING
TO R. SOLOMON OF LUTZK.*

Introduction

R. Solomon of Lutzk (d. 1813) was one of the foremost disciples of R. Dov Ber, the "Great Maggid" of Mezeritch, student of the Besht and the leading expositor of the doctrine of the growing movement. R. Solomon was the author of his own work, *Divrot Shelomoh*. It is he who collected, collated, and published the teachings, aphorisms, and *derushim* of the Maggid, and gave the work its name, *Maggid Devarav le'Ya'akov* (the first word for R. Dov Ber's "profession," and the concluding letters of all three words forming the acrostic for *Dov*). This volume, one of the most important sources of Hasidic thinking in the early history of the movement, is also probably one of its most difficult works. Its comments are pithy, its style terse, and its *derush* often arcane. The Maggid did not himself write these "words of Torah." They are records of his oral discourses. Professor Rivka Shatz-Uffenheimer has shown that the author of the Mss. of these lecture-notes is one of the more well-known disciples of the Maggid, R. Levi Yizhak of Berditchev (Introduction to her critical ed. of the work, Jerusalem: 1976).

* This article is taken from a forthcoming volume by Dr. Norman Lamm on Hasidic religious thought, containing annotated translations of excerpts from the writings of Hasidic teachers of the first three generations.

R. Solomon prefaced two introductions to his edition of his master's work. Most of the Second Introduction is translated here. It reflects both the spirit and content of the Maggid's teaching, especially the reorientation of strictly Kabbalistic thought to a Hasidic mode. This brief excerpt touches upon some of the major themes that pervaded the religious thought of Hasidic circles in this heroic and remarkably fecund period of its growth. Thus, we are introduced to the concept of *devekut* (communion), Hasidic version, and the joy to which it leads; the importance of internality and the right kind of "pure" thinking (the Besht had taught: "Where a man's thoughts are, that is where he is"); the technique and content of contemplation; the concept of *tzimtzum* — the divine "contractions" in the creation of the world.

Perhaps most important of all, and the central doctrine elaborated in this passage, is the theme of divine immanence: God is present in all of creation. He is not only the transcendent Creator, but the One who sustains all creation (including the spiritual worlds) by inhering in it unceasingly.

This heavy emphasis on immanence (which should not be confused with pantheism, as has often been done; this is not the place for elaborating on this issue) took many forms — from the appropriation of recondite Lurianic doctrines, such as *tzimtzum* and especially the "elevation of the sparks" which fell from the primordial cataclysm of the "Breaking of the Vessels," to more traditional *derush*, to legend, and even to song and humor.

In this passage, Hasidic immanentism is presented in a metaphysical form: the derivation of mundane substances, properties, and affects from the "spiritual worlds" which, in turn, derive from the *En Sof* — God in His absolute self, beyond all relationships and attributes, name or description. This, in turn, becomes the pattern for proper contemplation. By meditating on this creative process in reverse, we regress from the world of matter to its root, the world of spirit, and thus approach the "Root of Roots," the *En-Sof*.

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Of all, and the central doctrine of Hasidism, is the theme of divine immanence: God is not only the transcendent One who sustains all creation (including the human being) in it unceasingly. On immanence (which should not be confused as has often been done; this is not the subject of this issue) took many forms — from the most radical Lurianic doctrines, such as the "elevation of the sparks" which culminated in the "Breaking of the Vessels," to legend, and even to song.

Hasidic immanentism is presented in a derivation of mundane substances, from the "spiritual worlds" which, in the *En-Sof* — God in His absolute self, and attributes, name or description. The pattern for proper contemplation of the creative process in reverse, we regress from its root, the world of spirit, and to the "Roots," the *En-Sof*.

Text

First of all, it is important to know that "the whole earth is full of His glory" (Isa. 6:3), and "there is no place that is empty of Him",¹ and that He is in all the worlds, etc. This matter can be sensed in everything, for in every place there exists the life-force of the Creator. Every object possesses taste or odor or appearance or love — that is, the object is beloved or feared or considered beautiful, and so for all other attributes. When we abstract [this quality] from its corporeality and contemplate only its spirituality,² such as taste or odor and the like, by and of itself, it will appear obvious to us that [the taste or odor, etc.] is intangible and invisible, and can be apprehended only conceptually by the life-force and soul of man. Therefore, certainly, it is a spiritual thing: the life-force of the Creator that dwells in this material object, as the soul does in the body. So it is with every object and with every motion, as is written in *Hovot Ha-Levavot*, that "all your motions are tied to the will of the Creator."³ In all of them there exist sparks of vitality drawn from the Creator, Who is the "Bond of Life" and the "Light of Life" and the "Source of Life" and the "Life of Life"; from Him is drawn the life-force of every object, from the highest heights to the lowest depths.

This is [what is meant when we say] that He contracted⁴ His *Sheh'inah* in order to dwell in [these] lower worlds. Every spark is derived from its own "world." For instance, an object of love: the love within it derives from the World of Love; that is, there certainly must be a source and root from which love is derived for every object which entails love. In order better to explain the idea of this "root," let us think of the spirituality of the root of love itself, as mentioned above. It is obvious that it is only the [undifferentiated] life-force of the Creator which contracted itself, as it were, in order that it be perceived as the quality of love. There is, as well, a vitality and spirituality that cannot be perceived as love, but only in some other category, such as fear or beauty or another of the attributes. All of them are [the divine] life-force and spirituality, as mentioned, but no