THE HASIDIC-MITNAGDIC CONTROVERSY:

Lessons for our Times (by your very of Disting of Shelors)

- 1. Introd: autobiograph'l--my interest in Has-Mitn controv'y: daven Rebbes, "Litvak," term paper Sanz-Sadigur, PhD thesis
- 2. Origins Hasm: post-Sabbatian Europe; Lurianic Kabbalah; Haidanek persecutions; Maggidim & מוכיחים; mass depression & demoraliz'n; BESHT; RYY; Maggid Mezeritch... by Vilna Gaon et al.
- 3. Some Basic Teachings (most --standard trad'l fare, but):
 - *Mood--שמחה, never ייאוש (sign incipient depression in leaders?!) .
 - *Inwardness-מונה יותר ממעשה (hence: neglect hal'c time limits; Yiddish in prayers; singing & dancing; even somersaults...)
 - *Devekut--experiential, not intellectual, as greatest value; again, >ח"ח (and in ח"ח--stress לשמה). Thus:
 - *Emphasis on Prayer--even > カ"カ
 - *Zaddikism--as center Has'c community--one which disting'd by אהבת ישראל
 - *Theology: immanentism--מכה"כ, ממכ"ע, לית אתר פנוי מיניה

4. Nature of Has:

- *Has's Self-Definition-- a new דרך בעבודת הי strictly w-i Torah
- *Mitnagdim-- a) Heretics (אפיקורסים); b) Sectarians (כת)
- *Cultural-Anthropological -- a Romantic movement

5. Criticism by Has of Mitn:

- *Neglect of המון עם distance betw ח"ח & people; arrogance of ח"ח-thus, RYY: שדין יהודאין
- *Loss of true religious experience-- Thus: Besht-השוכח דבר אחד-ממשנתו ה"ז מתחייב בנפשו; and Kotzk--, אלהי מסכה לא תעשה לך--(A.J.Heschel-- "sacred physics")
- *Arrogance of scholars (also: same criticism by RH Volozhiner!)

6. Criticism by Mitn of Has:

- *Antinomianism-thus: a) זמני תפילה; b) הרהור בד"ת במבואות המטונפים;
 - c) distortion of צ"צ) מורה לשמה agreed: if not for Mitn'c criticism, Has would have gone over deep end...)
- *Lifestyle-No Decorum-dancing; drinking; singing; Yiddish interjections...
- *Zaddikism as Idolatry--
- *Downgrading of n"n-became largely irrelevant as Hasm produced own great n"n
- *Communal separatism -- turned into כת, weakened
- *Supercilliouness of the Pious (=בקות (same crit'm -- by BESHT! --) ((בקות -- by BESHT! --) ((בא לשמה בא ללא לשמה)
- *Theological--over stressed immanence over transcendence (too complicated to go into now)
- 7. <u>Length of Controversy</u>--several generations, but gradually abated--until Ray Shach vs Lubavitch
- 8. What Caused Rapprochement?
 - *Simply: passage of time
 - *Common enemy: Haskalah, Reform, secularization, modernity
 - *They took each other's criticism seriously

9. Today?

- *Theology--Hasm hardly mention, and added very little that's new (except for HaBaD's misbegotten emphasis on Messianism);
 Mitn--don't know/care
- *Mood-- all pretty much alike--witness any wedding...
- *Inwardness vs Intellection-moved closer to each other
- *Talmud Torah-Hasm have largely accepted Mitn valuation--although some deficiencies in certain Has circles. So, here--Mitn prevailed
- *Antinomianism--hardly an issue-except, marginally, for זמני תפילה. So--Mitn influence won the day
- *Zaddikism--clear triumph of Has! RYs=Zaddikim... דעת תורה... And even HaBaD= personal & family direction;
- *Communal Separatism--Has prevailed: most Mitn equally opted out of larger Jewish community

10. Lessons for Our Time:

Caveat: always dangerous to read from one historical context to another!

In our own schools--

- *Study theology (מחשבה)--both classical & modern--in our own schools!
- *No neglect of fundamental experiential element (to wit: youth seminar successes)--but even in our own schools!
- *Continued emphasis on מ"ח as central value (and: social "glue"). BUT--Don't allow chasm to develop betw n"n & unlearned Jews...

In our own schools and throughout Jewish community--

- *No arrogance/self-righteousness --neither intellec'l snobbism of n"n, nor of the "super-frum"--even in our own schools!
- *Can tolerate certain בת properties, but not those that lead to turning back on כלל ישראל (Besht very strong on this) interior ty taly - a

The Internal Debates Within Orthodoxy--

*No חרמות or any form of shunning--is always counter-productive--and lower emotional temperature of debates within Orthodoxy.

*Be self-critical--as were Besht & RH Volozhiner...

Terms of the internal debates: Interesting "discovery" when doing my thesis: מצרף העבודה is reputed debate betw Has & Mitn--defense of Hasm-and is pseudepigraphic. Also, was plagiarized in work known as ויכוחא רבא.

What is not mentioned by any scholars is a further plagiarism, of ויכוחא רבא, in work called משיבת נפש. This little book contains an introduction not found in the other two, and in it the anonymous author lays down rules for true dialogue:

- (no contempt) לעזוב השנאה, כי השנאה תעוות הענין ומטה השכל
- b) להסיר כעס מלבך...דהוא סר מדרך האמת
- c) אל תבקש גדולה לעצמך (no triumphalism--or defeatism)
- d) שלא לאהוב את הנצחון, כי הרוצה בנצחון אינו הולך אחר האמת

אהבת ישראלי--esp as preached by Hasm, & practiced in very earliest Hasc circles--need to feel that all Jews are one family...