3

Rebbetzins, Wonder-Children, and the Emergence of the Dynastic Principle in Hasidism

Nehemia Polen

The Origin of Hasidic Dynasties

The institution of the tsaddik and the lineal inheritance of the position of tsaddik are considered perhaps the most characteristic features of the social structure of Hasidism. Yet while the theology of the tsaddik and his role are discussed at length in Hasidic theoretical literature, the dynastic principle is seldom discussed—or even mentioned—in Hasidic *derashot* (sermons, or discourses). Similarly, while the emergence of the Hasidic dynasties has been duly noted in scholarly studies, the reasons for that emergence have never been fully explained. In a recently republished group of essays, Joseph Dan has underscored the centrality of the institution of the tsaddik for understanding Hasidism; according to Dan, it is the only really new feature of the movement as a whole.[1] After the first few decades of the movement's existence, the tsaddik's charismatic leadership became hereditary, so that "the *tzaddik* is a miracle worker both because of his charismatic relationship with the divine world and because of his being a descendant of great magicians like the Besht or the Maggid."[2] Eventually, the charismatic element dwindled, and entitlement to leadership became "genetic, rather than an intellectual or spiritual."[3] Dan characterizes hereditary leadership as "legitimate, organic, and central"[4] to the movement, yet he cannot entirely hide his

puzzlement with this "stupendous phenomenon,"[5] which "introduced into Jewish culture the oxymoron of a hereditary charismatic leader and miracle worker."[6] Dan argues persuasively that the main factor securing the miraculous contemporary rebirth of Hasidic communities in the aftermath of the Holocaust and other recent crises was "adherence to their hereditary *tzaddikim*."[7] But this does not shed light on how the principle took hold originally, well over a century before the challenges of the twentieth century. Following in the footsteps of many earlier researchers, Dan explores the historical and theological roots of the institution of the tsaddik: the relationship to Sabbateanism, the mediation between heaven and earth, the responsibility of the tsaddik to channel blessings to his community, and so on. But nowhere does Dan explain why this theology required "the establishment of hereditary leadership in the people of Israel after almost a millenium of its absence."[8]

In her now-classic essay "Hasidism after 1772: Structural Continuity and Change,"[9] Ada Rapaport-Albert demonstrates that in the earliest period—the era of the Baal Shem Tov (d. 1760) and the Maggid of Mezhirech (d. 1772)—there was no dynastic principle at all. Rather, Hasidism began as a "loose association of autonomous units," and no thought was given to the inheritance of leadership. Indeed, the Maggid of Mezhirech, a charismatic figure of enormous power and stature, actively worked to promulgate Hasidism as a decentralized movement, with no thought of bequeathing a unified body of followers to his own biological heir.[10] Following Shmuel Ettinger's observation that "[The Maggid] set up group after group with a pupil at the head of almost every one," Rapaport-Albert concludes that the Maggid worked actively to establish courts in different centers—led by disciples, not descendents.[11]

So how and why did the principle of dynastic succession take hold? Rapaport-Albert suggests that this mode of organization arose to preserve the distinctive identities of the various schools after the death of the founder.[12] But this suffers from circularity: if, as Rapaport-Albert amply demonstrates, Hasidism began as a fraternity of leaders and followers loosely bound together by a distinctive set of religious practices and theological teachings, why could the movement not have continued on that basis? And if various schools developed as the movement grew and matured, why could not the "distinctive identity" of a school be preserved by a gifted disciple as well or better than by a son? Later in the same essay

Rapaport-Albert suggests that the Polish-Russian pattern of inheritance of noble estates may have served as a model.[13] This is indeed quite plausible, but we would still need to understand what internal forces arose within Hasidism at this time which made the aristocratic model appear attractive and legitimate. Rapaport-Albert poses the problem with admirable clarity: "The matter has not been addressed by scholars, but the institutionalization of the hereditary principle in both tsaddikism and hasidism should not be taken as self-explanatory."[14]

In point of fact, the move to hereditary succession was neither inevitable nor universal. Rabbi Elimelekh of Lyzhansk passed away in 1787, and it was his students such as the Seer of Lublin, the Maggid of Kozienice, and Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel of Apta who were seen as his primary successors.[15] In Eretz Israel, after the death of Rabbi Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk in 1788, Rabbi Abraham Kalisker was widely if not universally acknowledged as the former's legitimate successor and the leader of the Hasidic *Yishuv* in the Holy Land. In the Ukraine, R. Levi Yitzhak of Berdichev passed away in 1810, and despite his enormous reputation and influence, he never established a dynasty; his sons were rabbis and scholars, but they never became "Berdichever Rebbes."[16] Bratslav Hasidim rejected the dynastic principle entirely by regarding the death of Rabbi Nahman in 1810 as in some sense not real; the founder continued to lead them as an ongoing living presence.[17] In White Russia, after the death of Rabbi Shneur Zalman in 1813, a struggle for succession developed between one of the rabbi's sons and a gifted disciple, with the result hardly a foregone conclusion.[18] In Polish Hasidism, the hereditary principle never triumphed completely, as time and again a charismatic senior disciple attracted the younger Hasidim of an aging or deceased master. As late as the mid-nineteenth century, the Halakhic authority and tsaddik Rabbi Hayyim Halberstam could write that the office of Hasidic rebbe should not be inherited, since "I do not know how the ability to pray can be inherited."[19]

Stephen Sharot has studied the Hasidic dynasties from a sociological perspective, drawing upon Max Weber's work on the routinization of charisma.[20] While Sharot acknowledges that "[n]o detailed theology was developed to justify the dynastic principle," he makes reference to a Hasidic belief that "the holy thoughts of the tsaddik at the time of conception would bring down an exceptional soul from heaven and that a child conceived and brought up in holiness would himself be holy."[21] He further

notes that "it was considered important for not only the tsaddik but also his wife to be of pure lineage. First-cousin marriages strengthened the 'holy seed' of the next tsaddik."[22]

In a similar vein, Louis Jacobs has written that "particularly from the period of the Seer of Lublin, the idea of dynastic succession took hold, in the belief that the *tsaddik*'s holy thoughts when he made love to his wife could succeed in drawing down a specially elevated soul into the child conceived, who was thereby ideally suited to take his father's place when the father departed this life."[23]

The term "holy seed"—*zera kodesh*—occurs frequently in Hasidic discussions of tsaddikim and their families. It appears originally in the Bible (Ezra 9:2; cf. Neh. 9:2), in the context of the post-exilic program of forbidding intermarriage and banishing foreign wives, so that the "holy seed" would no longer "mingle with the people of the land."[24] When applied to Hasidic tsaddikim, it clearly suggests a theology of genealogical sanctity, involving the wife and her *yihus* (distinguished ancestry) no less than the husband.

Yet most studies of Hasidism until now have largely overlooked the significance of women even in matters of genealogy. To take one striking example, the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* has an excellent chart of the relationships of the leading Hasidic dynasties, from the Baal Shem Tov to the present times, containing hundreds of names. With the exception of the Baal Shem Tov's daughter, women are completely absent. The key to the chart lists the following relationships: father, son, grandson, son-in-law, teacher-disciple; but not mother, wife, daughter, or sister-in-law. This near-complete omission confirms an unfortunate pattern to which feminist historians have called attention and which they have attempted to redress. As Joan Wallach Scott has written, "Recent research has shown that women were not inactive or absent from events that made history, but that they have been systematically left out of the official record."[25] We shall argue here that the role of the wives and mothers of tsaddikim was pivotal in the emergence of several key Hasidic dynasties and that the presence of women, when brought to the foreground, will reveal much about Hasidism in its economic, social, genealogical, and spiritual dimensions. The retrieval of this suppressed presence will be the subject of the rest of this essay.[26]

The Crisis of the Interregnum, 1802: Chava, the Mother of Rabbi Israel of Ruzhin, and the Appearance of the Yenuka

Around the year 1800 the distinctive identities of the various Hasidic courts began to emerge into full view.[27] In 1796, for example, Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liady published his famous work known popularly as *Tanya*, which did so much to forge the special character of Habad Hasidism. In 1802 Rabbi Nathan of Nemirov, a devotee of Hasidism who had previously visited many tsaddikim, became a faithful disciple of Rabbi Nahman of Bratslav, apprenticing himself to this one master exclusively. As the foremost follower and amanuensis of Rabbi Nahman, Rabbi Nathan had a central role in the crystallization of Bratslav Hasidism.[28] And in 1798, after the death of Rabbi Menahem Nahum of Chernobyl, his son Rabbi Mordecai succeeded him; this has been called the first appearance of the dynastic principle in Hasidism.[29] It was due in large measure to Rabbi Mordecai that the House of Chernobyl became the exemplar of what is meant by a Hasidic dynasty. He was among the first tsaddikim to establish an aristocratic court on the grand style; each of his eight sons became a rebbe in his own right, establishing courts in various Ukrainian towns and thereby propelling the geographic diffusion of Chernobyl Hasidism and the movement as a whole.[30]

David Assaf, in his recent biography of the celebrated tsaddik Rabbi Israel of Ruzhin (1796–1850), states that "little is known about Chava," Israel's mother.[31] And indeed, in the over five hundred pages of his meticulously documented and insightfully written study of Rabbi Israel, Chava receives only passing mention. In this, Assaf mirrors the more traditional works of Hasidic hagiography, which, when they speak of Chava or most other women, nearly always do so to highlight and frame the virtues of the male tsaddik. Yet Chava lived to about seventy-five, an unusually long lifespan in those days; she outlived Rabbi Shalom Shakhna, her husband and Rabbi Israel's father, by forty-two years. (Rabbi Shalom Shakhna was the grandson of the Rabbi Dov Ber, the Maggid of Mezhirech, the most famous figure in Hasidism after the Baal Shem Tov and widely considered the actual founder of Hasidism as an organized movement.) She accompanied her son through every stage of his controversial and stormy career and died in Sadgora only six years before he did. It is hard to believe that she was not a significant influence on her famous son, despite the near silence of the sources. In such a circumstance it seems appropriate to carefully examine and

reassess the materials we have, bringing neglected information to the foreground and looking for patterns which eluded or were not of interest to earlier writers. What emerges not only will tell us much about women in Hasidism, but will shed new light on the Hasidic movement as a whole.[32]

One unusual phenomenon which appeared early in the Hasidic movement was the *yenuka*, the "wonder-child" who assumes a leadership role at a very young age. As Assaf notes, perhaps the very first *yenuka* in Hasidism was Abraham (1787–1813), Chava's eldest son. When Abraham's father Rabbi Shalom Shakhna died in 1802, the fifteen-year-old Abraham took over the leadership of his father's Hasidim. Rabbi Shalom Shakhna died just before Sukkot that year, and as the Hasidim tell the story, "on the first night of Sukkot [just hours after his father's funeral and burial] Rabbi Abraham entered the sukkah, sat on his father's seat, and began to assume the reins of leadership, in the grand manner, as his father's successor."[33]

The assumption of communal leadership by a fifteen-year-old boy was noted with derision by the maskilim. Joseph Perl mentions Abraham by name in his anti-Hasidic polemic, *Uiber das Wesen der Sekte Chassidim* (On the Nature of the Sect of the Hasidim), completed in 1816.[34] And from that time on, the phenomenon of the *yenuka* became a frequent target of maskilic scorn and satire. We will have more to say about a later instance of this below.

Abraham's behavior is never fully explained in the Hasidic sources. Many of the faithful probably saw it as just one more example of the preternatural powers of the tsaddik, often expressed in patterns of action which cannot be comprehended by lesser mortals. The more learned undoubtedly recalled passages in the Zohar where a *yenuka* makes an appearance, bringing particularly sublime and recondite wisdom.[35] For his part, Assaf sees Abraham's action as "cynical behavior," a power-grab by a youngster who, in his "urgent need for legitimization," rushed to gain the assent of his family to his succession.[36] But how plausible is it that a youngster, barely fifteen years old (as Joseph Perl already pointed out in 1816), is so filled with the urge for power and the attendant burdens and responsibilities of communal leadership, that he grabs the reins just a few hours after his dead father has been interred? It is certainly reasonable to ask whether an adult may have been involved in the decision.

The main account of young Abraham's succession appears in a hagiographic collection of Ruzhin traditions known as *Bet Yisrael* (House of Israel), originally published in 1913 by Reuben Zak.[37] The stories about Rabbi Abraham do not hide the astonishment felt by many, even among

the Hasidim, that such a youngster had assumed the reins of his father's community.

It is interesting that nearly all the accounts of this episode make specific mention of Abraham's mother. One such tradition states that

> on that night of Sukkot [Abraham] took his younger brother, the future Ruzhiner Rebbe [who was six years old at the time], and wanted to enter the sukkah. He said, "We must first go to our mother the *zaddeket* and say *Gut Yom Tov* (essentially, Happy Holiday) to her." He told her, "God now has a new guest in heaven; we ought to send Him something in honor of the guest. What should I send? I will say Kiddush in his honor." So he entered the sukkah and made Kiddush.[38]

Chava's response is not recorded, but her silence suggests agreement. And the line "'We must first go to our mother the zaddeket (a saintly individual) . . .'" may be a way of hinting at the obvious: that no family decision—especially at such a time, and of such consequence—could have been made without the mother, and that Chava may have been actively involved from the very beginning. In any event, it is clear that Abraham was concerned to receive his mother's consent, post facto if not ab initio.

Consider the following: Chava was a granddaughter of Rabbi Menahem Nahum of Chernobyl (1730–1797), a foundational personality from Hasidism's early period, a disciple of the Baal Shem Tov and the Maggid of Mezhirech, and the author of the seminal work *Me'or Eynayim* (The Light of the Eyes).[39] Chava's uncle was Rabbi Menahem Nahum's son and successor, Rabbi Mordecai of Chernobyl (1770–1837). As noted above, he was one of the first tsaddikim to live on a grand scale, in the manner of Russian nobility.[40]

Rabbi Shalom Shakhna enjoyed a successful tenure as rebbe in Prohobitch. His popularity extended to the wider region; he was a well-known and respected personality throughout Ukrainian Hasidism.[41] He must have had a sizable following. In light of this, it should come as no surprise that he had already begun living in a princely manner, much unlike his ascetic father, Rabbi Abraham "the Angel." This mirrors the generational trajectory that his wife Chava had experienced in Chernobyl. Her grandfather Rabbi Menahem Nahum had lived a life of extreme self-denial and poverty, while his son Rabbi Mordecai—Chava's uncle—had introduced the aristocratic style of leadership.

At the time of Rabbi Shalom Shakhna's passing in 1802, Chava was confronted with the dissipation of his community and the collapse of her position within it. We recall that at this time dynastic rights were not universally asserted or recognized, and the very notion of an "heir" to the seat of a tsaddik had not fully crystallized. In general the corporate identity of a Hasidic community did not long survive without direct personal contact with a living master.[42] Without the announcement of a successor, the Hasidim of Prohobitch would have naturally dispersed, each looking for a new tsaddik in some other location. But if the Hasidic community of Prohobitch were not to survive with its identity intact, Chava would have been just another widow with most uncertain prospects. And without dynastic succession, her two sons would have been not heirs, but mere orphans in a society which had no dearth of fatherless children.

The force of these concerns is brought into greater relief when seen in light of an earlier episode in the family's history. Rabbi Abraham the Angel—Rabbi Shalom Shakhna's father, son of the Maggid of Mezhirech—had himself died young, in the fall of 1776. His widow, Gitl, left her two young children and went to Eretz Israel, spending the rest of her life there in obscurity. The two orphans were taken in by the tsaddik Rabbi Shlomo of Karlin, who educated them and found appropriate matches when the time came (the older brother married Rabbi Shlomo's own daughter, while Shalom Shakhna was betrothed to the granddaughter of Rabbi Menahem Nahum of Chernobyl—our Chava). Gitl's departure was never explained, and the whole episode is shrouded in obscurity. But the abandonment of the eight-year old Shalom Shakhna by his mother, just after the death of his father, must have profoundly shaken him and left its mark on the entire family. Now, one generation later, Rabbi Shalom Shakhna had himself died, leaving two young children. It must have seemed an eerie echo of the past, with history in danger of repeating itself. The fifteen-year-old Abraham would have had strong motivation to step in and try to fill his father's shoes, for his own sake as well as for his mother's. Nothing would have been more important than the stability of the family, which required the continuity of the community his father had built up.

Abraham and his mother, Chava, had a convergence of interests. The fifteen-year-old still needed his mother, for himself and his six-year-old brother, Israel. And if he was to succeed as a rebbe, he surely needed the guidance and experience his mother could provide. Chava would have

known the Hasidim as individuals—not just their personal idiosyncrasies and aspirations, but the role each Hasid played in the constellation of her late husband's community. This detailed information would have been indispensable for an inexperienced youngster trying to lead a group of followers out of a crisis of continuity. For her part, Chava needed her son Abraham, for, being a woman, she could not officially lead the Hasidim. As a Twersky of Chernobyl, she had had first-hand knowledge of the emerging aristocratic leadership style. But whatever her depth of experience and knowledge, only her son Abraham could be the tsaddik. Only he could avert the dissolution of the community her husband had built. In light of this convergence of interests, it is only reasonable to assume that Chava would have assisted her son in his consolidation of leadership, and she may have pointed the way from the very beginning. This supposition receives support from the repeated references to Chava's motherly guidance of Abraham and Israel. (Abraham died in 1811, at which point Israel assumed leadership of the community. Strikingly, Israel was then fifteen years old—the same age his older brother Abraham was in 1802, when *he* first sat in his father's seat!) Hasidic tradition preserves memories reflecting Chava's deep concern for her children's development, even from before birth. There is a notable remark from the Apter Rav, Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, considered Hasidism's most senior and revered figure in the last decade of his life (1815–1825).[43] When Chava was pregnant with her younger son, Israel, the future Ruzhiner Rebbe, the Apter is quoted as calling Chava "the Holy Ark" who was carrying (in her womb) a Torah scroll.[44] It would be a mistake to dismiss this as nothing but typical Hasidic exaggeration, a pious encomium for a future leader. The phrase "Holy Ark" (*Aron ha-Kodesh*) resonates with Kabbalistic meaning, alluding to the *Sefirah* of *Malkhut*, or "sovereignty," and associated with the receptive feminine aspect of the divine realm, also known as *Shekhinah*.[45] To anyone with even a modest familiarity with Kabbalistic symbolism, this would have suggested that the union of Chava with her husband, Rabbi Shalom Shakhna, was a sacred rite destined to produce extraordinary offspring. A related tradition states that during the entire nine months of her pregnancy with Israel, Chava was secluded in her private chamber. No one came into her room other than her maids and ladies-in-waiting, thus protecting the pure and holy soul of the future Ruzhiner Rebbe from wayward glances and influences.[46] These traditions reflect an intense level of agency on Chava's part in the spiritual development of her offspring.

Chava's active involvement in the upbringing of her children continued during their childhood and apparently intensified after the death of her husband. The sources tell of visits to the great tsaddikim of the day to receive their blessing, including the Seer of Lublin[47] and the Apter Rav. Around 1805 (three years after her husband's death) Chava brought the two brothers to Berdichev, home of Rabbi Levi Yitzhak. Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Lyady, the founder of Habad Hasidism, who was visiting in Berdichev at the time, is said to have been greatly impressed with Israel's profound religious insight.[48] The picture which emerges from these stories is that of a mother engaged in the project of introducing her sons to the foremost Hasidic leaders of the era. As a devotee of Hasidism, she was undoubtedly following the pious practice of securing blessings from holy masters; but it also seems evident that she was intent on grooming her sons, orphaned from their father, in the ways of the tsaddikim. In addition, these courtesy calls built support among influential leaders to legitimate her sons' succession.

At times Chava appears as an unspoken but clear presence in her sons' life. An example of this is Israel of Ruzhin's *Tosefet Ketubah*—a codicil of supplementary provisions to the *ketubah*, the traditional marriage contract. In this fascinating document, recently published for the first time,[49] the boilerplate *ketubah* obligation has been augmented by the sum of 1,548 rubles. This substantial commitment indicates that the family already had considerable financial resources. And the date (9 Elul 5569) reveals that Israel was wed in 1809, at age twelve—before his Bar Mitzvah![50] Given that he had no father, it is impossible to suppose that his mother was not involved in the arrangements and negotiations. Significantly, young Israel is repeatedly referred to as *ha-yanik*—a variant form of the word *yenuka* we have already encountered, but here in a legal document. The word bespeaks his youth and precocity. But it also conveys a hint of its etymological origin, from *yanak*—to suckle, nurse, breast-feed—hence pointing to a mother hovering in the background, providing nurturance and guidance, even if not acknowledged.

We have a report from the early years of Israel's marriage that Israel refused to perform his marital duty. He gave pious reasons for his behavior, but it must also be remembered that he was scarcely a teenager at this time. In any event, Chava sought the intervention of Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel of Apta, who was able to assure Israel that "engagement in the commandment to be fruitful and multiply" was entirely proper and that he would be blessed with children worthy of his sacred lineage.[51]

Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel of Apta was also the source for an extraordinary and widely circulated claim made about the Ruzhiner: that he never forgot what the angel had taught him in his mother's womb.[52] This relates to the old rabbinic *aggadah* (legend) that for the nine months of gestation, babies in the womb are taught Torah by an angel, only to be tapped on the mouth at birth, forgetting everything.[53] A prominent follower of the Ruzhiner, Rabbi Reuven Horenstien of Odessa, was astonished at the thought that his master had retained his prenatal memories, and once ventured to ask the rebbe, "'How can such a thing be?'" The Ruzhiner replied, "'Go ask my mother.'" Rebbetzin Chava answered as follows:

> "There is indeed a rabbinic teaching that an angel studies the entire Torah with the baby before he is born into this world. Just as he is about to leave his mother's womb, an angel comes, slaps him on the mouth, and he forgets everything. But these very different tasks—that of teaching, and that of expunging memories—are not performed by the same angel, rather by two different angels. What then, gives rise to the Angel of Forgetting? It is the final thought of intercourse [the self-awareness of orgasm]. Believe me that neither I nor my late husband, Rabbi Shalom of Prohobitch, had such a thought at that time, so no Angel of Forgetting was created. That is why my son remembers everything."[54]

In this extraordinary exchange, Chava is asserting the unique spiritual power of her son; more, she is asserting her co-responsibility—along with her late husband—for engendering that power in an act of conception without sexual lust. By avoiding the indulgence of orgasmic forgetting, Chava and Rabbi Shalom Shakhna were in control of their sexual natures. Having maintained their spiritual awareness at a moment when most couples surrender to passion, they birthed a child continually in contact with God and His pristine Torah. Furthermore, by referring the questioner to his mother, the Ruzhiner was effectively endorsing her reply: his birth was the result of a sacred union, and his charismatic powers derived from his mother as much as his late father. And the narrative frame of the story—in which a prominent follower turns to the great tsaddik's mother for a decades-old truth that only she could know—inscribes Chava's role as matriarch of the family, as the repository of sacred knowledge and history, and as the wise guardian of origins and bedrock of dynastic identity.

Finally, there is an astonishing family tradition that the Ruzhiner attributed his imprisonment in Kiev to his mother, Chava. During the period of incarceration (1838–1840) Chava longed to hear some word from her son. A certain Hasid managed to gain entry to the Ruzhiner's cell and was able to converse with him. As the visit ended, the Hasid asked the tsaddik for a sign, a signal by which he could prove to Chava that he had actually met with her son. Rabbi Israel responded, "'Tell my mother that she is responsible for my entire incarceration.'" When the Hasid reported on his visit to Chava and told her what her son had said, she replied:

> "That's exactly right—It's my fault that my son is in prison. Let me tell you the story. Before he gave birth in holiness to his youngest son [Mordecai Shraga of Husyatin], he came to me and said that he has the opportunity to bring down a very great and lofty soul, such as the world has not seen in the last two thousand years; but as a consequence he would be forced to suffer a painful exile. So he asked me for my advice, and I replied, 'My son, what don't we do for our children's sake?'"[55]

This story once again links the Ruzhiner's mother, Chava, with motifs of holy sexual union and the birth of sacred souls. Here she is depicted as the matriarch of the family, steering it toward a glorious spiritual destiny at whatever cost to her son's physical or material welfare. Whatever we make of the theology implicit in this story, it places Chava in the role of behind-the-scenes guide to her son on a matter of utmost gravity, of vital concern to the lineage and her family's future.

When taken in the aggregate, the sheer number of vignettes and reminiscences which feature Chava is impressive. I cannot think of another early tsaddik who is linked so strongly and consistently in the hagiographic literature with his mother.[56] And these traditions always spotlight Chava's concern for family continuity, a concern whose spiritual and material components are inseparable. Willy-nilly, these memories testify to Chava's ongoing leadership in the Ruzhin dynasty.

So far as I know, we have no correspondence from Chava, but one item which did survive is Chava's ring, extant to this day.[57] On one side are engraved the words "To light the Sabbath lamp," and on the other, "Chava daughter of our master Rabbi Abraham, may God preserve and redeem him." Such a ring, crafted at a time when her father was still living, bespeaks a confident self-awareness of aristocratic position.[58] In all, we catch sight of an influential woman, utilizing her stature to advance the

situation of her sons while securing her place at the very core of Hasidism's new aristocracy. While any analysis of her motives must include the factors of economic self-interest and social position, for Chava these considerations would have been totally intermingled with thoughts of her venerable ancestors, on the one hand, and her belief in her sons as tsaddikim, on the other. Chava surely believed that the great legacy of the Maggid of Mezhirech, Rabbi Abraham the Angel, her husband, Rabbi Shalom Shakhna, and her grandfather Rabbi Menahem Nahum of Chernobyl could best be preserved and transmitted by the sacred souls which she had brought into the world.

Let us now return to that first night of Sukkot in 1802, mere hours after the death of Rabbi Shalom Shakhna. We will never know in full what motivated the newly orphaned boy to move (quite literally) into his father's seat, to the chagrin and astonishment of the Hasidim. But it was surely the case that Abraham sought and received his mother's consent, post facto if not ab initio. Rising to the role of filial successor—a role still rare and unexpected in Hasidism—Abraham, with his mother's support, saved the cohesive community built by his father from immediate dissipation. Crystallized around family loyalty and the memory of great predecessors, the community's identity remained intact, much as had already happened in Chava's own family where the Hasidic community of Chernobyl had become a proprietary domain. With his mother as his silent partner, the son laid the foundation for what would soon flower into the great lineage of Mezhirech-Prohobitch-Ruzhin. Abraham of Prohobitch and his younger brother, Israel (later of Ruzhin), were no longer orphans but heirs, dauphins of an emergent dynasty which would influence Hasidism for all time to come.

On the twelfth of Tammuz (midsummer) 1844, Chava passed away. She was the first person to be interred in the family's burial plot in Sadgora; her son the Ruzhiner Rebbe would join her six years later. It is reported that when the burial was concluded, the Ruzhiner took three steps back from her grave and paused. Then he said, "Thus far the border of the Land of Israel."[59] It should not be missed that the given name of the Ruzhiner Rebbe was Israel.

The Crisis of the Interregnum, 1873: Sarah Devorah Shapiro and the Yenuka of Stolin

In 1875, an article appeared in Peretz Smolenskin's *Ha-Shahar* (The Dawn), published in Vienna, titled "Hitgalut ha-Yenuka mi-Stolin," or "The Debut of the Yenuka of Stolin." Israel Davidson, in *Parody in Jewish Literature*, writes that the "Hitgalut" is a "satire directed against the abuses of the Tsaddikim of the House of Karlin in general, but in particular against the accession of the five year old son of Rabbi Asher of Karlin into the office of Tsaddik."[60] The historical background of the satire is as follows: Rabbi Aaron the Second of Stolin (1802–1872) was a prominent master in White Russia, a grandson of the celebrated Rabbi Aaron the Great of Karlin (1736–1772). His incumbency as leader of the Karlin-Stolin Hasidim lasted forty-five years. When he died in 1872, he was succeeded by his son Rabbi Asher the Second (1827–1873). But Rabbi Asher died only one year after his father, and Karlin-Stolin Hasidism was beset by a crisis of continuity, having sustained in rapid succession the loss of two beloved leaders. The only male heir was Rabbi Asher's son, Israel, who was about four and a half years old at the time of his father's passing. When the child was about five years old, the Stolin elders announced that Israel had been designated his father's successor and would henceforth lead the Hasidic community of Stolin.[61]

When this turn of events became known to the wider community, it provoked astonishment; almost immediately maskilim rushed to satirize what in their view was an absurd example of Hasidic credulousness. The best-known example is "Hitgalut ha-Yenuka mi-Stolin," signed "Had min Havraya," a pseudonym meaning "One of the Fellows." One question which seems not to have been asked by either the maskilim or the subsequent scholarly writers on this topic is, Why did the Stoliner Hasidim do it? That is, even granting their putative naivete, there must have been a compelling reason which led them to the extraordinary step of appointing a five-year-old as their leader. They must surely have anticipated that such a decision would attract ridicule and contempt.

To answer this question, we must take a closer look at the article published in *Ha-shahar*, which Davidson attributed to Yehuda Leib Levin.[62] This attribution is only partially correct. The "Hitgalut" actually has a composite character, with two distinct sections. The article begins and concludes with a "Letter to the Editor," which introduces and frames the

core document, a letter from "the Rabbi of Turov, a town near Pinsk." The tone of the two sections differs dramatically. The frame letter is a typical maskilic satire, by turns ludicrously pompous, bathetic, and ribald, with repeated references to the rumored sexual inadequacy of the tsaddikim. By contrast, the core letter is entirely serious. It does herald the advent of the *yenuka*, and portrays him as gifted with an extraordinary intellect, musical ability, and supernatural powers; it also claims for him a messianic soul. But with all this, the tone is quite different from the carnivalesque style of the frame letter, which is typical of anti-Hasidic parodies such Joseph Perl's *Megaleh Temirin*.[63] The core letter is characterized by an earnest and plaintive note of urgency which accurately reflects the Karlin-Stolin crisis of succession and the concern of the elders to hold the group together around the child as titular leader.

"The Rabbi of Turov" is a historical figure: his name is Ya'akov Noson Weisman (c. 1832–1916), who indeed served as rabbi of Turov (a small town east of Pinsk) and later emigrated to Eretz Israel where he was a rabbi in Tiberias; he died in Safed in 1916.[64] Yehuda Leib Levin was shown a copy of Weisman's letter and grasped the opportunity to augment it into a full-scale assault on Karlin-Stolin Hasidism. He wrote the frame letter which enabled him to incorporate other scandalous and embarrassing material. He also festooned Weisman's original letter with mock-serious footnotes, which added to the fun but further obscured the composite character of the whole. The original, authentic letter without Levin's embellishments (but with a side-by-side Yiddish translation) appears in a Yiddish-language journal published in Lemberg, *Jsrulik* (The Israelite), in the issue of October 30, 1875.[65] Levin tells the entire story in the year 1900, in *Hatchiah* (The Renaissance), a Hebrew literary weekly published in Chicago.[66]

For all their differences, Weisman's original letter, Levin's 1875 parody, and Levin's 1900 article agree on one thing: young Israel Perlow's mother had a hand in her son's accession to the leadership of Karlin-Stolin. Levin (1900) writes that the idea to give the Karlin-Stolin dynastic seat to the child came from the mother's circle of supporters (*mekoraveha*); the Rabbi of Turov, who was acting as *gabbai* (administrative assistant) for the mother, wrote and circulated his letter to gather support for the child's accession.

Levin's 1875 satire states that in contrast to tsaddikim who are accused of living in extravagant style, "this lad drinks only a little wine in order to get accustomed to sacred service; he eats little and dresses modestly. He

takes no pleasure in all the money he receives from thousands of hasidim, for he gives it all to his mother."[67]

But undoubtedly the most reliable source is Rabbi Weisman's original letter. Weisman mentions steps that were already taken to place the child in charge of Karlin-Stolin institutions in both Russia and the Holy Land. He continues, "His mother the Rebbetzin has the authority to appoint overseers for governance of the sacred institutions, as well as tax collectors (*anshei ma'amad*) of her choice. [This arrangement will hold] until the righteous Shoot will grow to adulthood. . . . And everyone knows about the matter of Jehoash of blessed memory."[68]

The rather cryptic reference to Jehoash requires some elucidation. In 2 Kings 11–12 (cf. 2 Chronicles 22–24) Jehoash, son of Ahaziah, is the only survivor of a bloody purge which attempted to eliminate every legitimate contender for the Davidic throne. He is secreted away as an infant by his aunt Jehoshiba and kept hidden for six years. In his seventh year, Jehoshiba's husband, the high priest Jehoiada, reveals the young lad to the people, and Jehoash is anointed and crowned as king in a ceremony celebrating the renewal of the Davidic dynasty. The salient parallels are clear: Davidic descent and messianic claims were advanced for young Israel Perlow, he was a "child-king," and his cause was being championed by a close woman relative: for Jehoash, his aunt; in the case of Israel Perlow, his mother. The naming of Jehoash at the very end of Weisman's letter is intended to invoke a powerful biblical precedent for the installation of a child-leader, but it also points to the central role that young Israel's mother had in directing the course of events.

Who was Israel Perlow's mother? Born in 1844, her name was Sarah Devorah Shapiro; she was a great-great granddaughter to Rabbi Israel the Maggid of Kozienice (1737–1814), one of the founders of Hasidism in Poland. Her first marriage, to a second cousin who was heir to the Kozienice Hasidic dynasty, ended with her husband's death in 1866. The young widow soon remarried (1867), this time to Rabbi Asher Perlow of Stolin (1827–1873), whose role as tsaddik of the Karlin-Stolin line has already been mentioned.[69] When Sarah Devorah left Congress Poland for White Russia to marry Rabbi Asher, she brought along her two children from her first husband, a boy and a girl. In Stolin, Sarah Devorah presented her husband, Rabbi Asher, with three children, two girls and a boy. The boy, born in 1868, was named Israel. When his father died in 1873, it was he who was brought forward as successor; he is our *yenuka*.

Let us consider Sarah Devorah's situation at the time of Rabbi Asher's death in 1873. She was twenty-nine years old. Within a span of just seven years, she had lost two husbands (she had lived about six years with each one). This was enough to stigmatize her and make it most unlikely that she would ever marry again. But she was the mother of five children, and—of special importance in Hasidic society—she had given birth to two boys, each of whom was heir to a well-known lineage: Kozienice in Poland, then Karlin-Stolin in White Russia. Sarah Devorah would have had an intense personal interest in the deliberations regarding the choice of a successor to her late husband, Rabbi Asher Perlow, and her efforts to see her son installed are fully understandable.[70]

Sarah Devorah figures prominently in a memoir[71] written by her granddaughter and published in Israel in 1967. The granddaughter, whose name was Malkah Shapiro, writes of her youth in Kozienice, Poland. The memoir is set in 1905, after Sarah Devorah has returned from White Russia to her native Poland, together with her son from her first marriage, Yerahmiel Moshe Hapstein, who assumed the incumbent seat as Rebbe of Kozienice.

In Shapiro's memoir, Sarah Devorah manages the affairs of the court and makes all major decisions. She is appropriately respectful to her son, who is after all the Rebbe, but Yerahmiel Moshe treats his mother with the greatest reverence. She is constantly chastising him for endangering his health with a grueling schedule of study and service, and with extreme asceticism. A major point of contention is the question of building a new mansion to replace the elegant home which was destroyed in a fire about six years earlier. Sarah Devorah, along with a group of loyal and generous Hasidim, conspires to go ahead with plans for new construction, but Yerahmiel Moshe does his best to subvert their intentions. Eventually the new house does begin to rise, due to Sarah Devorah's indefatigable marshalling of architectural, financial, and managerial resources. Speaking Polish, she works with contractors, artisans, and suppliers of raw materials, conducts labor negotiations, and deals with work stoppages and strikes. Everyone is frightened of her: she need only give one look in the direction of a group of chatting workers, and they fall silent and return to work. In addition to managing the household and court in Kozienice, she owns a country estate where the family would often spend summers. Shapiro remembers her grandmother Sarah Devorah as a woman of elegance, culture, and refinement, who prizes education and piety. Her knowledge of German and of delicate embroidery techniques was obtained from a tutor whom she herself had imported from Hungary. She maintains excellent relation-

ships with members of the Polish nobility; they respect her family heritage and cultural sophistication, and share her aristocratic values rooted in an era that was fast disappearing. But along with the ambience of majesty and nobility that Sarah Devorah cultivates, there is also devout piety and the fear of heaven. In between her managerial activities she prays and recites psalms. The Rebbetzin's blessings are sought by Polish peasants as well as by Hasidim.

As depicted in her granddaughter's memoir, Sarah Devorah is a dynamic, enterprising, and courageous individual who confidently travels to the crown city of St. Petersburg for an interview at the Russian imperial palace. With a memory of events going back to the first half of the nineteenth century, she is the repository and transmitter of the family's sacred traditions and foundational stories. Shapiro depicts her sitting at the head of the table, surrounded by family members and Hasidim who listen in rapt attention as she tells mystic stories from her childhood. She is domineering and assertive, but these qualities are essential for her effectiveness in managing the household and court.

Sarah Devorah's fears for her son's health are entirely justified: Yerahmiel Moshe died in 1909. She lived through the Great War, and it was she who made the decision for the family to leave Kozienice for Warsaw when the town became a battlefield. Scion of the Maggid of Kozienice and widow of two major tsaddikim, it was she who nurtured and transmitted the household's sense of itself as a royal dynasty. She died in Warsaw in 1921 at age seventy seven, surviving both her sons.

This portrait of Sarah Devorah is entirely consistent with the image that emerges from the sources we have examined in connection with her son Israel Perlow, the *yenuka*. In particular, Rabbi Weisman's original letter asserting her control of communal institutions and funds testifies to her role as dynastic regent, the actual power behind her son, the "child-king."

David Assaf has written about the enormous financial resources that were necessary to run the large Hasidic courts such as that of Ruzhin, and the techniques that arose to supply the requisite funds. But Assaf and his primary sources say almost nothing about actual administration: who made purchasing decisions and paid the bills; who hired, fired, and supervised the large staff of servants, workers, kitchen help, artisans, and contractors; who oversaw the comings and goings of honored guests, Hasidic pilgrims, and the poor; who decided on renovations, additions, and major construction; who purchased real estate and invested assets, negotiated

with local and regional authorities, tracked the distribution of charitable funds and the governance of religious institutions, and so on?[72] Such a major administrative role could only have been filled by a trusted intimate of the tsaddik, most likely a close family member.[73] Malkah Shapiro's memoir makes it clear that at least in one instance it was the family matriarch, Sara Devorah Shapiro, who filled that role.

Nor can such a role be dismissed as marginal to the tsaddik's spiritual focus. The regal Hasidic court as it developed through the nineteenth century expressed an embodied social theology. The tsaddik's role as sacred pivot of his community, as "axis mundi,"[74] was concretized in the court itself, so that the structures of the court create a sacred domain analogous to the sacred space of the biblical Tabernacle and the Jerusalem Temples.[75] The life of the court, in both its material and spiritual culture, displayed the theology of the tsaddik and nurtured the experience of the Hasid who came as pilgrim to see and to be seen.[76]

The Hasidic court was not characterized by sharp delineations between the public and private, between domestic and communal. Hasidim, at least Hasidic intimates, came into the family residence all the time. Rebbetzins interacted with the entire community and could easily exercise control if they so desired. So it should not surprise us that in some cases it was a Rebbetzin such as Sarah Devorah Shapiro Perlow who guided the court's administration. Such a Rebbetzin should be thought of as a regent directing the spiritual and material fortunes of the lineage, bearing the dynasty's vision of itself.[77]

When writing of the Stolin *yenuka, Haskalah* (Jewish Enlightenment) writers saw a story of venality, credulity, and superstition. They never bothered to think much about the mother of the wonder-child, other than to accuse her of appropriating the *pidyon* (redemption)-money. The "Hitgalut ha-Yenuka mi-Stolin" parody does not even refer to her by name. From the research presented here, however, a different picture emerges, a narrative of a woman of courage, intelligence, and energy, working to secure the continuity of her tradition and lineage. By struggling for her son's position as dynastic heir, she was assuring her own continued role as queen mother, but she had every right to do so. Not the sovereign but the regent, Sara Devorah Shapiro Perlow, was destined to be forever the power behind the throne, the guardian of dynastic vision.

Our analysis of Chava, mother of Rabbi Israel of Ruzhin, and Sarah Devorah Shapiro Perlow suggests the following: where there is a *yenuka*, there is

likely a recently widowed mother, with very legitimate concerns about her lineage, promoting the role of her son and thereby securing her own position as well. After the crisis of the interregnum has passed and her son has successfully taken his place as tsaddik, a woman such as Chava or Sara Devorah would often settle into the role of dynastic elder, prized for first-hand knowledge of the events, traditions, and personalities of bygone days. If she also had the energy and ability, she might emerge as the de facto if unacknowledged leader of the Hasidic community, making key decisions and guiding its destiny as much as or even more than her son the tsaddik.

Hasidic writers would have had no reason to publicize such an arrangement; wherever it existed, the Hasidim would have worked hard to shield it from view. And that is why the large corpus of hagiographic literature contains mere hints of the roles played by women such as Chava and Sara Devorah. This underscores the importance of reexamining that literature, as well as searching for documents and texts previously overlooked or undiscovered.

At one point in Malkah Shapiro's memoir, she mentions that Sarah Devorah Shapiro Perlow carried a pouch tied around her neck. The pouch was for some of her most precious possessions: heirloom jewelry bequeathed by her dynastic predecessors and plans for the family's country estate in Polesia. But the pouch also contained "holy letters she had received from tzakkikim, including appreciations of her son the wonder child."[78] The land documents and approbations of her son which this matriarch carried in her bosom were more than priceless possessions. They were the crown jewels of her Hasidic lineage, embodying its dynastic identity and hopes. There was no safer place for them than on the tablet of Sarah Devorah's heart.

Notes

1. Joseph Dan, "A Bow to Frumkinian Hasidism," in *Jewish Mysticism, Vol. 4: General Characteristics and Comparative Studies* (Northvale, NJ, 1999) p. 93. The article was originally published in *Modern Judaism*, Vol. 11, No. 2 (1991), pp. 175–193.

2. Dan, "The Contemporary Hasidic *Tzaddik*: Charisma, Heredity, Magic, and Miracle," in *Jewish Mysticism, Vol. 4*, p. 118.

3. Ibid., p. 119.

4. Ibid., p. 120, n. 7.

5. Ibid., p. 119.

6. Ibid., p. 112.

7. Dan, "Hasidism: The Third Century," in *Jewish Mysticism, Vol. 4*, p. 80.

8. Dan, "The Contemporary Hasidic *Tzaddik*," p. 119. But see a more recent publication, *The Heart and the Fountain: An Anthology of Jewish Mystical Experience* (New York, 2002), where Dan writes of Hasidic leadership as "a hereditary power inherent in the families of the founders" (p. 40). This emphasis on family moves closer to the approach we shall adopt herein.

9. In Ada Rapaport-Albert, ed., *Hasidism Reappraised* (London, 1996).

10. In the event, Rabbi Dov Ber's grandson, Rabbi Shalom Shakhna, successfully established himself as a tsaddik; he and his descendents will play prominent roles in the discussion that follows. But while Rabbi Shalom Shakhna drew on the spiritual power and prestige of the Great Maggid, in no sense did he inherit an established Hasidic community, nor did he ever make the claim that he was the designated successor to his illustrious grandfather. His *Rebistve* (rabbinic office; tenured chair of a recognized tsaddik) in Prohobitch was his own making. Similar remarks pertain to Rabbi Barukh of Medzibozh, grandson of the Baal Shem Tov.

11. Martin Buber begins his chapter on the Maggid of Mezhirech, in "Dov Ber of Mezritch, the Great Maggid" (*Tales of the Hasidim: Early Masters* [New York, 1975]), with a story that depicts the five-year-old Dov Ber consoling his mother on the loss of her family tree, burned in a fire which destroyed their house. The tree traced the family's lineage back to the great talmudic sage Rabbi Yohanan the sandal-maker. The young Dov Ber is quoted as saying, "'And what does that matter! I shall get you a new family tree which begins with me!'" (p. 98). But this story, which appeared first in 1930 and purports to describe an event from around 1710, may be a retrospective projection of the later situation back to the time of the illustrious paterfamilias. The story actually supports the thesis developed herein: the dynastic vision emerges out of a child's assuming responsibility for his mother in the wake of crisis.

On the broader question of the reliability of hagiographic traditions, see below, nn. 37–38. It is obvious that as the time between the ostensible event and its first appearance in print increases, one's confidence in its historicity diminishes proportionally. Here, there is a gap of over two hundred years, much too long to give the story historical credence.

12. Rapaport-Albert, p. 118.

13. Ibid., p. 137. See also Arthur Green, "Typologies of Leadership and the Hasidic Zaddiq," in *Jewish Spirituality*, edited by Arthur Green (New York, 1994), Vol. 2, pp. 127–156. Green observes that "The very notion of inherited dynasty, the right to authority in the Hasidic community by virtue of birth, smacked of royalism" (p. 144). For the earliest examples of leadership in the regal style, Green

mentions Baruch of Medzibozh as well as Mordecai of Chernobyl. But Baruch is not the best example of the pattern under discussion because while he drew on the prestige of the Besht, he did not inherit an ongoing, established Hasidic community; see above, n. 10. There was a gap of nearly thirty years between the Besht's death and Baruch's establishing his court in Medzibozh. And when Baruch died in 1810, his sons-in-law did not inherit his court (he had no sons). Shortly after Baruch's death, Medzibozh became the seat of Abraham Joshua Heschel (formerly of Apta), until the latter's death in 1825. On Mordecai of Chernobyl's assumption of leadership, see below, n. 40.

14. Rapaport-Albert, p. 137, n. 239.

15. Moshe Menahem Walden, *Nifla'ot ha-Rabbi* (Warsaw, 1911; reprinted, Brooklyn, 1985), records the story that before Rabbi Elimelekh passed away, "he placed his hands on his disciples, bestowing aspects of his radiance upon them. He gave the Rabbi of Lublin the light of his eyes; to Rabbi Israel the Maggid of Kozienice he gave the power in his heart; to Rabbi Mendel of Pristik [later of Rymanov] he gave the soul in his mind; and to Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel of Apta he gave the power in his mouth" (pp. 24–25, #29). See also Abraham Chaim Simhah Bunem Michaelson, *Ohel Elimelekh* (Przemysl, 1910), p. 78, #186.

16. The apparent lack of interest on the part of Rabbi Levi Yitzhak in establishing a dynasty is conveyed in the following story, told by Rabbi Yitzhak of Neskhizh (d. 1868), son of the famed tsaddik Rabbi Mordecai of Neskhiz (d. 1800). The story involves Rabbi Yitzhak himself and Rabbi Levi Yitzhak of Berdichev. "The Rabbi of Berdichev, in his last year of life (c. 1810) sent for Rabbi Yitzhak of Neskhizh to teach him the esoteric intentions of the *mitzvah* of Lulav and Etrog. The descendents of the Berdichever became jealous of the rabbi of Neskhizh, thinking, Why was the Berdichever teaching him and not them? The Berdichever answered them as follows: 'When old Rabbi Mordecai of blessed memory [who had already died in 1800] will ask me in the World of Truth, What did you teach my son? I will need something to answer him, so that's why I'm teaching him these esoteric intentions of Lulav and Etrog.' Then the Berdichever closed the door to his descendents and transmitted to Rabbi Yitzhak those secret teachings." The story, which appears in the collection *Zikhron La-Rishonim* (reprinted Brooklyn, 1976 [original, Piotrkow, 1910]), pp. 135–136, has the effect of promoting the standing of the teller, Rabbi Yitzhak. But it certainly captures accurately the reality that Rabbi Levi Yitzhak did not groom a successor from his own family.

17. Rapaport-Albert, pp. 118–119; cf. Arthur Green, "Nahman's Final Years," in *Tormented Master: The Life and Spiritual Quest of Rabbi Nahman of Bratslav* (Woodstock, VT, 1992 [original, 1979]), pp. 221–265.

18. See Naftali Loewenthal, *Communicating the Infinite: The Emergence of the Habad School* (Chicago, 1990), pp. 100–138; and Rachel Elior, "The Controversy over the Leadership of the Habad Movement," *Tarbiz*, Vol. 49 (1980), pp. 166–186.

19. Rabbi Hayyim Halberstam, *Divrei Hayyim*, Vol. 2, p. 208, *Hoshen Mishpat* #32, quoted in Shaul Stampfer, "Inheritance of the Rabbinate in Eastern Europe in the Modern Period—Causes, Factors and Development over Time," *Jewish History*, Vol. 13, no. 1 (1999), p. 48. Stampfer argues that in the face of often bitter leadership struggles, the dynastic principle at least "limited the field of potential candidates and gave a justification for an heir's claim" ("Inheritance of the Rabbinate," p. 48). See also David Assaf, *The Regal Way: The Life and Times of Rabbi Israel of Ruzhin*, translated by David Louvish (Stanford, 2002), in particular chapter 2, "'The Main Thing Is One's Own Distinction': The Argument over Succession," pp. 47–65. Assaf adroitly traces the significance of hereditary succession in the Ruzhin dynasty, the claims of Davidic descent, the merit of the Maggid of Mezhirech, and the subdivisions of Ruzhin lineage in later generations. But there is little in the way of theological analysis.

20. Stephen Sharot, *Messianism, Mysticism, and Magic: A Sociological Analysis of Jewish Religious Movements* (Chapel Hill, 1987).

21. Ibid., p. 170.

22. Ibid., p. 172. Joseph Dan approaches this insight in his editor's introduction to *The Heart and the Fountain: An Anthology of Jewish Mystical Experience*, where he writes that the establishment of mystical leadership was seen as "a hereditary power inherent in the families of the founders" (p. 40).

23. Zevi Hirsch Eichenstein, *Turn Aside from Evil and Do Good*, translated by Louis Jacobs (London, 1995), pp. xxii–xxiii.

24. The holy seed rhetoric in Ezra has recently been studied by Christine A. Hayes in her *Gentile Impurities and Jewish Identities: Intermarriage and Conversion from the Bible to the Talmud* (New York, 2002). Hayes is very careful to point out that "Ezra does not say that Gentiles are genealogically impure (i.e., an impure seed, in contrast to Israel's holy seed)." Rather, they are simply profane—that is, common, not distinguished by the gift of holiness, but not tainted or impure (pp. 30–32). The situation in Hasidism is rather similar if not identical: to this day, the families of tsaddikim have a strong preference for endogamous unions or, at a minimum, marriage to another aristocratic line, but there is no actual prohibition against a Hasidic scion marrying a Jewish commoner.

25. Joan Wallach Scott, "The Problem of Invisibility," in *Retrieving Women's History: Changing Perceptions of the Role of Women in Politics and Society*, edited by S. Jay Kleinberg (Oxford, 1988), p. 5; cited in Nathaniel Deutsch, *The Maiden of Ludmir: A Jewish Holy Woman and Her World* (Berkeley, 2003), p. 8.

26. Our discussion here will concentrate on aspects of the key dynasties of Ruzhin, Chernobyl, and Karlin-Stolin. Habad-Lubavitch will not be a major focus here but is a very important part of the topic as a whole; I hope to devote a separate study to dynastic emergence in Habad-Lubavitch. In an earlier article I discussed the question of women as charismatic leaders in Hasidism; see Nehemia Polen, "Miriam's Dance: Radical Egalitarianism in Hasidic Thought," *Modern*

Judaism, Vol. 12, No. 1 (1992), pp. 1–21. Here my focus is not on women as charismatic leaders but as wives and mothers of tsaddikim, and their contributions to dynastic emergence and continuity.

27. Rapaport-Albert, "Hasidism after 1772: Structural Continuity and Change," p. 129, n. 201; p. 136. And cf. Dan, "Hasidism: The Third Century": "the hereditary aspect of the cult of the *tzaddik* did not develop in the Hasidic movement until the early decades of the nineteenth century" (p. 81).

28. Rapaport-Albert, p. 136.

29. Rapaport-Albert, p. 129, n. 201.

30. Arthur Green, *Menahem Nahum of Chernobyl: Upright Practices, The Light of the Eyes* (New York, 1982), notes that eventually this pattern of division and fragmentation was to lead to the impoverishment of the Hasidic courts (p. 21, n. 22). See also Assaf, *Regal Way*, pp. 63–65; 307–309. But at the beginning of the nineteenth century there was ample opportunity in the form of new territory to be conquered for Hasidism. Thus, at this stage, the needs of family members to stake out their own territory dovetailed nicely with the expansionist agenda of the movement as a whole. The situation is reminiscent of the settling of New England in the roughly two centuries before 1800. The goal of every farmer was to clear enough land to set up each of his sons in an economically viable farm. Each succeeding generation cleared and cultivated new areas farther away from earlier settlements. This process continued until they ran out of new territory, and there was no more available land to clear; see Diana Muir, *Reflections in Bullough's Pond: Economy and Ecosystem in New England* (Hanover, 2000). Note, for example, her remark that "For several generations . . . Massachusetts was a land of plenty. [Colonial farmers] lived well, married young if they pleased, and reared large families in the full confidence that their children would enjoy a life as comfortable as their own. . . . [E]arly-settled towns might not have had enough space for every young couple to settle on, but there was land enough elsewhere to allow the surplus young people of each generation to pioneer farms of their own" (pp. 47–48). One can look at the spread of Hasidic territories during the nineteenth century in a similar way, as being largely driven by the ongoing branching of dynastic trees, as successive generations of sons and sons-in-law of famous tsaddikim were motivated to find new towns in which to establish a *rebistve*.

31. David Assaf, *Derekh ha-Malkhut: Rabbi Yisrael mi-Ruzhin* (The Zalman Shazar Center for Jewish History, Jerusalem, 1997), p. 63, n. 21. An English translation of the Hebrew original has appeared under the title *The Regal Way: The Life and Times of Rabbi Israel of Ruzhin* (Stanford, 2002). Since the quality of the translation is very fine, I generally cite the English edition except in places where the Hebrew provides fuller information. The passage now under discussion appears only in the Hebrew text.

32. This approach draws upon feminist methods of historical-theological reconstruction, whose goal is not only the recovery of women's voices as a

domain of interest, but the reconstruction of a movement's history in light of fresh awareness of women's central role. See Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her* (New York, 1983); note esp. ch. 2, "Toward a Feminist Critical Method," and ch. 3, "Toward a Feminist Model of Historical Reconstruction," pp. 41–95. See also Fiorenza's *Bread Not Stone: The Challenge of Feminist Biblical Interpretation* (Boston, 1984), pp. 15–22. Following Paul Ricoeur, Fiorenza adopts a "hermeneutic of suspicion," by which texts placing women in a marginal role may be interrogated to recover women's central contributions. In my view such a "hermeneutic of suspicion," however useful, must be accompanied and complemented by a hermeneutic of appreciation and gratitude. See below, note 37.

33. Reuben Zak, *Beit Yisrael* (Piotrkow 1913 [Bene-Barak, 1983]), p. 7, #1.

34. Joseph Perl, *Uiber das Wesen der Sekte Chassidim*, edited by Avraham Rubinstein (Jerusalem, 1977), p. 94. Perl also mentions another *yenuka*, "Pinchsel Sohn des Rebi Srul Abraham." The editor of *Uiber das Wesen der Sekte Chassidim* says that he was unable to identify this person, but Perl was evidently referring to Rabbi Pinhas Shapiro of Cherny Ostrov, a grandson of the famed Rabbi Zusia of Hannipol. Pinhas's father, Rabbi Israel Abraham (1772–1814) was the publisher of *No'am Elimelekh* by his uncle Rabbi Elimelekh of Lyzhansk (Yitzhak Alfasi, *Ha-Hasidut mi-Dor le-Dor* (Jerusalem, 1995), Vol. 1, p. 149). Alfasi states that after Rabbi Israel Abraham's death in 1814, "his widow conducted herself as a Rebbe," and also offers the information that in 1834 she emigrated to the Holy Land and was killed in the earthquake of 1837 (ibid.). S. Z. Weinberg, *Nezah she-be-Nezah* (Jerusalem, 1994), records the tradition that her in-law Rabbi Mordecai of Chernobyl once attended her *Se'udah Shelishit* (third Sabbath meal, a sublime event) (p. 33). The phenomenon of a widow leading her late husband's community, together with the appearance of a child-successor, is fully consistent with the thesis of this essay. Rabbi Israel Abraham was the father-in-law of Rabbi David Twersky of Talna; for more on him, see *Nezer Yisrael va-Ateret Avraham*, published in *Torat ha-Hasidim ha-Rishonim*, edited by Menahim Mendel Viznitzer (Bene-Barak: Nahalat Zvi, 1986).

35. See, for example, *Zohar*, Vol. 1, 138b–140b; Vol. 2, 170a; Vol. 3, 186b–192b.

36. *Assaf Derekh ha-Malkhut*, pp. 82–83; *Assaf Regal Way*, p. 34.

37. It is a scholarly commonplace that Hasidic hagiography must be used with great caution as a historical source. Nevertheless, a number of highly regarded studies do rely on this genre, at least to some degree. See for example Arthur Green's *Tormented Master*, which draws extensively on the Bratslav literature on Rabbi Nahman. For Green's discussion of the methodological issues, see pp. 6–14.

Immanuel Etkes makes extensive use of the first Hasidic hagiographical collection, *Shivhei ha-Besht*, for his study of the Baal Shem Tov in *Ba'al Hashem: The Besht—Magic, Mysticism, Leadership* (Jerusalem, 2000), pp. 217–265. In contrast to other scholars who treat *Shivhei ha-Besht* with great suspicion, Etkes, in a lengthy excursus on *Shivhei ha-Besht* as a historical source, concludes that "a significant

proportion of the stories brought in this collection can be categorized as testimonies and reliable traditions anchored in the personal experiences of the Besht and his circle" (p. 265).

The entire issue is discussed by David Assaf in his biography of Rabbi Israel of Ruzhin (see above, n. 31). After noting the characteristics typical of hagiography, such as avoidance of problematic topics, apologetic intent, naivete, exaggerations, and imagination (*Regal Way*, pp. 8–28), Assaf nevertheless concludes that the critical scholar cannot disregard this genre but must take advantage of it by "separat[ing] the wheat from the chaff. . . . [I]n any source that is not prima facie unacceptable, there is a core of truth grounded in factual reality" (p. 26). Of special importance for our purposes is Assaf's statement that "Although the pronouncements attributed to Rabbi Israel and stories about him were published many years after his death, it is assumed as a rule that the material is basically authentic, although perhaps not as actually worded" (23).

Assaf and others have pointed out examples where specific hagiographic assertions have received surprising confirmation in newly discovered historical materials. It now seems clear that the very reason that Hasidic hagiographic writing is often so tendentious—namely, the deep esteem and reverence of the writer for the tsaddik—is precisely the impetus for collecting and preserving traditions about the master with great care and zeal. In this paper we will assume that the stories about the Ruzhiner and his family are in large measure genuine traditions transmitted orally or in writing, sometimes for several generations, but that their mode of presentation and contextualization may reflect the interests and perspective of the final editor or anthologist. It is therefore appropriate and necessary to read with attention to anomalies, silences, gaps, and suppressed voices. See above, note 32.

Most important for our purposes is that the editor of the collections from which we will quote often provides a named source for his stories. As Etkes and others have noted, this type of attribution is generally quite reliable; it is not at all the case that the editor is simply making up names or an attribution chain. See the next note.

38. Reuben Zak, *Bei Yisra'el* (Piotrkow, 1913 [Bene-Barak, 1983]), pp. 7–8; cf. Assaf, *Regal Way*, p. 34. Zak says that he heard this story from Rabbi Israel of Medzibozh. Not to be confused with the Besht, this is Israel Shalom Yosef of Medzibodz (1852–1911), a descendent of Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel of Apta (who spent his last years in Medzibozh). Israel Shalom Yosef was a son-in-law of Rabbi Abraham Jacob of Sadgora, a child of Rabbi Israel of Ruzhin. It is only reasonable that as a close family member, he would have been privy to stories about the dynasty's origin. For more on Israel Shalom Yosef, see Yitzhak Alfasi, *Ha-Hasidut mi-Dor le-Dor* (Jerusalem, 1995), Vol. 1, pp. 218–219. Alfasi includes a portrait and an autograph.

39. See *Menahem Nahum of Chernobyl: Upright Practices, The Light of the Eyes*. Rabbi Menahem Nahum had served in Prohobitch before arriving in Chernobyl;

thus Chava's family had deep roots there and her husband's tenure was in some sense picking up on family ties from the previous generation.

40. According to Aaron David Twersky, *Sefer ha-Yahas mi-Chernobyl ve-Ruzhin* (Lublin, 1938; reprinted Brooklyn, 1990), Rabbi Mordecai was already living in expansive style during his father's lifetime. During a visit to his son, Rabbi Menahem Nahum observed "gold and silver vessels and many clocks," and asked what need there was for such things (p. 5, #3). Rabbi Mordecai is said to have replied with reference to Rabbi Judah the Patriarch, who according to the Talmud was surrounded by abundance yet maintained a personal asceticism (see B.T. *Ketubot* 104). Whatever the historicity of this family tradition, it sheds light on how Hasidism viewed the opulent lifestyle of the tsaddikim: Rabbi Judah the Patriarch is remembered as the editor of the Mishnah as well as a revered and effective communal leader who related to Roman rulers on equal terms; he embodied "Torah and worldly grandeur in one place." It should also not be overlooked that Davidic descent was claimed for Rabbi Judah the Patriarch.

Twersky also states that Rabbi Mordecai of Chernobyl's tenure as tsaddik lasted "about fifty years" (p. 102, #1). If correct, this suggests that not only Rabbi Mordecai's lifestyle but his aristocratic court system may have originated during his father's lifetime. Rabbi Mordecai died in 1838; fifty years earlier brings us back to 1788, almost ten years before Rabbi Menahem Nahum's death in 1797 (see Arthur Green, *Menahem Nahum of Chernobyl*, pp. 24–25). Other sources, however, say that Rabbi Mordecai led his community for about forty years; this would place the beginning of his tenure about the time of his father's death. See, for example, Moshe Chaim Kleinman, *Mazkeret Shem ha-Gedolim* (Brooklyn, NY, 1976; original 1907); the text has no pagination but the passage appears at the very end of the section devoted to Rabbi Mordecai.

41. Assaf, *Regal Way*, p. 32.

42. Immanuel Etkes has described the attempt of Rabbi Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk and Rabbi Abraham of Kalisk to lead White Russian Hasidism from Eretz Israel in the 1780s. Their efforts were largely unsuccessful because Hasidim simply began traveling to the courts of other tsaddikim in Volynia and elsewhere. Immanuel Etkes, "The Rise of Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Lyady as a Hasidic Leader," *Tarbiz*, Vol. 54, No. 3 (1985), pp. 430–439.

In recent years we have the example of Hasidic communities after the Holocaust. Almost without exception, it was only where a scion of the dynasty survived the war that the community was able to reconstitute itself, generally in Israel or America. The fate of Alexander Hasidism is instructive: before World War II, it was one of the largest groups in Poland. But no dynastic heir survived to rebuild the community, and the remnant of Alexander Hasidim generally affiliated with dynasties that had a living tsaddik, typically Ger.

43. This is because virtually all of the celebrated early masters and dynastic founders had died by 1815; the Apter was viewed as one of the inheritors of the

spiritual legacy of Rabbi Elimelekh of Lyzhansk, along with the Maggid of Kozienice, the Seer of Lublin, and Rabbi Mendel of Rymanov, who had all died around 1815.

44. Reuben Zak, *Bei Yisrael* (Piotrkow 1913 [Bene-Barak, 1983]), p. 9, #6 and #8.

45. See Rabbi Moshe Cordovero, *Pardes Rimmonim* (Jerusalem, 1962), *Sha'ar Erkei ha-Kinnuyim*, ch. 1, p. 7b.

46. Rabbi Joseph Landau, *Kol Nehi* (a eulogy for Rabbi Israel of Ruzhin), cited in *Ner Yisrael*, Vol. 4, p. 17, #34.

47. Walden, *Nifla'ot ha-Rabi*, p. 127; cf. Assaf, *Regal Way*, p. 33. I do not know why Assaf believes that "this trip to Poland never took place."

48. A version of this story is found in *Kerem Yisrael*, which states that the meeting took place in Prohobitch at the time when Rabbi Shneur Zalman "was returning from [St.] Petersburg," presumably after his release from prison in 1801 (p. 58, #4). But if he was returning home to White Russia after his ordeal in St. Petersburg, he would hardly have gone by way of Prohobitz, roughly 1000 miles to the south. The location in Berdichev is mentioned by the grandson of Rabbi Shneur Zalman, Rabbi Menahem Mendel Schneerson ("the Zemah Zedek"), in *Derekh Mitzvotekho* (Brooklyn, NY: Kehot Publication Society, 1991); significantly, the context there is the spiritual symbolism of the union of bride and groom (p. 277). Hayyim Meir Heilman, *Beit Rabbi* (Berdiehev, 1903), says the occasion was "the wedding" (p. 123). Perhaps Heilman is referring to the betrothal of Israel and his wife-to-be, Sarah, which took place in Berdichev in 1803. Some say that the magnificent betrothal celebration was arranged by Rabbi Levi Yitzhak of Berdichev himself, and it is at least plausible that Rabbi Shneur Zalman might have made the journey to attend the reception in honor of the great-grandson of his master the Maggid of Mezhirech. For more on the betrothal and the versions of the story, see Assaf, *Regal Way*, pp. 33–35 and notes.

49. *Tiferet Israel*, Vol. 37 (1996), pp. 38–39; reprinted with corrections in *Iggerot ha-Rav ha-Kadosh mi-Ruzhin u-Vanav* [Letters of the Holy Rabbi of Ruzhin and His Children], edited by Dov Ber Rabinowitz (Jerusalem, 2003), Vol. 1, pp. 61–64; a facsimile reproduction of the original is also provided.

50. In that day it was not uncommon for boys who were not yet Bar Mitzvah to enter into marriage. The legal validity of such arrangements is the subject of a responsum by Rabbi Ezekiel Landau in his *Noda bi-Yehudah* (second series, *Even ha-Ezer*, #54), quoted in *Iggerot ha-Rav ha-Kadosh mi-Ruzhin u-Vanav*, p. 61, n. 11.

51. This episode was told by the famed tsaddik Rabbi Elimelekh Shapiro of Grodzisk; see Meir Wunder, "Teshuvat Rabbi Elimelekh mi-Grodzisk le-Rabi Hayyim mi-Zanz," *Sinai*, Vol. 81 (1977), pp. 164–168.

52. Rabbi Elimelekh of Grodzisk attributes this to the Apter Rav, with the explanation, "What angel would dare hit such a holy mouth?!" See Wunder, "Teshuvat Rabbi Elimelekh mi-Grodzisk le-Rabi Hayyim mi-Zanz," p. 166. See also *Bet Yisrael*, p. 10, #1.

53. See B.T. *Niddah* 30a.

54. *Ner Yisrael*, Vol. 4, p. 58, #15, citing *Kelilat Hen*. Hasidic sources routinely deny that *yihus*—noble ancestry—alone can impart spiritual perfection to progeny. At most, ancestral merit may ease the pathway to spiritual attainment, but only when combined with personal striving; see Rabbi Kalonymos Kalman Epstein of Cracow, *Ma'or va-Shemesh* (Jerusalem, 1992), Vol. 2, p. 412, *Parashat Naso*, s.v. *"Va-Yedaber Ha-Shem el Moshe."* The same master states that "a talismanic practice (*segualah*) for having good children is to picture in his mind, during sexual intercourse, the image of *tsaddikim*." Therefore, when a man marries a woman of distinguished lineage (cf. B.T. *Ta'anit* 31a), "during intercourse, he should picture in his mind the image of the tsaddikim of her family whom he has become familiar with." *Ma'or va-Shemesh*, Vol. 2, p. 751, comment on B.T. *Ta'anit* 31a. See also idem, Vol. 1, pp. 42–43, s.v. *Ve-Avraham ve-Sarah zekenim . . .* At the same time, this author, when discussing the tsaddik's power to channel blessing like the prophets of the Bible, notes that "the tsaddik has the power to transmit this to his disciple . . ." and makes no mention of transmission from father to son. *Ma'or va-Shemesh*, Vol. 2, p. 575, *Parashat Re'eh*, s.v. *Od ba-pesukim ha-nizkarim le'el . . .*

The transmission of leadership and charisma from a master to disciple rather than to the master's children is already discussed by the early midrash in relation to the biblical narrative of the succession from Moses to Joshua (Num. 27: 15–23). Commenting on Num. 27: 22, *Midrash Sifrei Zuta*, edited by H. S. Horovitz (Jerusalem, 1992, p. 321), states that Moses appointed Joshua "with joy"; "As he bequeathed his glory to Joshua, Moses was as happy as a man bequeathing his property to his sons." On the broader issue of the role of lineage in the rabbinic world, see Jeffrey L. Rubenstein, *Talmudic Stories: Narrative Art, Composition, and Culture* (Baltimore, 1999), chapter 6, "Torah, Lineage, and the Academic Hierarchy (Horayot 13b–14a)," pp. 176–211. See also Richard Kalmin, "Genealogy and Polemics in Rabbinic Literature of Late Antiquity," *Hebrew Union College Annual*, Vol. 67 (1996), pp. 77–94.

55. Reuben Zak, *Knesset Israel* (Warsaw, 1906; reprinted Bnei Brak, 1983), pp. 142–143.

56. Rabbi Hayyim Meir Yehiel Shapiro, the "Seraph" of Mogielnica, transmitted hagiographic material about his mother Perl, but the sheer volume and variety does not approach that of the Ruzhiner and Chava. See Nehemia Polen, "Miriam's Dance: Radical Egalitarianism in Hasidic Thought," pp. 1–21.

57. Assaf, *Derekh ha-Malkhut*, p. 63, n. 21. Assaf also notes that Chava possessed a stylish, elegant wardrobe, "in the spirit of the house of Ruzhin." But our suggestion here is that Chava and her fashionable taste may have actually helped to create "the spirit of the house of Ruzhin!"

58. Compare my remarks on the seal of Sarah Horowitz Sternfeld of Checiny, the "Chentshiner Rebbetzin," in Nehemia Polen, "Miriam's Dance: Radical Egalitarianism in Hasidic Thought," p. 13.

59. *Ner Yisrael*, Vol. 4, p. 363, quoting *Darash Moshe* of Rabbi Moshe Kohlenberg. Abraham Bromberg claims that Rabbi Israel did not attend the burial, but this is hardly credible. Bromberg is apparently the first author to make this assertion, though he states, without indicating a source, that the story was told to Rabbi Meir of Premishlany. Abraham Isaac Bromberg, *Migdolei ha-Hasidut: Ha-Admor Rabbi Israel Friedman me-Ruzhin* (Jerusalem, 1982), p. 145.

60. Israel Davidson, *Parody in Jewish Literature* (New York, 1907), p. 76.

61. Ya'akov Yisraeli (Kula), *Bei Karlin-Stolin* (Tel Aviv, 1981), p. 257.

62. Yehuda Leib Levin, known by his pen-name Yahalal, was a grandson of the tsaddik Rabbi Moshe of Kobrin. As a child, he showed great promise with impressive knowledge of Talmud and Hasidism; his embrace of the *Haskalah* scandalized the Hasidic community and caused great anguish to his family. See Wolf Zeev Rabinowitsch, *Lithuanian Hasidism* (New York, 1971), pp. 186–187; also p. 119, n. 156.

63. Joseph Perl, *Megaleh Temirin* (Vienna, 1819). The work is now translated into English with an introduction and extensive notes: Dov Taylor, *Joseph Perl's* Revealer of Secrets, *The First Hebrew Novel* (Boulder, CO, 1997).

64. Among Weisman's published works is *Mahshavot be-Etzah* (Berdichev, 1902; Jerusalem 1967), a Halakhic compendium which bears an approbation from none other than Rabbi Israel Perlow of Stolin, our *yenuka*, who was by then about thirty-four.

65. *Jsrulik*, October 30, 1875, pp. 1–3. My thanks to Dr. Leah Orent of Harvard Widener Library for assistance in locating the microfilm of this journal. In the *Ha-Shahar* article, *Hitgalut ha-Yenukah mi-Stolin* (The Debut of the Yenuka of Stolin) *Ha-Shahar 6* (1875), pp. 25–44, Weisman's authentic letter appears on pp. 36–42 (the footnotes are not his); Levin's satiric frame letter appears on pp. 25–36, and on pp. 42–44.

66. For the spelling of *Hatchiah*, I follow the transliteration supplied by the journal itself. The masthead provides the following: "*Hatchiah* (*Regeneration*), A Hebrew literary WEEKLY in America for the purpose of promoting the knowledge of the ancient hebrew language and literature, and to regenerate the spirit of the nation. Editor & Publisher, W. Schur." I have followed the orthographic idiosyncrasies of the original. Levin's article appeared in two installments, #23 (March 23, 1900), p. 4; and #24 (March 30, 1900), pp. 3–4.

67. *Ha-Shahar*, p. 44.

68. *Ha-Shahar 6* (1875), p. 42. For a description of the annual tax and the role of tax collectors in Hasidic courts, see David Assaf, *The Regal Way*, pp. 299–303.

69. At the time of Sarah Devorah's second marriage in 1867, her husband was forty, and she was about twenty-three.

70. Later sources tell an even more complicated story: there were some Stoliner Hasidim who were inclined to follow Sarah Devorah's older son, named Yerahmiel Moshe. He was about fourteen at the time of his stepfather's death and

had recently married. According to these reports, the Stolin elders were fearful that Yerahmiel Moshe might emerge as leader, in effect absorbing the Karlin-Stolin lineage into that of Kozienice. It was to forestall such an outcome that the elders moved to proclaim the five year old Israel Perlow as Rebbe. See Ya'akov Yisraeli (Kula), *Bei Karlin-Stolin*, pp. 256–257; see also *Stolin: Sefer Zikaron*, edited by A. Avtihai and Y. Ben-Zakai (Tel Aviv, 1952), pp. 151–155. But even if we accept this version, one can hardly doubt Sarah Devorah's central role in the unfolding of events, given that she was mother of both candidates!

71. Malkah Shapiro, *Mi-Din le-Rahamim: Sippurim me-Hatzrot ha-Admorim* (Jerusalem, 1969); English translation: *The Rebbe's Daughter*, translated, edited, and with an introduction and commentary by Nehemia Polen (Philadelphia, 2002).

72. Assaf simply says that "the use of the funds was at the sole discretion of the tsaddik (or of his representative)" (*Regal Way*, p. 287). In some sense this is probably true, but it sheds little light on the actual administrative structure and procedures of the household. See also his remark that "Any surplus money was invested by the tsaddikim or their financial advisors" (p. 295). But who were those financial advisors?

73. Stella Tillyard writes about the family estates of aristocrats in England with their "complex command structure," employing up to several hundred people, including a core of professional artisans and a hierarchical staff of servants who had servants of their own. Tillyard writes about one such estate: "Cumbersome, leaky, and above all expensive, the household at Carton creaked through the years like an ageing man-of-war, industrial in its scale and cost, a centre of employment and production" (*Aristocrats* [New York, 1994], p. 106). Mutatis mutandis, this picture illuminates the situation of the large Hasidic courts in their heyday.

74. See Arthur Green, "The *Zaddiq* as *Axis Mundi* in Later Judaism," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Vol. 45, No. 3 (1977), pp. 327–347.

75. See Nehemia Polen, "Coming of Age in Kozienice: Malkah Shapiro's Memoir of Youth in the Sacred Space of a Hasidic Tsaddik," in *Celebrating Elie Wiesel: Stories, Essays, Reflections*, edited by Alan Rosen (Notre Dame, 1998), pp. 123–140.

76. There is a clear parallel here to the lavish country residences of the Russian nobility which, as Priscilla Roosevelt has shown, expressed ideals of culture, family wealth, and status, and embodied the relationship between land-ownership and political power (*Life on the Russian Country Estate* [New Haven, 1995], p. 3). It is certainly suggestive that, as Roosevelt notes, "[a]lmost all the great houses were built between the mid-eighteenth and mid-nineteenth centuries, and the majority were constructed during the nobility's brief 'golden age'" (p. xii)—the decades just before and just after 1800, a time span remarkably coincident with the period under discussion here, when the great Hasidic lineages arose and flourished. This implies that the Hasidic adoption of aristocratic ways and resi-

dences was more than just a lifestyle choice, but embodied a sense of noble lineage, a heraldry of rank to be transmitted from generation to generation.

77. Compare Tamara Haraven's observations on the close relationship between "family time" and "social time" in women's lives in "The Family as Process: The Historical Study of the Family Cycle," *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 7 (1974), pp. 322–329; quoted in Jane Lewis, "Women, Lost and Found: The Impact of Feminism on History," in *Men's Studies Modified: The Impact of Feminism on the Academic Disciplines*, edited by Dale Spender (Oxford, 1981), pp. 55–72. We would expand this horizon to include sacred time and sacred space as well: the embodied theology of the Hasidic court can be understood only when all these dimensions are viewed as a unity. The adoption of such a perspective would force a reassessment of the role of women in Hasidic life.

78. *The Rebbe's Daughter*, p.137.

The Shtetl

New Evaluations

Edited by

Steven T. Katz

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY PRESS
New York and London