



The Hasidic Tale as a Historical Source: Historiography and Methodology

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Abstract

A review of the discourse on Hasidic tales reveals a persistent vagueness on the crucial question of how, precisely, historians should read hagiography. Can elements of certain tales stand on their own as historical sources? After a review of the current debates about the historicity of Hasidic tales, this paper introduces several historically oriented redactors whose collections constitute a rich repository of information about events, phenomena, personalities, and what most scholars would consider historical reality. Historians can mine these texts for solid information about Hasidism during its vital phase of growth, expansion, and crystallization.

The reader of Hasidic tales is inevitably impressed by the rustic, idyllic Jewish past conveyed there. It is a traditional existence, to be sure, but one infused with drama, earthy wisdom, and an egalitarian spirit that exalts the pious poor and chastens stodgy elites. This image of Hasidism was greatly enhanced in Martin Buber's famous renditions. By purging the gritty Hebrew and Yiddish originals of elements that might be unappealing to the modern eye and refashioning them in stylized German, Buber instilled in early twentieth century secular Jewish readers a new appreciation for the discarded world of tradition. Most took the tales' miracle claims with a grain of salt; what was really important was their anti-bourgeois, authentic folk sensibility. And since romanticization occurs only at a safe remove, readers of Buber's tales could feel privy to the Hasidic spirit without feeling beholden to its ritual demands.

Few scholars of Hasidism have permitted themselves this indulgence. Gershom Scholem was famously dismissive of Buber's legend-based Hasidism, insisting that the movement's true ethos was to be found in its homiletic literature.¹ Rivka Schatz-Uffenheimer concluded that Buber's tales yield insight into the theology of Buber, but not of Hasidism.² Joseph Dan cautioned scholars not to take Buber's tales to be historical, authoritative, or reflective of Hasidism's true spirit, and situated them within a long tradition of nostalgia-driven tale collections.³ Jon D. Levenson, who defended Buber's approach, still took him to task for 'reading into the text

ideas at odds with the cultures that produced them'.⁴ Steven Katz demonstrated that Buber expunged kabbalistic, magical, and ascetic content from original printed versions.⁵

The original versions themselves, which circulated orally and began appearing in print during the nineteenth century, have scarcely fared better. Most scholars classify them as hagiography – sacred biography whose primary purpose is to inspire piety. Moshe Rosman questions the historical reliability of the classic early collection *Shivhei Ha-Besht* (Kopys, 1814), a collection of tales about Hasidism's spiritual founder, Rabbi Israel Ba'al Shem Tov ('the Besht', 1700–1760). There is no autograph version, its printer and redactor evince pious agendas, and its accounts were corrupted by oral transmission over many decades and accretions or alterations that spoke to evolving contemporary anxieties.⁶ A whole chorus of skepticism has greeted the next wave of Hasidic tales, commonly classified as the 'Lemberg' period (1864–1912). To cite but two examples, Gedalyah Nigal stigmatises Lemberg tales as 'outward-oriented direct apologetics' composed to counter the movement's critics by glorifying Hasidic leaders, or 'Zaddikim',⁷ while Ira Robinson contends that they 'reflect the ideas and concerns of their latter-day redactors' rather than Hasidic life at the time of the purported events.⁸

Hasidic tales accordingly constitute deeply problematic sources for scholars, even without their supernatural claims. Yet the sheer mass of printed Hasidic tales is astounding; and their portraits of daily Hasidic life are sometimes rendered with precision and scintillating detail.⁹ Can historians of Hasidism really afford to discard this immense corpus of cherished personal recollections, often relayed first-hand or transmitted from father to son, painstakingly compiled, and then translated into Hebrew for publication? Apparently not. While debates over historicity are quite spirited, as the first part of this essay will show, even the most skeptical historians occasionally find it necessary to draw upon these rich repositories. The real question, then, is how to apply a consistent standard for distilling history from Hasidic tales. The second part of this essay accordingly proposes a methodology. Ze'v Gries has suggested that historians mine tales for knowledge about the status and use of Hasidic books, the evolution of Hasidic customs, historical realia like varieties of Hasidic costume during holidays, and educational norms.¹⁰ But a less frequently explored category of Hasidic hagiography, which may be labeled 'historical', can also yield reliable information about fundamental events, personalities, and what most scholars would consider historical reality.

The Historical Uses of Shivhei Ha-Besht: The Rosman-Etkes Controversy

Although tales about Hasidism as a full-fledged movement only began appearing in print in the mid-1860s, debate over the historicity of Hasidic hagiography has primarily centered on *Shivhei Ha-Besht*.¹¹ Moshe

Rosman's biography of the Besht, entitled *Founder of Hasidism* (Berkeley 2006), was hailed as the skeptic's ultimate vindication. By privileging contemporaneous documentary sources like archives and correspondence over *Shivhei Ha-Besht*, Rosman was able to disprove once and for all its conception of the Besht as champion of the masses and show, to the contrary, that the Besht was embraced by local elites, resided tax-free in a community-owned house in Międzybóž, and kept aloof from social conflicts. Rosman questioned whether the Jewish masses were even in desperate need of a champion. The Jewish communities of Podolia were not suffering from increased poverty or anti-Jewish attacks, and Międzybóž was 'an administrative center for the Czartoryski latifundium as well as an important trade emporium where merchants of the region and from the West gathered to buy and sell'.¹² The Besht and his fellow Jews did not reside in a ghetto, but 'owned the majority of the better, stone houses in the town as well as most of the stores on the marketplace', and had non-Jewish neighbors.¹³

Several scholars have subsequently been inspired to extend a more documentary approach to biographies of the Besht's disciples and descendants.¹⁴ But the reception of Rosman's work has not been so warm in other quarters. Most egregiously in the eyes of his detractors was Rosman's attempt to sideline *Shivhei Ha-Besht*. The ensuing controversy exposed a sizeable rift between scholars of Hasidism like Rosman, who contextualize Hasidism by means of contemporaneous documentary sources frequently composed in non-Jewish languages, and those who rely exclusively on internal Hebrew or Yiddish sources.¹⁵ Immanuel Etkes was moved to write an alternate biography, contextualizing the Besht vertically by situating him in a mystical tradition beginning with the emergence of kabbalists and mystical practitioners known as *ba'alei shem*.¹⁶

While Etkes initially claimed to be interested only in the 'image' of the Besht as opposed to the 'historical' Besht, his polemic against Rosman revealed that historical reliability was precisely what was at stake. The redactor of *Shivhei Ha-Besht*, he argued, often specified members of stories' oral transmission chains and occasionally provided alternate versions of the same story. Several were apparently firsthand reports and the storytellers themselves belonged to the 'upper spiritual-religious class', including many rabbis. Etkes concluded that *Shivhei Ha-Besht* is composed of 'testimonies and traditions, as they are the reflections of real people, of the real events that occurred to these people, and of the utterances they actually made'. The seasoned historian had only to purge them of their miraculous elements.¹⁷ Etkes was soon joined by Havivah Pedaya, who accused Rosman of employing an extreme positivist methodology that ignored *Shivhei Ha-Besht's* historical content, neglected its insights into the Besht's spiritual image, and artificially distinguished between the Besht's theology and daily life.¹⁸

At this point Rosman finally lost his patience. In a stinging rebuttal, he accused his detractors of reading *Shivhei Ha-Besht* uncritically and

completely out of context. He denied that he had neglected the collection; he had only insisted on a stricter standard.¹⁹ Indeed, if we return to Rosman's original words, we find him willing to concede that the tales contain a 'historical layer' and that one can locate verifiable elements through external corroboration. Invoking an analysis by historian Israel Bartal, he asserts that the stories have 'heuristic' value in that they 'can alert the researcher that an event happened, yet not necessarily supply completely accurate information about it'.²⁰

In practice, Rosman proves even more lenient. Describing the Podolian rebel-bandits known as Haidamaks, for example, he writes as follows:

It is evident from the stories in *Shivhei Ha-Besht* . . . that Jews fled their towns when the Haidamaks were on the move and the violent outbreaks served as benchmarks for dating prior and subsequent events.²¹

On the issue of Jewish-Christian relations he asserts 'the stories in *Shivhei Ha-Besht* and Ukrainian folklore indicate that Christians might avail themselves of the services of the Jewish holy men and vice versa'.²² A tale is then used to demonstrate 'a feeling of shared moral obligation between Jew and Gentile'.²³ And on the issue of female followers of the Besht, Rosman turns again to *Shivhei Ha-Besht*.²⁴ Rosman employs *Shivhei Ha-Besht* as a prooftext in these cases, not merely as a heuristic support. Occasionally, even archival-based research rests upon the presumed reliability of elements in *Shivhei Ha-Besht*, for example, the connecting of its characters with specific individuals mentioned on tax rolls and inventories.²⁵ Thus, while Rosman may be criticized for some inconsistency vis-à-vis hagiography, he has been misrepresented as a proponent of naïve positivism.²⁶

The Historiography of the Lemberg Period (1864–1912)

After *Shivhei Ha-Besht*, no collection of Hasidic tales would appear in print until a half century later.²⁷ Most tale collections appeared in the Habsburg city of Lemberg, since Tsarist censors had deemed works about the lives of Hasidic masters harmful.²⁸ Like *Shivhei Ha-Besht*, much Lemberg hagiography consists of originally oral testimony that was translated from the Yiddish vernacular into Hebrew, the language of the elite, and printed about 50 years after the reported events – in this case, the founding of dynasties and diverse schools of Hasidism in the early nineteenth century, a period that might be termed 'Middle Hasidism'.²⁹ Given this parallelism, one would expect similar historiographical contours. Yet until quite recently, scholarly literature on Lemberg hagiography was almost uniformly skeptical, tending to highlight the worst cases of distortion and fabrication.

Joseph Dan depicts the shady Michael Rodkinson, redactor of some of the first collections in 1864, as the founder and very embodiment of the Lemberg period, which he labels a 'neo-Romantic Hasidic literary

movement'.³⁰ Rodkinson fabricated tales outright and blatantly Hasidicized earlier folktales by replacing their protagonists with Zaddikim, and his stridently anti-Hasidic turn by the 1880s left him open to the charge that he only published Hasidic tales for profit.³¹ Ira Robinson exposes the colorful literary forgeries of hagiographer Yudel Rosenberg.³² Literary scholar Yoav Elstein traces prominent motifs in certain Lemberg tales back to folktales from other cultures and religions.³³ Ada Rapoport-Albert has produced exposés of particular distinction. Although like Rosman she has occasional recourse to hagiography herself,³⁴ she skillfully debunks previously sacrosanct notions like formal succession in early Hasidism or the Maid of Ludmir's alleged feminism and reveals certain contemporary ultra-orthodox histories of the movement to be little more than 'hagiography with footnotes'.³⁵ Revelations about forgeries, fabrications, and external borrowings are beneficial insofar as they remind us to proceed cautiously. But this negative emphasis can also create the impression that Lemberg hagiography as a whole is of little historical use.

Certain historians have begun to tentatively incorporate Lemberg hagiography. In Marcin Wodzinski's research on the Zaddik Isaac of Warka's lobbying activities, the hagiographic accounts he introduces are second hand and late and usually fail to stand up to his rich archival findings.³⁶ Ilya Luria occasionally brings hagiography into his documentary-based re-examination of the Lubavitcher court's relocation, social hierarchy and bureaucratization, relations with the local Jewish self-government, and pragmatic support of government-sponsored modern Jewish schools.³⁷ David Assaf clarifies the murky facts surrounding the apostasy of Moses, son of R. Schneur Zalman of Liady, the 'Alter' Rebbe of Lubavitcher Hasidism, examining exculpatory and hostile traditions against a file in the Minsk archives.³⁸ On the other hand, in his biography of the popular Zaddik Israel of Ruzhyn Assaf often uses Hasidic traditions as a point of departure. Here, he not only measures them against correspondence and non-Hasidic testimony, but also accepts certain Hasidic traditions which seem plausible within a given context.³⁹ Nathaniel Deutch attempts to authenticate aspects of the Maid of Ludmir legend through documentary sources.⁴⁰ In these latter cases one can discern a 'hagiography forward' approach: plausible elements of certain tales are brought in to help form a narrative framework or fill in certain gaps, in addition to being tested against the available evidence.

Historical Hagiography: Toward a Methodology

Can certain hagiography stand on its own as a historical source and yield insights that are unavailable in other sources? Before addressing this question, it is crucial that we distinguish the various categories from this period.⁴¹ Some of the above scholars have already critiqued the first

Lemberg collections from 1864, but these tales are vague and overtly miraculous in comparison to more historically oriented collections that began to emerge a decade later, including Nathan Shternharz's *Hayyei Moharan* (1874), Samuel of Sieniawa's *Ramata'im Zofim* (1881),⁴² Isaac Landau's *Zikharon Tov* (1892), and Eleazar Hakohen of Pułtusk's 'Ez Avot' in *Hidushei Maharakh* (1898), to name a few.⁴³ Their redactors appear to have been influenced by rabbinical chroniclers like Gabriel Sochaczew and Haim Dembitzer, who published in Lemberg during the same period.⁴⁴ Lemberg hagiographies can be situated on a spectrum of historicity, spanning the more fictional and folkloric (Rodkinson's, Bodek's, Rosenberg's) to the more historical (Shternharz's, Samuel of Sieniawa's, Landau's). Somewhere in the middle of the spectrum lie collections of later provenance, which contain fewer first-hand testimonies but retain valuable detail, such as those of Yoets Kim Kadish, Zvi Yehezkel Mikhazohn and his son Abraham Simha Bunem Mikhazohn, Dov Ber Ehrmann, and Israel Berger.

To be sure, even the more historical hagiographies contain errors and distortions.⁴⁵ Especially misleading are their attempts to project a folksy profile: in actuality, most Zaddikim derived from elite families and cultivated wealthy patrons who ensured the movement's financial stability, stymied governmental bans, and, where dynasticism had not yet taken hold, groomed and appointed successors from a pool of scions of the elite. The egalitarian posturing and outright social inversions in these tales probably tell us more about their target audience – the semi-literate work-a-day Jews they exalt – than the lived Hasidic reality.⁴⁶

But what distinguishes these collections as historical is their abundance of mundane and even unflattering detail about Hasidic figures, sometimes through first hand testimony and occasionally rendered in the first person. Their redactors are as much reporters as they are promoters – in addition to inspiring traditional audiences they are dedicated to recalling every detail about the Zaddik and his world. They emphasise his homey wisdom, business advice, style of worship, and performance of daily tasks over his miracle feats. Paradoxically, perhaps, the more historically oriented redactors tended to be devout Hasidim. Nathan Shternharz was the preeminent disciple of the Zaddik Nahman of Bratslav; Samuel of Sieniawa was the personal secretary of the Zaddik Simha Bunem of Przysucha; and Isaac Landau was a disciple of the Zaddik Isaac of Neskhiz. This inevitably begs the question of whether these texts are not contaminated by apologetic and missionary agendas. But polemical motivations actually present a golden opportunity, since the historian can navigate around edifying claims and seize upon disclosures of a mundane, incidental, or embarrassing character, i.e., elements that are extraneous to the movement's promotion.

This reasoning has already been incorporated into the study of the historical Jesus by New Testament scholars, who have termed it the

'Criterion of Embarrassment'.⁴⁷ According to its advocates, material in the Gospels that could have created some difficulty for the early Church but was nonetheless left in (albeit in a toned down form) at the risk of some embarrassment, is probably authentic.⁴⁸ In approaching Hasidic hagiography, I suggest we expand the 'Criterion of Embarrassment' to include all non-polemical elements, not only potentially troubling ones. By shifting the focus onto a tale's neutral or negative content, we can draw out abundant data on Hasidism during its vital but neglected phase of growth, expansion, and crystallization.

The wealth of incidental detail embedded in the historical genre of hagiography may be illustrated in a passage from Landau's *Zikharon Tov*, a collection of traditions relayed by R. Isaac of Neskhiz, who married R. Levi Isaac of Berdichev's (Berdyczów) granddaughter and boarded with him during his *kest* period. The redactor's description of the process of bringing a tale into print is wonderfully revealing of the tension in Hasidism between writing and orality: he heard these traditions from R. Isaac of Neskhiz's 'holy mouth' during R. Isaac's final years, the 1860s; and R. Isaac was aware he was writing down his testimonies but never asked to see them himself.⁴⁹ Landau's consciousness of the inherent limits of written versions despite a powerful preservational impulse may explain why the collection languished in manuscript form for over 25 years. But the product is a veritable time capsule of first-hand recollections. For example, the following was recorded after the Sabbath of the Torah portion 'Ekev' in 1867, about 60 years after the event:

Once I saw [R. Levi Isaac] before the eve of Yom Kippur, when he was sitting at his meal, and beautiful sounds came out of his mouth. And after that, only two tears, no more, flowed from his eyes.⁵⁰ After that, they placed stuffed fish (*memuleh*) before him (called *oksen*). And he said 'fulfill (*maleh*) all our wishes.⁵¹ And after that, they placed the dish of gravy before him, called in Yiddish *yohel*,⁵² and he began to call out 'Israel awaits (*yahel*) God'.⁵³ And he once again was very, very happy, and worshipped in tremendous joy.⁵⁴

The account's overt purpose is to showcase R. Levi Isaac's witty correlation between foods and sacred verses, which transformed eating into a holy act and demonstrated the concept of worship through corporeality. But its detail affords precious insight into early nineteenth century Hasidic customs, cuisine, and performative features like sounds, gestures, tears, and above all, ritual choreography: the Zaddik chants beautifully, pauses for restrained weeping, connects his food to its 'holy root', and then gives free reign to his joy. It also affirms in a more positive way R. Levi Isaac's love of food, deemed gluttonous in anti-Hasidic writings.⁵⁵ It is more of a report than a tale.

Historically oriented Lemberg hagiographies also contain embarrassing revelations about Zaddikim. Here we must proceed cautiously, since qualities seen as embarrassing in our culture were not necessarily perceived

as such by the Hasidic community. For example, disclosures about R. Levi Isaac include bouts of anger, depression, and mental illness:

And in the year 1773, owing to his terrible loss of heart, he fell from his lofty level . . . and prayed rapidly from his little prayer book, and went a little out of his mind, as is known.⁵⁶

R. Levi Isaac eventually ‘returned to his great level in brilliant light’; yet he was deeply depressed again a few years later.⁵⁷ The Zaddik Menahem Mendel of Kotzk (Kock) had a notorious temper, became a virtual recluse from 1830 and may have suffered from a nervous breakdown on a Sabbath in 1838.⁵⁸ A choleric personality was not necessarily a deficiency; it could signal saintly, prophetic, or messianic potential.⁵⁹

But certain disclosures undoubtedly created difficulties for redactors. One source of scandal was the master-disciple conflict, which divided schools of Hasidism and caused violent altercations between followers. Such airings of dirty laundry would have poorly served any evangelical objective. Yet hagiographers diligently recorded conflicts between the Seer of Lublin and his renegade disciple R. Jacob Isaac the ‘Holy Jew’ of Przysucha; between R. Barukh of Międzybóž and his audacious nephew R. Nahman of Bratslav; and between R. Menahem Mendel of Kotsk and his break-away disciple R. Mordecai Leiner of Izbica. We are also privy to more temporary rifts, such as that between R. Menahem Mendel of Rymanów and R. Naftali Zvi of Ropszyce. Descriptions of master-disciple conflicts often divulge negative personality traits, although accounts by rival courts should be treated with due caution.

Certain disclosures must have shocked and dismayed the Hasidic community. The Seer of Lublin’s overly familiar behavior with women, his second marriage to a young virgin in his old age, and his tolerance of her taste for modern fashions scandalized followers. Worse, his supernatural vision failed him several times; and he was possibly suicidal after the Napoleonic Wars failed to bring the Messiah.⁶⁰ R. Nahman of Bratslav, another victim of disappointed messianism, struggled with gluttony and self-doubt, and kept company with Maskilim during the last decade of his life to the great consternation of his disciples.⁶¹ Both R. Simha Bunem and R. Isaac of Warka were fiscally irresponsible and more than once had to be financially bailed out by a woman, Temerel Sonenberg-Bergson.⁶² R. Simha Bunem moreover had a penchant for gambling, theater attendance, and secular learning, and was once barred from a Hasidic gathering (*tish*) on account of his western-style dress. In one first-hand recollection of his reaction to being disturbed during prayer, he admits, ‘I was quite callous and had no mercy . . .’.⁶³ Other accounts imply his ritual laxity, for example:

And once, when he journeyed to Lublin with other Hasidim, he ate meat in a village. And this did not appear to the Hasidim to be God-fearing. But when he came with them to greet [the Seer of Lublin] there, the rabbi of blessed memory placed his hand on his stomach and said, ‘Your flesh [i.e., meat] is holy flesh’.⁶⁴

Although the pious audience receives reassurance, the revelation is quite discomfiting.

If redactors of Hasidic tales merely repurposed their oral originals to meet contemporary concerns, as the current scholarly consensus has it, one would not expect these kinds of disclosures. They did not serve retention or recruitment efforts, they undermined them. Even if a Zaddik's eventual triumph over his shortcomings could, like any 'Cinderella story', serve as inspiration, no hagiographer could get away with fabricating acts of indiscretion or character flaws. These shortcomings were likely well known and redactors were attempting damage control. They sought only to mitigate the embarrassing disclosures – the Seer's act of escorting a woman contained deep, mystical significance; R. Nahman was drawing Maskilim toward repentance; R. Simha Bunem's secular tendencies were an incognito phase that preceded his revelation to the world; he and R. Isaac of Warka mystically ensured Temerel's prosperity and were thus the ultimate source of her wealth, and so on. But mitigating scandalous information is not the same as expunging it from the record. One almost feels these hagiographers' struggle, pulled as they were between the need to paint Zaddikim in inspirational terms and the equally powerful compulsion to report every known detail about their lives. These sources are sites of tension, not straightforward evangelical modes.⁶⁵

How, then, should we approach historical hagiography? First-hand accounts may enjoy the status of any written memoir account, while second-hand traditions introduced by short, precise transmission chains (e.g., I heard it from my grandfather) can also be assumed to retain reliable information. Additional forms of insurance are alternate versions of a tale, particularly those circulated by rival courts. The next step is to seek out contemporaneous documentary evidence which either substantiates a tale's assertions or enables a triangulation of sources. But after corroboration is exhausted, it is possible to read historically oriented Hasidic hagiography 'against the grain' by highlighting elements extraneous to the goal of edifying the Zaddik. The personal failings of Zaddikim listed above suggest a need to remove historical hagiography from the category of folklore and appreciate it as an antecedent to critical biography. Functionally, it fills in the sizable gaps left by documentary sources and supply a Hasidic perspective in a process of reconstruction that has been increasingly dominated by hostile voices.

Folkloric Hagiography: Reading Late Traditions

Collections toward the middle of our spectrum, which are further removed from eyewitness sources, present a more difficult case. Can anything reliable be salvaged from traditions mediated through several storytellers over the course of a century? As the following series of tales about the Galician Zaddik Menahem Mendel of Rymanów (1745–1815) illustrates,

later tales can preserve a sense of a Zaddik's personality and, since their retellings are likely to reflect group crises and anxieties, can be read as biographies of Hasidic society as a whole. The following account suggests a starting point for reactionary trends in the region:

And his first task there [in Rymanów, 1807] was to put a stop to the practice of dressing in licentious Gentile fashions, for apparently this scab was beginning to spread throughout those areas. And he worked hard to create preventive measures to remove thorns from Israel's vineyard because of 1) the prohibition 'do not walk according to their ordinances' (Lev. 18:3); and 2) You shall not draw the attention of the peoples among whom you live, so that they will not look upon Israel with eyes of envy and denunciation. And daughters of Israel in the town of Rymanów did not go out with jewelry and embroidered clothes, in accordance with the Rabbi's will. But once, a wealthy man from there married his son to a woman from a big city. And after the wedding, when he took her home, the bride – who was from a big city – went out in great finery. And our Rabbi's Hasidim really resented this, because she had 'breached the fence' of their holy rabbi. And they ordered the young people to shout a 'word' after her.⁶⁶

When the man protested to R. Menahem Mendel, pointing out that the Torah actually permits women to wear finery, the Zaddik replied that this was indeed permitted in the privacy of one's own home, but not in the market and the streets.

The scholarly instinct is to dismiss the tradition as anachronistic, since it appears to project a latter day ultra-orthodox concern onto an earlier period. But some corroboration is found in contemporaneous documentary sources. In a letter from 1812, R. Menahem Mendel laments that 'women in particular dress licentiously, so that one can barely distinguish between Gentile and Israelite women'.⁶⁷ R. Menahem Mendel's 13 decrees were entered in the Rymanów 'Society for Visitors of the Ill' (*Havurah Bikor Holim*) minute book on 27 Nissan, 1815. The first several decrees exhort women against imitating gentile fashions and demand extreme public modesty:

1. Women shall not go out wearing head bands and headdresses. Nor shall they wear any clothes or even shoes in the new style, as they do in other places. But they shall only go out with scarves, as their people [always] did. And nor shall they go out with their heads covered with the red kerchief (*tikhil*), or wear shoes called 'sandals'.
2. The unmarried women shall not go out with curled hair; nor with lace caps or German blouses.
3. Women, married and unmarried, shall not sit in the marketplace on Sabbaths and festivals; they shall not stroll outside the city; and certainly not with men.
4. Women shall not go out or travel without a guard; and milk sold by women who go out to milk the cows without a guard shall be forbidden.

The fifth decree threatens sanctions against any tailors who would sew the prohibited clothing.⁶⁸ These documents confirm R. Menahem Mendel's aspiration to elevate minor sartorial distinctions to legal imperatives, unusual in his day.⁶⁹

R. Menahem Mendel's puritanical reform tendencies are affirmed in diverse hagiographical accounts of his response to absolutist state reform initiatives. One particularly traumatic measure was the official ban on rural Jewish lease holding in Galicia (Austrian Poland), which especially targeted tavern keepers (as many as eighty percent of rural Jewish families in pre-partition Poland leased taverns and distilleries from the nobility). A patent issued on February 9, 1784 by Emperor Joseph II declared that existing liquor leases only retained validity for the lifetime of the current holder and that no new leases were to be issued. A decree the next year abolished Jewish lease holding in general. The combined effect was the displacement of around 15,000 Jewish families. The situation was alleviated five years later – the 1789 patent reinstated the right of Jews to contract leases for markets, stalls, pastures, and roads in towns and permitted Jews to return to the countryside as farmers and manufacturers. Those who currently possessed licenses were allowed to resume selling alcohol in their own homes; but rural Jews were still forbidden to lease taverns, mills, and several other enterprises.⁷⁰ The next year, however, the new emperor Leopold heeded the protests of Polish landowners who had incurred financial losses without Jewish lessees and did not enforce these remaining restrictions.⁷¹

We have been conditioned by Raphael Mahler to think of Galician Hasidic leaders in terms of 'their solidarity and their clandestine struggle against the oppressive decrees of the Austrian government'.⁷² Mahler cites an 1827 report by a Brody district commissioner, who depicts followers of Zaddikim as 'common tavern keepers, swindlers and soothsayers'.⁷³ Yet certain Zaddikim saw in the bans a solution to the notorious religious laxity of rural Jews. According to a tradition relayed to Avraham Hayyim Simhah Bunem Mikhalzohn by an elderly ritual slaughterer named Leibush, who heard it from his father, a beadle in Ropszyce, R. Menahem Mendel went so far as to issue his own lease holding ban and prayed successfully for Polish landowners to expel any Jews who would not comply. The redactor explains that R. Menahem Mendel saw that Jews who 'lived in villages – lessees of taverns and other estate holdings' could never pray in a quorum or immerse themselves in the ritual bath. They mingled with Gentiles; and their children, who had only known Gentiles, were 'slipping into materiality'. R. Menahem Mendel only relented after his star disciple, R. Naftali Zvi of Ropszyce, traveled to him and, nearly frozen to death himself, pointed out that pious Jews were now deprived of places to warm themselves during their business journeys.⁷⁴

There are some obvious reasons for treating this tradition cautiously: it appeared in print over a century after the event; and it is not first-hand testimony (although there is a precise transmission chain). It also attempts

to recover a sense of Jewish agency by having the Zaddik himself ban rural Jewish lease holding, enforcing it and repealing it by means of Polish landowners, with no mention of the Imperial decrees. But a similar sense is conveyed in a more partisan version redacted ten years earlier by Mikhhalzohn, who ‘heard it from the mouth of a veteran Hasid, and . . . was sure to present it in its proper order and to transmit it precisely in its original form’. This version notably lacks the claim about R. Menahem Mendel’s own ban. Instead, he informs the desperate leaseholders that the royal ban is God’s will, since

you will never attend public prayer services. And an even worse sickness is that you will profane the Sabbath day and not keep it according to Law, as it is written in the holy Torah. And you will spend every day in vanities of vanities and not rest on the day of resting, you and your servants and your women and all your livestock.⁷⁵

The leaseholders immediately promised to faithfully adhere to Sabbath law; and the ban was presumably lifted. These accounts are at cross-purposes, since each attempts to present its own Zaddik as champion of the masses.⁷⁶ But both fit the basic contours of the Josephian reforms: R. Menahem initially supported the tavern keeping ban and rural expulsion (1784–1785), then relented (reflecting the partial repeal and lapse in enforcement in 1789–1790).

R. Menahem Mendel’s hard-line tendencies are also attested in earlier traditions, recorded between 1881 and 1903. According to one tale, he placed a curse on a wealthy leaseholder who defied his tavern leasing ban, resulting in the man’s financial ruin.⁷⁷ According to another, the Zaddik induced a tavern keeper from the village Kobylany who sold liquor to Gentiles on the Sabbath to hand over his lease to a Gentile.⁷⁸ Most compellingly, decree number eight of R. Menahem Mendel’s 13 decrees, published in 1815, reads as follows: ‘And [you] shall also be vigilant against profanation of the Sabbath; and in particular watch out for tavern keepers who accept Gentile customers on the Sabbath and festivals’.⁷⁹

These late traditions betray ambivalence about the Zaddik’s zealotry. His approval of his followers’ crude tactics in the first tale is jarring even in a traditional context. After all, dressing fashionably is not the same as dressing provocatively; the Hasidim probably used a ‘word’ that unjustly impugned the bride’s virtue; and the father-in-law’s protest had biblical support. R. Menahem Mendel is painted in an even more unflattering light in the tavern keeper tales. He is anything but Mahler’s champion of the ‘enslaved Jewish multitude in the small towns and villages of Galicia’.⁸⁰ Against the remonstrations of his inner circle, R. Menahem Mendel effectively expelled the rural leaseholders himself. His image is only slightly better in the earlier, more partisan version, in which he labeled all rural Jews eventual sinners. Whether R. Menahem Mendel was pressured to rescind his own decree, as the first tradition claims, or

whether he exploited the decrees to coerce ritual observance out of its victims as described in the second, he comes across as a zealot who gave little thought to the human cost of his puritanical reforms. These tales may celebrate the Zaddik's power, but a certain discomfort lurks on their periphery.

In addition to helping us to form a picture of R. Menahem Mendel's personality and policies, these late traditions disclose a wider phenomenon: a persistent group anxiety over rural Jewish residence, which usually entailed isolation among Gentiles far from the loci of Jewish communal and religious authority. This disclosure points to a need to move historical inquiry beyond Hasidism's purported socio-economic profile, which inevitably strays into overgeneralization, and onto more manageable issues like urbanicity – which types of settlements were preferred by Hasidim or considered dangerous to their way of life. What emerges from the above traditions is that although urban centers held certain pernicious temptations (e.g., the big city bride's opulent clothing), it was village Jews who were deemed most prone to ritual laxity, acculturation, and outright apostasy. Indeed, when faced with expulsion and loss of livelihood, certain rural tavern keepers opted for the latter route.⁸¹

Conclusion

The foregoing discussion will hopefully counter the tendency to view Hasidic hagiography as a single, undifferentiated corpus whose historical veracity can be blithely generalised. In fact, the very designation 'tales' is misleading, since many accounts lend themselves to genuine corroboration. Certain early redactors considered it their responsibility to register even disquieting information, while later traditions often expose group anxieties that are rooted in an earlier era. Although it may not be as simple as accepting all hagiographical accounts as reflections of real events and utterances minus a few supernatural elements, the historian should be much encouraged by the preponderance of non-polemical layers in what had been assumed to be merely apologetic or inspirational literature. When it comes to rich anthropological information and negative disclosures, which would not have been fabricated by a community of believers, the burden of proof is on the skeptics.

It is also necessary to qualify the rather Rankean assumptions about the ipso facto reliability of written contemporaneous sources in the case of Hasidism. In defending his use of Inquisitorial records, historian Carlos Ginzberg reminds his critics that 'there are no neutral texts; even a notarial inventory implies a code, which we must decipher'.⁸² Of the hundreds of archival records related to Hasidism that have recently come to light, the vast majority were composed by Polish officials with almost no understanding of internal Jewish affairs. What little knowledge officials possessed usually derived from anti-Hasidic informants with an axe to

grind. Exclusive reliance on such material can produce a distorted picture of the movement, causing scholars to exaggerate instances of aggressive or anti-social behavior, vastly underestimate Hasidic numbers in various communities, and ignore the crucial role of women, who were usually left out of the official record. In my research I have found that some Hasidic traditions are discredited when tested against archival sources, but that others receive unexpected verification or fill sizeable gaps left by the still fragmentary documentary evidence. The discerning reader of hagiography is rewarded with precious insight into the most popular East European Jewish cultural phenomenon of the nineteenth century.

Short Biography

Glenn Dynner is a scholar of East European Jewry with a focus on the social history of Hasidism and the Polish Jewish modernization process. His additional interests include Polish-Jewish relations, Jewish economic history, and popular religion. Dynner is author of the critically acclaimed book *Men of Silk: The Hasidic Conquest of Polish Jewish Society* (Oxford University Press, 2006). He received textual training in several Israeli yeshivas, Brandeis University, and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. As a Fulbright scholar, Dynner traveled to Poland and began uncovering hitherto unknown archival sources on nineteenth century Polish Jewry. Currently a Fellow at the University of Pennsylvania Center for Advanced Judaic Studies (CAJS), Dynner is writing a book which explains Polish Jewish modernization by examining Jewish responses to Tsarist decrees. He is co-editing a book on Jewish and Christian Mysticism in Eastern Europe, and a volume of the journal *Polin* focusing on the Congress Kingdom of Poland. Dynner presently teaches Judaic Studies at Sarah Lawrence College. He holds a B.A. from Brandeis University, an M.A. from McGill University, and a Ph.D. from Brandeis University.

Notes

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¹ For an interesting analysis of this anti-Buber school, see Jon D. Levenson, 'The Hermeneutical Defense of Buber's Hasidism: A Critique and Counterstatement', *Modern Judaism*, vol. 11, no. 3 (Oct., 1991), 297–320. Scholem's critique is found in *The Messianic Idea in Judaism* (London 1971), 228–250.

² Rivka Schatz-Uffenheimer, *Ha-Hasidut ke-Mistikah: Yesodot Kvi'atistim ba-Mahhashavah ha-Hasidit ba-Me'ah ha-18* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1998), 9–10.

³ Joseph Dan, 'A Bow to Frumkian Hasidism', *Modern Judaism* 11 (1991), 175–193.

⁴ Levenson, 'The Hermeneutical Defense of Buber's Hasidism', 314.

⁵ Steven Katz, 'Martin Buber's Misuse of Hasidic Sources', idem., ed. *Post-Holocaust Dialogues* (New York, 1983), 52–93.

⁶ Moshe Rosman, *Founder of Hasidism: A Quest for the Historical Ba'al Shem Tov* (Berkeley: University of California, 2006), 153; 159–70.

- ⁷ Gedalyah Nigal, *The Hasidic Tale*, tr. Edward Levin (London: Littman, 2008), 3–7.
- ⁸ Ira Robinson, 'The Zaddik as Hero in Hasidic Hagiography', Menachem Mor, ed., *Crisis & Reaction: The Hero in Jewish History* (Omaha: Creighton University Press, 1995), esp. 94–5.
- ⁹ See Yoav Elstein, 'Bibliografiyah Shel Ha-Sifrut Ha-Hasidit', in R. Kushelevsky and A. Lipsker, eds, *Ma'aseh Sippur* (Bar Ilan University, 2006), 449–535; idem., *A Bibliography of Hasidic Literature: In Alphabetical, Chronological and Genealogical Order* [Hebrew] (Bar Ilan University Press, 2006).
- ¹⁰ Ze'ev Gries, 'Ha-Emnam Meitiv Ha-Sipur K'zavo? Makom Sifrut Ha-Shevahim Be-Tolodot Ha-Hasidut', *Da'at* 44 (2000), 85–94.
- ¹¹ Ben Zion Dinur, 'The Origins of Hasidism and Its Social and Messianic Foundations', in Gershon Hundert, ed., *Essential Papers on Hasidism* (NY: NYU Press, 1991), 86–208; Joseph Weiss, 'Some Notes on the Social Background of Early Hasidism', *Studies in Eastern European Jewish Mysticism* (London: Littman, 1985), ed. David Goldstein, 12–14; Martin Buber, *The Origin and Meaning of Hasidism*, esp. 58 and 61; Simon Dubnow, *Toldot ha-Hasidut* (Tel Aviv: Devir, 1975), 34–6.
- ¹² Rosman, *Founder of Hasidism*, 66–7.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, 69.
- ¹⁴ See for example Yohanan Petrovsky-Shtern, 'The Drama of Berdichev: Levy Yitshak and His Town', *Polin* 17 (2004), 83–95; Glenn Dynner, *Men of Silk: The Hasidic Conquest of Polish Jewish Society* (NY: Oxford University Press, 2006), esp. chapters 2 and 5; and Ilya Luria, *Edah Vê-Medinah: Ha-Hasidut Habad Be-Empirah Ha-Rusit* (1828–1882).
- ¹⁵ On these divergent approaches, see Petrovsky-Shtern, 'Hasidei de-ara and hasidei de-kokhvaya: Two Trends in Modern Jewish Historiography', *AJS Review* 32:1 (Spring, 2008), 141–167. However, Petrovsky seems to downplay the crucial linguistic distinction.
- ¹⁶ Immanuel Etkes, *The Besht: Magician, Mystic, and Leader*, tr. Saadya Sternberg (Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2005), 5. See also idem., 'The Historical Besht, Reconstruction or Deconstruction?' *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry* 12 (1999), 298–306. While the present discussion on *Shivhei Ha-Besht's* historicity is limited to the Rosman-Etkes debate, see also Elchanan Reiner's attempt to differentiate several collections within *Shivhei Ha-Besht*, 'Shivhei Ha-Besht: Mesirah, Arikhah, Hadpasah', *Proceedings of the Eleventh World Congress of Jewish Studies* (1994), II, 145–153.
- ¹⁷ Etkes, *The Besht: Magician, Mystic, and Leader*, 242. This approach is similar to that of Simon Dubnow, who insisted that all tales had a 'historical kernel'. See Dubnow, *Toldot ha-Hasidut*, 38.
- ¹⁸ Haviva Pedaya, 'Iggeret ha-kodesh le-Besht: nusah. Hatekst u-temunat ha-'olam – meshihyut, hitgalut, 'ekstazah ve-shabta'ut', *Zion* 70:3 (2005), 311–54.
- ¹⁹ Rosman, 'Lemeḥkar bikorti 'al habesh"t hahistori – teguvah', *Zion* 70. (2005), 537–45.
- ²⁰ Rosman, *Founder of Hasidism*, 149; Israel Bartal, 'The Aliyah of R. Elazar from Amsterdam to Eretz Yisrael in 1740' [H], in Israel Bartal, *Galut Ba-Aretz* (Jerusalem, 1994), esp. 34. See also Adam Teller's contextualization of the tale about the Ickowicz brothers, in *Kesef, Ko'ah, ve-Hashpa'ah: Ha-yehudim ba-Ahuzot Bet Radzivil be-Lita be-Meah Ha-18* (Jerusalem: Shazar, 2006), 92; and Israel Halpern, 'Bunty Woszczyłowski', *Buletyn iIH* 26 (1958), 28–41.
- ²¹ Rosman, *Founder of Hasidism*, 55.
- ²² *Ibid.*, 57.
- ²³ *Ibid.*, 58.
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*, 71.
- ²⁵ Rosman, *Founder of Hasidism*, 162.
- ²⁶ Rosman's treatment of the later hagiographical collection *Gedolim Ma'aseh Zaddikim*, tales which served as propaganda for the Margalioth family, appears even less skeptical. See *Founder of Hasidism*, 155–58.
- ²⁷ For a discussion of this 'fifty years' silence', see *Men of Silk*, 218–19. According to Nigal, the Lemberg period came to an end with the death of Aaron Walden in 1912. See *The Hasidic Tale*, 18. For a relatively complete accounting of tale collections, see Elstein, 'Bibliografiyah Shel Ha-Sifrut Ha-Hasidit' (cited above, no. 9).
- ²⁸ On Lemberg as a center for the publication of orthodox history books in general, see Haim Gertner, 'The Beginning of "Orthodox Historiography" in Eastern Europe: A Reassessment', *Zion* 67 (2002), 293–336 (Hebrew). For an account of Tsarist censorship of Hasidic literature in the Congress Kingdom of Poland in the 1860's and 1870's, see Michael Jerry Ochs, *St.*

Petersburg and the Jews of Russian Poland, 1862–1905 (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Harvard University, 1986), 124. Perhaps *Ramatayim Zofim* (Warsaw, 1881) evaded censorship by appearing under the guise of a commentary to *Tanna de-Vei 'Eliyahu*.

²⁹ This phrase of Hasidism used to be portrayed as a deterioration of a supposedly authentic eighteenth century Hasidic movement. But as Rosman recently wrote, 'What is now understood is that if we want to talk about Hasidism as an institutionally and doctrinally articulated movement, it should be looked at in the nineteenth century'. See 'Hasidism as a Modern Phenomenon', *Jahrbuch des Simon-Dubnow-Instituts / Simon Dubnow Institute Yearbook VI* (2007), 219.

³⁰ Dan, 'A Bow to Frumkian Hasidism', 181–186. In actuality, Menahem Mendel Bodek, who also published his first Hasidic tale collection in 1864, was a more typical Lemberg hagiographer: a believing Hasid and halakic authority who sought to the very end 'to silence the slanderers and disparagers of Hasidism'. See Nigal, *The Hasidic Tale*, 25–27.

³¹ Jonathan Meir, 'Mikhal Levi Rodkinson: Bein Hasidut le-Haskalah', *Tarbiz* (forthcoming), 230–60, courtesy of the author. Meir argues that Rodkinson was a credulous Hasid when his first collections appeared.

³² Ira Robinson, 'The Uses of the Hasidic Story: Rabbi Yudel Rosenberg and His Tales of the Greiditzer Rebbe', *Journal of the American Association of Rabbis* 1 (1991), pp. 17–25; 'Literary Forgery and Hasidic Judaism: the Case of Rabbi Yudel Rosenberg', *Judaism* 40 (1991), pp. 61–78.

³³ In English, see Yoav Elstein, 'The Gregorius Legend: Its Christian Versions and Its Metamorphosis in the Hassidic Tale', *Fabula* 27:3–4 (1986), 195–215. See also Ch. Chajes, 'Baal-Szem-Tow u Chreścijan', *Miesięcznik żydowski* 4 (1934), 450. For a classification of motifs in *Shivhei Ha-Besht*, see the appendix to *In praise of the Baal Shem Tov [Shivhei ha-Besht]; the earliest collection of legends about the founder of Hasidism*, tr. and ed. Dan Ben-Amos & Jerome R. Mintz (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1970).

³⁴ See, for example, the reconstruction of R. Nahman of Bratslav's career in Ada Rapoport-Albert, 'Hasidism after 1772: Structural Continuity and Change', in idem, ed., *Hasidism Reappraised* (London: Littman Library, 1997), 113–19.

³⁵ Ada Rapoport-Albert, 'Hagiography with Footnotes: Edifying Tales and the Writing of History in Hasidism', in *Essays in Jewish Historiography, (History and Theory, Suppl. 27)*, 23–84; 'On Women and Hasidism: S.A. Horodecky and the Maid of Ludomir Tradition', *Jewish History: Essays in Honor of Chimen Abramsky*. Ada Rapoport-Albert, Steven J. Zipperstein (eds) (London, 1988), 495–525; 'Hasidism after 1772', esp. 109–12 and 122–6. On the distinction between hagiography and the more systematic and chronological compilations that appeared later such as Hayyim Meir Heilman's *Bet Rabbi* (Berdichev, 1902), see Nahum Karlinsky, 'The Dawn of Hasidic-Haredi Historiography', *Modern Judaism* 27:1 (2007), 20–46.

³⁶ Marcin Wodzinski, 'Hasidism, Shtadlanut, and Jewish Politics in Nineteenth-Century Poland: The Case of Isaac of Warka', *Jewish Quarterly Review* 95:2 (Spring 2005), 290–320.

³⁷ Ilya Luria, *Edah Ve-Medinah*.

³⁸ David Assaf, *Ne'ehaz be-Sabakh: Pirkei Mashber ve-Nevukha be-Toldot ha-Hasidut* (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar, 2006), chapter 1, esp. pp. 70–6.

³⁹ David Assaf, *The Regal Way* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002).

⁴⁰ Nathaniel Deutsch, *The Maiden of Ludmir: A Jewish Holy Woman and her World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), esp. 187–9.

⁴¹ Here we will not address the related problem of authenticity of teachings. On teachings attributed to the Zaddik Menahem Mendel of Kotzk, see Ya'akov Levinger in 'Imrot Otentiot Shel Ha-Rabi Mi-Kotsk', *Tarbits* 55:1 (1986), 109–135; and idem., 'Torato Shel Ha-Rebbe Mi-Kotsk le-Or Ha-Imrot Ha-Meyuhasot Lo Al Yadei Nekhedo R. Shmuel Mi-Sokhachuv', *Tarbits* 55:3 (1986), 413–431. Levinger argues that only teachings witnessed first hand by the 'intimates' of R. Menahem Mendel should be considered authentic.

⁴² R. Joseph Levenstein, famous for his correspondence with Simon Dubnow about Hasidism in 1894, claims rather cryptically that he is the true author of *Ramata'im Zofim* but did not publicise his authorship because of a 'hidden reason'. See *Ha-Peles* 3 (1903), 47; cited in Marc Shapiro, 'Suicide in the World to Come', *AJS Review*, 18:2 (1993), 245–263.

⁴³ Joseph Dan briefly mentions historical hagiography in *Ha-sipur Ha-Hasidi* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1975), 236. R. Nathan Shternharz's reliability as a reporter with a concern for precision and

detail has already been observed by Arthur Green. See *Tormented Master: The Life and Spiritual Quest of Rabbi Nahman of Bratslav* (VT: Jewish Lights, 1979), 6–9.

⁴⁴ Haim Gertner, 'The Beginning of "Orthodox Historiography" in Eastern Europe', 296–7.

⁴⁵ In *Zikharon Töv*, p. 16, no. 13 we read that R. Levi Isaac lamented that he never met the Maggid of Kozenice. Alas, after the meeting was arranged news arrived that he had died. This could not, however, have occurred, since the Maggid of Kozenice actually outlived R. Levi Isaac by 5 years. Moreover, contemporaneous testimony suggests that R. Levi Isaac and the Maggid were close colleagues.

⁴⁶ Such egalitarian fantasy is notably absent in Hasidic homiletic literature, which was intended for consumption by highly literate elites. See *Men of Silk*, Chapter 6. On the role of the Hasidic mercantile elite, see *ibid.*, Chapter 3.

⁴⁷ Stanley E. Porter, *The Criteria for Authenticity in Historical-Jesus Research: Previous Discussion and New Proposals* (New York, 2000), 106–10; Jonathan Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus* (NY: Doubleday, 1991); 167–71; and Craig Evans, *Jesus and his Contemporaries* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 18–19.

⁴⁸ Examples include rifts between Jesus and his family members, John's baptism of Jesus and his initial questioning as to whether he was really the Savior, Jesus' own attempts to distance himself from Davidic messianology, his lack of knowledge about the eschatological hour, his suggestion that God had forsaken him, his action in the Temple, and his reference to its future destruction. See Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 67; and Evans, *Jesus and his Contemporaries*, 18–19. Michael Satlow applies this methodology to Leviticus Rabba. See 'Fruit and the Fruit of Fruit: Charity and Piety among Jews in Late Antique Palestine', at <http://www.mlsatlow.com/otherdocs/CharityArt.pdf>.

⁴⁹ Yizhak of Neskhiž, *Zikharon Töv* (Piotróków Trybunalski, 1892), introduction.

⁵⁰ Probably a mystical reference to God's manner of weeping for the sake of his exiled people: 'Then He shed two tears into the ocean, recalling His children in the midst of His weeping' (*Zohar*, Parshat 'Vayakhel'), 195b; cited in Zvi Hirsch Kaidanover, *Kav Ha-Yashar* (Frankfurt, 1705), ch. 37, p. 86b.

⁵¹ From the first blessing of the new month.

⁵² *Yohel* is the diminutive of *yoah*, a broth made from chicken or fish.

⁵³ Psalm 130:7.

⁵⁴ Yizhak of Neskhiž, *Zikharon Töv* (Piotróków Trybunalski, 1892), p. 12, no. 1.

⁵⁵ See anti-Hasidic author R. David of Maków, *Zemir Arizim* 3a–4a, in Wilensky, *Hasidim u-Mitnaggdim* (Jerusalem, 1990), II: 196–197.

⁵⁶ Alexander Sender of Komarno, *Zot Ha-Berakha* (Jerusalem, 1999), 23.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 24.

⁵⁸ For a full account of the 'Friday Night Incident' in which R. Menahem Mendel allegedly desecrated the Sabbath (an unsubstantiated rumor), see Morris Faierstein, *All is in the Hands of Heaven – the Teachings of Rabbi Mordekhai Joseph Leiner of Izbica* (New Jersey: Ktav Publishing House, 1990), 111–24. Cf. A.Y. Heschel, *Kotsk: in Gerangl far Emesdikeyt* (Tel Aviv: Ha-Menorah, 1973), II: 567.

⁵⁹ This was pointed out to me by Alan Brill, in private conversation.

⁶⁰ Yizhak of Nezkhiž, *Zikharon Töv* (Piotróków, 1892), pp. 17–18, no. 23; *Nifla'ot ha-Rabi*, 20:15; Israel Berger, *Eser Orot*, 85:7 and 91:27; David Assaf, 'The Fall of the Seer of Lublin', *Polin* 16 (2002), 190–1.

⁶¹ See Green, *Tormented Master*, esp. 23–62 and 221–74.

⁶² Jehiel Michael of Zakrotshtein, *Ez Avot, Megilat Yuihasin, Tahat ha-Ez* (Warsaw, 1898), 3a; *Nifla'ot ha-Rabi*, 90:304; Moshe Menakhem Walden, *Ohel Yizhak* (Piotrkow, 1914), 24:96. See also number 93.

⁶³ Samuel of Sieniawa, *Ramata'im Zofim* (Warsaw, 1881), I: 231–2.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, I: 170. A similar violation is hinted at in I: 169–70.

⁶⁵ Of course, many Hasidic redactors did edit out embarrassing episodes. See David Assaf, *The Regal Way*, 12–15; and more extensively *idem.*, *Ne'ehaz be-Sabakh: Pirkei Mashber ve-Neukha be-Toldot ha-Hasidut* (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar, 2006).

⁶⁶ Yekutiel Kamelhar, *Em Le-Binah*, 'Bet Menahem' (Lemberg, 1909), p. 32.

⁶⁷ Letter printed in Avraham Simkha Bunem Mikhalzohn, *Ateret Menahem* (Bilgoraj, 1910; rpt. Brooklyn, 2002), p. 15.

⁶⁸ The entry of the *pinkas* is printed in 'Bet Menahem', fol. 17 and reprinted in *Ateret Menahem*, 12. Men are exhorted against wearing collars; and tailors are ordered to make four-cornered garments knee-length. For similar teachings in hagiographical collections, see Raphael Mahler, *Hasidism and the Jewish Enlightenment*, tr. Eugene Orenstein et al. (Philadelphia: JPS, 1985), 14.

⁶⁹ For a similar but later attempt in Hungarian orthodoxy, see Michael Silber, 'The Emergence of *Ultra-Orthodoxy*: The Invention of a Tradition', *The Uses of Tradition*, Jack Werthmeimer, ed. (New York, 1992), 23–84.

⁷⁰ Samuel T. Myovich, *Josephism At Its Boundaries: Nobles, Peasants, Priests, and Jews in Galicia, 1772–1790* (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University, 1994), 255–6; 282–4. The issue is also discussed, but with errors and a lachrymose slant, in Avraham Yaakov Breur, *Galiziah ve-Yehudeyha* (Jerusalem: Bialik, 1956), 162–8.

⁷¹ Breur, *Galiziah*, 168. The proposed expulsion of rural Jewish lease holders was initially opposed by five of eighteen Starosty, four of whom have been identified: Bojakowski, Baum, Tannhauser, and Tschirch. Eight were strongly in favor; the rest abstained. Majer Balaban, *Dzieje Żydów w Galicyi* (Lwow, 1914), 36. In 1836, Jewish tavern keepers were still present in ¾ of Galician villages, according to the imperial chancellor. See Mahler, *Hasidism and the Jewish Enlightenment*, 21.

⁷² Mahler, *Hasidism and the Jewish Enlightenment*, 23–4.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁷⁴ Avraham Hayyim Simkha Bunem Mikhalzohn, *Ohel Naftali* (Lemberg, 1911), 185–188; no. 373.

⁷⁵ Gershon Kamelhar, *Mevaser Tov* (Podgorze and Cracow, 1900), 17–18. See also a truncated version in *Ateret Menahem*, pp. 34–6, no. 117. A similar account, printed later, is attributed to Zvi Hirsch of Zydaczów in Mikhael Hakohen Braver, *Zvi Le-Zaddik*, (Vienna, 1931), 60.

⁷⁶ R. Naftali is known to have dissented from his master in 1812 over Napoleon's alleged messianic role. See Paul Mendes-Flohr and Yehuda Reinharz, ed., *The Jew in the Modern World* (NY: Oxford University Press, 1995), 137–8.

⁷⁷ Dov Ber Ehrmann, *Devarim Arevim*, 'Stories About the Holy Rabbi of Rimanov, z'l' (Munkacs, 1903; rpt. Tel Aviv, 1963), fol. 40.

⁷⁸ *Devarim Arevim*, fol. 45. Adam Teller has observed that selling alcohol to members of the nobility and clergy on the Sabbath was so widespread in the eighteenth century that it was actually tolerated by some rabbis. See Adam Teller, *Kesef, Koah, be-Hashpa'ah* (Jerusalem: Shazar, 2006), 159. Kobylany is a village located slightly west of Rymanów.

⁷⁹ 'Bet Menahem', printed in Yekutiel Kamelher, *Em la-Binah: Makhil be-Kravo* (Lemberg, 1909), fol. 17; *Ateret Menahem* (Bilgoraj, 1910; rpt. Brooklyn, 2002), 12. R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk also supported the bans, while R. Moses of Kozyenice protested them. See Menahem-Mendel of Vitebsk, *Pri Ha-Aretz*, 29b, printed in Gershon Hundert, *Jews in Poland-Lithuania* (Berkeley: University of California, 2004), 48–9; and Moses Eliyakim Beriyah, *Be'er Moshe* 'Yom Kippur' (Jozefow, 1858; censored out of subsequent editions).

⁸⁰ Mahler, *Hasidism and the Jewish Enlightenment*, 7.

⁸¹ *Be'er Moshe*, op. cit.

⁸² Carlos Ginzberg, 'The Inquisitor as Anthropologist', *Clues, Myths, and the Historical Method*, 161. See also idem., *The Cheese and the Worms: the Cosmos of a Sixteenth-century Miller*, translated by John and Anne Tedeschi (NY: Penguin, 1982).

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