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## NEO-HASIDIC REVIVAL: EXPRESSIVIST USES OF TRADITIONAL LORE

More than 250 years after its birth under the light-blue sky of Podolia, Hasidism is still the single greatest resource for any Jewish attempt at spiritual renewal. As the first Jewish “revival” movement displaying significant modern characteristics, Hasidism offers, to the modern and postmodern spiritual seeker, a range of theological structures, religious practices, and ethical frameworks suited for interpretation and adoption. It is no accident then that since the early twentieth century we find important elements of Hasidism used and elaborated upon in the works of almost any Jewish thinker, observant or non-observant, set out to enliven her or his tradition.

As such, a significant part of the modern appropriation of Hasidism is what is called, both by the participants themselves (emically) and by those who research the field (etically), Neo-Hasidism. Defining Neo-Hasidism as the deliberate and conscious attempt to draw inspiration, tools, and cultural capital from early Hasidic texts and practices in order to bring about a contemporary spiritual revival, it is crucial to notice the exact way in which these elements are arranged anew in the contemporary arena. As I will attempt to show, these will usually coalesce around patterns in line with the modern expressivist, self-conscious utilitarian self, a phenomenon that is predominant in parallel Contemporary Spirituality circles, such as the New Age cultic milieu.<sup>1</sup>

The study of contemporary spiritual movements has been greatly broadened since the 1990s, with monographs devoted to both the sociological and the ideological aspects of what can be called “The New Age Movement.”<sup>2</sup> A substantial social phenomenon, the New Age has been defined as a religion of its own, with its idiosyncratic theological and social characteristics and typical modes of operation. Although some works have been devoted to the study of the New Age phenomenon in Israel,<sup>3</sup> no such study has been devoted to the Neo-Hasidic phenomenon. Such an academic cavity is wanting, as the phenomenon is not only rich, diverse, and complex, but it also carries a significant impact on contemporary Jewish culture.

I aim in the words below to analyze Neo-Hasidism, expounding its ideational and sociological birth, briefly reviewing its development and history, and elaborating on its current place and importance in the efforts being made to “renew” Jewish religiosity and to “modernize” (i.e. de-mythologize, individualize, and psychologize) the Jewish tradition by its contemporary well-wishers and popularizers in Israel. The lion’s share of the article will be the examination of three examples taken from the Neo-Hasidic field in Israel, test cases which differ in a structural way one from the other, and as such will allow us to decipher their common underlying principals.

### §§§

Neo-Hasidism began with the turn of the twentieth century. Answering a spiritual and ideological hunger among Jewish elite in Europe, Martin Buber (1878–1965) published his book, *Legend of the Baal-Shem* (1908), in which he proposed to introduce “a movement in which myth purified and elevated itself – Hasidism.”<sup>4</sup> Through presenting the processed tales of the Hasidic master, Buber was emphatically determined to cause a spiritual revival in European Judaism, proclaiming explicitly that “The Hasidic teaching is the proclamation of rebirth. No renewal of Judaism is possible that does not bear in itself the elements of Hasidism.”<sup>5</sup>

Buber wished to continue the divorce of modern Judaism from Jewish Law (*Halacha*), but to fill anew the spiritual lack that had arisen as part of the aforementioned proceedings. Hasidism for him was a Jewish tradition contrasted with the rest of Judaism, being concentrated more on the individual’s feelings, intentions, and states of consciousness than the meticulous compliance with and performance of *Halacha*. Out of the Hasidic spirit, Buber wished to secure traditional legitimacy for letting go of the Law, while benefiting spiritually from its emphasis on inner transformation.

In the years following Buber’s Neo-Hasidic popularization of Hasidism, we can find the development of Orthodox Neo-Hasidism. In contrast to Buber’s antinomian version of Judaism, Menachem Ekstein (1884–1942) and Kalonymus Kalman Shapira (the Rabbi of Piaseczno, 1889–1943) presented a pietistic and *Halacha*-abiding Neo-Hasidism. Both Hasidic men, through different channels of development, sought to rejuvenate the Hasidism they found around them and lift it from being what they saw as a pale shadow of its past glory.

According to both of them, the Hasidism of the early twentieth century performed lax and mechanical worship of the divine, the

remedy of which could be brought about by injecting it with fresh, “original” Hasidic juice. The product that they developed was aimed, in the end, to strengthen the observance of Jewish tradition, though in the process of proposing a new and improved system of Jewish practice they incorporated methods which they found in Vienna of the 1920s: fledgling psychology and psychoanalysis and, more importantly, elaborations on Franz Anton Mesmer’s “Animal Magnetism” method, which emphasized forms of guided imagination and trance-inducing means of hypnosis.<sup>6</sup>

According to the contemporary *zeitgeist*, both men would recommend meticulous introspection and deep psychological understanding. Thus, Menachem Ekstein told his readers that, “[t]he first rule that Hasidism lays forth [...] is ‘know yourself, teach yourself to see yourself,’”<sup>7</sup> and Kalonymus Kalman Shapira asked each of his disciples to notice how “[y]our feeling is folded in you and you don’t know it. So enlarge it with your thought.”<sup>8</sup> Following such exercises, the Hasidim would be asked to concentrate by using guided meditation, all in an effort to galvanize their prayer and halachic worship, and subsequently reach the state of “prophecy.”

These germinal examples of the movement already held the two parallel strands of Neo-Hasidism that would be part of the phenomenon throughout its history. On the one hand, we see antinomian Jewish individuals intent upon bringing about a spiritual revival under which the individual will therapeutically rectify his own psyche and, in some cases, the community will also undergo some process of social harmonization. The antinomian Neo-Hasid will interpret the Hasidic sources as legitimizing a kind of inner-directed spirituality, often not only indifferent to the heteronomous authority of the Jewish law or the traditional authority of the Rabbis as interpreters of the law, but also clearly opposed to these social structures (marking them as “dry,” “soulless,” “archaic,” or “tyrannical”).

On the other hand, we will encounter Orthodox Rabbis and Spiritual Leaders who, aware that traditional forms of worship are unattractive to new generations of modern Jews, try to enrich the practice they offer by tapping into the thrust and innovation of the budding Hasidism movement’s sources, often while engineering the methods they develop with the help of knowledge they acquire from non-Jewish authorities which are influential, or simply in vogue. These exponents of Neo-Hasidism want to strengthen what they view as the sacrosanct tradition, and in order to do so will many times, consciously or unconsciously, fill the traditional form of worship with modern meaning, or, indeed, carry into what they offer not more than the name of the former Jewish practice (e.g. *Hitbodedut*—see below) and will exchange the traditional content with some sort of popular New-Age spirituality method.

What is essential to notice is that both forms of Neo-Hasidism, Orthodox and antinomian, have a substantial and essential core in common as they share a very modern view of religion, one that can be traced to the works of William James and, further in the past, to Friedrich Schleiermacher and the American Transcendentalists.<sup>9</sup> This conception of faith places the mystical experience as the heart and soul of religion, and the believer's inner life as the focal point of the religious drama. Both forms lay emphasis on an intimate and personal relationship with the divine, and both have the individual, emotional, authentic, and expressivist (in Charles Taylor's use of the term)<sup>10</sup> person as their ideal type of religious being. Thus, we are witnessing, in both cases, the appropriation of Hasidism's own turn from the theocentric to the anthropocentric, and from the historical to the psychological, as part of the modern emphasis on the subject.

Though Neo-Hasidism had its beginnings in the early twentieth century, it is only since the Fifties, after the communal recovering from the Holocaust, that the first green sprouts of fresh interest in spirituality were seen in Jewish communities. It was on the peaceful and fertile soil of the U.S. that rabbis and thinkers like Abraham Joshua Heschel, Menachem Mendel Schneerson, Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, Shlomo Carlebach, Arthur Green, Aryeh Kaplan, Arthur Waskow, and others, developed their own interpretation of Hasidism, thereby laying new tracks for the play and function of Hasidism in the present.<sup>11</sup> This second, significantly broader phase of Neo-Hasidism is characterized by the rise of whole communities and movements structuring their life around Neo-Hasidic motifs, such as the Chavurah Movement and the Jewish Renewal movement,<sup>12</sup> Chabad and its emissaries,<sup>13</sup> and the varieties of Bratslav experience.<sup>14</sup>

While these important developments were taking place in the U.S., in Israel there were scarcely any popular manifestations of contemporary spirituality.<sup>15</sup> The young state, only two decades old, hardly had the leisure or the financial contentment to develop a widely based contemporary spirituality sub-culture. And while both above-mentioned strands of Neo-Hasidism, nomian and antinomian, had important representatives in the U.S., due to societal and juridical conditions in Israel widely discriminating in favor of Orthodox Judaism, when the social and economic conditions finally did permit (and indeed promote) such a sub-culture, it was largely of the nomian sort.<sup>16</sup>

As nomian Neo-Hasidism is far more dominant in Israel than its antinomian brother, this article will be devoted to analyzing and characterizing the former, and will present, in the following pages, three of its representative cases. Beginning with one of the foremost thinkers in the contemporary Religious-Zionist<sup>17</sup> Israeli public, Rabbi Shimshon

Gershon Rosenberg, we shall review his appropriation of Hasidism which offers an intellectual and philosophical perspective. This article will then introduce the teachings of one of the most popular of the Bratslav Hasidic court leaders, Rabbi Israel Isaac Besancon, presenting an experience-directed, “spiritual” Neo-Hasidism. We will close with the Neo-Hasidism of Rabbi Yitzchak Ginsburgh, one of the most brilliant—and politically extreme—Kabbalists living, developing a violent and *völkisch* Neo-Hasidism. To summarize, we will close by deciphering the common thread running through all three examples.

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Over the last two decades, the Religious-Zionist community in Israel has shown an increasing attraction to Hasidic lore and practices. Rabbis, educational figures, and spiritual leaders such as Menachem Froman, Baruch Cahana, Yehoshua Shapira, Dov Zinger, and Yair Dreifuss, incorporated Hasidic themes in their teachings, and used them in order to better explain and answer contemporary needs.<sup>18</sup> No one, however, has written works as innovative, wide-ranging, and systematic as Rabbi Shimon Gershon Rosenberg (1949–2007, acronymed ShaGaR).

Rosenberg was late in his life—and more so since his death—recognized as one of the most important and deeply sensitive thinkers of the Religious-Zionist public. His works cover a wide arena of subjects, but in its center stand the challenges and opportunities facing the observant Jew as a consequence of the postmodern condition. Rosenberg was one of the first to introduce Hasidism into the Religious-Zionist world, formulating through it both a means of understanding contemporary society, and a source of what was for him passion, charisma and freedom that were lacking in his own community.

Rosenberg characteristically would find existential proclamations in Hasidic lore. For him, “the Hasidic man and the existentialist both face Nothingness.”<sup>19</sup> More often, however, he would compare Hasidism and postmodernism and explain the latter in terms taken from the former:

The root of the postmodern nullification [of all value] is a touch from the aspect of that which surrounds all the world [*sovev kol almin*]<sup>20</sup> – nothing is absolute in and of itself, there is no up or down. [...] But this view can also be turned toward the positive: it opens for us a great alternative by placing man in a world in which the divine or any value descending from Him is not present, as it were, and thus gives me the opportunity to freely and fully choose to obey the Law.<sup>21</sup>

Here we note the use of Hasidic theosophy in order to explain—and find the positive side of—the postmodern condition. Instead of blaming postmodernism in the breakdown of values, Rosenberg sees its effect as an opportunity for free, and thus authentic, religious choice. This way of viewing the postmodern condition is central to Rosenberg's thought, for the mechanical and automatic obedience to the Jewish law he finds around him is a constant concern. It seems that the Hasidic quest for authenticity is here understood as the inevitable result of the postmodern condition, thus transforming a religious crisis into a religious boon. As Rosenberg puts it:

The Hasids saw the exodus from Egypt not only as an historical event, but as a process awaiting every generation: Exodus from the straits [the word “straits” resembling the word “Egypt” in Hebrew – T.P.], from the borders and adversities of the world. In this sense post-modernism can also be an exodus from Egypt in the radical sense of the word.<sup>22</sup>

Though both Hasidism and postmodernism can bring us out of the prevailing, routine order of things, out of our habitual patterns of dealing with it, and as a result bring us face to face with the absurdity of creation, in Rosenberg's thought it is only Hasidism that can build a livable world thereafter:

The Hasids interpreted the verse “For the Lord's portion is his people” (Deut' 32, 9) as meaning the Lord's people – Israel – is a part of Him, a divine piece. That is mystical freedom. The postmodern freedom is man's ability to create a world out of nothing, but only inspiration will give this creation reality and certainty, like the creation of the Lord, blessed be He.<sup>23</sup>

Rosenberg's Neo-Hasidism, then, is characterized by a theological analysis of the postmodern condition using conceptual tools appropriated from the Hasidic world. These are used not only to understand it, but also to offer its solution, as it were, whether by turning the loss of structured meta-narratives into an opportunity for freedom and choice or by finding in Hasidism the (divine) inspiration needed to create a religious world anew.

The creation of a new religious world is heralded by Rosenberg as a momentous event, leading to historical, or rather trans-historical consequences. The liberty to consciously choose one's religious commitment will lead to nothing less than the renewal of prophecy:

I believe the crisis of postmodernity will open the way to the renewal of prophecy. It is here that the new Hasidism connects to Rav Kook's<sup>24</sup> proclamations of the renewal of prophecy in the land of Israel. [...] I don't know if a new Baal Shem Tov will arise or whether the renewed Hasidic project will be collective, nor do I know what shape it will take, but I have deep faith that it will be

of no less significance and weight than the previous Hasidic movement.<sup>25</sup>

If Rosenberg has high expectations from Neo-Hasidism, it is because he sees in it a solution to the problem of mechanized religious adherence, the empty husk of observance of religious law by rote. For Rosenberg, the very heart of religious life is the conscious and informed decision to observe and obey the divine will. The freedom *from* automatic and mechanical adherence to the Law, and the freedom *to* reach a considered and mindful resolution, is not only a condition for real religiosity, but is its very essence. He interprets the common ground shared by Hasidic thought and the postmodern condition as the liberty entrusted by them upon the individual, permitting—indeed demanding—first introspection and reflection, and then personal choice, commitment, and responsibility. His is an intellectual and ethical Neo-Hasidism, with a passionate hope to become a mystical Neo-Hasidism in the future.

### §§§

Another major site for the growth of Neo-Hasidism can be found in contemporary manifestations of the Bratslav Hasidic court. Since the 1990s, there has been a significant revival of Bratslav (or rather, Neo-Bratslav) Hasidism in Israel, with figures, often more spiritual teachers than rabbis, such as Erez Moshe Doron, Yisrael Yitzhak Besancon, Shalom Arush, and Ofer Erez.<sup>26</sup> None of these figures themselves come from a Bratslav family—all have chosen it as their preferred Jewish expression.

Correspondingly, Bratslav is dominant amongst Ba'al Teshuva (BT) Jews, that is, Jews who are “returning” from a secular lifestyle to a religiously observant one.<sup>27</sup> In fact, BT Jews have populated Bratslav to such an extent that the majority of the Bratslav court today is made up of them. As these individuals bring with them the dispositions and preferences of post-modern western culture, it should come as no surprise that Bratslav is at this time offering new forms of community worship and, in the words of Doron and Besancon, “meditation” (the word is not translated but transliterated into Hebrew). A burst of multifarious artistic expressions follow, with Bratslav-oriented singer-songwriters, musicians, and poets attracting media attention and a large audience in Israel today.

As briefly mentioned above, Rabbi Israel Isaac Besancon, along with Rabbi Erez Moshe Doron, explicitly teach “meditation,” and both are indeed popular in no small measure because of it. In the

following section, I would like to present a small portion of Besancon's teaching regarding meditation, and by doing so note both his particular style of reflective and introspective Neo-Hasidism, and the inspiration, and indeed motifs and positions, he acquires from the New Age cultic milieu.

Rabbi Besancon was born in France in 1944. At the age of 15, he became a BT Jew, and later moved to Israel. He studied under Rabbi Levi Yitzchok Bender, one of the most influential Bratslav leaders of the twentieth century. Today, he leads a small community in Tel-Aviv, and is popular amongst Religious-Zionist youth. He has written more than ten books, one of them, *Hitbodedut: To Talk With God*, is devoted to *Hitbodedut* practice, which is an hour of pietistic conversation with God prescribed by Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav, founder of the court, to all his disciples.

The practice of *Hitbodedut* is one of the central characteristics of the Bratslav Hasidic court, and its position within it is such that it is hard to overstate its importance in the eyes of Rabbi Nachman and the Bratslav Hasidim.<sup>28</sup> Most of the times when Rabbi Nachman refers to it, it designates a simple and candid talk with God, though at other times it is obvious that the frank talk is supposed to bring one to tears, and through a weeping frenzy of longing and yearning for God to bring about a potent mystical experience, one of total annulment of the self and of ecstatic *Unio Mystica*.<sup>29</sup> In either case, *Hitbodedut* is meant to be a time of intimate connection—whether though candid conversation or mystical experience—with the divine.<sup>30</sup>

For Besancon, *Hitbodedut* is in essence “Jewish Meditation.”<sup>31</sup> As not many Jews consider meditation to be part of the Jewish Law, or a department of their covenant with their Maker, Besancon dubs it “a secret” that Rabbi Nachman has disclosed to us. This special secretive practice leads to the development of a pure heart, of simplicity, faith and joy, and indeed to the personal liberation of “private redemption.”<sup>32</sup> Besancon explains that

In its essence, the goal of *Hitbodedut* is to disconnect our consciousness, even partly, from all the stimulations that pull it in different and scattered directions, in order to connect it back to its spiritual root. This temporary disconnection from the noisy surroundings brings calm, mental stability, that help us found a personal relationships with our Maker, to learn to be assisted by Him, blessed be He, and to win a measure of *Devekut* – which promises us supreme spiritual happiness.<sup>33</sup>

Besancon's *Hitbodedut* is presented as an internal path, at the end of which one finds serenity and *Devekut* (a common name for a mystical objective of worship in Hasidism). This is achieved by disconnection from sense impressions, apparently through cultivating some sort of

concentration and introspective ability. Besancon indeed goes on to elaborate on the workings of the method itself:

As far as we will be able to persist in these [*Hitbodedut*] meetings, after a few times we will talk to God blessed be He in our language, we will be able, sometimes, to feel His presence. In the light of this splendor we shall be able with ease to look inside as well, to our real inner self. Without make-up or fear our ego will be reveled to us under the generous supervision of the divine Being. In this way the secrets of our soul will be reveled to our eyes, slowly, and we will be surprised to discover in her hidden glamour, which was waiting to be disclosed. At the same time, the spiritual light will shine on the complicated net of our feelings, and expose the sources of wrong patterns of thought and behavior, that we were not aware existed.<sup>34</sup>

Besancon's interpretation of *Hitbodedut* exhibits a noted inward flavor. It is in fact a sort of reflective, introspective meditation, in which the divine is not a persona to be addressed, nor an essence to be embraced or united with, but rather a source of illumination in the strictest sense of the word: God's "splendor" is the light we use in order to look inside and discover our own self. This self discovery, in turn, is of a therapeutic nature: it exposes wrong patterns of thought and behavior, and it discloses inside us a "hidden glamor."

*Hitbodedut* practice, according to Besancon, is quite different than what was prescribed by Rabbi Nachman. Instead of bringing ourselves to a craze of lamentation, we are instructed to develop calm and stability. Instead of an ecstatic annulment of the self, culminating in a *Unio Mystica*, we have its therapeutic discovery and illumination.

The language Besancon uses is in fact similar not to his avowed master's teachings but to the way Buddhist *Vipassana* meditation is presented today in the west. It is in this meditative tradition's contemporary interpretation that meditators are directed to observe their mental and emotional world. It is here that we find also the soteriological goal of liberation from negative habitual patterns and obstructing emotional complexes. Indeed, when Besancon implores us to let God "mend our errors and see in a clearer way,"<sup>35</sup> he simply adds the monotheistic God to the Buddhist conception of developing "right vision," which is the literal meaning of the word *Vipassana*.<sup>36</sup>

Our aim here is not to expose Besancon's non-Jewish sources of influence (though these are quite clearly evident and probably interesting), but to try to understand why is it that he sees a need to alter his Rabbi's teaching. As with Rosenberg's use of Hasidism to address contemporary issues, here too we find a neo-Hasidic transformation of original Hasidic material in order to make it fit and relevant for the contemporary Israeli Jewish palate.

In effect, Besancon transforms Rabbi Nachman's *Hitbodedut* from a dialogical relationship *with* the divine into an introspective quest, aided *by* the divine. From what was an attempt, either through candid talk or ecstatic mystical experience, to form an intimate connection with the transcendent Other, *Hitbodedut* is made into a therapeutic tool for rectifying the Hasid's own inner world. While laying claim to be the follower and successor of Rabbi Nachman, Besancon presents us with an introspective and therapeutic Neo-Hasidism, whose redemptive horizon has been internalized and made monological.

### §§§

As noted above, Neo-Hasidism in Israel is mostly of the nomian, Halachicly observant kind. Following this trajectory, and quite apart from American Neo-Hasidism, it is only in Israel (both the state and its occupied territories) that we find an ultra-nationalistic version of Neo-Hasidism. This form of Neo-Hasidism can be observed in the works of Rabbi Yitzchak Ginsburgh (b. 1943), a BT Jew and a Kabbalist of high regard among interested circles.

Ginsburgh offers a radical interpretation of Chabad Hasidism's mystical doctrine. Inspired by a romantic and expressivist ethos, and using his innovative elaborations on Kabbalah and Hasidism, Ginsburgh molds an organismic and monarchical ideal of the nation, led by the messiah and subject to (Ginsburgh's interpretation of) the laws of the Torah.<sup>37</sup> One of the main pillars of his teaching is the renewed and rehabilitated connection with nature—both our own internal nature and that which can be found across the hills of Samaria.

As a theological descendent of Chabad Hasidism, Ginsburgh sees the material world itself as the very essence of the divine, veiled from the eyes of mortals until the time of the Messiah.<sup>38</sup> To this theological axiom he adds a romantic flavor, interpreting the very connection with nature—here in the sense of the uncultivated wild—as fruitfully spiritual:

[T]he object of our yearning, since we were expelled from the Garden of Eden: to live again a life that is reconciled with the body, matter and nature! More than we want to overcome nature, we are drawn to meet it.<sup>39</sup>

While Ginsburgh belittles it, it should be noted that overcoming nature—not meeting it—is a well-established ethos in the Jewish Halachic tradition where the divine law is at many times meant

specifically to remove one from a spontaneous and uninhibited connection with his or her natural needs and cravings.<sup>40</sup> Ginsburgh himself admits as much.<sup>41</sup> Ginsburgh is thus fashioning a novel spiritual path, which I wish to claim is inspired by non-Jewish sources and contemporary *Zeitgeist*.<sup>42</sup>

For Ginsburgh not all nature is equal. Israel, The Holy Land, is made up of matter that is “God’s material.” The connection with the land of Israel is therefore most important, and is placed as an invaluable step on the way to general redemption. This redemption for Ginsburgh is one in which a transformation in consciousness enables us to unite material and spiritual in one divine Being.<sup>43</sup>

Meeting and uniting with nature are taken by Ginsburgh one step further, or rather inside, as he teaches that the closest one can get to God is by meeting his own inner nature, the sub-intellectual point inside him where he is in his very essence wild—and as such divine. In a special tract of mystical political theology, written after the Goldstein massacre in the Cave of the Patriarchs,<sup>44</sup> Ginsburgh develops this point in detail.

For Ginsburgh, Goldstein’s murderous act was one of revenge, revenge for terrorist acts by Palestinians on Israelis (or rather, on Jews). As such, it is a *natural* act, for “revenge is a natural spontaneous reaction [...] a sort of natural law.”<sup>45</sup> Because it is natural, revenge connects us with our most inner self, which is none other than the divine essence:

Revenge is being true to my own positive being, to the truth of my being. [...] the avenger joins the “ecological currents” of reality, his “true essence” and that of the world meet each other. [...] the end goal of it all is to finally reconcile with the natural “IS”, and to live it as a reflection of the “true essence”, that is God, blessed be He.”<sup>46</sup>

Ginsburgh follows Chabad’s mystical tradition in seeing the moment of mystical ecstasy as a point of nullification of the self and total surrender to the divine essence filling all.<sup>47</sup> He then transfers it into the political field of action, and interprets Goldstein’s violent actions as an outer manifestation of his inner mystical nullification. According to Ginsburgh, a moment before he started shooting Baruch Goldstein was able to connect to his innermost being, to his essence, which was hidden deep under the daily intellectual, moral, and cultural stratum of his personality.<sup>48</sup> He thus opened fire just as he met and merged with his true nature, which is none other than the divine.<sup>49</sup>

Ginsburgh’s “natural theology” has a wide following in what is termed “the Hilltop Youth.” Living on the margin of Israeli settlements in the West Bank, these youth (in their teens to their twenties) cultivate an

eco-friendly attitude along with a romantic yearning for Nature. They seek an “authentic” lifestyle, which they generally find in trying to emulate biblical life. A sub-department of so called HaVaCuK Neo-Hasidism,<sup>50</sup> these youth often display a Post-Zionist belief system in which the State of Israel is to be replaced by a theocracy, the center of which is the Third Temple, build upon the ruins of the Dome of the Rock.

As can be understood from their alias as well as their spiritual leader, “the Hilltop Youth” also exhibit a special genre of Neo-Hasidism, one that places the connection with “nature” at center. As Menachem Natura, a 17-year old from the Bat-Ayin settlement expresses it:

Contacting the natural world allowed me to mature. Friends of mine, studying in regular facilities, are connected all day to the chair, the table or the internet. They don’t know, for example, what is nature. They almost don’t meet a tree. They don’t know what it’s like to just sit in front of a tree and contemplate it. [Contemplate] the wind. The growing [of plants]. I think that because of this contemplation I was able to discover God from a deeper place.<sup>51</sup>

For “the Hilltop Youth,” Ginsburgh’s Kabbalistic theology serves as a well of legitimate Jewish lore from which to water their own much more simple romantic yearnings.<sup>52</sup> Yet the main theme is the same, and central to it is the meeting with nature as a path toward the meeting with God. Joanna Steinhardt, who conducted an anthropological research within their circles, finds that these “American Neo-Hasids in the Land of Israel” have almost all

been part of the countercultural milieu that includes subcultural successors to the 1960s hippie movement—Rainbow Gatherings, Grateful Dead and Phish concerts, raves, radical environmentalism, Neopaganism, anti-globalization activism, and other youth subcultures. Students from this milieu shared a particular construction of spirituality associated with the New Age movement and an antagonism toward mainstream society. With a broad brush, they painted American, Western, capitalist, consumerist, modern, and even post-modern culture as environmentally destructive, spiritually distorted, morally degenerate, boring, vapid, uninspired, and even more importantly, “cut off” physically from the Earth and spiritually and morally from an elemental life force.<sup>53</sup>

The most important element in Steinhardt’s observations is the last, for it is the idea that connection to the Earth is needed that enables these individuals to re-contextualize the styles and attitudes of the 1960s hippie movement and the contemporary New Age cultic milieu in such ways as to make them nationalistic, ethnocentric, and racist.

Taking their cue again from Rabbi Ginsburgh, over and above the sanctity of connection with nature in general stands their meeting specifically with the nature of the Holy Land. Israel’s unique standing

among places allows them to develop an exclusivist attitude, complemented easily by the flattering notion that the Jewish people also are unique among peoples. Thus, the ecological environmentalism of the hippies and of contemporary spirituality turns into one that is concentrated on a single, specific environment; the romantic connection with nature develops into a connection to the nature of the hills of Samaria and one's inner *Jewish* nature; unconditional love is given to Jews only; and anti-globalization is less about economics and politics and more about the destructive influence of decadent western bourgeois values.

An extreme part of this group, known by the alias "Price Tag," has conducted since 2008 acts of vandalism and violence toward their Palestinian neighbors and their property. The head of the Israeli internal security agency (the ShaBaK) points to the Yitzhar settlement, near the Palestinian city of Nablus and where Ginzburgh's *Yeshiva* (Torah study facility) is located, as the ideological source and the motivating force behind these actions.<sup>54</sup> As Fischer writes,<sup>55</sup> violence has become part of these settlers' very ethos, and is connected directly to their focus on life close to the earth, intimately meeting nature and its wild forces.

insburgh and his followers thus display a Romantic form of Neo-Hasidism, one that divinizes nature and seeks an intimate bond with the outer and inner forces of what they consider to be primordially wild. In the particular case of the Jewish people, the inner primordial wilderness is in fact the divine essence, and so intimacy with it is tantamount to the highest religious ideal. However, it is not only an end, but also a means for violently forwarding the current political struggle in the Holy Land.

This genus of Neo-Hasidism is heavily influenced by the logic of the German Romantic movement on the one hand, and the American Hippie sub-culture on the other, thus fashioning its adherents as ethnocentric nature lovers, eco-friendly, while at the same time hostile to humans of other nationalities. Outer and inner nature is considered divine, whereas the human other is perceived as evil. The religious ideal thus becomes an inner connection with the (Jewish) divine nature, manifested outwardly as violence against the non-Jew. It is a Romantic, *Völkisch* Neo-Hasidism.

### §§§

Above we have observed three different illustrations of Neo-Hasidism in Israel at this time. As the main current of Neo-Hasidism in Israel is of the nomian type, these examples all belong to that classification, though exhibiting different perspectives within it. While Rabbi

Rosenberg presents us with an intellectual elaboration applying Hasidic ideas and motifs in order to address contemporary philosophical and social issues, Rabbi Besancon uses Hasidic mystical practices adopted and adjusted to fit the contemporary palate, and Rabbi Ginsburgh develops an organist and *völkisch* political theology emphasizing the individual's connection with his or her nation and land through the intimate encounter with wild nature, both external and internal.

It is important to note the Neo-Hasidic backbone of these different modern Jewish religious representations. What connects the teachings of these three thinkers is the almost exclusive focus on the individual's internal life, on her or his psychological and emotional states, while endowing these not only with religious significance, but indeed with religious authority. When Rosenberg notes with appreciation Hasidism's as well as postmodernism's ability to give the individual "the opportunity to freely and fully choose to obey the Law;" when Besancon wants us to connect "to our real inner self;" when Ginsburgh interprets Goldstein's murderous deed as the divine fruit of his meeting with his innermost core and "true essence," it should be clear that they all represent different patterns of the same Neo-Hasidic constitution, being the turn toward the subjective so as to find in it—in us—sources for attributing meaning, quality and hierarchical value to the outside world.

A number of social theorists have framed this interiorization on a grand scale, articulating what some call "the great subjective turn of western culture."<sup>56</sup> Under this heading, they address the growing engrossment of the west, over the last few hundred years, with its inner life, searching within and finding not only manifold and divergent degrees and levels of psyche ("sub-conscious," "repressed," etc.), but attributing a level of authority to them in terms of life choices and ethics that has never before been known.

The internalization of our moral sources begins in full force only in modern times when a schism appears between what we today call the subjective and objective worlds. As Charles Taylor puts it, this is the move from what he labels the "porous self" to the "buffered self."<sup>57</sup> What is meant here is a shift from life felt as part of a continuous matrix encompassing both the stars in the heavens (often seen as living entities) and the thoughts in our head (often seen as intruding agents, from daemons to demons), to life lived separated from the outside "objective" world and concentrated within a unified but multilayered "subjective" entity, being the modern individual self. Descartes' *res extensa* and *res cogitans* come immediately to mind, and indeed it is Descartes who gives this modern condition its most famous formulation.

Explaining this “major cultural shift,” Heelas and Woodhead note that it is experienced as,

[A] turn away from life lived in terms of external or ‘objective’ roles, duties and obligations, and a turn towards life lived by reference to one’s own subjective experiences (relational as well as individualistic).<sup>58</sup>

The reference to one’s own subjective experiences mentioned here is, in effect, an allocation of great weight and ascendancy to our inner worlds. As such, the development of the buffered self has wide-ranging consequences on the way we organize our religious and moral life. It has, in general terms, internalized our sources of meaning, authority, and identity. This displacement could come about only following the removal of a transcendent God, for as long as there was a divine source of authority that was completely different and above humans, an exhaustive rearrangement of our reference point was impossible.

As Charles Taylor demonstrates, the idea of a transcendent source of authority suffered devastating blows from Enlightenment rationality (leading to Deism at first, then secularism),<sup>59</sup> Romantic expressivism (finding God inside and in creativity, then finding ourselves thereof),<sup>60</sup> and the rise of post-Galilean natural science (first finding the wisdom of the Creator in the natural order, then jettisoning the creator for a self-legitimizing nature).<sup>61</sup> Lacking a transcendent God, western religious and moral sensitivities turned inside in order to find a spiritual and ethical compass.<sup>62</sup>

Hasidism’s modern characteristics, referred to in passing in the opening paragraph of this article, can now be more fully understood: the turn to the individual’s inner life and away from the metaphysics of the Kabbalah, the emphasis on the conscious and emotional performance of the Halacha, and the search of a “true” and “authentic” connection with the divine<sup>63</sup> are all aspects of the same process of interiorization. It is essential to note the way today’s Neo-Hasidic leaders accentuate and emphasize this aspect in particular, at times at the expense of other traditional Jewish themes (as can be observed with Ginsburgh’s wish to connect with nature). So fundamental has become many contemporary Jews’ reliance on the inner worlds in order to make sense and verify the truth of their religious life<sup>64</sup> that it has become difficult to offer religious teachings that do not make emotional upsurge and inner transformation their focal point.

One final point on the inherent antagonism between expressivism and Halacha. As pointed out above, within the antinomian strand of Neo-Hasidism, the quest for “inner truth” is undertaken in opposition to compliance with the heteronomous law, using Hasidism’s focus on the inner worlds in order to question the relevancy of the outer.

Nomian Neo-Hasidism is challenged with tempering this fundamental tension, so as to risk as little as possible doubts among their adherents about trading the loyalty to the Law for raw experience.

Of the three thinkers presented here, Rosenberg does not offer a solution for this problem. As seen above, he holds great hope for “the renewed Hasidic project,” and it may be that his optimism allows him to disregard the immediate danger to the Halachic world, which he no doubt cares very much about. Writing briefly on the principal tension between “inner worship of God” and the Halacha, Rosenberg states that, “the ideal state is when one’s inner truth is identical to the objective truth.”<sup>65</sup> Possibly he believes that when prophecy is renewed the inner and outer worlds will be indistinguishable.

The situation is different with Besancon’s and Ginsburgh’s forms of Neo-Hasidism, as they have their own, built in, as it were, ways of dealing with the problem. I wish to propose that for the former the way to avoid the subjective temptation is the very transformation of the original practice of *Hitbodedut* from an attempt at intimacy with the divine, whether ecstatic or dialogical, to an inner, introspective and therapeutic, journey toward one’s self. The subjective turn is thus circumscribed within the bounds of the remedial care for the self, and the connection with the divine remains the monopoly of the Halacha and the regular prayer routine. The Halacha thus keeps its place as the exclusive element in the sphere of worship and the only path for keeping God’s covenant, while the contemporary call for inner, “spiritual” work and transformation is not neglected.

Within Ginsburgh’s thought we can find a different way to solve the inherent incongruity between adherence to our inner ambulations and compliance to inherited tradition. His followers are directed toward realizing the authenticity of their intimate selves by externalizing their most passionate feelings as religio-nationalist violence. This exteriorization not only allows them to stay within Halachic boundaries but forces them to do so, as the Halachic boundaries are the very standards and criteria that divide between Jew and Gentile, and thus lay the necessary ground for these passions and acts.

There is no doubt that the contention between the outer Law and the subject’s inner life has grown much more accentuated with the contemporary fixation on the interior world. Neo-Hasidism is one of the main ways in which modern Judaism addresses this problem and it will be interesting to witness its future development.

## NOTES

1. This specific theme will be addressed in my article “Neo-Hasidism & Neo-Kabbalah in Israeli Contemporary Spirituality: The Rise of the Utilitarian Self,” submitted to the *Alternative Spirituality and Religion Review*.

2. The following are some of the prominent texts on the subject: Eileen Barker, *New Religious Movements: A Practical Introduction* (London, 1995); Paul Heelas, *The New Age Movement: The Celebration of Self and the Sacralization of Modernity* (Oxford, 1996); Wouter J. Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought* (Albany, 1998); James Lewis, *The Oxford Handbook of New Religious Movements* (Oxford, 2004).

3. See, e.g., Boaz Huss, “The New Age of Kabbalah: Contemporary Kabbalah, the New Age and Postmodern Spirituality,” *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (2007), pp. 107–25; Jonathan Garb, *The Chosen Will Become Herds: Studies in Twentieth-Century Kabbalah* (New Haven, 2009); Dalit Simchai, *Flowing Against the Flow: Paradoxes in Realizing the New-Age Vision in Israel* (Haifa, 2009) [Hebrew]; Rachel Werczberger, “New Age of Judaism: Jewish Spiritual Renewal in Israel” (Ph.D. dissertation, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 2011); Marianna Ruah-Midbar, “Current Jewish Spiritualities in Israel: A New Age,” *Modern Judaism*, Vol. 32, No. 3 (2012), pp. 102–24.

4. Martin Buber, *The Legend of the Baal-Shem*. trans. Maurice Friedman (New York, 1955 [1908]), p. 11.

5. *Ibid.*

6. Tomer Persico, ““Jewish Meditation:” The Development of a Modern Form of Spiritual Practice in Contemporary Judaism” (Ph.D. dissertation, Tel Aviv University, 2012), pp. 274–302.

7. Menachem Ekstein, *Psychic Conditions for the Acquisition of Piety* (Vienna, 1921) [Hebrew], p. 1.

8. Kalonymus Kalman Shapira, *The Training of the Students* (Jerusalem, 2001) [Hebrew], p. 141.

9. William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* (New York, 1961 [1902]); Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Nature; Addresses and Lectures* (Philadelphia, 1894 [1849]); Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers* (London, 1893 [1799]). On their influence on the Jewish Renewal and Neo-Hasidic movement, see Shaul Magid, *American Post-Judaism: Identity and Renewal in a Post-Ethnic Society* (Bloomington, 2013); Shaul Magid, “Pragmatism and Piety in Jewish Renewal,” in *Kabbalah and Modernity; Interpretations, Transformations, Adaptations*, edited by Boaz Huss, Marco Pasi and Kocku von Stuckrad (Leiden, 2010), pp. 357–87.

10. See Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: the Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, 1989).

11. On Heschel’s Neo-Hasidism, see Arthur Green, “Abraham Joshua Heschel: Recasting Hasidism for Moderns,” *Modern Judaism*, Vol. 29, No. 1

(2009), pp. 62–79. On Menachem Mendel Schneerson’s developments and innovations in Hasidism, see Samuel C. Heilman and Menachem M. Friedman, *The Rebbe: The Life and Afterlife of Menachem Mendel Schneerson* (Princeton, 2010). On Schachter-Shalomi and Arthur Green, see Shaul Magid, *American Post-Judaism*. On Shlomo Carlebach, see Yaakov Ariel, “Hasidism in the Age of Aquarius: The House of Love and Prayer in San Francisco, 1967-1977,” *Religion and American Culture*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (2003), pp. 139–65. On Aryeh Kaplan, see T. Persico, “Jewish Meditation,” pp. 359–90. An academic study of Arthur Waskow’s contribution to Neo-Hasidism has yet to be written.

12. See Jeffrey K. Salkin, “New Age Judaism,” in *The Blackwell Companion to Judaism*, edited by Jacob Neusner and Alan J. Avery-Peckl (Malden, 2003), pp. 354–70; Hava Tirosh-Samuels, “Jewish Spirituality: Past Models and Present Quest,” *Studies in Jewish Civilization: Spiritual Dimensions of Judaism*, edited by Leonard J. Greenspoon & Ronald A. Simkins (Omaha, 2003), pp. 1–39; Yaakov Ariel, “Jews and New Religious Movements: An Introductory Essay,” *Nova Religio*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (2011), pp. 5–21; and T. Persico, “Jewish Meditation,” pp. 303–56.

13. S. Heilman and M. Friedman, *The Rebbe*.

14. Zvi Mark, “The Contemporary Renaissance of Braslav Hasidism: Ritual, Tiqqun and Messianism,” in *Kabbalah and Contemporary Spiritual Revival*, edited by Boaz Huss (Beer Sheva, 2011); Eliezer Baumgarten, “Between Uman and Morocco, Ethnic Identities in Bratslav Hasidism,” *Pe’amim* No. 131 (2012) [Hebrew], pp. 147–78.

15. For an impression of the spiritual scene in Israel in the Fifties and Sixties, see Herbert Weiner’s books concerning his journeys to Israel in search of spirituality—Herbert Weiner, *9.5 Mystics: The Kabbala Today* (New York, 1992 [1969]); Herbert Weiner, *The Wild Goats of Ein Gedi: A Journal of Religious Encounters in the Holy Land* (New York, 1963 [1954]).

16. While there certainly is a wide range of New-Age groups, movements and phenomena in Israel since the 1990s, intense engagement with Hasidism is reserved almost totally to those on the Halachicly observant side of the pole. A noted exception to this situation is Ohad Ezrahi, who teaches antinomian Neo-Hasidism. In this article, I wish to concentrate on varieties of Israel’s nomian Neo-Hasidism and so will not write about Ezrahi. About his teachings, see Rachel Werczberger, “New Age of Judaism.”

17. Religious Zionists are Halachicly observant Jews who believe that the state of Israel has Jewish religious (usually eschatological) significance. They assume a more involved and engaged social and political position than the Ultra-Orthodox, Haredi community, and in many ways are similar to American Modern Orthodox Jews.

18. These figures have not yet been studied academically.

19. Shimon Gershon Rosenberg, *Tablets and Broken Tablets: Jewish Thought in the Age of Postmodernism* (Tel Aviv, 2013). It must be noted,

though, that for the Hasid, this is the nothingness of no-security (as he is obliged to take God's will as good no matter what happens) and for the existentialist, it is the nothingness of no-meaning. See *Ibid.*, pp. 42–43.

20. *sovev kol almin* is a Hassidic-Kabbalistic term referring to the divine transcendence, supplementing the divine immanence—*Memalle kol almin*. For Shagar both are existentially potent, as the transcendent God is impossible to understand, and the immanent nullifies all distinction between good and bad.

21. *Ibid.*, pp. 43–44.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 431.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 102.

24. Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook (1865–1935), perhaps the most influential religious leader and thinker of the Religious-Zionist public. See Yehudah Mirsky, *Rav Kook: Mystic in a Time of Revolution* (New Haven, 2014).

25. *Ibid.*, p. 177–79.

26. I am currently at work on an article describing and analyzing their different teachings.

27. See J. Garb, *The Chosen Will Become Herds*; Moshe Weinstock, *Uman: The Israeli Journey to the tomb of Rebbe Nachman of Breslov* (Tel Aviv, 2011) [Hebrew].

28. Zvi Mark, *Mysticism and Madness in the Work of R. Nachman of Bratslav* (Tel Aviv, 2003), p. 235.

29. *Ibid.*, pp. 236–37, 245–46.

30. *Ibid.* I have devoted an article to the comparison between Rabbi Nachman's original instructions on *Hitbodedut* and the contemporary, New-Age influenced, versions of this meditative practice. See Tomer Persico, "Hitbodedut for the New Age: Adaptation of *Hitbodedut* Meditation among the Contemporary Followers of Rabbi Nachman of Breslov," *Israel Studies Review* (forthcoming).

31. Isaac Besancon, *Hitbodedut: To Talk With God* (Tel Aviv, 2001) [Hebrew], p. 5.

32. *Ibid.*, pp. 3–4.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 5.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

35. *Ibid.*, p. 57.

36. See Richard Hughes Seager, *Buddhism in America* (New York, 1999); Stephen Batchelor, *The Awakening of the West: The Encounter of Buddhism and Western Culture* (Berkeley, 1994); Alan B. Wallace, "The Spectrum of Buddhist Practice in the West," in *Westward Dharma: Buddhism Beyond Asia*, edited by Charles S. Prebish and Martin Baumann (Berkeley, 2002), pp. 34–50; Gil Fronsdal, "Virtues Without Rules: Ethics in the Insight Meditation Movement," in *Westward Dharma: Buddhism Beyond Asia*, edited by Charles S. Prebish and Martin Baumann (Berkeley, 2002), pp. 286–89. Two of the most popular and influential modern renditions of this Buddhist meditative tradition can be taken as examples: William Hart, *The Art of Living: Vipassana Meditation as Taught by S. N. Goenka* (Igatpuri, 1993), pp. 87–97; and Joseph Goldstein and Jack

Kornfield, *Seeking the Heart of Wisdom: The Path of Insight Meditation* (Boston, 1987), pp. 22–30. Explaining the word *Vipassana*, Hart, writing in the name of S.N. Goenka, an internationally known and very influential Buddhist meditation teacher, holds that: “The word *passana* means ‘seeing,’ the ordinary sort of vision that we have with open eyes. *Vipassana* means a special kind of vision; observation of the reality within oneself. This is achieved by taking as the object of attention one’s own physical sensations. The technique is the systematic and dispassionate observance of sensations within oneself. The observation unfolds the entire reality of mind and body.” (p. 91). Joseph Goldstein, writing with Jack Kornfield (both of whom are popular and prominent American meditation teachers) gives the following instructions: “[W]e sit and make the effort to aim the mind toward the breath, either the in and out-breath or the rise and fall of the abdomen. If there is enough effort and energy, and the aim is correct, then we connect with the sensations of the rise and fall or the in and out; we become mindful of the specific sensations and how they’re behaving, and from this our concentration grows and our understanding deepens.” (pp. 22–23). Another of Goldstein’s passages resembles Besancon’s even more: “The elements of mind: thoughts, visions, emotions, consciousness, and the elements of matter, individually are called ‘dharma.’ The task of all spiritual work is to explore and discover these dharmas within us, to uncover and penetrate all the elements of the mind and body, becoming aware of each of them individually, as well as understanding the laws governing their process and relationship. This is what we are doing here: experiencing in every moment the truth of our nature, the truth of who and what we are.” – Joseph Goldstein, *The Experience of Insight: A Natural Unfolding* (Santa Cruz, 1987), p. 19.

37. Shlomo Fischer, “Nature, Authenticity and Violence in Radical Religious Zionist Thought,” in *Generations, Locations, Identities: Contemporary Perspectives on Society and Culture in Israel*, edited by Hannah Herzog, Tal Kochavi and Shimshon Zelinker (Tel Aviv, 2007) [Hebrew], pp. 421–54; Shlomo Fischer, “Radical Religious Zionism: From the Collective to the Individual,” in *Kabbalah and Contemporary Spiritual Revival*, edited by Boaz Huss (Beer Sheva, 2011), pp. 285–309.

38. Rachel Elijor, *Unity of Opposites: The Mystical Theosophy of Habad* (Jerusalem, 1992) [Hebrew], pp. 54–95; Elliot R. Wolfson, *Open Secret: Postmessianic Messianism and the Mystical Revision of Menachem Mendel Schneerson* (New York, 2009), pp. 138–47.

39. Yisrael Ariel, *Al Yisrael Ga’avato: Composed after Hearing the Lectures of R. Yitzchak Ginzburg on his Essay “Israel and the Nations”* (Rechovot, 1998) [Hebrew], p. 168.

40. Ephraim Elimelech Urbach, *The Sages: Their Concepts and Belief* (Jerusalem, 1969) [Hebrew], pp. 259–60; 285.

41. Yitzchak Ginzburgh, *Kuntreis Barukh HaGever: Five General Commandments which are Five Inner Aspects of the Act of the Martyr R. Baruch Goldstein May God Avenge His Blood*, edited by Yisrael Ariel (1994) [Hebrew], p. 18.

42. I will return in the summation of the article and examine the *Zeitgeist* which I think is an inspiration for Ginsburgh's teachings. About non-Jewish sources influencing Ginsburgh, see Shlomo Fischer, "Self-Expression and Democracy in Radical Religious Zionist Ideology," (Ph.D. thesis, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 2007), where Ginsburgh's thought is analyzed according to the romantic cultural currents it manifests. See also Andrew Cohen, "Vessels for the Infinite: A Talk Between Rabbi Yitzchak Ginzburgh and Andrew Cohen," *What Is Enlightenment?* Vol. 4, No. 1 (1995), pp. 20-27, where Ginsburgh admits he knows "a lot about Eastern thought."

43. S. Fischer, "Radical Religious Zionism," pp. 296-98.

44. On February 25, 1994, Barukh Goldstein, a Jewish-Israeli M.D. and resident of the Hebron Jewish settlement, entered the Muslim part of the Cave of the Patriarchs there and opened fire on Muslim Palestinian worshippers, killing twenty-nine people and wounding many others before being killed himself. A few months later, the tract *Barukh Ha'Gever* was published by Ginsburgh, analyzing the theological significance of the act. The name is taken from the beginning of the verse "Blessed [*barukh*] be the man [*gever*] who trusteth the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is" (Jeremiah 17:7). "Barukh" is both "blessed" and Goldstein's first name, and "gever" means "man," but can also mean "hero."

45. Y. Ginzburgh, *Kuntreis Barukh HaGever*, pp. 17-18.

46. *Ibid.*, pp. 18-19.

47. T. Persico, "Jewish Meditation," pp. 196-99; Don Seeman, "Violence, Ethic and Divine Honor in Modern Jewish Thought," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Vol. 73, No. 4 (2005), pp. 1015-48.

48. Y. Ginzburgh, *Kuntreis Barukh HaGever*, p. 5.

49. Shlomo Fischer, "Between the General and the Exceptional," in *State of Exception and State of Emergency*, edited by Yehouda Shenhav, Christoph Schmidt and Shimshon Zelniker (Jerusalem, 2009) [Hebrew], pp. 93-107.

50. HaVaCuK, which Rabbi Rosenberg, mentioned earlier in this article, calls "the new Hasidism" and "the Hasidism of the land of Israel" (Rosenberg, *Tablets and Broken Tablets*, p. 169), is a loosely delineated Neo-Hasidic group of the nomian type, exhibiting an increased interest in music, art, nature, the body, and ecstatic prayer. The name is an acronym of Chabad, Breslov, Carlebach, and Kook. Chabad and Breslov are of course Hasidic courts. Shlomo Carlebach (1925-1994), as stated earlier, was one of the central figures of the American Jewish Renewal, and his influence is felt also in Israel, especially among those with American roots (see Y. Ariel, "Hasidism in the Age of Aquarius," and Joanna Steinhardt, "American Neo-Hasids in the Land of Israel," in *Nova Religio*, Vol. 13, No. 4 (2010), pp. 22-42). Avraham Yitzchak HaCohen Kook (1865-1935) was one of the most important mystics and spiritual leaders of twentieth century Jewry. His Hegelian and nationalistic messianic thought, seeing the return to Israel as the beginning of redemption, is very influential among the National-Religious public in Israel. For an excellent analysis of his (and his son's) influence, see S. Fischer, "Self-Expression and Democracy."

51. Shoshana Greenfield, "Dear Children in Cheap Shacks," *Nekuda*, No. 303 (2007) [Hebrew], pp. 44-46.

52. See also Ginsburgh's words about "a widening phenomenon, of many who are drawn to cultivating the earth [...] returning to the land is a turn towards redemption, a return to the root [...] and to advance from there with our faces towards God." – Quoted in S. Fischer, "Nature, Authenticity and Violence", p. 442.

53. J. Steinhardt, "American Neo-Hasids in the Land of Israel," pp. 32-33.

54. See the report in *Haaretz* national Israeli newspaper in Barak Ravid, "The Head of ShaBaK on 'Price tag:' The Settlers of Yitzhar are Terrorizing the Government," *Haaretz*, March 2, 2012 (Hebrew) <http://www.haaretz.co.il/news/politics/1.1632993>

55. S. Fischer, "Nature, Authenticity and Violence," p. 444.

56. Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man* (New York, 1992 [1974]); Joseph Veroff, Elizabeth Douvan and Richard A. Kulka, *The Inner American: A Self-Portrait from 1957 to 1976* (New York, 1981); Daniel Yankelovich, *New Rules: Searching for Self-Fulfillment in a World Turned Upside Down* (New York, 1982); Robert Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley, 2008 [1985]); C. Taylor, *Sources of the Self*; Ronald Inghelhart and Christian Welzel, *Modernization, Cultural Change and Democracy: The Human Development Sequence* (Cambridge, 2005).

57. Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, 2007), p. 539.

58. Paul Heelas and Linda Woodhead, *The Spiritual Revolution: Why Religion is Giving Way to Spirituality* (Malden, 2005), p. 2.

59. C. Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, pp. 266-74.

60. *Ibid.*, pp. 368-74.

61. C. Taylor, *A Secular Age*, pp. 542-44.

62. The turn inside is manifested many times as the turn eastward, a phenomenon which we can easily witness in contemporary New Age spirituality. This is because Eastern religions have, from the start, developed in an ideational world lacking a transcendent God, and thus have "readymade" religious frameworks fitting westerners in search of relevant religious forms in today's social arena. On the lack of the transcendence in Eastern religions and its theological affects, see Shlomo Biderman, *Philosophical Journeys: India and the West* (Tel Aviv, 2003) [Hebrew].

63. Ron Margolin, *The Human Temple: Religious Interiorization and the Structuring of Inner Life in Early Hasidism* (Jerusalem, 2005) [Hebrew]; Tsippi Kauffman, *In All Your Ways Know Him: The Concept of God and Avodah Be-Gashmiyut in the Early Stages of Hasidism* (Ramat Gan, 2009) [Hebrew]; Alan Brill, *Thinking God: The Mysticism of Rabbi Zadok of Lublin* (New York, 2002).

64. Steven M. Cohen and Arnold M. Eisen, *The Jew Within: Self, Family and Community in America* (Bloomington, 2000).

65. Shimon Gershon Rosenberg, *Illuminating the Openings: Homilies and Articles for Hanukkah* (Alon Shvut, 2013), p. 55.