



WE WANT MOSHIACH NOW!

**Understanding the
Messianic Message
in the Jewish
Chabad-Lubavitch
Movement**

**Nanna
Rosengård**



Photo: Ville Kavilo

Nanna Rosengård, was born 1978 in Stockholm, Sweden and grew up in Dagsmark, Kristinestad in Finland. She received a Masters of Theology from Åbo Akademi University 2005 and enrolled in the doctoral program of Jewish Studies the following year.

Photo on front page taken by Nanna Rosengård in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, New York 2006.

Design: Laura Karanko

Åbo Akademi University Press

Biskopsgatan 13, FIN-20500 ÅBO, Finland

Tel. +258-20 786 1468

Fax +358-20 786 1459

E-mail: forlaget@abo.fi

<http://www.abo.fi/stiftelsen/forlag>

Distribution: Oy Tibo-Trading Ab

P.O.Box 33, FIN-21601 PARGAS, Finland

Tel. +358-2 454 9200

Fax +358-2 454 9220

E-mail: tibo@tibo.net

<http://www.tibo.net>

WE WANT MOSHIACH NOW!

We Want Moshiach Now!

Understanding the Messianic Message in the
Jewish Chabad-Lubavitch Movement

Nanna Rosengård

ÅBO 2009

ÅBO AKADEMIS FÖRLAG – ÅBO AKADEMI UNIVERSITY PRESS

CIP Cataloguing in Publication

Rosengård, Nanna

We want Moshiach now! : understanding the
Messianic message in the Jewish Chabad-
Lubavitch movement / Nanna Rosengård. -
Åbo : Åbo Akademi University Press, 2009.
Diss.: Åbo Akademi University.
ISBN 978-951-765- 514-9

ISBN 978-951-765-514-9
ISBN 978-951-765-515-6 (digital)
UNIPRINT
Åbo 2009

PREFACE

Many people ask me what initially stirred my interest in the Lubavitchers and their eschatological program. The story is that in 2001 I was a volunteer with *Sar-El* (Service for Israel) in Israel, and as part of the program one could celebrate *shabat* and staying with families over the weekends. I stayed with a religious family in a *moshav* in the Rehovot area. They spoke substantially about rebuilding the temple and other things connected to eschatology, and I found their vibrant expectations very fascinating. That, together with an informative article on Chabad messianism by Rachel Elior, set me off.

This work is dedicated to *pappa* and *mamma*, always there to offer support and whose interest in my work spurs me on.

I would like to thank a lot of people who have aided me in various ways in the process of writing this thesis. I will not be able to mention all of you, but I do hope you have felt my appreciation, whoever you are! My gratitude goes primarily to my professor, Dr. Antti Laato, as well as to all the participants during the years at the graduate seminars. Thank you Pekka, Sinikka and Lorna, and all the friendly people who have been involved in finishing this project, among others *Forskningsinstitutet*, Laura and Ville. I appreciate it. I am also very grateful to my department, the department of Old Testament Exegesis and Judaic Studies, and the Finnish Graduate School of Theology for making my employment possible.

My wish is that people from different disciplines and for different reasons will find this work interesting and helpful.

Dagsmark, December 10th, 2009

Nanna Rosengård

Table of Contents

1. Introduction	9
1.1 Impacting the World for the Messiah.....	9
1.2 Relevance, Purpose and Questions.....	15
1.3 Theoretical Discussion, Methodology and Material	20
1.4 Transliteration and Terminology.....	27
2. Historical and Theological Background	32
2.1 Hasidism	32
2.2 Shneur Zalman and the Dynasty of Chabad.....	39
2.3 The Written Law of Chabad: The Tanya.....	44
2.4 Messianism and Mysticism	50
2.5 Messianic Redemption in Hasidism.....	58
2.6 Examples of Early Hasidic Messianic Activity.....	62
3. The <i>Tanya</i> and the Messianic Concept	70
3.1 The Worldview: Divinity and Creation	72
3.1.1 God – Present in Everything.....	72
3.1.2 The World – Not Yet a Place for God.....	75
3.1.3 Man and His Significance for the Messianic Course of Events.....	80
3.1.4 Means of Uniting with God.....	91
3.1.5 The Purpose of Creation: The Messianic Era	95
3.2 The Zaddik: Linking Heaven and Earth	101
3.2.1 A Very Special Person, Executing Influence Not Only On Earth	101
3.2.2 Ecstatic Praying.....	105
3.2.3 Converting Evil into Holiness	108
3.2.4 The Ascent of Souls	110
3.3 Summary and Discussion	113

4. Acute Messianic Awareness in the 20th Century	120
4.1 The Message of Rabbi Joseph Isaac	123
-	
4.1.1 Finding Strength despite the Messianic Birthpangs.....	126
4.1.2 A Spiritual War – Repentance	132
4.1.3 Meriting the Coming of the Messiah	138
4.1.4 Taking action	143
4.1.5 Summary and Conclusions	146
4.2 The Message of Rabbi Schneerson	150
4.2.1 The Last Generation Before the Messianic Era	154
4.2.2 Exile, Repentance and Messianic Redemption	159
4.2.3 The Messiah.....	164
4.2.4 Anticipating the Coming of the Messiah and Redemption	171
4.2.5 Everybody’s Responsibility in Hastening the Coming of the Messiah	172
4.2.6 The Messianic Significance in Studying the Torah and Spreading Hasidic Teachings.....	180
4.2.7 Summary and discussion.....	186
5. Conclusions	189
Bibliography	204
Chabad-Lubavitch Literature.....	204
Secondary Literature.....	208
Magazines.....	216
Online Material.....	216

1. Introduction

1.1 Impacting the World for the Messiah

"When the Rebbe was alive, just about every Lubavitcher (---) was confident that he was the Messiah."¹

The messianic concept of the Jewish ultra-Orthodox group of *Chabad-Lubavitch* is of primary interest in this study. Being one of the most visible of the Jewish groups today, Chabad-Lubavitch transforms Jewish communities all over the world. Small communities seem to come alive through the work of emissaries, sent out to every corner of the earth where there may be Jews with a mission to rekindle the Jewish faith.² The movement is well-known for its outreach, called "Lubavitch activism" and purported by insiders to have the purpose of "strengthen[ing] the Jewish identity and religious consciousness."³ In addition to the visibility of this ultra-Orthodox group, the movement is

¹ *New York Times Magazine*, September 21, 2003

² *National Geographic*, February 2006:66, 68

³ Schochet 1995 III:183

also connected to a strong devotion for its deceased leader, Rabbi Menahem Mendel Schneerson. Banners proclaiming Rabbi Schneerson the Messiah can be seen in places with a large population of Lubavitchers, such as Jerusalem and Crown Heights in New York. In other parts of the world this feature of the Lubavitchers may not always be as evident, but, as will become evident in this work, Lubavitch activism cannot be separated from the expectant belief in the Messiah. The Lubavitchers impact the world – for the Messiah.

Chabad-Lubavitch is one of the many ultra-Orthodox groups, and more specifically a group that sprung up out of the 18th century Eastern European Jewish revival known as Ḥasidism. The Ḥasidic groups are generally known to have popularized Jewish mysticism and have attracted many adherents. Chapter two of this study will provide more information on the history of Chabad-Lubavitch. Important for the Ḥasidim was, and is, the teachings of the Ḥasidic masters; in the case of Chabad-Lubavitch its first leader, Shneur Zalman and his work the *Tanya*. The messianic feature in early Ḥasidism has been a central theme for scholars, who to this day continue to disagree on its role.⁴ When attempting to know more about the contemporary messianic belief in Chabad-Lubavitch, it is said that it is a novelty that can be traced back only to the time of the Second

⁴ The earlier idea is represented by scholars like Martin Buber, *Hasidism*, 1948; Simon Dubnow *Geschichte des Chassidismus*, 1969; Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 1969 and *The Messianic Idea in Judaism. And Other Essays on Jewish Spirituality*, 1971. Contemporary scholars like Moshe Idel, *Hasidism Between Ecstasy*, 1995 and *Magic Messianic Mystics*, 1998; Ada Rapoport-Albert (ed.), *Hasidism Reappraised*, 1997; Joseph Dan, *Jewish Mysticism*, 1999; Shaul Magid *Hasidism on the Margin: Reconciliation, Antinomianism, and Messianism in Izbica and Radzin Hasidism*, 2003 exemplify a more dynamic view on messianism in Hasidism.

World War.⁵ This study, however, will take a new look at the foundational work of Chabad-Lubavitch and when exploring the worldview of the *Tanya* in chapter three, it will be explained how the messianic expectation was in fact imperative for the Chabad worldview already at the inception of the movement. Chapter four will explore the traces of the messianic worldview of the *Tanya* in the message of the Lubavitch leaders after the Second World War.

The Chabad-Lubavitch adherents' devotion for their leader, their *Rebbe*, has been met with strong disapproval from some Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox leaders, along with accusations of idolatry. According to David Berger, member of the Rabbinical Council of America and author of the book *The Rebbe, the Messiah and the Scandal of Orthodox Indifference*, these reactions have not been strong enough. He states that Chabad-Lubavitch today borders on something that goes far beyond Judaism and which is a threat to traditional Judaism. According to Berger, the group that believes that Rabbi Schneerson is the Messiah is much larger than people in general tend to believe, and that messianism even has its grip on Chabad-Lubavitch officials, as evidenced by the fact that Lubavitchers who continue to believe that Rabbi Schneerson is the Messiah, have been permitted to continue as emissaries, rabbis and teachers. Furthermore Berger argues that the officials would have elected a new spiritual leader for Chabad-Lubavitch had it not been for the sturdy messianist stronghold. Berger claims that the evidence of messianism in Chabad-

⁵ See especially Rachel Elijor, *The Lubavitch Messianic Resurgence – The Historical and Mystical Background*, 1998.

Lubavitch goes beyond normative Judaism, which Chabad-Lubavitch confesses itself to be adherents of.⁶

The Lubavitchers are not a coherent group, however. Not everybody within Chabad-Lubavitch belongs to the so called “messianists”, i.e. believe Rabbi Schneerson to be the Messiah. No statistics are available, but the adherents are generally perceived of as being divided into three groups: a small group which says that Rabbi Schneerson is the Messiah,⁷ another small group who refutes all messianic claims on Rabbi Schneerson and a third majority group that stands somewhere in between. The latter seems to believe that it will become apparent one day whether Rabbi Schneerson is or is not the Messiah.⁸ In 1998, the Central Committee of Chabad-Lubavitch

⁶ See David Berger, *The Rebbe, The Messiah, and the Scandal of Orthodox Indifference*, 2001. In a book called *The Rebbe's Army. Inside the World of Chabad-Lubavitch*, journalist Sue Fishkoff accounts for Lubavitch messianists, those who even after the death of Rabbi Schneerson openly state the claim on him to be the Messiah and who share the rationales of Berger. Since the leadership of the organisation has not elected a new rebbe, it must mean they still consider Rabbi Schneerson to be the one true leader. The other claim is that the organisation would not send out messianist emissaries if they did not approve of their beliefs. Thus the same arguments are used by people on very opposite sides, but asserting the same thing i.e. that the Chabad Lubavitch leadership is in fact messianist. Fishkoff 2003:270-271, 273-274.

⁷ Simon Dein, *What Really Happens When Prophecy Fails: The Case of Lubavitch*, 2001. David Singer, *The Rebbe, the Messiah, and the Heresy Hunter*, 2003. This group is divided into subgroups, each providing different solutions and interpretations for the death of their Messiah and the fact that he has not been fully revealed as the Messiah. Some claim that Rabbi Schneerson will return from the grave to complete his mission; others say he is not dead at all; yet others that he is “hidden”, waiting to be revealed.

⁸ There are no statistics available to show this, even though people in both camps – both those saying that the messianists are a majority and those stating that messianism is a marginal phenomenon in Chabad – express themselves very authoritatively. Fishkoff says the convention for emissaries believing Rabbi Schneerson to be the Messiah only drew 70 people in 1999, whereas the official convention had 1,500 participants that same year. No satisfactory conclusions can be drawn from these facts, as there are many factors that affect the outcome of conventions like these. Those saying the messianists are in majority often base their argument on the fact that Lubavitch officials do not denounce or even suppress the messianists. It is also said that a large number of Lubavitch rabbis hold subterranean messianic beliefs and that is why they will not stifle messianist action. In *The Rebbe The Messiah and the Scandal of Orthodox Indifference* David Berger argues ardently that Chabad has turned into a movement

Rabbis in the United States and Canada declared in a document that “the preoccupation with identifying the Rebbe as *Moshiach* is clearly contrary to the Rebbe’s wishes”, declaring that awaiting the Messiah is still a basic tenet of the Jewish faith.⁹ It is interesting to notice that the document fails to say that Rabbi Schneerson is not the Messiah, but rather states that the obsession or fixation with assuming someone to be the Messiah is not in line with what Rabbi Schneerson wanted. Thus, the document is not a statement of faith. It does not forbid the belief in Rabbi Schneerson as the Messiah, but states that from a Chabad point of view it would be wrong to say that Rabbi Schneerson is the Messiah, but it is equally wrong to say that he is not.

Chabad-Lubavitch reaches out through a system of *shluhim* – emissaries – that was developed by Rabbi Schneerson, who also worked at building schools and community centres, so called *Chabad Houses*, the number of which continues to increase. At the death of Rabbi Schneerson in 1994 there were no more than 2,000 Chabad centres. Now, according to the official Chabad-Lubavitch website there are 4,000 full-time emissary families who direct more than 3,300 Chabad-Lubavitch institutions in the world, in 71 different countries.¹⁰ This means a growth of about 60 percent in a little over ten years. Many a *shliah* expresses how Rabbi Schneerson, the *Rebbe*, inspires them even to this day.¹¹ Other *shluhim* explain that a holier world will hasten the Messiah’s coming.¹² Consequently it is considered imperative to bring Jews back into Judaism in order to

based on essentially Christian messianic doctrine and that Judaism in fact embraces this belief system by not excommunicating Chabad messianist rabbis.

⁹ Fishkoff 2003:268-269

¹⁰ <http://www.chabad.org/global/about/article.asp?AID=36226> March 24, 2008

¹¹ Boteach 1993:v; *National Geographic*, February 2006:66-68

increase observance of the Jewish law, which makes this world holy, and this will hasten the arrival of the long-awaited Messiah, whether the Messiah is the re-revealed Rabbi Schneerson or not.

Given contradictory attention, Chabad-Lubavitch impacts the Jewish world and the world around. Contrary to some opinions, among which is that of David Berger, Chabad-Lubavitch is admired for its accomplishments in keeping religious Judaism alive and for helping people in need. As an organisation, Chabad-Lubavitch receives support from prominent and visible circles – presidents, movie stars, musicians, politicians and successful businessmen. The movement receives stern criticism, however, because of its emphasis on eschatological theology. Chabad-Lubavitch has also made it into the non-Jewish press, and is thus not only a small internal Jewish phenomenon, irrelevant to the rest of the world. Hence the messianic concept in Chabad-Lubavitch is of interest to people from different walks of life. This work will discuss the rise of messianism in Chabad-Lubavitch by comparing the most important features of this messianism with the foundational work of Chabad Ḥasidism, the *Tanya*. The task will be approached by asking what ideas concerning the Messiah can be seen in the *Tanya* and in the messages of the last two leaders, Rabbi Joseph Isaac Schneersohn and Rabbi Menaḥem Mendel Schneerson. The central question is if the messianic ideas that are said to be inventions in the 20th century in fact can be found already in the *Tanya*. This will also shed light on the intriguing question whether there is a connection between messianism and Chabad activism.

¹² *National Geographic*, February 2006:66-68

1.2 Relevance, Purpose and Questions

The face of Orthodox Jewry is changing. Several Jewish communities in the world, originally not Ḥasidic, are now run by Ḥasidic rabbis, i.e. by Lubavitcher rabbis. Simply put, we can say that where earlier rabbinic leadership was based solely on Talmudic wisdom, now the Ḥasidic leader with a charismatic personality has become the preference. A religious phenomenon that many thought was disappearing in the aftermath of the Second World War, as well as the challenge of two centuries of advanced modernism, has, in fact, become a vigorous force not only in the religious Jewish life, but also in the political arena.¹³ The ultra-Orthodox population has grown in centres such as New York's Brooklyn and the Diamond districts of London and Antwerp as well as of course in Israel. Today, the Chabad-Lubavitch movement is said to be the most dynamic of the ultra-Orthodox groups and the group that the non-Orthodox are most likely to have come in contact with owing to its inclusive and outreaching nature. There is no doubt that Ḥasidism and Chabad-Lubavitch are fascinating phenomena for academics of different fields such as sociology, history, theology or comparative religious studies, but also for ordinary people coming in contact with Lubavitchers through their

¹³ Newman 1944:lvii; Dan 1997:416-419. For some time now the ultra-orthodox have been known to have a strong influence on Israeli politics in particular. Concerning the influence of the ultra-orthodox on Israeli politics see David Landau, *Piety and Power. The World of Jewish Fundamentalism*, 1993: xvii-xxvi. In the beginning of the 1990s the Israeli ḥaredim (ultra-orthodox) and the ḥaredim in the Diaspora were estimated to be 350,000 and 325,000 respectively (out of the total population of 4 million in Israel). It may be assumed that these numbers have increased since then. For more of the new relationship between Ḥasidim and other ḥaredi groups like mitnaggedim and oriental groups see Joseph Dan, *Hasidism: The Third Century*, 1997.

local community, as well as Christians interested in the assertion that Chabad-Lubavitch is making use of Christian messianic doctrines.¹⁴

Hasidism has been the object of academic research since the early 1900s and in particular the messianic feature has been discussed and is still in focus.¹⁵ There is however a scarcity of academic material relating to Chabad-Lubavitch. Concerning the academic discussion on messianism, it has traditionally been stated that Hasidism was void of messianism, a view that has begun to be increasingly questioned.¹⁶ Scholars do, however, agree on the fact that Hasidism was greatly influenced by and popularized Jewish mystical doctrines. The question still remains what type of Jewish mysticism impacted the young movement. Furthermore, the role of the 17th century messianic movement Shabbateanism has been debated. But there are still scholars who hold to the opinion that messianism had nothing to do with the success of early Hasidism,¹⁷ that Chabad Hasidism “possessed *no messianic* character at its inception,”¹⁸ and that it had no interest in messianic leadership and national redemption.¹⁹ I would like to find out if this is really the case, or if the

¹⁴ There are a few articles on the resemblance between Chabad Hasidism and Christianity. This resemblance is something that David Berger also points out, as well as other rabbis who claim that Judaism should not have to deal with these beliefs, i.e. doctrinal beliefs linked to the Christian messiah, anymore – it was over and done with 2000 years ago. Cf. Joel Marcus, *The Once and Future Messiah in Early Christianity and Chabad*, 2000. This matter lies outside the interest of the study at hand.

¹⁵ Among the academics who have written about Hasidism there are Simon Dubnow, Martin Buber, Gershom Scholem, Arthur Green, Joseph Dan, Rachel Elior and Ada Rapoport-Albert.

¹⁶ Among the scholars that look for a more dynamic perspective on Hasidism Isaiah Tishby, Joseph Dan and Moshe Idel can be mentioned. As an example of a new study on Hasidism and messianism Mor Altshuler’s *The Messianic Secret of Hasidism*, 2006 should be mentioned.

¹⁷ Green 1997:442

¹⁸ Elior 1998:386

¹⁹ Elior 1998:386 n. 11

Tanya holds any clues to the contemporary messianic fervour among the Lubavitchers.

The (mystical) theology of Chabad as a historical movement has been studied and explored by scholars such as Rachel Elior, and the ordained Lubavitch rabbi Mark Avrum Ehrlich has written thoroughly and comprehensively on Lubavitch leadership, but there has not previously been such an attempt to explore the messianic doctrine in the contemporary literature, nor to compare it with the *Tanya*.²⁰ In all there seems to be little scholarly discussion on the contemporary messianism of Chabad-Lubavitch. Perhaps because the phenomenon is still intricate; there is no real official stand on the issue and few adherents will openly state their beliefs concerning Rabbi Schneerson.

The general assumption concerning messianism in Chabad-Lubavitch today seems to be that it is a new and innovative feature. In the article *The Lubavitch Messianic Resurgence – The Historical and Mystical Background* Elior has started a discussion on the roots of the strong emphasis on the messianic belief in Chabad-Lubavitch. Elior asserts that the messianic message grew out of the horrors of the Russian pogroms and the Holocaust. By falling back on mystical concepts, Rabbi Schneerson's predecessor, Rabbi Joseph Isaac Schneersohn, made mystical-historical sense out of the hopelessness of the atrocities asserting there was a meaning to everything the Jews encountered: i.e. the hardships were the birth

²⁰ Academically Elior and Ehrlich provide good accounts on Chabad-Lubavitch thought and history. Worth turning to are also Naftali Loewenthal, *Communicating the Infinite: The Emergence of the Habad School*, 1990. Menachem Friedman, *Habad as Messianic Fundamentalism: From Local Particularism to Universal Mission*, 1994. Aviezer

pangs of the Messiah, which meant that the Messiah was on the verge of being revealed. According to Elijah, Rabbi Schneerson intensified this message to the point where his followers started believing that Rabbi Schneerson himself was the Messiah.²¹ This work would like to balance the view of Elijah by highlighting the messianic worldview of the *Tanya* and its role in the teachings of the 20th century Lubavitch *Rebbers*.

The Lubavitchers themselves stress the biblical and rabbinical sources of their messianic beliefs. Faith in the fulfilment of the perfection of the world through the Messiah is said to be “one of the key principles of Judaism”. Waiting for the Messiah is what has kept “the Jewish spirit and hope alive in good times and bad”.²² This is demonstrated by the saying that “this is what the sages taught.” The purpose for God creating the world was in order for him to live among humans, which is what will take place in the time of the redemption.²³ The denial of the belief in the Messiah is said to be a denial of the entire Torah,²⁴ and “a rejection of the entire structure of Jewish thought”.²⁵

This study is relevant because of the impact that the Lubavitchers make on the Jewish world through their worldview, and which they spread through their missionary work. Academic research on Chabad-Lubavitch is scarce and has only presented a very imperfect picture of the rise of messianism in Chabad-Lubavitch.

Ravitzky, *The Contemporary Lubavitch Hasidic Movement: Between Conservatism and Messianism*, 1994.

²¹ Rachel Elijah, *The Lubavitch Messianic Resurgence – The Historical and Mystical Background*, 1998.

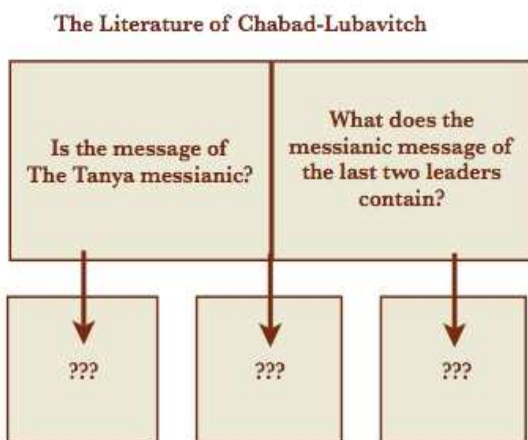
²² *The Rebbe – An Appreciation* 2005:35

²³ *Sound the Great Shofar* 1992:13

²⁴ *Sound the Great Shofar* 1992:20

Faith in the Messiah is said to have been of no importance for the early Chabad adherents, and thus the modern messianic fervour has not been linked back to the history of Chabad Hasidism.

The purpose of this work, then, is to shed new light on the background of the strong expectancy for the Messiah in Chabad-Lubavitch by looking at the worldview of the *Tanya* and comparing it to the printed message of the last two Lubavitch leaders, Rabbi Joseph Isaac Schneersohn and Rabbi Menaḥem Mendel Schneerson. Chapter three will deal with the worldview of the *Tanya* and answer the question about what messianic ideas can be found in the foundational work. Chapter four will present the messianic messages of the 20th century Lubavitch leaders, comparing it with that of the *Tanya*. We will look at what the texts say about messianic expectations and if the texts present the reader with a coherent message, or if there have been developments. A further question is if any of the answers can provide explanations for the outreaching activity of the Lubavitchers.



Schematic overview of the research questions and material

1.3 Theoretical Discussion, Methodology and Material

One way of approaching the contemporary Chabad-Lubavitch movement and their beliefs is through the vast body of literature published in its name.²⁶ It must be borne in mind, however, that the written word or even the formulated theology of a certain movement does not necessarily reflect the common belief among the broad masses or even the personal ideas of the leaders. The primary

²⁶ An alternative method would be to conduct interviews, but the fact that there is no official standpoint to guide the adherents in their opinions excludes the relevance of building this study on interviews. It seems more likely that printed material would provide more of an official position concerning the messianic belief in Chabad-Lubavitch.

objective of this study is to present the messianic ideas as they are laid out in published material of Chabad-Lubavitch.

The messianic ideas of Chabad-Lubavitch are found in religious literature. Some can be considered as holy texts since the teachings of Rabbi Schneerson are treated as highly authoritative by the Lubavitchers. They are also great inspirational texts for others than Lubavitchers. When approaching religious texts, both form and content need to be taken into account. When it comes to the texts analyzed in this study, an understanding of the religious and cultural milieu of the text is needed, thus the language and translations used; the author; how the text is used in the religious group and how the text can be typologically classified are all important. Questions such as: What are the primary topics of the text? What does the text say about the Lubavitchers' worldview and man? How is God depicted? Can something extraordinary be seen in the text? all need to be wrestled with.²⁷ As for the messianic ideas in Chabad-Lubavitch we will find that they are not isolated from the questions concerning God, man and worldview.

Apart from the religious text in itself, identifying how it serves its readers is highly essential. It is often said that the Jewish religious texts brought unity to a people without a nation – the text became their homeland.²⁸ For this reason the text must be respected by scholars for the sake of its original readers (i.e. the Hasidim) and the meaning it brings to them. For this study another important aspect is of higher priority, namely to respect the contents of the texts in order to form an understanding of the meaning of the

²⁷ Holm 1998:21-22

²⁸ Holtz 1984:17

text as close to the author's intention as is possible. Particularly when reading Jewish sacred text it is important to remember that in Jewish tradition, the occupation with holy texts is never only reading or learning terminology – it is studying and learning what the contents really say. The holy texts may not be treated as the individual chooses, but must be considered as authoritative because they reveal the word of God, not merely what one individual thinks in his own mind. This revelation is an ongoing process, which can be said to be the essence of the Torah.²⁹

With regard to the meaning and the purpose of the text, modern critical literary methods are not always applicable. In this case the most interesting thing is not the accuracy of specific details or the historicity of the events that the text may take account of, but rather the purpose, the function and the meaning of the text for those that the authors turn to. This does, however, not mean that the texts lack historical value! The texts remain valuable to the scholar in the sense that we are dealing with a historical phenomenon.³⁰ When looking at the *Tanya*, this means that this study is not making use of historical or redaction-critical methods. The purpose is not to come to the historical Shneur Zalman (traditionally said to be the author of the text) through the text, but rather the text will serve a purpose in the fact that it will convey early ideas in the Chabad-Lubavitch movement. Chapter two will present the work of the *Tanya* in greater detail.

In order to arrive at a successful reading of Ḥasidic texts, Arthur Green lays out the following three steps:

²⁹ Holtz 1984:18, 20, 25, 28

³⁰ Green 1984:368-369

1. “Become Ḥasidim”, enter into the intellectual and spiritual world of the Ḥasidim
2. Consider the historical circumstances under which the text was written
3. Look for the philosophical or phenomenological questions that can be derived from the text.

The first step requires reading the text as the Ḥasidim would listen to their Rebbe speak it; follow the thread and anticipate the next step, just as one would do when listening to a particularly inspiring speech. Green exemplifies the second step by means of a homily delivered by the Lubavitcher rebbe (Rabbi Joseph Isaac Schneersohn) in New York 1947, talking about how the Jewish people survived in Egypt because of the *yeshivot*, the religious schools, which Jacob founded. This was at the same time as he – historically – was working hard to establish Lubavitch schools in America, and it is easy to see the link between the spiritual message and the historical circumstances. The third step involves questions of comparison and definition and this is where the religious character of the words is investigated, determining for example whether a text is mystical or not. Green also mentions the importance of knowing how the text impacts the interpreter.³¹

The general character of Ḥasidic literature is firstly an oral homily, loosely midrashic in form, starting from a passage from scripture, which develops into a commentary and is then taken into the Ḥasidic context, where prayer and other devotional matters

³¹ Holtz 1984:368-369

are central and taught. Historically these sermons were seldom published by the masters themselves, but by their disciples or sons. The basis of the literary work of the Ḥasidim is the Ḥasidic leader's written notes which are then transformed into books. Secondly, the most famous Ḥasidic literature is made up of tales, written in Yiddish and suitable for people lacking a higher education of Hebrew. These are very different to the homilies, in both form and content, and are not dogmatic. Nonetheless it can be argued that they are not without use when creating an accurate image of the Ḥasidic movement – they simply demonstrate a different side to Ḥasidic lifestyle and values.³²

The literature which is the object of this study is mainly comprised of oral homily that has been written down. It is religious and to some extent holy or authoritative, and the content of the material is to the greater part messianic, because it teaches us about how Lubavitchers view the Messiah and the doctrine about the end of time. In order to be able to analyze the messianic doctrine and its nature properly, Zwi Werblowsky advises searching for responses to the following questions, dealing with context:

1. How do messianic ideas come up and how do they work in a specific culture and history?
2. What type of circumstances or historical events actualize a messianic ideology?
3. What is the role of the leader in the messianic movement?

³² Holtz 1984:363-366. The difference between these two types of literature becomes evident in the Yiddish language, where the religious books are called ספרים (*sforim*) and

These questions are relevant because, as Werblowsky writes, “beliefs and doctrines require a specific constellation of facts in order to pass from potentiality to actuality” and consequently will be considered for this study.³³ The similarities between these questions and those of Arthur Green concerning the approach to reading Ḥasidic texts should also be noted.

In order to systemize the doctrines about the Messiah an inductive study method looking for repeated themes in the literature of Chabad-Lubavitch will be used. This is a phenomenological study, using a hermeneutical approach, where the primary concerns are the movement’s self image and self portrayal in the area of the messianic doctrine. Before turning to a particular religious text the theological context and an understanding of the theology that is the basis for the relevant texts must be elicited.³⁴ Following the method laid out by Green on how to approach religious and Ḥasidic texts chapters two and three provides relevant information in order to “enter into” the intellectual, spiritual and historical world of the Ḥasidim, in order to “hear” the texts presented in chapters three and four in a Ḥasidic fashion. This background information given in chapters two is invaluable when approaching and analyzing the texts studied in chapter three and four. Chapter three focuses on the theology of Chabad-Lubavitch, in response to questions about God, man and their relationship, which are inseparable from messianic expectations. In chapter four an analysis of the messianic message of Rabbi Schneerson and his predecessor Rabbi Joseph Isaac

non-religious books are called ביכּער (*bikher*). Both words are translated “books”, but the one taken from the Hebrew has a different status than the one of Germanic origin.

³³ Werblowsky 1974:1017

Schneersohn, in the light of the foundational work of Chabad-Lubavitch, the *Tanya*, are given. The conclusions of this study are laid out in chapter five.

The primary material for this study is thus the *Tanya*, the messianic teachings by Rabbi Joseph Isaac Schneersohn and Rabbi Schneerson. The material has been limited to material published in English and available in the Chabad bookstore in Crown Heights during the time this study has been undertaken (2006-2009) with special regard to books presented under the topic of “*Moshiach*”. Even though there is a vast body of material in many different languages, including the original Hebrew and Yiddish, only English material has been used, partly for volume’s sake. In specific cases the original has been consulted. The choice of limiting the material to English is also motivated by the fact that a great number of readers of Chabad literature are English-speakers and the publishers (as well as Rabbi Schneerson) also point out the significance of bringing these works to a broader audience. This simple fact is of great centrality to this study, since, as will be demonstrated, the act of making the works available to more people is part of the messianic agenda. There is a clear motive to spread a certain message, if not primarily, then at least very consciously in English.³⁴ In the process of translating parts of the original message can have been altered, and one must bear in mind that a translation is subject to the translator and his/her perceptions.

The primary material has been taken from the Chabad-Lubavitch publishing divisions, *Kehot Publication Society* and *Merkos Publications*. They provide religious literature for

³⁴ Fine 1984:315

³⁵ See the foreword of most Lubavitch literature.

newcomers as well as “for those well versed in Torah knowledge”, for children and women, who desire a better knowledge of Judaism. In the marketing of the titles no special emphasis is given to the fact that the literature is associated with Chabad Hasidism in particular. Instead they turn to “the people of the Book” as a whole. Since being established in 1942, they have spread more than 100,000,000 volumes in Hebrew, Yiddish, English, Russian, Spanish, French, Italian, Portuguese, Dutch, German, Farsi and Arabic.³⁶

As secondary material commentaries and inspirational books by Chabad theologians, as well as the Chabad web pages have been made use of in order to understand how this movement presents itself. The Internet is an important channel of information for this organisation, which quite early on realized the possibilities of using this technology. Books and pamphlets written by Lubavitchers, has also been used. Additionally, newspapers, magazines and oral communications (such as videos on the Internet and discussions with insiders) have been consulted.

1.4 Transliteration and Terminology

Transliteration of original Hebrew and Yiddish words in this work follows a broad approach to transcription, which in essence means that non-English words are transliterated to reflect the modern Hebrew pronunciation rather than the spelling and word structure. Therefore

³⁶ <http://store.kehotonline.com/index.php?action=help&helpfile=aboutus.htm> March 24,

no distinctions are made to *alef* and *ayin*, *tet* and *taf*, *kaf* and *kuf* or to *sin* and *samekh*. This does however not apply to *het* and *khaf*, where the spelling is retained (both pronounced as a guttural *h*) on the grounds of familiarity to the reader. The same rule is applied to the ending *heh* (which is silent). In cases where English versions of Hebrew or Yiddish names and terms exist, such as the word “Messiah”, the English word will be used. The Yiddish/Hebrew word “*moshiah*” (commonly used in Chabad-Lubavitch works in English) will be used only in quotations. The situation is different with a term like “*zaddik*”, which does not have an English equivalent. Also for familiarity’s sake the official spelling “Chabad” is maintained. As in Hebrew, no capital letters are used for Hebrew words, except for titles of published works. In a few cases where none of the above mentioned can be applied, and several versions exists, (as is the case with the term Shabbateanism), I have followed the *Encyclopaedia Judaica*.³⁷

Concerning the name of the last two Lubavitcher rebbes, the two individuals are separated by different spellings. Rabbi Joseph Isaac Schneersohn has an additional ‘h’, which is also superfluously used in the Yiddish spelling of his name (שניאורסאהן). From this point in this work on he will be referred to as **Rabbi Joseph Isaac**, whereas Rabbi Menahem Mendel Schneerson will be referred to as **Rabbi Schneerson**. As for the name **Chabad-Lubavitch**, it can be stated that the original name of this school of thought was Chabad, formed after three Hebrew words that are central in the kabbalistic doctrine, namely דעת, בינה, חכמה (*hokhmah* wisdom, *binah*

understanding and *da'at* knowledge). The founder of Chabad Ḥasidism was Shneur Zalman, whose most prominent work was the *Tanya*, an authoritative work for adherents to this day. The movement split into several dynasties with respective leaders residing in different towns, which gave the branches their names. Lubavitch, a town in today's western Russia, was one of these locations. The dynasties later merged and today there is only one united group. The names Chabad and Lubavitch are both used, as in Chabad Ḥasidism or Lubavitch Ḥasidism. It would be most correct to use Chabad when referring to this specific Ḥasidic school of thought, and Lubavitch for the dynasty. An adherent is then most correctly referred to as a **Lubavitcher**, but another Yiddish sounding name is also in use: Chabadnik (Hebrew female: Chabadnikit). In this dissertation "Chabad-Lubavitch" will be used when speaking about the organisation, "Chabad Ḥasidism" when speaking about theological aspects and "Lubavitcher" when referring to a Chabad-Lubavitch adherent. The word **messianist** is used among Lubavitchers for someone who believes that Rabbi Schneerson is the Messiah. It is used in almost the same sense as "messianic", but in this case a distinction needs to be made. Chabad-Lubavitch is a messianic sect, based on the definition of messianism. But there is a subgroup of Lubavitchers who believe that Rabbi Schneerson is the Messiah, making them messianists.³⁸

One popular view is that Judaism is not a religion of **doctrine and theology**, as stated by Jewish scholar Samuel S. Cohon: "the doctrine that Judaism does not have doctrines".³⁹ Cohon refers to

³⁸ They are also called *Moshihists* or *Moshihist/in, -im* and the phenomenon *Lubavitch meshihism/ moshihism*.

³⁹ Cohon 1971:1

this as a fear of putting doctrines over good will and the religious spirit. Nonetheless, Cohon argues that Judaism would be powerless without beliefs – doctrines – and that the Jewish prayer *Birkat Haminin* talks about heresy concerning both doctrine and religious praxis.⁴⁰ I would also argue that the fear of talking about Jewish doctrine comes from the conception that theology is a Christian invention. One dictionary defines “doctrine” as the body of teachings or beliefs of a religion, or a religious leader, organization, group or text.⁴¹ This means that it is possible to talk about “the doctrine of Chabad-Lubavitch” – both as an organization and religious group, but also about “the doctrine of Chabad literature”.

Systematic Jewish theology was first formulated in the Jewish philosopher Saadia’s *Emunot Vedeot* in the year 933 CE, and continued during the Middle Ages in the polemic against Christianity and Islam.⁴² Scholars in the field of Jewish Thought quite uncomplicatedly make use of terms like “the doctrine of kabbalah” and “the doctrine of *zaddikism*”. Thus it can be argued that Judaism has something that can be called “theology”, which has been created by Jewish thinkers, and which is not based on Christian theological patterns. It is also important to remember that there is always a tendency to view other religions through the glasses of one’s own religion or tradition. Avoiding this entirely is perhaps not even possible, in the same way as complete objectivity is not attainable, but being aware of the problem is, at least, a step in the right direction.

⁴⁰ Cohon 1971:1

⁴¹ <http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/doctrine> April 18, 2008

⁴² Cohon 1971:88

This work therefore aims at talking about theology based on the concepts of Chabad Ḥasidism.

2. Historical and Theological Background

2.1 *Hasidism*

What is *Hasidism* and who is a *Hasid*? To answer these questions one could first of all divide Judaism into several different groups, or even “Judaisms”, meaning that these groups sometimes are so dissimilar that they each constitute different religions in expressing worldview and religious practice.⁴³ Judaism is furthermore not only a religion, but can first of all be divided into religious or secular Judaism. Perhaps the most visible, though not the largest, religious group is the ultra-Orthodox (also referred to as *haredim*) – a group that is discernable to anybody by their style of dressing. This group is not uniform either, but consists of two larger factions: traditional (or rabbinic) and *Hasidic*,⁴⁴ and which were in opposition with one another. These two cover a mass of subgroups, of which Chabad-Lubavitch is one of the *Hasidic* dynasties or schools of thought, originating in Eastern Europe in the 1700s.

⁴³ Neusner 1984:ix

Originally the word *ḥasid* was not linked to an 18th century movement of Eastern Europe, but it is derived from the word חסד (*hesed*, grace, but also loyalty and faithfulness). In the Bible, a Ḥasid is someone who habitually acts graciously towards others.⁴⁵ Further, in the Talmud, a Ḥasid is someone who makes an effort, beyond what is required, to carry out the religious commandments. This could be both in worship to God and in behaviour towards a fellow man.⁴⁶ Today a Ḥasid is most of all a follower of a certain Ḥasidic rabbi. In the case of Chabad Ḥasidim the term refers to someone who (1) feels a connection to Rabbi Schneerson, (2) studies the teachings of Ḥasidism and (3) conducts himself as a Ḥasid.⁴⁷

Interestingly enough, the old schism between the Ḥasidim and the traditionalists (*mitnaggedim*) has intensified lately. This is true and becomes true for a lot of communities around the world. At the same time as historically non-Ḥasidic Jewish communities are influenced and leadership sometimes taken over by Ḥasidic (i.e. Chabad Ḥasidism) rabbis, some communities are enhancing the centuries old split.⁴⁸ It also often so happens that rivalry groups assume each other's ideological ideas. While earlier the Ḥasidim were compelled to conform to *mitnaggedic* values, the trend is now reversed and most exceptional is perhaps the emphasis on and the open affiliation with the leader also in *mitnaggedic* groups. Today,

⁴⁴ Since the time of the beginning of Ḥasidism, the traditionalists are also called *mitnaggedim* (or *misnaggedim* in Yiddish), that is “opponents”. The term “*ḥaredi*” is mainly used in Israel, literally meaning “those who shake” or “those who fear God”.

⁴⁵ See for example Isaiah 57:1 and Jeremiah 3:12. *Ḥasid* is in the Vulgate translated with the word *pius*, from which the word “pietism” is derived.

⁴⁶ Etkes 2005:153

⁴⁷ Steinsaltz 2003:314

on one hand in addition to being great Talmudic scholars, the mitnaggedic rabbis must also be charismatic leaders in the Ḥasidic style. On the other hand, however, Ḥasidic groups places greater stress on Talmudic study and halakhic observance. Nonetheless, it seems as if the Ḥasidic impact on its surrounding world is greater and is attracting both secular and non-Ḥasidic Jews alike. Scholar Joseph Dan does not foresee a change in this development in the near future. As reasons for this, he mentions socio-economical reasons such as the high birthrates, highly educated mothers educating their children and adaptation to the new technological economy.⁴⁹

From the middle of the 19th century when the movement was still young Ḥasidism has been the object of extensive research. Concerning academic work on Ḥasidism in general, it can be noted that important revisions have been made since the time of Gershom Scholem, Martin Buber and Simon Dubnow, whose names dominated the research on Ḥasidism for a long time. The most important amendments made by scholars since the 1980s are 1) the fact that Ḥasidism is not a passing trend in Judaism, but a force to be reckoned with and also 2) the historical and spiritual grounds for Ḥasidism.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ This is happening on more or less official levels. One example is from Lithuania, the home of prominent rabbinic historical figures, where the quarrel between Ḥasidim and mitnaggedim is taking place openly in national newspapers.

⁴⁹ Dan 1999:75-76. The actual numbers of “new believers”, so called “*baalei teshuvah*”, are de facto not big.

⁵⁰ The second matter involves the question about the messianic nature of Hasidism, dealt with by both Scholem and Buber and which remains an important part of the academic discussion today. Contemporary scholars tend to disagree with the earlier idea that messianism was not an integral part of Ḥasidism. The earlier idea is represented by scholars like Martin Buber, *Hasidism*, 1948; Simon Dubnow *Geschichte des Chassidismus*, 1969; Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 1969 and *The Messianic Idea in Judaism. And Other Essays on Jewish Spirituality*, 1971. Contemporary scholars like Moshe Idel, *Hasidism Between Ecstasy*, 1995 and Magic

The person most commonly accredited as the founder of Ḥasidism is the travelling preacher and miracle worker Israel Ben-Eliezer (1698-1760), known by the name of Baal Shem Tov or the acronym Besht. He was most probably not out to start a new movement. His life is surrounded by numerous legends, a central aspect of Ḥasidism concerning other leaders and holy men as well. People came to Besht in order to seek release from problems connected to the soul as well as various sicknesses and infertility, or motivated by the desire for an amulet that could protect them from maladies. Besht also conducted exorcisms, reversed spells and did fortunetelling. He could tell a soul's previous incarnations, a practice holding a belief in the reincarnation of souls. This was a component that the Ḥasidic leaders took from the Lurianic kabbalah. According to stories told about Besht, he performed healing miracles. An example of that is commanding the soul of a dying baby to re-enter the body. One of his healing techniques was the ecstatic prayer for which he became famous. In those days, prayer in itself was seen as a part of magical rituals: a verse or a certain order of verses were recited in prayer and this practice was said to have the virtue of healing or of offering protection from evil. Besht used the ecstatic form of prayer not only when performing healing, but also as a means for his own mystical experiences.⁵¹

Besht believed he had a divine mission that did not only concern individuals, but this mission was universal in the Jewish

Messianic Mystics, 1998; Ada Rapoport-Albert (ed.), *Hasidism Reappraised*, 1997; Joseph Dan, *Jewish Mysticism*, 1999, Shaul Magid *Hasidism on the Margin: Reconciliation, Antinomianism, and Messianism in Izbica and Radzin Hasidism*, 2003 exemplify a more dynamic view on messianism in Hasidism.

⁵¹ Etkes 2005:46, 49, 53-54

context. He had received powers for a purpose, not to keep it to himself, and his mission was not only mundane, but it was to “defend the Jewish people in the heavenly courts”. This was done by the ascent of his soul to the upper worlds, where he carried prayers of his followers and could redeem the sinners’ souls.⁵² Besht did not author any books himself, but the oral traditions were written down. These works are very problematic because there are several versions and interpretations of them.⁵³ One of these works contains a letter, which Besht is said to have sent to his brother-in-law, Rabbi Gershon of Kotov, who had immigrated to the land of Israel.⁵⁴ Without going into the historicity of this letter, it says something of how early Ḥasidism perceived Besht and his beliefs. In this letter Besht tells of one of his ascents of the soul, where he meets and speaks with the Messiah.⁵⁵ It is interesting to note that this letter includes an important notion about the Messiah – a personal experience of the Messiah which has had great impact on later generations of Ḥasidim, particularly the Chabad Ḥasidim.⁵⁶

1772 was a groundbreaking year for the early Ḥasidim because of the reawakening of messianic aspirations led by a student of Besht: Rabbi Yeḥiel Mikhel of Zolochiv (1726-1781).⁵⁷ Rabbi Yeḥiel is said by the scholar Mor Altshuler to have inspired the

⁵² Etkes 2005: 251

⁵³ Nigal 1997:346-348

⁵⁴ Nigal 1997:348

⁵⁵ Altshuler 2006:18

⁵⁶ The historicity of Besht’s *Holy Epistle*, in particular, is of secondary value for this work. Altshuler says, “Besht exercised his primary influence not during his lifetime but twenty-two years after his death, when the *Holy Epistle*, with its account of his soul’s ascent, was printed by followers of R. Yehiel Mikhel, the *Maggid* of Zolochiv.” Altshuler 2006:195-196. The importance therefore lies in how the followers, i.e. the early Ḥasidim, interpreted Besht.

⁵⁷ (Золочів), town in the Lviv province in Western Ukraine.

first court in the style of the kabbalists in Eastern Europe and had more than twenty disciples, who established new Ḥasidic courts.⁵⁸ The Talmudic criteria for leadership did not apply to the Ḥasidic leader, but the transferral of leadership was explained mystically. Ḥasidism interpreted mysticism practically, and this had social implications for the community. The ritual of transferral of leadership happened through the laying on of hands and anointing through which the mystical powers were passed down. For the masses these were the signs that validated a person and made him worthy of respect as a leader. The transmittal was thus dependant first and foremost on mystical attainment, but the people considered for the task were most often close to the previous leader in some form, usually through family. The Ḥasidic leader should also have “a sense of responsibility for the community and for spiritual continuity”.⁵⁹

One of the most outstanding phenomenon of Ḥasidism, making Ḥasidism unique and which made (and continues to make) Ḥasidism such a success, is the Ḥasidic leadership. The Ḥasidic leader is called *zaddik* (צַדִּיק), and more affectionally “Rebbe”. This leadership has strong ideological roots, and can be called “the doctrine of *zaddikism*”. The compact and practical meaning of this doctrine is the mystical interpretation of the Ḥasidic leader together with his role as benefactor for the people. *Zaddik* is the Hebrew word for righteous, but in Judaism it has different connotations in different literatures. In the rabbinic literature a *zaddik* is the same as a good person, similar to “Ḥasid” in Ḥasidism. In the kabbalah there are different categories for *zaddikim*, and among them in every generation there are a few who

⁵⁸ Altshuler 2006:34

⁵⁹ Ehrlich 2000:32-34

are perfectly righteous, i.e. completely without sin.⁶⁰ The first time in the history of Ḥasidism that “*zaddik*” was used not as an adjective but as a noun, was when, on the basis of the kabbalistic *sefirah* of foundation, which is also the *sefirah* of the *zaddik*, the disciples of Rabbi Yeḥiel Mikhel of Zolochiv (1726-1781) declared him their leader and referring to him as their *zaddik*.⁶¹

Joseph Dan says: “The specific characteristics of each Hasidic community seem to be determined more by the personalities of their leaders in recent times than by the ideology of their eighteenth- and nineteenth-century forbearers”,⁶² and the function and position of the Ḥasidic leader is still the single most important feature to differentiate Ḥasidism from any other strand of Judaism.⁶³ Dan continues, “Without the mystical dimension of the leadership and its cultic manifestations, Ḥasidism would be virtually indistinguishable from ultra-Orthodox Judaism in general”.⁶⁴ In chapter four the contemporary message of Chabad will be compared with that of the 18th century. I argue that “in recent” times the Chabad leaders have followed in the footsteps of their forbearers as far as doctrine and ideology are concerned. This does, however, not diminish the importance of each leader’s charismatic personality and his ability to interpret sacred texts in a way that is relevant for the generation he serves. But the characteristic of the Chabad community was determined a long time ago – by Shneur Zalman in the *Tanya*.

⁶⁰ Tishby 1989:III 1410-1412. The perfectly righteous are the real *zaddikim*, and because of these the world still exists: in the kabbalah the *zaddik* symbolizes the part in the godhead that releases the divine energy to the lower worlds in order to maintain it.

⁶¹ Altshuler 2006:8. This was in the town of Brody in Eastern Galicia.

⁶² Dan 1997:423

⁶³ Dan 1997:419

⁶⁴ Dan 1997:423

2.2 *Shneur Zalman and the Dynasty of Chabad*

The dynasty of Chabad-Lubavitch began with Shneur Zalman (1745-1812) in the areas of today's Lithuania and Belarus. Zalman was born in the town of Liozna in the Vitebsk province in northern Belarus.⁶⁵ Wanting to study the Torah, Zalman chose between the famous Gaon of Vilna of the traditionalists and the Maggid of Mezhyrich, Rabbi Dov Ber of the Ḥasidim. These two of course lead two opposing schools of thought. As Zalman wanted to learn more about prayer, he chose the latter and headed for Mezhyrich in 1764, which means he came in contact with Ḥasidism at a very young age. There he received the task of compiling and re-writing a new *Shulḥan arukh*, the great Jewish law codex by Joseph Karo. The book that Zalman authored, *Shulḥan arukh ha-Rav*, became essential to his own disciples and parts of it survived a fire, although most was destroyed. The book is not particularly Ḥasidic, instead it assembles the halakhic approach of the Gaon of Vilna.⁶⁶

Zalman was subsequently appointed preacher (מגיד *maggid*) in his hometown, Liozna, where some years later he started receiving students. It can be supposed that it was during this time, the early 1770s, that the distinctive Chabad philosophy was formed. Zalman sought to speak with the Gaon of Vilna, but was rejected. The main struggles between the traditionalists and the Ḥasidim took place in the area of Lithuania and Belarus and sometimes the persecutions were severe. That same decade, Zalman's rebbe, Rabbi Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk (in Chabad known as Mendele Horodoker),

⁶⁵ The town (Лізна) is situated on the border of Russia, on the Moshna river.

⁶⁶ Steinsaltz 2003:xvii; Avtzon 2005:51-53

emigrated to the land of Israel, and it is said that Zalman was initially also in this group, but that he was convinced to return home to take care of the Ḥasidim. Later, in 1788, in a letter sent from the land of Israel, Zalman was appointed the sole leader of the region by Rabbi Menaḥem Mendel of Vitebsk.⁶⁷

In 1797 Zalman's most famous book *Collected Discourses* (לקוטי אמרים *Likutei Amarim*) was published. The book is more affectionately called the *Tanya*, after the first word in the book.⁶⁸ It shows a strong emphasis on the intellect in reaching emotions towards God, as opposed to Besht's emphasis on the mystical experience through ecstatic prayer. Because of this, Zalman's group received the name Chabad. In the book Zalman proves to have great insight to both the Talmud and kabbalah.⁶⁹ This emphasis on the intellect and saying that other groups thought it enough to rely on their faith in the rebbe and feeling warm towards God is something by which Lubavitchers distinguish themselves from other Ḥasidic groups.⁷⁰

Fierce opposition from the mitnaggedim resulted in the imprisonment of Zalman, along with others in 1798. He was accused of having formed a new sect, which was forbidden in the Russian Empire, and having sent money to the sultan of Turkey. (Zalman had fundraised for the Ḥasidic group in the land of Israel, which was under Turkish rule at the time.) Zalman was released from prison in the same year, an event that has taken mystical proportions

⁶⁷ Steinsaltz 2003:xviii; Stroll 2007:501. The region is Rydzyna (Reisen) in Belarus.

⁶⁸ A *baraita*, a source that is not part of the Mishnah, always opens with the word תניא (*tanya*).

⁶⁹ Steinsaltz 2003:331; Stroll 2007:501

⁷⁰ Avtzon 2005:179-180. This can be seen in a biography about Shneur Zalman.

among the adherents and the date (the 19th of *Kislev* in the Jewish calendar) is celebrated even today as the Festival of Redemption. Zalman's release symbolized victory over his opponents, but it was readily interpreted as an echo of a heavenly trial where God was the judge. The decision of the earthly court mirrored the supernal divine mandate and justification for the existence of Ḥasidism.⁷¹

Even though the intellect was stressed more in Chabad than in other Ḥasidic groups, Zalman's movement was deeply mystical. The key concept was that God is the true essence in reality, the vital force of life and therefore all experiences are filled with the divine presence.⁷² According to Chabad historiography, imprisonment had an impact on Zalman's mystical approach; in Chabad circles it is thought that there is a "before Petersburg", where Zalman was brought to trial, and an "after Petersburg".⁷³ Lubavitchers say that after the trial, imprisonment and release, Zalman no longer saw any obstacle in conveying and disseminating the esoteric message to the masses, because of the heavenly vindication, proven by his being released from prison.⁷⁴ However, it should be noted that Zalman's ordeal took place in 1798 and the *Tanya* was published a year prior to that, in 1797. Consequently it would be anachronistic to say that the imprisonment affected Zalman's courage concerning his esoteric

⁷¹ Ettinger 1997:71; Steinsaltz 2003:xix; Stroll 2007:501

⁷² Elior 1998:386

⁷³ Ada Rapoport-Albert states that caution needs to be taken when studying works on the internal Chabad-Lubavitch historiography, since it lacks critical evaluation of facts. This branch of Ḥasidism, Chabad, has produced extensive materials on the history of both Ḥasidism in general and on the specific Chabad Ḥasidism. Much was written especially during the 20th century. Chabad-Lubavitch characteristics have often been applied to Ḥasidism in general, particularly in regard to organization and the importance of Chabad Ḥasidism in the early stages. See Rapoport-Albert 1997:77, 119-120.

⁷⁴ Steinsaltz 2003:xx

message.⁷⁵ The first part of the *Tanya*, published in 1797, has explicit mystical esoteric expositions. On the other hand, it may be argued, that the fifth part of the *Tanya* goes into much more depth in mystical teachings.

After a second imprisonment in 1800, Zalman moved to Lyady, a village in the province of Vitebsk, Belarus (hence the practice of referring to him as Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Lyady). In the war between Russia and Napoleon, Zalman thought it better for the Jewry to be under Russian rule, even though it would also be more difficult. He feared the emancipation and assimilation that French rule would bring and therefore he supported Russia in the conquest. Joining the Russian armies in fleeing the French army he fell ill and in December 1812 he died in central East Ukraine, in the village of Pyena. He was buried in the town of Hadiach, which today is a pilgrimage destination for Ḥasidim.⁷⁶ Zalman was the first leader of the Chabad-Lubavitch dynasty and after him six other leaders have had the leadership position.⁷⁷

Zalman's son Rabbi Dov Ber (1773-1827) assumed the leadership over most of his father's disciples and settled in the town of Lubavitch,⁷⁸ which remained the centre of Chabad for over 100 years. The sons of the third Lubavitcher rebbe, Rabbi Menahem

⁷⁵ See Steinsaltz 2003:xx

⁷⁶ Steinsaltz 2003:xx; Stroll 2007:501. The village of Pyena/Pena/Pyern is to be found in the Kursk district towards the north of central east Ukraine. Hadiach (Гадяч) is situated in the Poltava province on the Psel River.

⁷⁷ The seven leaders of Chabad-Lubavitch are: Shneur Zalman (1745-1812 also referred to as "Der Alter Rebbe"), his son Dov Ber (1773-1827 "Der Mittler Rebbe"), Menahem Mendel (1789-1866 "Zemah Zedek", both son-in-law of Dov Ber and grandson of Shneur Zalman), his son Shmuel (1834-1882 "Maharash"), his son Shalom Dovber (1860-1920 "Rashab"), his son Joseph Isaac Schneerson (1880-1950 "The Previous Rebbe") and his son-in-law Menahem Mendel Schneerson (1902-1994 "The Rebbe").

Mendel (1789-1866), all headed their own dynasties because the Ḥasidim could not unite under one leader. However, these fractions did reunite after some time. Mendel's youngest son, Rabbi Shmuel (1834-1882), resided in Lubavitch and under his leadership the dynasty remained in the town. His son, Rabbi Shalom Dov Ber (1860-1920), founded the first Ḥasidic religious school (*yeshivah*), called *Tomekhei Temimim*. This was in Lubavitch 1897. He also began establishing a network of religious schools in Georgia (1916) and was the first to actively spread Ḥasidism among non-Ashkenazi Jewry. He was the father of Joseph Isaac Schneersohn (1880-1950), successor of the last Lubavitcher rebbe.⁷⁹

As for all of the Ḥasidic groups, the course of the dynasty changed with the Second World War, for obvious reasons. The rebbe of the time, Joseph Isaac Schneersohn, emigrated to the USA in 1940, and thus the centre of the dynasty was relocated in Brooklyn, New York. With the founding of the state of Israel the stage transformed further, and despite the non-Zionistic approach of Ḥasidism, Chabad-Lubavitch has important centres in Israel.

⁷⁸ Lubavitch is situated in Western Russia very near the Belarusian border. It has however belonged both to Lithuania and Belarus in the past.

⁷⁹ Stroll 2007:501-502

2.3 The Written Law of Chabad: The Tanya

“Tanya is the ‘Written Torah’ of Chassidim,
and studying it is like studying Chumash:
everyone studies it, from the greatest
scholars to the most simple of folks; each,
according to his level, understands what he
understands, and no one understands it
all.”

- Rabbi Joseph Isaac Shneersohn⁸⁰

Referred to as the written law of Chabad by insiders, the *Tanya* was first published in Slavita in 1797 under the name *Collected Discourses* (לקוטי אמרים *Likutei Amarim*). Two years later it was re-published, this time in Zhovkva⁸¹ under the name *Tanya* (תניא, meaning “it has been taught/we have learnt”, and *Likutei Amarim* as its subtitle. Shneur Zalman himself often referred to the book as *Book of the Intermediates* (ספר של בינונים *Sefer shel Beinonim*), the subtitle of the first edition. This title indicates the book’s target readers. This was a book for the ordinary Ḥasid who had a desire for God and right living, and not for the *zaddikim* themselves, who had already attained the highest spiritual level, or the uninterested “wicked men” (רשע *rasha*).⁸²

⁸⁰ Quoted in Steinsaltz 2003:xxiv.

⁸¹ A Ukrainian town (Жовква) in the province of Lviv near the Polish border, also referred to its Polish name, Żółkiew, and known to Yiddish speakers as זשאלקווא (*Zholkva*).

⁸² Zalman writes in his foreword: וישמע אליכם אלקים למגדול ויעד קטן (Listen to me you who pursue righteousness, who seek the Lord, and may the Almighty listen to you, both great and small.)

Before the teachings and doctrines of the *Tanya* were put on paper, Zalman had preached them, which explains the homiletic style. As practice was among Ḥasidim, the sermons and discourses were recorded from memory and circulated among the followers.⁸³ The standard edition of the *Tanya* from 1900 has five parts, each a distinct treatise. Strictly speaking, the name “*Tanya*” refers only to the first part.⁸⁴ The edition with five parts was reprinted in Brooklyn, New York in 1984 and the edition utilized in this study is from 1993.⁸⁵ Attempts had been made to translate the Hebrew original into European languages, and an English translation that “leaves much to be desired”, according to the notes to the preface of the edition mentioned, came 1945, but it was not until 1958 that a Yiddish version saw the light of day.⁸⁶ The different parts have since then been translated into English under the supervision of Rabbi Schneerson and is included in bi-lingual prints.

The five parts of the *Tanya* are called 1) *Collected Discourses*, 2) *Gate of Unity and Faith* (שער היחוד והאמונה *Sha'ar ha-Yihud vecha-Emunah*), 3) *Letter on Repentance* (אגרת התשובה *Igeret ha-Teshuvah*), 4) *Sacred Letter* (אגרת הקדש *Igeret ha-Kodesh*) and 5) *Last Treatise* (קונטרס אחרון *Kuntres Aḥaron*), and the author delves deeper and deeper into the mystical teachings, even though most of the parts

⁸³ *Lessons in Tanya* 2004:xx

⁸⁴ Stroll 2007:505. There are many editions of the *Tanya*, or parts of it, revised and sometimes including or excluding longer parts of the text. It is a custom to print the *Tanya* in different countries, and thus there is a list at the back of the edition used here with all of the places around the world that has printed the work.

⁸⁵ The English translation was made by Nissan Mindel and published with a foreword by Rabbi Schneerson in 1962. In the foreword Rabbi Schneerson commends the work of presenting the Chabad philosophy and way of life to a wider range of people, for whom the Hebrew might be a barrier. He calls it a further contribution to the spreading of the riches of Ḥasidism.

evolve around the same themes in general. When quoting the work, the *Tanya* normally refers to the first part and for the other parts the Hebrew transliterated names are usually used, and this custom will also be followed here.

As the title may signify and the title page informs the reader, 1) *Collected Discourses* is believed to have been compiled by Shneur Zalman from sacred books and sages, most probably from his own rebbe, Rabbi Menaḥem Mendel of Vitebsk, among others, and not written in its entirety by Zalman himself. It may also be based on ideas other than his own, and which have subsequently revised and edited by Zalman. In any case the work reveals the initial theology of Hasidism in the region of Belarus and Lithuania. The Lubavitchers accredit the whole work to Zalman's innovative creativity. In *Opening the Tanya* Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz praises the originality of the *Tanya* claiming that Zalman calls himself a compiler out of modesty.⁸⁷ Lubavitchers consider every word and letter of the *Tanya* meaningful. Zalman divided this part into 53 chapters, one for each weekly portion of the Pentateuch. Accordingly, Lubavitchers study one chapter of the *Tanya* each week.⁸⁸ In the foreword of the 1962 edition, Rabbi Schneerson highlights man's role in drawing down holiness to permeate daily life through the study of Torah, of which studying the *Tanya* is also a part. The *Tanya* is a work on Jewish religious ethics, primarily focusing on the soul and the conflict between the good and evil in a person, explaining and guiding the ordinary Jew who wants to excel in his relationship with God, by means of the Jewish mystical

⁸⁶ The Yiddish translation was made by Rabbi Uriel Zimmer and printed by Kehot Publishing House.

⁸⁷ Steinsaltz 2003:xxi

worldview making references to the *Zohar*, Rabbi Ḥayim Vital and Lurianic kabbalah. Zalman elaborates on the meaning of life and the messianic age as the purpose of the creation.

Zalman commences with a verse from Deuteronomy 30:14, “For this thing is very near to you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it” and throughout the whole work of the *Tanya* he never really departs from it. The verse runs like a thread through all the treatises and is truly the heartbeat of Zalman’s teachings. *Lessons in Tanya*, a commentary on the *Tanya*, explains how this verse speaks about the obligation to fulfil the commandments and how every Jew is capable of doing so through three means, seen in the words “heart”, “mouth” and “to do”: thought, speech and action – called “the functional organs of the soul”.⁸⁹ The heart speaks of one’s feelings towards God in love and fear, which ought to be the inner motive for obeying the commandments. How to arouse these feelings is one of the main themes of the book. Man’s infinite potential (including the ability to control and form one’s destiny) because of the divine spark within him and the origin of his soul also saturates this work. In modern-day language, Zalman would have cheered his adherents on saying “You can do it!”

The second part of the *Tanya*, 2) *Sha’ar ha-Yihud ve’ha-Emunah* expounds on creation and truths for contemplative prayer, namely two loves and two levels of perception of God’s unity. The book is based on the *Shema Yisrael* (Deut 6:4) and the phrase *barukh shem kevod malkhuto le’olam va’ed* (blessed be the name of the glory of his kingdom forever and ever) which are said to refer to

⁸⁸ *Lessons in Tanya*, vol. 1 2004:xvii

⁸⁹ *Lessons in Tanya*, vol. 1 2004:1

the higher perception of God's unity (יהודא עילאה *yihuda ila'ah*) and the lower perception of God's unity (יהודא תתאה *yihuda tata'ah*). It was published in English for the first time in 1965, translated by Nisen Mangel.

The script of 3) *Igeret ha-Teshuvah* has changed during the years, but the theme about repentance in this book is central for Ḥasidism. This may be understood through the fact that one of two objections to Ḥasidic doctrine presented to Shneur Zalman in a debate in Minsk 1783 concerned repentance. Besht had taught that repentance was needed for everybody, whereas opponents thought it demeaning to think that even scholars sinned and thus were in need of repentance. Zalman teaches that repentance has meaning on several levels and that even the sinless *zaddik* attains growth through repentance. The *zaddik's* kind of advanced repentance was to be bound up with the mind. Remorse for past sins, and determination for a better future were also important. The return to God needed to be rooted in the actual daily life, and as the English translator Zalman I. Posner says, repentance according to Zalman, "is within man's grasp".⁹⁰

Zalman wrote pastoral letters to the Ḥasidic community and these constitute the fourth part of the *Tanya*, 4) *Igeret ha-Kodesh*.⁹¹ The letters deal with how to relate to the Creator and

⁹⁰ Posner 1993:860-863

⁹¹ In the first letter, Zalman is giving instructions to business men on how to pray, saying that because they do not have so much time, they should not "descend before the ark". Rather, only those that have enough time to pray should come. Businessmen on the other hand should prolong their prayers on the Sabbath and on Festivals with devotion to the Lord. "And it should be made known that, G-d willing, it is my intention to send spies secretly to all congregations [מנינים *minyanim*], to find out and to inform about anyone that is able, and about anyone that has the time to prolong and meditate on

fellow Jews, especially through the concept of charity (תְּדָקָה *zedakah*). There is also considerable emphasis on prayer and eschatology. Zalman deals with these matters by way of teaching, inspiring and admonishing. Several of the letters regard the giving of charity to the Ḥasidic group living in the land of Israel (see letter 14 in particular) and love for the land of Israel, as means of proving support for the immigrants. Most of the other themes touched upon in the letters are to be found elsewhere in the *Tanya*, with the exception of letter 20. This letter also contains matters unique to Ḥasidism; the doctrine of the *zaddik* and his relationship to the followers, the centrality of esoteric teachings when studying the Torah, defence of Ḥasidic ideas and attitude towards those that oppose Ḥasidism. The letters were not printed until a year after Zalman's death, and not all of the 32 letters were included until the 1900 edition. Furthermore, the first publishers remarked that no letters written by the hand of Zalman survived, even though they were sure that his meaning would still shine through.⁹² Thus the authenticity of the letters as being written by Zalman can be disputed. In any case, the important factor for this study concerning the *Tanya* is that the ideology of the first generations of Chabad Ḥasidism, or the ideological Zalman, is exposed.

The last part of the *Tanya*, 5) *Kuntres Aḥaron*, requires some previous insight into *Likutei Amarim* in particular, but also mystical concepts in general. It seems as if the last part was written as an in-depth guide for studying the first and fourth parts of the *Tanya*. Thus, it is not a homogenous work, but elaborates on

prayer but is slothful." Zalman did keep a close watch on his followers, just like a good shepherd would do.

⁹² Schochet 1993:864-865

different subjects. Two questions stand out: how does one become connected with God by studying the Torah and what does the zoharic statement that it is not enough to just think about the Torah mean?⁹³

2.4 Messianism and Mysticism

Taste and see that the Lord is good

- Psalm 34:8

Messianism and mysticism are closely linked in Judaism. In order to locate and recognize the worldview of Chabad Ḥasidism, an understanding of messianism and mysticism, their definitions and main ideas are needed. Furthermore, how mysticism, an integral part of traditional Judaism, is defined also determines our view on Chabad Ḥasidism and its place in Judaism, because it provides insight that answers Berger's proposition that the messianic stronghold in Chabad-Lubavitch is a marginal phenomenon in and at the same time a threat on Judaism as a whole. There is a purpose to highlighting Jewish mysticism and the flexibility it offers for hermeneutical ideas, in order to understand the messianic concept in Chabad-Lubavitch. But first, a few words on messianism.

Messianism is a set of theories regarding eschatology. It involves improvement of the world or man and a final

⁹³ See also *Lessons in Tanya*, vol. 4 2004:259-260

consummation of history.⁹⁴ In this phenomenon there is often a historical person who is to come back as a Messiah in order to bring the people back to a golden age “to change chaos into utopian order”. Anthropologist Weston La Barre called it “the Barbarossa motive” after the German-Roman emperor mentioned in German folktales, meaning that the phenomenon of messianism is universal.⁹⁵ Other historical or mythical figures of this sort could be King Arthur or the twelfth imam.⁹⁶ The Messiah is the hero of the action drama entitled “history”; the hero for which humanity dreams and hopes. The Messiah-hero receives his special mission from God himself to do “the complete make-over” of the world and man. This implies radical changes for the better; changes described in terms of “salvation”, “redemption” or “liberation”, after which the world will come to an end. Messianism is linked to certain ideas, doctrines, hopes and expectations – both religious and secular – that reveal a linear time perception.⁹⁷

Important in this matter is to distinguish between the messianic ideology and the messianic movement. “Messianic movements are messianism in action,” according to Zwi Werblowsky. The messianic ideology presents us with ideas, doctrines, hopes and expectations that become relevant through social and historical circumstances. These ideas and hopes are actualized through the movement. Often there is a special person who initiates the forming of a messianic movement. In short Werblowsky states that messianism consists of three major building stones. First of all life circumstances

⁹⁴ Werblowsky 1974:1017

⁹⁵ La Barre 1971:1, 18

⁹⁶ Werblowsky 1974:1021

must be valued negatively, which leads to the need of something that can radically change the situation to the better. In that second phase a leader or superhuman being often plays a decisive role. The last important ingredient is a perception of the goal and some kind of time plan for the fulfilment of that goal.⁹⁸

Even though messianism is a universal religious phenomenon and does not always include a personal messianic figure, the term is derived from the Judeo-Christian concept of the Messiah, משיח – *mashiah*, a Hebrew word meaning “anointed”. The ritual of anointing certain people stems from the Hebrew Bible, where people were inaugurated into three professional roles through the anointing with oil: the king, the prophet and the priest. According to scholars, these roles were gradually transformed through the history of the Bible and combined into one single figure – the victorious king who had spiritual qualities. As the ideal model stood King David, who reigned over a united kingdom and exemplified certain spiritual attributes. The hope was that someone like David would arise again, someone with both a political and religious agenda for redemption or salvation.⁹⁹

As for modern Judaism, Werblowsky says that the “[b]elief in, and fervent expectation of, the Messiah became firmly established tenets of Judaism and are included among the great Jewish medieval philosopher Maimonides’ Thirteen Articles of Faith.” Philosophers and mystics treated the messianic belief a little

⁹⁷ Werblowsky 1974:1017

⁹⁸ Werblowsky 1974:1017

⁹⁹ See Joseph Klausner *The Messianic Idea in Israel – From Its Beginning to the completion of the Mishnah*, 1955; Antti Laato, *A Star Is Rising – The Historical*

differently from each other. The hope for a messianic future has been maintained in Judaism to our days, but in non-Traditionalist groups the personal Messiah is not necessarily part of the dream. Werblowsky also states that Judaism probably owes its survival to the messianic belief, and that the core of this belief can be seen in political, social and secular revolutionary movements in which Jews have had an active part in the establishment and preservation of.¹⁰⁰

Mysticism is a kind of interpretation of reality where the central understanding is that there is a hidden world – there is more to reality than the material. The life giving feature in mysticism is that there are ways and means by which man can see and get in touch with the unseen and untouchable.¹⁰¹ This idea would become essential to Hasidism. Scholem distinguished between different types of mysticism by means of the religious system in which each of them functioned, thus stipulating that the religion with its doctrines framed the mystical ideas. Another view is held by Elijor, who puts forward the contrary position that the mystical is often applied to things that are not fully respected culturally, socially and religiously, and at the same time she says that “mysticism embraces a rich world of thought, creativity, imagination, and inspiration, transcending existential experience”.¹⁰² This indicates that whereas Scholem says that

Development of the Old Testament Royal Ideology and the Rise of the Jewish Messianic Expectations, 1997.

¹⁰⁰ Werblowsky 1974:1018. Examples of non-religious groups and ideologies clearly influenced by messianic thinking Werblowsky mentions Marxist Communism as well as Socialism. He also mentions the 18th and 19th century Enlightenment and Romanticism focused on the progress of humanity to an ideal state of harmony as a result of Christian messianism.

¹⁰¹ See Rachel Elijor, *Jewish Mysticism. The infinite Expression of Freedom*, 2007. Joseph Dan, *Jewish Mysticism*, 1999. Joseph Dan, *Kabbalah. A Very Short Introduction*, 2006. Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 1969.

¹⁰² Elijor 2007:1

mysticism functions within the structures, Elior believes that the mystical goes beyond the structures for each respective religion adhered to by the mystics themselves.

According to Elior, the definition of a mystic in Jewish tradition is based on “concepts expressing the blurring of boundaries and transcendence of limitations”. The mystics have had different epithets such as prophets, visionaries, masters of secrets, Kabbalists or holy people.¹⁰³ The mystic can be recognized by his abilities, which include listening to heavenly mentors or hearing the voice of God (or rather the *Shekhinah*), performing miracles, interpreting omens and manifesting his spirituality. Alternatively, the mystic may be recognized by his charismatic personality and social understanding. The mystic often appears in particular historical circumstances, in hardships, religious controversies and social disputes, as Elior writes, and he is able to give meaning to these situations. His authority is founded on mystical, ecstatic and visionary experiences expressed in such a way, and with content and substance which is compatible with tradition. The mystic himself describes his experiences as illumination or even rebirth.¹⁰⁴ The experience of the mystic is of a paradoxal nature: at the same time as God is unknowable and hidden in the view of the mystics, they still strive to know the presence of a good and just

¹⁰³ Elior 2007:57

¹⁰⁴ Elior 2007:58-67. Elior also writes, “The fine distinctions between prophecy, divine inspiration, and dream on the one hand and hallucination, derangement, and mental disturbance on the other, or between a mystic who sees visions and hears supernal heralds and the prophet who is regarded as a fool or insane, are often defined by the public according to the identity of the specific prophet, his social status, and the circumstances of his time and place. The determining factor lies within the cultural milieu” (p. 66).

God and to encounter him in the ecstatic experience. This encounter is the goal of the mystic.¹⁰⁵

When delving into a world inspired by mysticism it must be borne in mind that we are treading on the grounds of paradox, of human creativity and imagination, a desire to permeate to the depths of existence and reality – a reality that cannot be grasped by human cognition. The area in which we walk is an area where boundaries and traditional borders are no longer clearly visible – though they are there. It is a world of flexibility. This may be worth while keeping in mind when turning to the foundational work of Chabad Ḥasidism as well as other Chabad literature and its hermeneutical explanations of the leadership in particular.

Ḥasidism drew from a certain mysticism in particular – kabbalah. The term itself is derived from a common Hebrew word meaning “to receive” (קבל *kibbel*). There are three major concepts that mark the originality of 12th century kabbalah.¹⁰⁶ These concepts can also be used when identifying literature as kabbalistic in general.

1. The divine world is portrayed as consisting of ten powers, known in later works as **the ten sefirot**.
2. One of the sefirot is feminine, **the Shekhinah**,¹⁰⁷ hence introducing gender dualism in the description God.

¹⁰⁵ Scholem 1969:12-15

¹⁰⁶ These concepts can be distinguished in the earliest kabbalistic work, the *Book Bahir* (written anonymously in Provence in Northern Spain 1185).

¹⁰⁷ For the sake of clarification: the *Shekhinah* is the female part of the godhead according to the kabbalah. In rabbinic literature “*Shekhinah*” is used as an abstract reference to God, replacing the proper names of God in the Bible. The term “*Shekhinah*” is not to be found in the Bible, but is derived from the verb שכן found in the Bible denoting the residence of God in the temple and among his people.

3. The ten sefirot are arranged one above the other like the branches of a **tree, ilan**. The tree is characteristic of the kabbalistic illustration of the divine world.¹⁰⁸

Another essential kabbalistic term is that of *Ein-sof*, a negative phrase meaning “without end”. The practice of using a negative term seems to stem from philosophy and signifies that the description of God is beyond language. The concept behind this term is an infinite, unchanging, perfect, supreme, divine being and is used in kabbalistic literature.¹⁰⁹ The most prominent work of kabbalah is the *Zohar*, and it still stands as one of the three pillars of Jewish tradition, together with the Bible and the Talmud, according to Dan.¹¹⁰ It is a homiletical commentary and exegesis of the Torah and Dan states that this is the reason why the *Zohar* could be accepted as a traditional and authoritative work, despite the fact that it is one of “the most daring and radical works of religious literature and mysticism in any language”.¹¹¹

The Galilean town Safed (Tsfat) became the kabbalistic centre in the 1500s, from which there is a considerable amount of material. The two most famous contributors to the Safed school were Moses Cordovero (1522-1570) and Isaac Luria (1534-1576); the former was a theoretician, and whereas the latter did not provide written works, his ideas took form in unsystematic

¹⁰⁸ Dan 2006:21-22

¹⁰⁹ Dan 2006:37-41

¹¹⁰ Dan 2006:29-34. One might wonder why the *Zohar* received such credence in the Jewish tradition and what its contribution was. The *Zohar* is undoubtedly one of the most literary creative endeavours from the Middle Ages. It contains an Aramaic that is not found elsewhere, and is written in the way of the ancient Midrash, says Dan.

¹¹¹ Dan 2006:32-33

discussions with his disciples.¹¹² Early kabbalah was infused with messianism (i.e. end time calculations, messianic ideas and visions). It stressed the catastrophic element of redemption and especially after the expulsion from Spain the end became as important as the beginning. The task of hastening the end even became pivotal for the mystics, just as it is for Lubavitchers today, whereas earlier messianism had been a matter for apologetics. For Luria and his new kabbalah, the Messiah played the utmost essential role in the cosmic drama that is the purpose of all existence and kabbalistic worldview, and which Luria introduced as *tikkun*. This is “the doctrine of Salvation as the return of all things to their original contact with God”, as Scholem expresses it, or the process of restoration of all things.¹¹³

Tikkun is closely related to the idea of holy sparks, which are divine light originally contained in vessels. At creation there was an explosion and the sparks of divine light were shattered and subsequently held captive in shells, *kelipot*, i.e. in the material.¹¹⁴ The sparks need to be restored to their original state.¹¹⁵ This will be explained further in chapter three as it is also fundamental to the worldview of the *Tanya*.

The kabbalists sought to unite man and God through death, repentance and rebirth – either in the sense of reincarnation or spiritually in the process of repentance. But the final consummation of the ongoing process of restoration was, in the view of Luria, the advent of the Messiah. According to Scholem the “new Kabbalism

¹¹² Scholem 1969:251-254

¹¹³ Scholem 1969:246

¹¹⁴ The term “*kelipot*” (plural for *kelipah*) is used in the kabbalah to denote “evil” and the source of sensual desires in human nature, see for example *Zohar* I:19b; II:69b; 184a; 198b; III 185a.

[i.e. the kabbalah originating in Safed and most prominently with Luria] stands and falls with its programme of bringing its doctrines home to the community and preparing it for the coming of the Messiah".¹¹⁶ This is also the view of the *Tanya* and is still one of the most central doctrines in Chabad-Lubavitch.¹¹⁷

2.5 Messianic Redemption in Ḥasidism

Traditional historiography, represented by Scholem and Buber, claim that messianism does not belong in traditional Ḥasidism. During his lifetime Rabbi Schneerson continually spoke about the Messiah. Many of his letters both start and end with messianic contents and it seems as if his messianic teachings increased in intensity over the years. Scholars such as Avrum Ehrlich and Aviezer Ravitzky claim this to be a radical change from earlier Chabad generations.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵ Scholem 2007:340

¹¹⁶ Scholem 1969:246-250, 274. To this day Gershom Scholem is the most prominent scholar on the teachings of Isaac Luria. See also Lawrence Fine, *The Contemplative Practice of Yīhudim in Lurianic Kabbalah*, 1987 and Louis Jacobs, *The Uplifting of Sparks In Later Jewish Mysticism*, 1987.

¹¹⁷ Dan also says that kabbalistic terminology today belongs to the Ḥasidic religious practice. It is the central matter in the works of Ḥasidic communities today, especially in those of Bratslav and Chabad-Lubavitch. The adherents of these movements study kabbalah (especially the *Zohar* and the works of Rabbi Ḥayim Vital, Luria's greatest disciple) in a traditional manner. Also of note is that not all kabbalists are, or were, mystics. See Dan 2006:111, 10.

¹¹⁸ Ehrlich 2000:116-117 and Ravitzky 1994:313.

Three major approaches concerning messianism in Hasidism in general can be found in scholarly literature.¹¹⁹ The first approach indicated that the classical messianic elements had been made defunct in Hasidism and was first campaigned for by Buber and Dubnow. Scholem on the other hand recognized some messianic concepts in Hasidism but argued that the apocalyptic (or acute) element of messianism had been demythologized. He described this as a neutralization of messianism in comparison to Lurian or Shabbatean messianism. Scholem meant that Hasidic messianism lacked acuteness, but existed as a utopia in the distant future. Isaiah Tishby and Ben-Zion Dinur pointed out a third way of looking at messianism in early Hasidism and its activity: they see an explicit awareness of messianism.

In line with the second approach, advocated by Scholem, Ehrlich writes that the reason for messianism not being all that visible in Hasidism is because it was spiritual, rather than political and this made it possible for Hasidism to remain within traditional Judaism. Ehrlich solves the issue of messianism in the movement by saying that “there were, however, a number of stronger messianic submovements in hasidism”.¹²⁰ He mentions the Breslav Hasidim, followers of Rabbi Naḥman of Breslav (1772-1810), a man who was and is said to possess the soul of the Messiah. Ehrlich claims that this strain of Hasidic elitism inspired contemporary Chabad Hasidism, without explaining it further. He also mentions what he calls “mild

¹¹⁹ The approaches accounted for in this paragraph are well attested for in academic discussion. See especially Buber 1948:6-7; Scholem 1969: 327-331; 1971:228-250. Moshe Idel has often discussed the views of Buber and Scholem, see for example Idel 1997:389-403. Emmanuel Etkes discusses past trends and new directions in Hasidism, referring to Dubnow, Dinur and Tishby, see Etkes 1997:447-464.

messianic assertions”, such as the previous Satmar rebbe, Joel Teitelbaum, who was believed to live to see the coming of the Messiah. The Satmar rebbe obviously had a strong messianic belief, evident in the fact that there was a room for the Messiah in his house, should the Messiah come for a visit.¹²¹ Is it possible that these examples really count as being mere periphery Ḥasidic subgroups?

Mor Altshuler propagates fiercely in favour of the third approach.¹²² In her study she does not present Rabbi Dov Ber as the founder of the Ḥasidic court, but rather as a messianist, Rabbi Yehiel Mikhel of Zolochiv, stating that it was in fact messianic activity that created the Ḥasidic court. Altshuler claims that the astonishing growth of Ḥasidism in the first four decades was a result of messianic activity. Basically, Altshuler means that Ḥasidism really brought its fuel and strength from messianism.¹²³ She says Besht did not reject kabbalistic reckonings of the end time, nor did he create something new. Instead he followed the path laid out by the generations before him in practicing magic for the hastening of redemption and the messianic era.¹²⁴

The literary passages about the Messiah are not many, Idel says, and therefore it might seem too great a suggestion to say that Ḥasidism was strongly infused with messianism in its early stages. However, Idel points to the way everyday religious life is shaped and argues that it is not number of quotes that matters, nor faith or hope, but action. Idel mentions the responsibility on a personal

¹²⁰ Ehrlich 2000:114

¹²¹ Ehrlich 2000:29, 114

¹²² See Mor Altshuler, *The Messianic Secret of Hasidism*, 2006.

¹²³ Altshuler 2006:193-212

¹²⁴ Altshuler 2006:27-28

level in Ḥasidism to further the messianic advent and determines the messianic topics of the early Ḥasidic matters to be quite impressive.¹²⁵

In line with scholars such as Ben-Zion Dinur and Isaiah Tishby, Altshuler's study shows that a shift took place in Ḥasidism, moving from esotericism to the public eye and that its messianic content followed that transition. While Ḥasidism was an esoteric movement the messianic impulse was still strong, but in order to be integrated into the Orthodox stream of Judaism, it had to suppress messianism when it became a larger, more open type of group. According to Altshuler it was the break-up into several courts that made explicit messianism impossible, because "the nearly simultaneous appearance of two or more Messiahs makes a mockery of the notion of a single, chosen, Messiah." Still there does exist in the different Ḥasidic dynasties of today the belief and hope that the Messiah will come from their own leader, even though open expressions of this have always been rare – with a few exceptions. Unlike the Shabbatean movement, Ḥasidism did not cast off all restraints, but remained within Judaism.¹²⁶

Harris Lenowitz links the messianic feature in Ḥasidism to the institution of the *zaddik*, the doctrinal idea of the Ḥasidic leader of whom he says is a quasi-divine being performing miracles and cosmic repairs and whom the soul of the Messiah inhabits. Lenowitz further connects the Ḥasidic Messiah to the lurian and Shabbatean messianic figure, whose purpose was to repair the

¹²⁵ Idel 1998:234

¹²⁶ Altshuler 2006:10-11, 212. The quotation is from pp. 10-11. Open Ḥasidic messianic outbreaks that have occurred involve Rabbi Nahman of Bratslav and Rabbi Menahem Mendel Schneerson, though Altshuler claims on p. 11 that this is "a pale reflection of events in the early days of the movement."

cosmos and bring about the end of time, and in which the traditional view of the Messiah as someone who studies the Torah and observes the Jewish laws disappeared in favour of a larger role and divine character.¹²⁷

Even if references to the Messiah are scarce, they are far too frequent in early Ḥasidism to be ignored. The fact that Ḥasidism fostered several messianic figures also indicates that Ḥasidism foundationally was not void of a messianic element. If a certain environment gives birth to many of the same kind, we have reason to ask what it is in that environment that inspires this feature. Ḥasidism is said to have popularized mysticism and one of its main literary sources is mysticism, which itself is infused with eschatology. If Besht was not the first in a new line, then he followed something deeply essential to Judaism, and in particular to Jewish mysticism – messianism. Is it then possible to say that Ḥasidism is fundamentally messianic in its character?

2.6 Examples of Early Ḥasidic Messianic Activity

Rabbi Yeḥiel Mikhel of Zolochiv (1726-1781), whom Altshuler claims to be the real inventor of the Ḥasidic court, sought redemption through prayer and the mystical union together with his kabbalistic fellowship. Rabbi Yeḥiel Mikhel himself was said to have the soul of *shaddai* (יְדַי) – one of the names of God and also to have the soul of

¹²⁷ Lenowitz 1998:199-200

the Messiah. He was implied to be a man with a messianic mission and was at the same time called “*zaddik*”.¹²⁸ After the death of Rabbi Yeḥiel Mikhel, his disciples did not believe that their master would return from the dead, nor did they elect an heir. According to Altshuler, they disintegrated and some of them claimed the title “*zaddik*”, gathered disciples of their own and established courts after esoteric patterns, thus paving the way for expansion and establishment of Ḥasidism.¹²⁹

Altshuler has taken a new look at Ḥasidism’s starting period, 1740-1781 – a time that she calls “the era of redemption”.¹³⁰ She shows that in his “Holy Epistle” Besht indicated that he saw himself as the messenger of redemption; in the spirit of Elijah heralding the arrival of the Messiah. Besht desired to meet with the Messiah in the heavenly realms in order to know the time of his coming, and in a vision Besht entered into the palace of the Messiah and saw him face-to-face. Different things were revealed to Besht in his ascent to the celestial world, but the one answer he yearned to receive to, was to remain a mystery. Moreover, the Messiah in Besht’s vision specifically forbid Besht to make known what he had learnt. Nonetheless, the answer to Besht’s most important question – when the Messiah would arrive – shocked and distressed Besht:

(---) it will be when what you have learned becomes widely known and manifest to the world and your springs disperse abroad what I have taught you and

¹²⁸ Altshuler 2006:8

¹²⁹ Altshuler 2006:193, 10, 151

¹³⁰ Altshuler 2006:8

you have comprehended, so that others will be able to perform unifications and ascents just as you are.¹³¹

The ascent on the Jewish New Year in 1746, when Besht had his encounter with the Messiah, shattered his messianic hopes of greeting the Messiah in his lifetime. This was thirteen years before Besht's death, but still, according to Altshuler, Besht's messianic hopes made a great impression on his followers. Altshuler claims that the environment was greatly infused with messianic expectations and it was in this atmosphere that Rabbi Yehiel Mikhel of Zolochiv grew up – he was a teenager during Besht's messianic period – and he was the one who explicitly infused the new movement with messianism.¹³² Altshuler's claim is thus that Besht's messianism consisted of him being the Messiah's messenger but that his expectation of the imminent coming of the Messiah was shattered by his mystical experience of meeting with the Messiah.

Idel sees a clear phenomenological parallel between the 13th century ecstatic kabbalist messianic figure Abraham Abulafia and Besht, stating that Besht's messianism was closer to the ecstatic kabbalah than to Luria's or Shabbetai Zevi's messianism. Idel says both Abulafia and Besht used the same mystical techniques in using the divine names and bringing healing to the people. These were practices that, according to Idel, are not part of classical Judaism and anomian. Idel sees Heikhalot and zoharic messianic motifs in the conversation Besht had with the Messiah, especially in the way Besht saw himself as a personal model for others to become like him and learn his techniques. According to Idel the techniques for reaching

¹³¹ Altshuler 2006:18

unification had strong messianic overtones and he exemplifies this by pointing to the urge that a person must have to perform unifications – an impetus that in Ḥasidism is called Elijah, the person preceding the Messiah.¹³³

The land of Israel has at all times been important in messianic movements. The redemption of the nation has always been believed to be linked to the Messiah coming to the land of Israel. This has its grounds in Gen. 15:18, “On that day, God executed a covenant with Abram, saying, ‘to your seed I have given this land’”. The land of Israel was also central in the belief of the sin of the nation, because of which the Jews were exiled. Repentance of sins would in turn lead to a return to the land. The process of returning began among messianic kabbalists.¹³⁴

Besht’s aspirations to go to the land of Israel, as well as his support to others who aimed at Jerusalem (such as Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye), were put to an end because of his encounter with the Messiah, an experience that also concluded Besht’s expectations of the imminent coming of the Messiah. Not so for Besht’s disciples. In 1777 a group of Ḥasidim, disciples of Rabbi Yehiel Mikhel of Zolochiv, set out on a messianic voyage to the land of Israel. They were led by Rabbi Menaḥem Mendel of Vitebsk (1730-1788) and his

¹³² Altshuler 2006:8, 16-24, 195

¹³³ Idel 1998:216-220, 229

¹³⁴ Altshuler 2006:152, 156-157. One of the first to move to the land out of messianic zeal was Rabbi Joseph Karo who settled in Safed in 1536 in order both be redeemed and to redeem through kabbalistic means. Messianist immigration continued even after the failure of the Shabbatean movement, but disciples of The Gaon of Vilna, so called “perushim” also immigrated and the last group to immigrate with a messianist pathos before the Zionist wave was the Yemenite Jews in 1881. Most of these immigrations were linked to beliefs and prophecies concerning the end of time and the immigrants believed they were acting on behalf of the whole Jewish nation; proclaiming the time of redemption.

assistant Rabbi Abraham of Kolyshki.¹³⁵ The former was the rebbe of Zalman. Zalman urged his followers to support the immigrants to Israel in his pastoral letters, *Igeret ha-Kodesh*. He had founded a fund for this task, *Kollel Chabad*, and told his Ḥasidim to give more generously every year to this fund, for the love of the Holy Land.¹³⁶

1777 was a year of high messianic expectations, probably originating in Shabbatean circles, and it was even rumoured that the Messiah had come. These hopes were intensified by the political situation at the time.¹³⁷ The group wanted to settle in the land of Israel to greet the Messiah. In an attempt to consummate the coming of the Messiah, they published *Besht's Epistle* – hoping that revealing the mysteries included in the letter would perfect the messianic efforts that Besht himself had started. The letter was published around the same time as rumours suggested the redemption of Israel.¹³⁸ The Ḥasidim who had immigrated to the land of Israel in 1777 interpreted the fact that there were Jews from so many different places and strata immigrating as a sign that the Messiah was surely coming.¹³⁹

¹³⁵ These two are also known under the names of Rabbi Menahem Mendel of Horodok or Rabbi Mendele Horodoker and Rabbi Avraham (Katz) of Kalisk or Rabbi Avraham Kalisker. The former is the object of several of the stories in Martin Buber's *Tales of the Hasidim*, 1972. Zalman's book *Tanya* may be based on his letters and Rabbi Abraham of Kolyshki may be a contributor of the fourth part of the *Tanya, Igeret ha-Kodesh*. He became the rebbe of Zalman after Rabbi Menahem Mendel's death.

¹³⁶ *Lessons in Tanya*, vol. IV 2004:236

¹³⁷ Altshuler 2006:67, 172. Russia won victories in Poland and Turkey during this time.

¹³⁸ Altshuler 2006:9, 67

¹³⁹ Altshuler 2006:173. Altshuler writes on p. 12: "A messianic movement of this sort draws no distinction between the redemption of the individual and the redemption of the Jewish people, through which the individual will also be redeemed; the leader of the movement is seen as the redeemer of the nation as well; the yearning for redemption is transformed in the believer's consciousness from a utopian vision to a driving force, active in history; and the believer's expectations are focused on the Land of Israel, the return to which is understood as carrying out the redemptive process in a concrete way."

The messianic immigrants to the land of Israel often settled in the North – as well as in Jerusalem and Hebron. The southern parts were hostile towards Jewish settlement, whereas Galilee was relatively calm. But the reasons for settling in the north were also spiritual. The northern kingdom of Israel had fallen before the southern kingdom of Judah and the first tribes to be exiled were those in Galilee. Redemption would happen in the reversed order according to mystical reasoning, and thus the kabbalists taught that the Messiah would come from the north.¹⁴⁰

There were also messianic figures in later generations of Ḥasidim, such as during the 1800s. Both Israel of Ruzhin (1797-1850) and The Komarno Rebbe, Eizikel (1806-1874) perceived themselves as the Messiah. Israel of Ruzhin was said to have superior qualities already as a child and to have the soul of Besht. He became very successful having wealth and thousands of followers and was also closely watched by the Russian government because he was suspected of conspiring to become “king of the Jews”. The Komarno Rebbe explained in print about his special soul and his mission to purify his evil soul. He says that his soul, being of the Messiah of the Joseph lineage, would not have to have had to be reincarnated if Besht had not failed to bring redemption.¹⁴¹ Without taking a stand on the historicity here, it is safe to say that early Ḥasidism was far from void of messianic speculation and expectation. Even the statement by Gershom Scholem that Ḥasidism lacked acute messianism must be contested. Besht and the subsequent generations expected the Messiah in their own generation and several candidates arose for the position.

¹⁴⁰ Altshuler 2006:160

¹⁴¹ Lenowitz 1998:210, 214

In Chabad Hasidism the messianic references to the leaders were carried on through the generations. Ehrlich lists the Chabad Rebbes and how they depicted themselves as prophets and miracle workers, calling the study hall “the hall of the messiah”, taking names that in the Talmudic literature refers to the Messiah and calling the Hasidim “soldiers of King David”, thereby deducing that the Rebbe himself was the king.¹⁴²

Ehrlich states that the messianic doctrine has changed over time, in particular from Shneur Zalman to Rabbi Schneerson, based on the Shneur Zalman’s opinion that there is nothing special about the time of the Messiah.¹⁴³ (I strongly disagree with Ehrlich on this point and this will be further elaborated on in chapter four.) According to Ehrlich it was Rabbi Schneerson’s strong belief that his father-in-law was the Messiah. According to him Rabbi Joseph Isaac was a heroic *zaddik* who would have been perfect for the role of the Messiah, and it was Rabbi Schneerson’s stubbornness which hindered him from accepting the fact that Rabbi Joseph Isaac was not the Messiah, even to the point of denying his death – an attitude which Ehrlich states has paved the way for the “resurrectionist theory” that some Lubavitchers profess today.¹⁴⁴ Ehrlich also states that in its initial stages Hasidism avoided intense messianic fervour because of messianism’s inevitable disappointment,¹⁴⁵ but at the same time suggests that the reason for the traditionalist leadership at the beginning of Hasidism opposing the new group, was that they were afraid that it was a new mystical-messianic group in the style of

¹⁴² Ehrlich 2000:115

¹⁴³ Ehrlich 2000:115

¹⁴⁴ Ehrlich 2000:116

Shabbateanism.¹⁴⁶ As already indicated, in the chapter three, it will become evident that the teachings and the worldview of the Chabad founder, Shneur Zalman, were in fact infused with imminent messianic beliefs and contains a hermeneutical system preventing “inevitable disappointment”. This is the opposite of what Ehrlich articulates.

¹⁴⁵ Ehrlich 2000:114

¹⁴⁶ Ehrlich 2000:113

3. The *Tanya* and the Messianic Concept

This chapter explores the Tanya, the earliest parts of which are from the 18th century. Special attention is given to the worldview, which includes perceptions of God and creation and their interrelationship, and the messianic concept in the Tanya. Comprehension of the worldview of the movement in question is of foundational significance when looking at religious texts. Furthermore this chapter deals with the specific doctrine of Ḥasidic leadership, as this is said to distinguish Ḥasidism more than anything else, and has close connections to the function of the Messiah, even though the question about leadership is not a central or substantial part of the Tanya.

Because there is no critical edition of the Tanya, it is difficult to distinguish between the original form of the Tanya and its reception in the Chabad community. Thus we are not dealing with the historical Shneur Zalman when reading the Tanya. In spite of these historical difficulties, the Tanya in its entirety reveals the core values of the Chabad school of thought from its inception up to the year 1900, when the work received its current form. Methodologically an inductive study method has been employed in order to identify the central beliefs and ideas. The purpose of this chapter is not to go into

textual criticism or detailed analysis of the text, but rather to see the larger topical units.

As has been stated in the section about the Tanya in the previous chapter, it must also be understood that the Tanya is primarily a work that focuses on an individual's spiritual growth, and does not speak of the Messiah or the Ḥasidic leader (the zaddik) at length. In order to receive more substance on how the Tanya is to be interpreted, Chabad theologians who have worked with introductions to and commentaries on the Tanya, most notably Adin Steinsaltz and Jacob I. Schochet, who have published several books on personal spiritual development and Chabad mysticism, have been consulted for this chapter when deemed necessary. In addition, for understanding some mystical concepts, scholarly works have also been used.

3.1 The Worldview: Divinity and Creation

3.1.1 God – Present in Everything

To whom then will you liken God? Or what likeness will you compare to Him? ... To whom will you liken me that I should be equal, says the Holy One.

- Isaiah 40:18, 25

Apart from the belief in the existence of God, the most important principle of the Jewish faith is the belief in the unity of God, implicating that God is one and unique, as the quote from the book of Isaiah says. Any attempt to establish a reality “separate from” or “outside of” means denial of the solitary unity of God. The *Tanya* teaches that there is no place void of him, but still God is single and unique and remained unaltered also after creation.¹⁴⁷ The oneness of God and the reluctance to depict God are foundational to many types of Jewish faiths. In addition to this, the most essential notion about God in Chabad Ḥasidism is that God is continuously involved in his creation and that creation would in fact cease to exist if God was not constantly creating it by his spoken word. God is persistently present

¹⁴⁷ The *Tanya* ch. 19 and 20; *Sha'ar ha-Yiḥud* ch. 7. The *Tanya* expounds on *Tikkunei Zohar*, *Tikkun* 57, 91b. The cardinal sin is said to be any sort of separation, meaning anything that causes dualism or pluralism. See Schochet 1995 III:46-49. In one of the introductions to the *Tanya*, Nisen Mangel explains that believing in the unity of God not only excludes the existence of any ruling powers outside of God or any plurality in God, but also that “it precludes any existence at all apart from Him”. Mangel 1993:855.

in everything. The existence of God is the only independent existence, and thus the only true existence (as opposed to the existence of the world, which is depending on God's constant immanence).¹⁴⁸

The *Tanya* explains that God's word, which is life-bringing, is united with him and has always existed with him. Now, through his word the world has merely become materialized and revealed, and it receives its life-force through the fact that God is immanent in the created.¹⁴⁹ From God's perspective nothing is separate from God. Creation is separate from God only in the way a man's speech is separate from man.¹⁵⁰ Thus, God is unchangeable and always present in creation. At the same time as God permeates both the upper and lower world (i.e. heaven and earth), he is not at all contained in them, because he is still holy, meaning that he is totally distinct from everything else.¹⁵¹ Outside of Chabad this - saying that everything is God - is sometimes called pantheism; but, according to Chabad thought, God does not equate nature. Rather, everything is dependant on God for its existence and God sustains creation by emanating into it relentlessly. Thus the correct term would be panentheism. God is believed to be involved in the world by his speech ("the ten utterances") – and thus the world is being created all

¹⁴⁸ The *Tanya* ch. 2. According to the *Tanya* the creation by God's spoken word does not refer to man. Man is said to have been created by a divine "expulsion of breath". See also Schneersohn 2002:15. Steinsaltz explains that God obviously does not speak as such, and he does not breathe. These are metaphors for understanding the metaphysical. See Steinsaltz 2003:75.

¹⁴⁹ The *Tanya* ch. 20. Creation receives life through a process of gradual descent from cause to effect, by means of many "contractions" (צמצום *zimzum*). See especially *Sha'ar ha-Yihud* chapter 4. These contractions veil the light and life-force that comes from the divine word, and thus it may seem as if the created is apart from God, though they are not distinct from him, just like the snail is not separate from his "clothes" – because they are part of his body. See also Bereshit Rabbah 21.

¹⁵⁰ The *Tanya* ch. 22

¹⁵¹ *Igeret ha-Kodesh* ch. 7

the time. Not everything is God, but God is in everything. This understanding of God, and which is expounded on in the *Tanya*, as well as other Lubavitch literature, is called *the lower perception of God's unity*, a term taken from the *Zohar*.¹⁵²

Building on mystical teachings, the transcendent and immanent God is believed to have been separated. Steinsaltz states, “God’s desire is that man should unite the two”,¹⁵³ i.e. every Ḥasid has the responsibility to repair the breach in the divinity and restore the integrity of God’s dwelling. God, or the divine presence being implicit in the world – the *Shekhinah* – is seen as being held captive in creation and must be reunited with the Holy One.¹⁵⁴

Chabad literature is, for the most part, not particularly preoccupied with descriptions of God or with what could be said about God, but more with man’s mystical experience of God and man’s spiritual duty and activity. Generally the focal point in Jewish faith is more often the Torah than God, even though the Torah of course is “the Torah of God” and receives its value from the fact that it is believed to be of divine origin.¹⁵⁵ In short we could say that the perception of God’s omnipresence, and the providence being

¹⁵² The *Tanya* ch. 2. See also Steinsaltz 2003:74-76 and the *Zohar* I:18b. At the same time as God is immanent he is also transcendent, he is internal but also surrounding the world. His essence is not in the immanence or in the creating of material things. The speech by which he creates is in fact nothing in relation to his infinite being, Mangel says. God remains unaffected and unchangeable – he was alone before creation and he will be alone also after the creation, an idea which is understood as *the higher perception of God's unity*. Mangel 1993:856. See also Schneersohn 2003:13.

¹⁵³ Steinsaltz 2003:262

¹⁵⁴ The *Tanya* ch. 10. See also Steinsaltz 2003:138, 262-263 and the *Zohar* II:114b; III:222b, 281a.

¹⁵⁵ There is also “the unity of the Torah”, which means that the Torah must be accepted as one entity, as a whole. It must be recognized and accepted on “all its levels, all its facets and dimensions” as Schochet writes. Schochet 1995 I:38.

expressed in that, is the most significant and reoccurring idea about God in Chabad Ḥasidism.

3.1.2 The World – Not Yet a Place for God

*For my glory I have created it, formed it,
and made it.*

- Isaiah 43:7

The *Tanya* stresses that God created the world out of nothing, *ex nihilo*, by his uttered word – which is an anthropomorphic illustration.¹⁵⁶ In the second part of the *Tanya*, *Sha'ar ha-Yihud veha-Emunah*, more is explained about how creation came into existence. When God creates it is not like when man makes something. The active life-force of the creator must continuously be in all things created in order that they will not revert to nothingness. This life-force consists of God's creative "letters", i.e. his speech.¹⁵⁷ Because

¹⁵⁶ The *Tanya* ch. 19 and 20. See also *Tikkunei Zohar*, *Tikkun* 57, 91b as well as *Sha'ar ha-Yihud* ch. 7.

¹⁵⁷ *Sha'ar ha-Yihud* ch. 1 and 2. God is continually active in creating, according to Chabad literature. Schochet explains, "The above now leads us to another crucial concept in Jewish mysticism: the cosmic significance of man's actions. At the completion of *ma'aseh bereishit*, the work of creation, it is said that "G-d blessed the seventh day and made it holy, for on it He rested from all His work that he had created 'la'asot.' (Genesis 2:3) It does not say there 'that He had created *ve'assa* (and had made),' but the imperfect tense of *la'asot* – to make. *La'asot* means *letaken* – to mend, to complete. For none of the things created in the six days of creation is complete. Whatever came into being needs further work to complete it." It is further explained

creation exists only through this active divine life-force, it means that material things do not exist at all. If man could see God's immanence, the tangible things would disappear since they would be nullified in the encounter. This is explained using the allegory of sun-rays, which do not exist either, although they give the impression of having an actual existence to our eyes.¹⁵⁸ Nonetheless, God decided to make the world appear as an independently existing entity, in order for him to have a kingdom.¹⁵⁹ This idea is the beginning of the messianic doctrine in the *Tanya*.

The world is believed to be a divine creation and full of divine omnipresence. God created the world because he wanted to have a dwelling in "the lower worlds". The height of the creation will be the messianic era and the resurrection of the dead,¹⁶⁰ which constitutes the end of the messianic doctrine in the *Tanya*. The messianic era is explained in the *Tanya* as the time when God will live on earth.¹⁶¹ Thus, we can stipulate that the purpose for God's creating the world is the messianic era. How this purpose will come about will be explained through the understanding of the concept of man in the *Tanya*.

Crucial in the worldview of any religion is the question of evil and what to do with it. The *Tanya* is also preoccupied with answering the question of how evil entered the world, and how it

that this was intended with creation and does not denote some sort of defect or failure on the part of the creator, but it was God's plan so that man would contribute to his part in the universe. Concerning this, ideas expressed in Genesis Rabba 17:1; Genesis Rabba 42:3; Leviticus Rabba 11:7 are expounded on. Schochet 1995 1:56-57.

¹⁵⁸ The *Tanya* ch. 3

¹⁵⁹ The *Tanya* ch. 7

¹⁶⁰ The *Tanya* ch. 36 and 37. See also Schochet 1995 1:69 where he refers to and interprets Midrash Tanhuma, Nasso 16.

¹⁶¹ The *Tanya* ch. 36

can be overcome so that God can live in the earth. In the *Tanya*, evil is either referred to as *kelipah* (קליפה) and literally meaning “shell”, or *sitra aḥra* (סטרא אחרא), meaning “the other side”. Both “*kelipah*” and “*sitra aḥra*” are kabbalistic terms for evil, indicating that evil is diametrically opposed to holiness, completely different to God. Anything that separates from God belongs in the *sitra aḥra*, which is the root of evil.¹⁶² But how did evil come into existence? The act of creation is believed to have happened through what is called contraction (צמצום *zimzum*), in which God “conceals himself”.¹⁶³ The contraction is explained to be so powerful and the concealing so great that even unclean things can come into being. The *kelipot* and *sitra aḥra* do not, however, receive their sustenance from God (here called the Supernal Countenance), but from what is referred to as God’s “hinder part”¹⁶⁴ – where the nutrition is given unwillingly as to an enemy. Because *kelipot* do not receive their life force from God, they are called “other gods”¹⁶⁵ and *Lessons in Tanya*¹⁶⁶ explains that the unity of God is not only with regard to the fact that there is no other god but him, but also that he is the only existent being. Having an identity apart from him (as the *kelipot* and *sitra aḥra*) is idolatry.¹⁶⁷

The concept of *zimzum* in Ḥasidism originated with Luria. For Jewish philosophers and kabbalists the foundational question concerning the creation of the world was based on the perception that God is infinite. How can a god who has no end create

¹⁶² The *Tanya* ch. 1

¹⁶³ הסתר פנים העליונים:

¹⁶⁴ אחרים

¹⁶⁵ אלהים אחרים

¹⁶⁶ *Lessons in Tanya* is the *Tanya* with commentaries by Rabbi Yosef Wineberg published by Kehot Publication Society. The first edition is from 1997.

¹⁶⁷ The *Tanya* ch. 22; *Lessons in Tanya* I:296

something outside of himself, something finite? Luria taught that creation came into being through divine sparks (now being inherent in all Jews) sent out from the *Shekhinah*. Some were trapped in the material, in what is described as shells (*kelipah*), and needed deliverance – deliverance being redemption from the exile. For Luria, this was, therefore, a way of explaining redemption: once all the sparks had been liberated and returned to God, the exile would end and the time of the Messiah would come. The sparks are thought to be liberated by man’s obeying the commandments, and thus man has a central part of fulfilling the work of salvation.¹⁶⁸ I would like to underline the importance of observing the commandments in order to complete the liberation of divine sparks so that the Messiah can come, because in this lies a central motive for Lubavitch activism.

For Lubavitchers *zimzum* is seen as “the most crucial doctrine” in lurianic kabbalah.¹⁶⁹ Luria’s idea, according to Chabad thought, was that before the creation God himself filled the space, wherefore there was no possibility, no room, for any other existence. But because God willed it, he withdrew himself so that a vacuum or an empty space was formed.¹⁷⁰ The Lubavitchers explain *zimzum* a little differently. For the Ḥasidim the literal interpretation of God contracting himself was unthinkable, because withdrawal is a phenomenon of corporeality and God cannot be described in corporeal terms. Jeremiah 23:24 and Isaiah 6:3 speaks of God filling the whole earth, and so he cannot have withdrawn himself, the Lubavitchers explain. Furthermore, Malachi 3:6 says that God does not change. The

¹⁶⁸ Meijers 1997:429; Jacobs 1999:188; Illman and Harviainen 2002:131-132.

¹⁶⁹ See the glossary for the *Tanya* 1993:853

¹⁷⁰ Mangel 1993:856

emphasis in Chabad is more on the concealment of the emanation from the godhead, where creation takes its finite and physical form through a progressive development of God's self-revelation manifested in something called "the light of the *Ein-sof*". The [Chabad] Ḥasidic understanding of *zimzum* in general is that it does not affect God's essence.¹⁷¹

The theological concept of *zimzum* has far-reaching consequences for the practical conduct of Ḥasidim, and this is also one of the matters where they differ from rabbinic ultra-Orthodox Judaism. For the mitnaggedim *zimzum* meant that God has withdrawn himself from creation, leaving creation less divine. In practice this signifies contempt for the mundane world and everything that belongs to it. For the Ḥasidim *zimzum* does not imply that God withdrew himself, rather that he concealed his manifestation, which in turn denotes that he is present in the created and can be found in the mundane world. Thus, not only the spiritual work is significant: rather every act and right moral choice in the material world is rendered important in the goal of gathering the sparks; all of everyday life has purpose, meaning and value to the Ḥasidim.¹⁷² For the Lubavitchers this implies that there is no predicament in being active in the secular community and using modern technology as tools for reaching out, because God is present in the world.

¹⁷¹ The *Tanya* expounds on the topic of *zimzum* in chapters 21-22, 33, 38, 48-49 and in *Sha'ar ha-Yihud ve-ha-Emunah* in chapters 3-4, 6-7 and 9-10. See also Mangel 1993:856-858; Schochet 1993:889.

¹⁷² Meijers 1997:429-430

3.1.3 Man and His Significance for the Messianic Course of Events

In the previous section man's centrality in the world and in the messianic course of events has been touched upon. Permeating the *Tanya* is the capability of man. In the interpretation of Deuteronomy 30:14 at the beginning of the *Tanya*, it is conveyed that it is possible for any Jew to keep the commandments, to attain a higher level of divine service and experience God through prayer and meditation. Zalman makes the ideal for any Ḥasid that of Rabbah,¹⁷³ who declared that he is an intermediate (בינוני *beinoni*).¹⁷⁴ This term is from the Talmud, Berakhot 7a, where five types of men are described. Zalman also describes five types,

- 1) a righteous man who prospers (צדיק וטוב לו *zaddik ve'tov lo*),
- 2) a righteous man who suffers (צדיק ורע לו *zaddik ve'ra lo*),
- 3) a wicked man who prospers (רשע וטוב לו *rasha ve'tov lo*),
- 4) a wicked man who suffers (רשע ורע לו *rasha ve'ra lo*) and

¹⁷³ A Talmudist, living at the end of the 3rd and beginning of the 4th century, who is known because of his involvement in aggadic stories in the Babylonian Talmud.

¹⁷⁴ The *Tanya* ch. 1 referring to Berakhot 61b. The Ḥasidic understanding of human nature is built upon the belief in esoteric knowledge, or an elevated, hidden truth. This knowledge is believed to be an unwritten Abrahamic Torah that preceded the Torah given on Mt. Sinai. According to Hasidic thinking, man has access to this secret Abrahamic Torah, but not directly. It is partially revealed in the textual tradition of the kabbalah, which, in the view of Ḥasidic theological reflection, is needed in order to receive a fuller understanding of the classical Jewish sources. Magid 2003:1-2. Man's centrality is characteristic of Jewish mysticism, as can be seen in the *Zohar*. Since God created the mundane world after the pattern of the celestial world, and everything in the earth has its counterpart in the heavenlies, so God also has a matching part on the earth. This part would belong to man, who therefore has a completely unique position as the pillar supporting the world. Even though man's character has been impacted by Adam's sin, man can still have a superior place in the world, unless he sins further. This view is

5) the intermediate one.¹⁷⁵

Whether a person is righteous or wicked is not preordained by God, but man has the power to decide over his own personality and destiny; if he is to be righteous or wicked.¹⁷⁶ Man's superiority is explained by man being created as the *sefiriotic* world (the kabbalistic way of explaining the world) made flesh. This perception, together with the belief that man's soul (i.e. his godly soul, as shall be explained below) originates in the godhead, gives man the ability to impact the godhead, for good or bad. Man can do so by his way of living – either righteously or by sinning.¹⁷⁷

Similarly, in the *Tanya*, man's capacity is explained on the basis of man's soul, which is independent of his being righteous or wicked, is seen as consisting of two souls.¹⁷⁸ These have different origins. The first soul, referred to as the animal soul,¹⁷⁹ stems from evil (*kelipah*) and from "the other side" (*sitra aħra*). All characteristics in human nature are believed to derive from the four

by no means unique to the *Zohar*, but is existent also elsewhere in Judaism. Tishby 1989 II:676.

¹⁷⁵ The *Tanya* ch. 1. He continues: ופירשו בגמרא צדיק וטוב לו צדיק גמור צדיק ורע לו צדיק שאינו גמור צדיק (It is explained in the Gemara that the righteous man who prospers is the perfect *zaddik*, the righteous man who suffers is the imperfect *zaddik*.)

¹⁷⁶ On the other hand, Zalman makes a reference to Yoma 38b and Proverbs 10:25 that say that God has planted righteous men in every generation, because the *zaddik* is the foundation of the world. Thus, one may assume that there are those men whose righteousness is predestined by God.

¹⁷⁷ According to Isaiah Tishby, the *Zohar* emphasises that man's godly soul is his true self, and that the body in reality is without relevance for the human nature. The true essence of man is in God. This belief is of utter importance, because it is through meditating on it that man can receive insight into divine mysteries. The soul is always striving upward to reunite with the godhead. Tishby 1989:II 679-683

¹⁷⁸ The *Tanya* ch. 1; based on Rabbi Hayim Vital's *Sha'ar ha-Kedushah* and *Ez Hayim*, portal 50, ch. 2 and Isaiah 57:16 which talks about God's creating the soul in plural. See also Schneesochn 1991:25.

elements (fire, water, air and earth) and are consequently evil, having their origin in the *kelipot* and *sitra aħra*. This soul is clothed in blood and thus gives life to the body.¹⁸⁰ The “abode”, or the manifestation of the animal soul, is in the heart of man; where lusts, boasting, anger and similar passions reside.¹⁸¹ From the animal soul also come good characteristics, which are innate in every Jew. Not so of “the nations”, i.e. non-Jews, who are said to do everything out of selfish ambition, even when it looks good.¹⁸² The Jewish soul, on the other hand, originates in the “tree of good and evil” and therefore also contains good. The good in the animal soul comes from, what is called, the translucent shell (קליפת נוגה *kelipat nogah*).¹⁸³ The *Tanya* stresses love for fellow Jews, while cautioning that one’s love should not be awakened by Jewish heretics and atheists.¹⁸⁴ Man has a responsibility for other Jews because they are a part of God and therefore it is

¹⁷⁹ See the *Tanya* chapter 9 for animal soul (נפש הבהמית *nefesh habehamit*). In Chabad literature the animal soul is also called “the first soul”.

¹⁸⁰ The *Tanya* ch. 1. These evil characteristics are anger and pride (fire), appetite for pleasures (water), frivolity, boasting and idle talk (air) and melancholy (earth). The notion that the animal soul gives life to the body is based on *Leviticus* 17:11, which says that life of the flesh is in the blood. The soul is in the blood and thus, give life.

¹⁸¹ The *Tanya* ch. 9. See beginning of chapter.

¹⁸² For more on Zalman’s view on Gentiles, see chapter 19, where he explains that the souls of the Gentiles are dead and greedy – all they do is in order to satisfy their own needs. *Genesis* 25:30; *Job* 4:21; *Prov.* 30:15; *Ecclesiastes* 7:12 and *Berakhot* 18b are referenced to when speaking of Gentiles.

¹⁸³ The *Tanya* ch. 1. See end of chapter. See also chapter 6 where it says that the world with all its contents are evil, it is the world of *kelipot* and *sitra aħra*. Chapter 7 explains how the *kelipat nogah* is an intermediate category between the completely unclean or sinful *kelipot* (three in number, corresponding to thought, words and action) and holiness. It is sometimes absorbed into the unclean *kelipot* but can also be elevated into holiness. Here Zalman discusses which types of actions, originating in the *kelipot*, can be redeemed or elevated – in this case by means of repentance and intense concentration and devotion in prayer (כיוונה *kavanah*). In practice he is referring to sexual and dietary laws. The faults that cannot be rectified are “incestuous intercourse and giving birth to a bastard”. See end of chapter 7. Chapter 8 speaks about yet another sin stemming from the three unclean *kelipot* and that cannot be converted into holiness, namely inclinations toward non-Jewish matters (which are caused by a non-Jewish demon). All things that stem from the three sinful *kelipot* must be descended into purgatory (גיהנום *gehinnom*).

important to help and provide for others in the same way as one provides for his own life.¹⁸⁵

The second soul, however, is a part of God.¹⁸⁶ It has its home in the brain.¹⁸⁷ The *Tanya* teaches that all souls of Jewish individuals are connected because they have arisen in the divine thought, called the supernal wisdom (חכמה עילאה) *hokhmah ila'ah*). The root soul of all Jews (from which all souls originate) is in the “Supreme Mind”. Man was created through the wisdom of God, in his thought, which is also depicted as his brain.¹⁸⁸ But even though Jewish souls have the same root, or origin, they have different ranks or gradations. Thus, Moses and the patriarchs enjoy superiority, and the Jewish leaders of a generation can have a soul in the rank of the “head”, as the head on a human body is above the feet. Those that have a soul that is ranked “feet” or even “sole” can, by “attaching”

¹⁸⁴ The *Tanya* ch. 32

¹⁸⁵ *Igeret ha-Kodesh* ch. 9

¹⁸⁶ The *Tanya* ch. 2 וגופה השניית בישראל היא חלק אלוה ממעל ממש (And the second soul of Israel is truly a part of God above, literally.) This is the operating life force in man, man’s godly soul. Creation of man took place by God breathing his breath into the nostrils of man. Steinsaltz says that when God creates man, he is investing himself in man, giving of his very self. Steinsaltz explains that this is a different type of creating procedure than that of the world and other creatures, which God creates through his spoken word in an ongoing process. Steinsaltz 2003:75. Man is believed to be created also with the godly soul, which is thus inherent in every Jew, but it will not manifest itself until a person attains the age of maturity (thirteen for boys and twelve for girls). Steinsaltz explains that the animal soul must come first, because the godly soul needs a vessel or a channel. Steinsaltz 2003:73 referring to Genesis 2:7.

¹⁸⁷ The *Tanya* ch. 2 referring to Job 31:2; Ps. 16:5; 73:26; Jeremiah 10:16. The godly soul is also referred to as the second soul or the divine soul. For the sake of simplicity only the terms animal soul and godly soul will be used here. When “soul” is not specified (as being either animal or godly), it refers to the combined Jewish soul.

¹⁸⁸ The *Tanya* ch. 2 and 24. The idea of the source of souls, and all souls originating from the same source was one of the stumbling blocks for the early Hasidic opponents. The idea is built upon biblical verses such as Exodus 4:22 and Deuteronomy 14:1. God’s wisdom is vertically different from man’s (Isaiah 55:8). See also Genesis Rabbah 1:4 and the *Zohar* 12b. The origin of man’s soul is taken from Psalm 104:24 which says that God created everything with his wisdom, and from this comes the idea that all souls originate in the divine thought.

themselves to a scholar, find nutrition; the ignorant is in this way (through their leader) bound up and united with their original essence, their root in God's wisdom.¹⁸⁹

In relation to the fulfilment of the messianic era, the *Tanya* speaks of 600 000 root souls, each subdividing into 600 000 sparks. The *Shekhinah's* purpose is to refine the sparks that fell into the *kelipot*, which the *Shekhinah* does by going into exile.¹⁹⁰ This idea originates in the *Zohar*. One central issue for medieval rabbis concerned the pre-existence of the soul. One view was that the soul existed before the creation of the world, or at the latest during the six days of creation. One idea was that the first human, Adam, saw 600 000 souls, and that all other souls, destined to come into the world, are being created through continuous divine intercourse. These souls are not created separately for each human being, and God no longer creates *ex nihilo*. Instead, the soul exists in the divine thought and is placed in a body suitable for the soul. Up until that point, souls are being kept in a place called “*aravot*”, in the Garden of Eden. In order for the soul to come into the human being it must pass through several halls, of which the highest is “the most holy”. This is the fifth and last hall, and the place where the souls are waiting to come down to earth. This hall is never empty, but since the day of the destruction of the temple, no more souls are coming in and no more souls are being created. When all the souls have been used up it will be time for the Messiah to be revealed. On earth, the soul must be perfected, not for its own sake, but for the restoration of the *Shekhinah*.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁹ The *Tanya* ch. 2

¹⁹⁰ The *Tanya* ch. 37

¹⁹¹ Tishby 1989:II 700-703, 751, 754

Thus, there is hope also for the simple and common people in the Torah scholar, to whom they can attach themselves. Man's hope lies also in his intellect, because this is where his godly soul is situated – in the brain.¹⁹² The intellect is superior to feelings and by his intellectual faculties man can rule over himself, i.e. the evil emanating from *kelipat nogah* can be eliminated.¹⁹³ This is explained through the ten *sefirot*, which Zalman says are divided into two groups: three “mothers” and seven “multiples”. The three mothers are wisdom (חכמה *hokhmah*), understanding (בינה *binah*) and knowledge (דעת *da'at*). The godly soul is similarly divided into two, the intellect (שכל *shekhel*) and the emotional attributes (מדות *midot*), which constitute love for and fear of God. The *midot* are called “offspring”, because they are subject to the intellectual faculties.¹⁹⁴ In essence this is a way of depicting how the intellect can rule over one's feelings.

In short, man has two souls, one originating in evil and one that is part of God. There are different ranks of souls and Zalman explains that people can attain different levels in the battle between the two souls, being stirred by two contradicting elements. These are the good and the evil inclinations (יצר *yezer*) and they affect the animal soul.¹⁹⁵ Even though an individual is not believed to be inherently evil, evil inclinations can lead a person to become spiritually insensitive or indifferent. Though in opposition, the two

¹⁹² The *Tanya* ch. 9

¹⁹³ The *Tanya* ch. 3 and 9. Chapter 9 explains how the animal soul and the godly soul are at war with each other, but “It is the desire and will of the Divine soul that she alone rule over the person and direct him, and that all his limbs should obey her”.

¹⁹⁴ The *Tanya* ch. 3

¹⁹⁵ God affects and awakens man's godly soul, whereas man has full responsibility to make his animal soul righteous – i.e. its transformation is left to the free will of man. That the godly soul is righteous is predestined. The animal soul is not completely evil,

inclinations belong together, just as material and energy belong together in science. The more the divine service is perfected, the more man will realize the unity of the human nature until the good and the evil *yezer* become one as the evil *yezer* is transformed by the good *yezer*. The animal within must be sacrificed. The evil *yezer* must be corrected and totally eliminated by honest and right repentance. Man can make this happen by keeping God's precepts and laws and not falling for the temptations of the evil *yezer*. The struggle takes place within man, primarily.¹⁹⁶

These two powers are also accounted for in the *Zohar*, according to the *Tanya*, and they are the fundamental reason to why the *Zohar* ascribes man such a high value. Man has an enormous cosmic responsibility, since the power to decide over good and evil and impacting the godhead belong to man. The godly soul is capable of suppressing and sublimating evil inclinations or impulses (יצר הרע *yezer hara*) coming from the animal soul, which is inherent in everybody.¹⁹⁷ The *Tanya* explains the central role of prayer in

however, even though this is its major part, and man wills with both of his souls to run after God as it says in Song of Songs 1:4.

¹⁹⁶ The two inclinations are mentioned for example in Berakhot 9:5 "With all your heart – with both your inclinations;" Zalman *Transforming the Inner Self* 2004:7. Zalman writes, "True inner transformation can only occur through one's intellectual contemplation of G-dliness" (page 15). See also Schneerson 1979:13-14, 248, 311, 315. Schochet writes that the evil *yezer* wakes up every day to lead man astray, but through daily prayer a person can transform one's mind and overcome evil inclinations. Schochet 1995:II 52

¹⁹⁷ The *Tanya* ch. 9 and 28. In the lurianic kabbalah, human deeds have a cosmic effect, in that they either cause hindrances against or a flow of divine grace. Man stands last in a chain of sefirot leading to God's powers and energies. The sefirot are formed according to a human pattern and are man's will, wisdom, emotions and physical organs. Jacobs 1999:186-188. See also Schochet 1995 I:59. In Chabad literature this is explained as being of the same idea as sound-waves and light-rays in physics, or on an empirical level only on a metaphysical level. Just as someone speaking on the moon can be heard – with the aid of the right equipment – on earth thousands of miles away,

breaking the evil nature. A dullness of heart may prevent one from praying, also called “service of the heart” (עבודה שבלב *avodah shebalev*). Then one should rage with one’s mind against the animal soul. Zalman also talks about not judging fellow men, because everyone has his own battle that looks different in each and everyone’s lives.¹⁹⁸ He also explains that the side effects of crushing one’s spirit can be depression, which in turn is devastating for one’s Torah and prayer life, because both should be conducted with joy. Depression, meaning that one’s heart is as dead, is derived from the realm of *kelipat nogah*, and not of holiness.¹⁹⁹ Evil can thus be overcome. The five distinct types of human personalities were shortly introduced in the beginning of this chapter and they are based on how far a person has come in the war he wages against evil in himself. We can say that there are different stages in spiritual development that in turn affect the messianic events, because through man’s spiritual service this world is transformed into an abode for God.

“The righteous who prospers” is also “the completely righteous”, because he finds no pleasure in this world and even despises it. He connects God with those who are on lower levels.²⁰⁰ The second type, the righteous who suffers (i.e. “to whom is evil”, someone who experiences evil),²⁰¹ may seem as if he has overcome all evil, but nonetheless evil still has some hold over him and has not been converted to holiness.²⁰² When it comes to the wicked men, “the

likewise “Every activity of man, even speech and thought, affects the whole cosmic order”. Schochet 1995 I:60-61.

¹⁹⁸ The *Tanya* ch. 29 and 30

¹⁹⁹ The *Tanya* ch. 31

²⁰⁰ The *Tanya* ch. 10 is here quoting the *Zohar* II:114b; III:222b and 281a.

²⁰¹ Steinsaltz 2003:249

²⁰² The *Tanya* ch. 10

one who prospers” is someone whose goodness is submissive to the *kelipah*. Zalman is mainly referring to sexual sins here. This type of person feels remorse and he gathers strength from the goodness inside of him from time to time. Through repentance God will forgive him. “The wicked man who suffers” has no thought of repentance at all, but still the *Shekhinah* hovers over him, and so there is always an open door to repent and return to God, independent of what level one is on spiritually.²⁰³

Zalman primarily writes for the fifth type, the intermediate, the *beinoni*. Every person can attain this level at any time.²⁰⁴ This is the person in whom evil is dormant,²⁰⁵ but over whom evil never gains so much power as to make him sin, even though he sometimes feel a desire for the world. He does not carry out the desires, because he knows that he was created so that his brain rules over his heart and evil does not have authority over him. As soon as a thought arises he gladly refuses to accept it and is therefore actually never wicked.²⁰⁶ This is the battle that the intermediate is faced with. He has two “judges”: the evil inclination and the good inclination; anyone who does good is judged by the good inclination. Zalman says, “The final verdict comes from the arbitrator – the Holy One, blessed be He, who comes to the aid of the good nature”, because otherwise a person would not be able to overcome the evil inclination.

²⁰³ The *Tanya* ch. 11. *Igeret ha-Teshuvah* chapter 6 explains that when a sinner does penance he removed the life from sin he committed. When he repents he turns the flow coming from the *Shekhinah* to its proper place. See end of chapter.

²⁰⁴ The *Tanya* ch. 14

²⁰⁵ The *Tanya* ch. 13

²⁰⁶ The *Tanya* ch. 12. *Lessons in Tanya* I:185 explains that evil desires may often arise, but the divine soul of the *beinoni* constantly prevent these desires in thought, speech and action.

Evil is nurtured by evil, but the one who ponders the greatness of God gains strength for his godly soul.²⁰⁷

This is the choice of every individual; to be aware of the status of one's desires, and to triumph over one's nature is in the grasp of anybody, because of one's free will. Even the most unworthy of the worthless has the ability to sacrifice oneself,²⁰⁸ in order to unite with God through overcoming evil and fulfilling the commandments.²⁰⁹ The commandments need to be followed with true feelings of fear and love in the heart, and this will give the commandments vitality. Even though one cannot arouse conscious palpable feelings for God, one can still "attach" good thoughts (i.e. intellectual emotions: תבונה *tevunah*) to the deed, which will result in the deeds ascending to the same level as if it were done with the right kind of fear and love.²¹⁰ In order to change one's habitual nature one has to meditate and thus arouse love for God.²¹¹ The *Tanya* is encouraging its readers saying that this is easy to do for any person who has brains, meaning that anybody can through the intellect achieve love for God. The message is "you can do it", because it is easy to do the will of God.²¹² Faith does not require much

²⁰⁷ The *Tanya* ch. 13. See Kiddushin 30b.

²⁰⁸ The *Tanya* ch. 14. ואפי" קל שבקלים יכול למסור נפשו על קדושת ה'. (Even the most unworthy among the worthless is capable of sacrificing himself for the sanctity of God.)

²⁰⁹ The *Tanya* ch. 14

²¹⁰ The *Tanya* ch. 16. Zalman's original notes tell us that this is also written in the *Zohar* and *Ez Hayim*. See also *Lessons in Tanya* 1:234.

²¹¹ The *Tanya* ch. 15

²¹² The *Tanya* ch. 17 and 25. Again Zalman refers to Deuteronomy 30:14. There may arouse practical problems, but since the brain is under man's control he can meditate on the Torah. It is only the *zaddikim* who have control over their heart. For the wicked, repentance is needed in order to shatter the *kelipah*, so that he can serve God. In chapters 18-25 the *Tanya* repeats the matter, saying that even a person with limited understanding, a woman, or "whatever sort he may be" can fulfil Deuteronomy 30:14 because of the hidden love (אהבה מסתרת *ahavah mesuteret*) that is in the hearts of all Jews as an inheritance from the patriarchs. Zalman writes about how this is easy

understanding, since God cannot be comprehended. Everybody (even women and children) can believe in God because “faith is beyond understanding”.²¹³ And so, by intellectually meditating on God one can come to love God and even endure much hardships and persecution for the sake of the holiness of God.

In short, based on esoteric knowledge, man holds a central role in the world of two reasons. Firstly, because the world is a picture of the heavens and in it man has the position of God. Secondly, all the importance of man has to do with his soul, which is divine. Man’s soul originated with God and longs to go back to its source, but because of its origin it also has the ability to impact its source. Pivotal in the teachings of the *Tanya* is man’s ability to overcome evil and observe the commandments. This receives significance in the fact that it prepares this world so that it can become a dwelling for God. Lurianic mysticism describes this as a way of healing the breach between the Holy One and the *Shekhinah* so that the exile could end and the messianic era would begin.

because the soul of Jews always strives upwards, desires to cleave to God and fears separation from God. See *Lessons in Tanya* I:328.

²¹³ The *Tanya* ch. 18; *Sha’ar ha-Yihud* ch. 9

3.1.4 Means of Uniting with God

Prayer is union with the Shechinah.

– Jacob Immanuel Schochet²¹⁴

Man's relationship with God is foundational in the *Tanya*. Having an identity apart from God is seen as idolatry, which man is accused of when he severs himself from God by transgression, i.e. not observing the commandments, which unites the soul with God and attests and expresses belief in God. This is because the Torah and God are entirely one, and the commandments constitute God's very will and desire. When one obeys the commandments one clothes oneself in the godly soul, which in essence means that a person surrenders completely to the will of God. If this does not happen the godly soul is exiled in the animal soul.²¹⁵ The soul can be released from its exile through study of the Torah and observing the commandments, because the godly soul is situated in the brain, which has authority over the heart, in which the animal soul has its home.²¹⁶

By studying the Torah (as one's time permits) and also by giving charity, man makes a temple and habitation for God. After the destruction of the temple, God abides in the study of the Torah and giving charity, because man's soul and intelligence are too

²¹⁴ Schochet 1998:xix. The *Tanya* expresses the matter as such, "prayer which is the unifying force of the upper spheres" (chapter 23).

²¹⁵ The *Tanya* ch. 23 , 24 and 25; *Lessons in Tanya* 1:312

²¹⁶ The *Tanya* ch. 32

limited for God to inhabit.²¹⁷ According to the *Tanya*, the purpose and goal of creation, including mankind, is that God should have a dwelling here below.²¹⁸ By observing the commandments, man can draw down God's presence on earth. Since good deeds are God's will and his wisdom is an expression of his essence, they are united with God. For a soul to unite with God, man must perform good deeds. This is also explained in the way that good deeds act as oil for the *Shekhinah*.²¹⁹ Commandments observed through action are the only ones that draw down the light of the *Shekhinah* upon one's animal soul and the body – both in need of sanctification. The commandments that only require thought and speech draw down the *Shekhinah* solely on the godly soul.²²⁰ The illumination of the body and the animal soul is very important because of what has already been said about God wanting an abode in the lower worlds, i.e. the physical world. For this to happen the *sitra aħra* must be overcome and “darkness be transformed into light”, which means that evil must be converted into holiness.²²¹

²¹⁷ The *Tanya* ch. 34

²¹⁸ The *Tanya* ch. 33

²¹⁹ The *Tanya* ch. 35. Idel proposes that the drawing down of the divine powers on the lower worlds, explained through the emanation of the sefirot, is “one of the most influential models of thought and action in Jewish mysticism, and is of crucial importance for Hasidic literature”. Idel says this practice was prevalent in both Arabic and Jewish writing during the Middle Ages, as well as in 15th and 16th century kabbalism. Idel 1998:225. In the *Zohar* oil usually refers to the *sefirah* of *ħokhmah*, wisdom. In chapter 53 Zalman speaks about how the *Shekhinah* must garb itself in wisdom. It must have a garment so that creation would not be nullified, since the *Shekhinah* is the source of vitality for the whole creation (chapter 52; *Lessons in Tanya* II:789-800). In order to shine, the *Shekhinah* need a medium, which is likened to a wick. This wick is the first soul, the vivifying soul that provides the Jews with physical life. The wick burns through the Torah and the fulfilment of the commandments.

²²⁰ The *Tanya* ch. 35; *Lessons in Tanya* II:470; *Kuntres Aħaron*, essays 1 and 2

²²¹ The *Tanya* ch. 36; *Lessons in Tanya* II:483. Man is like a micro-cosmos, and in this cosmos the lower realm is constituted by the animal soul and the body, whereas in the world, the lower realm corresponds to the physical world.

In order to fulfil the commandments, 613 in all, love and fear are significant, because love is the root of the 248 positive commandments and fear is the root of the prohibitive commandments. The *kelipot* and *sitra aħra* have a hold on man, draw their sustenance from him, as man breaks the prohibitive commandments. The commandments are expressed through thought, speech and action, which are the garments of man's divine soul; and by actively carrying out the commandments, they will clothe the human soul. God cannot be comprehended, but man can encompass the commandments through understanding, and obey them in thought, speech and action.²²² By using one's intellectual faculties, by binding one's thoughts or focusing and reflecting hard on whom God is, feelings of love and fear are aroused. This type of experiencing and practically feeling God is essential to the Ḥasidic religious practice.²²³

²²² The *Tanya* ch. 4

²²³ The *Tanya* ch. 3. More on love and fear is expounded on in chapters 41-44, 46, where it is stressed how it is easy to awaken love for God and that serving God with fiery love will lead one to excel in one's study of the Torah. The experience of God is the inner motive for religious practice. Song of Songs is used as a metaphor for the love and union between God and man through the Torah and the observing of the commandments. More on love for God is explained in depth in *Sha'ar ha-Yiħud veha-Emunah*, in the first part called *Hinukh Katan*. Finding union with God in prayer is possible through a certain method called *contemplative prayer* (the Hebrew word is "*hiibonanut*" and has the same root as "*binah*", this being the intense form, showing a long, rigorous and deep reflection) meaning meditating and reflecting on the depths of certain intellectual truths until they are fully and perfectly understood. Jacobs 1976:224; 1993:85. In Chabad Ḥasidism this means two intellectual truths, called the *higher perception of God's unity* and the *lower perception of God's unity*. These concepts are also found in the *Zohar* and deal with the uniqueness or oneness of God. Mangel 1993:855; The *Zohar* I:18b. The first one includes meditating on the truth that everything is an expression for the infinite One, because the infinite One is the only true reality. The second truth is a step to even deeper contemplation and is said to be more difficult to comprehend. The lower unity is understanding that the material world is not to be seen as a veil, but is actually a direct manifestation of the divine. These two perspectives are said to be expressed in the *Shema*, found in Deut. 6:4 followed by the words *barukh shem kevod malkhuto le'olam va'ed*. Loewenthal 1997:290.

Observance of the commandments should be motivated by a desire to return one's soul to its source in God. Repentance (תשובה *teshuvah*, literally meaning "return") consists of good deeds.²²⁴ The idea is to unite with God by surrendering to him, abnegating oneself through martyrdom or self-sacrifice (מסירת נפש *mesirat nefesh*). Zalman, moreover, emphasizes that every Jew on earth has the capacity to do so. It means being so consumed with the Torah that everything in a person becomes focused on God, his will and divine service. This will result in the sanctification of God and the manifest presence of God on an individual, because it is said that the *Shekhinah* rests on the one who engages in studying the Torah, as well as the gathering of ten Jews.²²⁵

The *Tanya* demonstrates several meanings of repentance and the return to God. First of all there is the *teshuvah* as repentance for sins, where one "returns" in order to be accepted into the community or to be fit for service. There is no sin that cannot be remedied by *teshuvah*. Another kind of *teshuvah* is the type that deepens one's awareness of sins, resulting in a greater desire to cleave oneself to God (דבקות *devekut*). A third kind of *teshuvah* is when a person deepens his relationship to God. This kind of *teshuvah* has

²²⁴ The *Tanya* ch. 31; *Lessons in Tanya* I:413

²²⁵ The *Tanya* ch. 6. See also chapter 18, as well as Avot 3:6 and Sanhedrin 39a. In chapter 47 Zalman is talking about the bondage of the soul as a form of slavery in Egypt. There also needs to be an Exodus for the soul, which means overcoming all obstacles in order to serve God. See *Lessons in Tanya* II:708. Man has the power to impact God and hinder or release impartation of the divine in the world. How does man do this? Scholem states that Luria taught that everything in the mundane is contingent on spiritual action, and the most important spiritual action to take is prayer. Scholem says that Luria's doctrine of mystical prayer stands directly on the borderline between mysticism and magic and he then interprets this by saying that "The true worshipper in short exercises a tremendous power over the inner worlds, just as he bears a correspondingly great responsibility for the fulfilment of his Messianic task." Scholem 1969:274-276.

nothing to do with sin, and is one which the *zaddik* can perform. There are also different levels of *teshuvah*. The first level is to realize that one's sins have occurred without the right understanding and awareness of their implication. This transforms how a person relates to the sin, but not the sin in itself. The second level is one where the actual essence of the sin is transformed, so that the act turns into a positive phenomenon.²²⁶ Thus, according to Chabad thought *teshuvah* is not only repentance from sin, but also a deeper return to God.²²⁷

3.1.5 The Purpose of Creation: The Messianic Era

It has already been mentioned how the worldview of the *Tanya* finds its purpose in the messianic era. In the following some of the direct messianic references will be considered. In regard to what was discussed in chapter two concerning the messianic feature in early Ḥasidism, it can also be noted that even though messianism is not the most frequent topic of the *Tanya*, it is far from void of messianic expressions. Eschatological expressions are found, and these indicate a living, hoping and active expectation of messianic matters - the very goal of Zalman's writings. Thus, already in the second chapter of the *Tanya*, we find Zalman speaking about the different gradations of souls, notably, saying, “[---] the souls of our

²²⁶ The *Tanya* ch. 7. See also the *Tanya* ch. 25 and *Igeret ha-Teshuvah* ch. 4; Steinsaltz 2003: 191-201, 331

²²⁷ Repentance was one of the issues that the mitnaggedim were concerned about in the early arguments with the Ḥasidim. The mitnaggedim did not see the necessity of continual repentance.

generations who live in the period preceding the coming of the Messiah".²²⁸ When writing about fulfilling the 613 commandments by faith alone, Zalman interprets the quote from Habakkuk 2:4, "The righteous shall live by faith", as implying the resurrection of the dead in the words "shall live".²²⁹ Additionally, when speaking about the importance of joy in carrying out the commandments he says, "Therefore, [the man who accepts affliction with joy], merits [to see] the 'Sun going forth in its might' – in the world to come".²³⁰ These are three examples of how the messianic age, the resurrection and the world to come (i.e. heaven) are represented in the *Tanya*.

In *Igeret ha-Kodesh* and *Kuntres Aḥaron* Zalman goes so far as to call this time "the advent of the Messiah", משיחא, בעקבות²³¹, a time in which the act of charity is the principal service, because Israel will only be redeemed through charity.²³² Likewise, charity is recommendable because "it brings close the redemption".²³³ There are two kinds of souls among Jews: those of Torah scholars and those of the ones who carry out the commandments, of which Zalman especially emphasises the act of charity. He states that even though Torah scholars have an extremely important function in drawing down the illumination and vivification from God to this physical world, this alone is insufficient because it is only completed by the ones who

²²⁸ The *Tanya* ch. 2. The Hebrew text says: דעקבי משיח

²²⁹ The *Tanya* ch. 33

²³⁰ The *Tanya* ch. 26

²³¹ The expression literally means "on the heels of Messiah" or "in the footsteps of Messiah". See also Sotah 49b, Rashi and *Ez Ḥayim* (for mystical implication). *Igeret ha-Kodesh* ch. 9; *Kuntres Aḥaron*, essay 8. The words are a play on Psalm 89:52

²³² *Igeret ha-Kodesh* ch. 9. ישראל נגאלין אלא בצדקה. ("And all Israel...") is a quote from Shabbat 139a and Sanhedrin 98a. The good thing about charity is that it can be dispersed without limits. Zalman writes in chapter 10 that charity is also preferable to sacrifice according to Proverbs 21:3. All the blemishes in the upper and lower worlds, caused by man's sins, can be rectified by means of charity.

dedicate their lives to charity and kindness through the observance of the commandments.²³⁴ Moreover, the one who subdues the *sitra aħra* and converts darkness into light by self-sacrifice “will merit to see ‘Eye to eye’, the Lord returning to Zion” meaning that this person will witness the Messiah’s coming.²³⁵

It is when Zalman has explained man’s role in making the earth a home for God that he comes to the real purpose of creation: the messianic era and the time of the resurrection from the dead, which he says is a well known fact.²³⁶ In the messianic era God will be revealed to all, because he will live on earth (which is the purpose of man – to prepare this home for God). The world has already had a foretaste of the messianic era – at the time of the giving of the Torah, because at that time God filled the earth, just as he will in the messianic era. In the physical world God is hidden, or concealed, but in the messianic era he will be revealed without

²³³ The *Tanya* ch. 21 interpreting Bava Batra 10a.

²³⁴ The *Tanya* ch. 6. Zalman’s focus on the act of charity (צדקה *zedakah*) in his pastoral letters is linked to his support of the group who had settled in the land of Israel. He says that the act of charity will be peace, which is a quotation from Isaiah 32:17. Now, both the land of Israel and peace are central factors in the messianic era, and thus it is probable that Zalman’s teaching and admonishing his followers to give charity serve a messianic purpose. See also especially chapter 14 where Zalman admonishes his followers to “arouse the ancient love and the fondness for our Holy Land”. Giving generously for this cause should increase every year. See also *Lessons in Tanya* IV:236. Zalman’s own hope is expressed in chapter 21 where he says about the Holy Land, “may it be rebuilt and re-established speedily, in our days (I call upon you)”.

²³⁵ The *Tanya* ch. 9. The whole Hebrew text says, וכל הזוהב את יצררו בזה ופותח ידו ולבבו, אתכפאי ס״א ומהפך חשוכא לאור השי״ת השוכן עלינו בבחי׳ עשיה בעקבות משיחא ויזכה לראות עין בעין בשוב ה׳ ציון כר׳ (see very end of chapter). (And whoever sacrifices his impulse in this respect and opens his hand and heart subdues the *sitra aħra* and converts the darkness into the light of God, blessed be he, who with the advent of the Messiah, dwells over us in a state of action, and he will merit to see eye to eye the Lord returning to Zion.)

²³⁶ The *Tanya* ch. 36. ונודע שימות המשיח ובפרט כשיחיו המתים הם תכלית ושלמות בריאת עולם. (It is well known that the messianic era and especially the time of resurrection of the dead is the fulfilment and culmination of the creation of the world, the purpose for which it was originally created.)

garments. Then the nations, i.e. the gentiles, will also see his revealed glory.²³⁷

In the messianic era the prophecy will be fulfilled, saying, “And the number of the children of Israel will be as the sand of the sea that cannot be measured nor counted”.²³⁸ In *Igeret ha-Kodesh*, Zalman explains that there is a type of circumcision of the heart that will only take place in the messianic era, when God himself will circumcise the hearts of men.²³⁹ When it comes to laws concerning what is permitted, unclean and clean, Zalman says there will be no difference between the time of the exile and the days of the Messiah. This means that the redemption that will take place at the coming of the Messiah will only be physical, when Israel also will be freed from being under other nations, but this does not speak about spiritual redemption. In the time of the resurrection the commandments, on the other hand, will be abrogated. Thus the days of the Messiah are prior to the resurrection from the dead, and the spiritual redemption, when the commandments will be made redundant, will come at the time of the resurrection of the dead. Spiritual redemption means freedom from the law. The place of the

²³⁷ The *Tanya* ch. 36. It is said in the Tikkunim that “There was no place from which he did not speak to them” at the giving of the Decalogue. See also *Lessons in Tanya* II:482-483

²³⁸ *Igeret ha-Kodesh* ch. 7

²³⁹ The *Tanya* ch. 4. See *Deuteronomy* 30:6. Zalman explains that there are two parts in the circumcision: *milah* (excision) and *peri'ah* (uncovering, see Numbers 5:18). The same regards the heart: “Having circumcised and not uncovered is tantamount to not having circumcised” (Shabbat 137b). It is first said that one should “excise the prepuce of your heart” – by oneself, but the “thin membrane is a difficult matter for man”, which is why God will have to do it.

Torah will be of knowing its secret aspects, because everybody will already know the revealed Torah innately.²⁴⁰

The messianic era is described by Zalman simply as the revelation of the divine light of *Ein-sof* in the material world, and the fulfilment of this era is in the hands of man: it depends on man's actions and service during the exile.²⁴¹ It was "the sin of groundless hate and a division of hearts" that caused Israel into exile and the withdrawal of the *Shekhinah* into its exile.²⁴² Thus we see that all that Zalman's writings overcoming evil and arousing love and fear for God in order to fulfil the commandments up until this point are actually pointing to this very thing: to bring in the messianic era, when holiness will be all around. The responsibility of man is to elevate the vitality of the entire world from *kelipat nogah* to the realm of holiness in order to banish the spirit of impurity from the world. Every Jewish soul is given the ability and responsibility to elevate a part of this physical world.²⁴³

²⁴⁰ The *Tanya* ch. 26. Here is an interesting aspect of the redemption: it is divided into two stages. The first stage is physical redemption and the second stage is spiritual redemption.

²⁴¹ *The Tanya* ch. 37. והנה תכלית השלימות הזוה של ימות המשיח ותחיית המתים שהוא גילוי (This ultimate perfection of the messianic era and of the resurrection of the dead, which is the revelation of the light of the blessed Ein-sof in this material world, depends on our actions and service throughout the duration of the exile.) See the very beginning of chapter 37. See also *Igeret ha-Kodesh* ch. 14.

²⁴² *Igeret ha-Kodesh* ch. 32

²⁴³ The *Tanya* ch. 37; *Lessons in Tanya* II:489. All physical objects can be elevated to the realm of holiness, it is not only a person's animal soul that can ascend when performing a commandment, but even food and drink can be elevated from the dominion of *kelipat nogah*. The divine soul can go into exile in order to perfect and elevate the animal soul. Zalman also goes on to explaining the esoteric exile of the *Shekhinah* in order for her to refine the sparks that has fallen into *kelipot*. See chapter 37. When it comes to the commandments and their drawing down the light of God upon this world, it is said that study of the Torah calls God's essence upon man, which is why study of the Torah is superior to prayer. Prayer only creates a change on a material level – healing, prosperity and the alike – whereas study of the Torah affects the soul on a

In this task the understanding of mystical matters is of utmost importance, especially the understanding of the doctrine of sefirot, which is called a great deed (*mizvah*) because it leads to love and fear for God: the root or source for all commandments and that which motivates the observance of all commandments. Comprehension of the *sefirot* inspires and elevates a Jew's service.²⁴⁴ When a man's feelings for God and mankind are aroused in his heart, it simultaneously creates an arousal from above, i.e. from God. The feelings from God ascend on man, in order to effuse him with "fruits in this world, while the principal remains for the world to come".²⁴⁵ But, as has already been mentioned, godliness is chiefly drawn down through the physical commandments, on aspects of the world that are lower than speech and thought, including "physical commandments" include the wearing of fringes (ציצית *zitzit*), the putting on of phylacteries (תפילין *tefillin*) and the giving of charity (צדקה *zedakah*). Their creation comes from God himself and they are such that man can perform them easily.²⁴⁶ In *Kuntres Aḥaron* Zalman still says that the primary service in this era, which is at the dawn of the coming of Messiah, is worship. It is fit and proper to entirely devote oneself to this.²⁴⁷

spiritual level. See *Lessons in Tanya* II:509. In chapter 50 Zalman describes a kind of love for God that will not only join man to God, but actually expire into godliness.

²⁴⁴ *Igeret ha-Kodesh* ch. 15

²⁴⁵ *Igeret ha-Kodesh* ch. 17

²⁴⁶ *The Tanya* ch. 20. The custom of *zitzit* is based on *Numbers* 15:38. The fringes are mostly attached to the *tallit*, prayer shawl. The custom of donning *tefillin* is based on *Deuteronomy* 6:8. These are black leather boxes with scrolls of parchment with bible verses, put on the forehead and arm by leather bands.

²⁴⁷ *Kuntres Aḥaron*, essay 9. The text in Hebrew is, ומכש"כ עתה הפעם בעקבות משיחא שאין תורתנו קבע מצוק העתים. (It is even truer at this time, in the period just preceding the advent of the Messiah, when our study of the Torah is not constant because of the exigencies of our times. The primary service in the

3.2 The *Zaddik*: Linking Heaven and Earth

“As far as we are concerned, we can pray to the Rebbe and he can deal with God for us.”

- member of the Lubavitch head quarter's synagogue, Crown Heights, New York²⁴⁸

3.2.1 A Very Special Person, Executing Influence Not Only On Earth

The whole work of the *Tanya* is focused on the intermediate, the *beinoni*, whereas the doctrine of the *zaddik*, or the Ḥasidic leader, is not emphasized very much. However, since the Ḥasidic leader was one of the main novel characteristics of Ḥasidism, it is necessary to investigate what Zalman has to say about the *zaddik*. Furthermore, the role of the *zaddik* has academically been compared to that of a messianic figure. The *zaddik* has a redemptive role, combined by the ministry of the high priest, the Messiah king and the prophet.²⁴⁹ It is as a sort of a Messiah that he mediates between heaven and earth. This will help us understand why the messianic expectations are aimed at the Ḥasidic leader – as it was in the beginning of Ḥasidism and as we still find evidence for through the Chabad-Lubavitch movement.

period just prior to the coming of the Messiah is worship, as Rabbi Ḥayim Vital writes in *Ez Ḥayim* and *Pri Ez Ḥayim*.)

²⁴⁸ <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/pages/ShArt.jhtml?itemNo=824393> April 17, 2008.

²⁴⁹ Lenowitz 1998:199-201

Firstly, not everyone can become a *zaddik*.²⁵⁰ He is one who has been trained since his youth to reach this level, where the root of his service stems from the love of God.²⁵¹ Zalman explains that there are two kinds of love, and those who merit the state of “great love” (ecstatic love) are called *zaddikim*. This is a gift to the one who is perfect in fear. The *zaddikim* are motivated by love²⁵² and their innate evil has been turned into holiness.²⁵³ The world could not stand without the *zaddikim*, which is why God created them. Through them God reveals godliness.²⁵⁴ According to Zalman only the *zaddik* may be called “servant of God”, which is a title that has already been earned.²⁵⁵

Being a *zaddik* is completely different from being an ordinary person, for the *zaddik* never has any superfluous thoughts that would come from himself. If he does have such thoughts – they come from others.²⁵⁶ He actually enjoys the nature of the world to come, already here on earth. Zalman says this is the meaning of the verse from *Numbers* 18:7 “I will give you the priesthood as a service

²⁵⁰ The *Tanya* ch. 14. A *beinoni* can sometimes function as a *zaddik*, even though he has not yet reached the level of a *zaddik*. In fact, Steinsaltz continues, one is born with the unique ability to master the animal soul, and without that ability no-one can become a *zaddik*. Everybody is not even expected to pursue this level, whereas everyone can and should be able to attain the level of the *beinoni*. The definition of a *zaddik* is, in short, one who has no internal struggle, but whose animal soul has been totally nullified by the godly soul. Steinsaltz 2003:5, 267, 308, 333.

²⁵¹ *Sha'ar ha-Yihud, Himukh Katan*

²⁵² *Sha'ar ha-Yihud, Himukh Katan*. The second love (“eternal love”, see the *Tanya* ch. 43) can be attained by every Jew who takes part in profound contemplation of the depths of his heart that arouse love for God.

²⁵³ The *Tanya* ch. 10; 29; 43

²⁵⁴ *Sha'ar ha-Yihud* ch. 5. See also the *Tanya* ch. 1 which expresses the view that the *zaddik* is the foundation of the world (Proverbs 10:25) and because there were so few of them he planted them in every generation.

²⁵⁵ The *Tanya* ch. 15

²⁵⁶ The *Tanya* ch. 28

of gift.”²⁵⁷ The *zaddik* may concern himself with esoteric matters (as opposed to the intermediate.)²⁵⁸ In Ḥasidism in general the *zaddik* is believed to be able to annihilate the sin among his adherents, but Zalman interestingly enough taught that the greatest gift of the *zaddik* comes after his death. As long as he is on the earth his greatness is limited to the physical world because his body is here, but after his death he is no longer limited. It is then that he can lift the Jewish community up to God perfectly.²⁵⁹

The context for Zalman writing this was the death of his own rebbe, Rabbi Menaḥem Mendel of Vitebsk. Zalman wrote to console the Ḥasidim in the land of Israel, where Rabbi Menaḥem Mendel of Vitebsk had settled, with the words from the *Zohar* III:71b, that says, “When the [*zaddik*] departs he is to be found in all the worlds more than in his life-time.” He explains this by saying that “The righteous man lives by faith,”²⁶⁰ meaning that the *zaddik*’s life is not fleshly, but it is comprised of spiritual aspects such as faith, love and fear. Hence, when the *zaddik* dies, he is able to leave the faith, love and fear that he has with those Ḥasidim that are attached to him.²⁶¹ The reason why they can partake of these attributes when

²⁵⁷ *Sha’ar ha-Yiḥud, Ḥinukh Katan*

²⁵⁸ The *Tanya* ch. 39. Zalman does not seem to count himself into this crowd. The *zaddikim* can concern them with esoteric matters because they are in the mystical category of “vehicle” – for the palaces (היכלות *heikhalot*) of holiness. (See also the *Tanya* chapter 29.)

²⁵⁹ *Igeret ha-Kodesh* ch. 27. See also Ehrlich 2000:48.

²⁶⁰ Habakkuk 2:4

²⁶¹ The contemporary expositions of Chabad-Lubavitch teach that the *zaddik* is recognizable through his special relationship to both God and people. The *zaddik* is filled with a consuming love for God, which prompts him to love God’s creation. Thanks to the special position with God that the *zaddik* has, he has special powers, through which he can affect God. This might mean God showing mercy to a sick person. Schochet explains that the *zaddik* has always had this ability: it was not just in biblical or talmudic times, but rather every generation carries these special people with extraordinary skills. Schochet 1995:III 89-91.

being close to the *zaddik*, is that these aspects are no longer in their original vessel. The spirit (רוח *ruah*) of the *zaddik* namely remains with his followers. Also according to the *Zohar* the world endures thanks to the prayers of the *zaddikim* in the world above, which is why they shield the world even more after their death. Since the material world, according to the mystical worldview, is the world of action, the *zaddik* is instilled with an ever-growing light when the Ḥasidim take action in this world.²⁶²

Those who have read Ḥasidic tales may find the doctrine of the *zaddik* alien and incompatible with their view of Ḥasidism. The spiritual importance and meaning of the *zaddik* to the Ḥasid is not always evident in the popular Ḥasidic stories. Joseph Dan argues that this may well be the reason for the great surprise of the non-Ḥasidic world to the emergence of the contemporary powerful Ḥasidic leaders. The *zaddik* moves between the spiritual and the mundane freely though, meaning that he provides for his followers on both a spiritual and material level. The Ḥasidic community assists and strengthens the mystical power of the *zaddik* by having faith in him as well as supplying his worldly needs.²⁶³

²⁶² *Igeret ha-Kodesh* ch. 27; *Lessons in Tanya*, V:162-165; *Zohar* II:16b; III:70b; 71b. See also Psalm 97:11.

²⁶³ Dan 1999:82, 78-80. Dan says that the same applies to the Messiah, which is how the cosmic assistance of the Messiah changed into an interdependence between the Ḥasid and his leader in everyday life.

3.2.2 Ecstatic Praying

The *Tanya* says nothing about the way a *zaddik* prays. In general it can be stated that the *Tanya* is not a work aimed at the spiritually advanced in particular, but rather it emphasises every individual's ability to cleave to God. Ecstatic feelings are to be felt also during the Chabad prayers, by means of activating one's intelligence and contemplating certain truths about God. The passage about ecstatic praying *à la* Besht has still been included, in order to form a consciousness of the Ḥasidic spiritual experience; of how it was in the beginning and what Zalman himself must also have been accustomed to.

When considering the spiritual duty of the *zaddik* in Ḥasidism, prayer is by far the most important matter. This is the means by which the *zaddik* accomplishes his God-given assignment. The foundation for this practice was laid by Besht himself and he set a theological example for other Ḥasidic leaders. The two very special features in the theology of prayer of Besht were referred to by scholars as “*ecstatic prayer*”, and the “*ascents of souls*”, i.e. the souls of the Ḥasidim.²⁶⁴ According to Chabad literature, Zalman regarded Besht as his spiritual grandfather.²⁶⁵ Therefore we shall now investigate Besht's trademark: praying with ecstatic gestures in a state of trance.

When speaking of Besht's ecstatic prayer, witnesses state that it was not conducted in private, but rather took place in the synagogue on more than one occasion. It actually seems as if Besht's

²⁶⁴ Etkes 2005:124-127

way of praying became his hallmark from very early on. The purpose of the ecstatic prayer was to reach communion with God (דבקות *devekut*). This is how Besht's conduct was described in *Shivhei HaBesht*.²⁶⁶

During the vocalized *shmoneh esreh* the Besht was seized with a violent shaking and trembled and went on trembling as he always did during his prayer [---] Besht remained in his place and did not move onward toward the Ark, R. Wolf Kotses the Hasid came and looked at his face and saw that it was burning like a torch and that his eyes were bulging out and were open and motionless as if he was dying heaven forbid. [---] And he went with them and stood before the Ark and trembled somewhat and began to recite the Hallel, quaking all the while. And afterward when he had concluded the *Kaddish* he stood and trembled for a long time and they had to put off reading the Torah until he had calmed down.

The same account recounts another occasion where there was a water jug near Besht as he was having one of his experiences of ecstasy. In this story the water starts moving as Besht is shaking and the explanation that is given to this event is that the *Shekhinah* was hovering over the water. The importance of the trembling and the manifestation of God comes from the biblical events and trembling at Mount Sinai, which is one of the high points of the Torah, and a basis for fascination of Jewish mystics. Rabbi Dov Ber also interpreted the ecstatic manifestations of Besht as God hovering over him. He himself became part of Besht's experience when he was smoothing out a wrinkle on Besht's prayer garment

²⁶⁵ Steinsaltz 2003:307

²⁶⁶ This translation is taken from Etkes 2005:128-129.

while Besht was in trance. Suddenly the trembling came over Rabbi Dov Ber as well as the table he tried to hold on to. He says he had to pray God to take away the shaking from him, because he was not strong enough to carry on with it. Other elements of the mystical experiences included bending backwards almost to his knees, loud and strange noises and violent gestures. Besht was also sweating immensely because of the emotional intensity.²⁶⁷

According to Etkes, Besht himself explained the gestures and loud cries as a way of shielding himself from the things that would try and distract his thoughts as he was praying. This he said in his defence when being ridiculed. The outward manifestations were, in Besht's mind, means of helping "achieve liberation from the characteristic consciousness of earthly life". In the first stage of what would be the mystical experience, Besht would consciously make these gestures and noises. The next stage would be uncontrollable movements and Besht explained this as having direct contact with the divinity at this point.²⁶⁸

²⁶⁷ The purpose of including these stories here is an attempt to press into the way of thinking of a Hasidic mind. I am not taking a stand concerning the historicity of *Shivhei HaBesht*, and I am not trying to reconstruct the historical Besht. The Besht that is seen here is the ideological Besht, who the Hasidim of today would know, revere and emulate. This is important for the method applied in this study – to become Hasidim in order to understand how they read the texts.

²⁶⁸ Etkes 2005:128-129

3.2.3 Converting Evil into Holiness

Psalm 112:4 says, “He shines in the darkness as a light unto the upright, he that is gracious, and merciful and [*zaddik*].” This is interpreted by Zalman in such a way that it is the *zaddik* who transforms darkness into light, the *zaddik* is the one who is fond of charity (צדקות *zedakot*, plural). This, Zalman says, is referred to as “salvation” (ישועה *yeshua*).²⁶⁹ The light of the *zaddik* radiates over his disciples who engage in study of the Torah and worship. Through this radiation the Ḥasidim are imparted with thoughts of repentance and good deeds.²⁷⁰ Transforming darkness is also linked to annihilating *sitra ahra*, which is furthermore accomplished by the *zaddik*.²⁷¹

There are two types of *zaddikim*, *zaddik gamur* (perfectly righteous) and the *zaddik she-eno gamur* (imperfectly righteous). For the complete *zaddik* every action is the will of God and he does not have to control his desires, because they always reflect the will of God. He still has a free will, however, and can be held responsible for making wrong choices. The incomplete *zaddik* does what God wants, but has to act consciously and direct his mind to do the will of God.²⁷² Steinsaltz explains that the *zaddik* only wants to serve God and has no desire to go against God’s will. The *zaddik*’s feelings, thoughts and desires are all focused on godliness. It cannot be determined whether someone is a complete *zaddik* based on these, however, because the difference is internal and invisible. According to

²⁶⁹ *Igeret haKodesh* ch. 9. Thus we can say that salvation for the Jews is to be found with the *zaddik*.

²⁷⁰ The *Tanya* ch. 27. See towards end of chapter.

²⁷¹ The *Tanya* ch. 27. Again we see that the salvation from all evil is to be found with the *zaddik*.

Steinsaltz, the inner state of a *zaddik* goes beyond behavioural perfection. The *zaddik* does not sin, because his animal soul has become a force for holiness (as opposed to the incomplete *zaddik*).²⁷³

The messianic era and the resurrection from the dead is the same as the revelation of God's glory, according to the *Tanya*.²⁷⁴ The *zaddik* who has achieved mastery over evil has in fact elevated the *kelipah* within to holiness and transformed his soul completely, according to Steinsaltz. "The reason they are called 'ascendant ones' is that they transform evil and make it ascend to holiness."²⁷⁵ The one wanting to ascend to the heavenly court rooms is not permitted to do so, unless he has "transformed darkness into light".²⁷⁶ Steinsaltz comments on this saying that these *zaddikim* are called "ascendant ones" because they elevate the lowest and most mundane parts of the material life to higher worlds, and even their very actions reach the higher worlds.²⁷⁷

Another reason for the complete *zaddik* to be called "the ascendant one" is because of his desire to do only good "for the

²⁷² The *Tanya* ch. 1; Steinsaltz 2003:46-47, 252.

²⁷³ Steinsaltz 2003:250, 333

²⁷⁴ The *Tanya* ch. 37

²⁷⁵ When a person obeys the commandments and the will of God, evil is shattered and the light of *Ein-sof* is revealed, and the holiness hidden by *kelipot* (the shells of evil hiding holiness) is dissolved into God. Through this all of the 600 000 souls that Israel is made up of will be absorbed into holiness and the community of Israel will become a chariot (*merkavah*) for God. All impurities will disappear from the earth and the glory of God that fills the earth will be seen. Steinsaltz explains that in kabbalah a *merkavah* is anything that is fully obedient to the will of God, just as a chariot drawn by horses is subservient to the one driving it. He says that whenever a Jew obeys a commandment the parts of his body active in performing it becomes a temporary *merkavah* for God. Zech 13:2 talks about removing the impurities from the earth.

²⁷⁶ The *Tanya* 10; Steinsaltz 2003:259; *Zohar* I:4a. Sanhedrin 97b speaks about "ascendant sons" (*bnei aliyah*).

²⁷⁷ Steinsaltz 2003:260. Steinsaltz goes on to quote Jeremiah 15:19, "If you return and I bring you back, you will stand before Me; and if you extract the valuable from the vile it will be as if [you have placed it in] my mouth."

sake of the Above”); he does not even desire to attach himself to God for his own sake because he does not think of himself. There is no selfish desire in the complete *zaddik*. A *zaddik* who is the “leader of a generation”, as Steinsaltz writes, will, in this way, sacrifice himself, in the same way as Moses, who did not want to accept the role as the leader because he knew what difficulties he had to come against. Steinsaltz states that ultimately Moses did assume his role, and in this succeeded in “obliterating the ambition of his Godly soul – for God’s sake alone”. Steinsaltz continues, “A true leader is one who is capable of the ultimate self-sacrifice: the sacrifice of his very ‘I’; of his ‘*nefesh, ruach* and *neshamah*’; of his soul’s yearnings to cleave to God.”²⁷⁸

3.2.4 The Ascent of Souls

The tzaddik’s mission in life, his duty to his fellow man and to God, is to involve himself with the world and elevate it.

- Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz²⁷⁹

One important aspect in Ḥasidism has always been the ultimate experience of God called “cleaving to God” (דבקות *devekut*). In

²⁷⁸ Steinsaltz 2003:263

²⁷⁹ Steinsaltz 2003:266. When the *zaddik* forgets himself and even his longing for the *unio mystica* in order to involve himself in the profane world, he is in fact uniting the Holy One with the *Shekhinah*, Steinsaltz says (p. 266).

essence this is a mystical union with God. This is also spoken much of in contemporary Chabad literature, even though it is not present in the *Tanya*. In Chabad *devekut* is the same thing as *hitbonanut*, the contemplative meditation, which was supposed to have the same result as *devekut*. The common aspect in *devekut* and *hitbonanut* is concentration.²⁸⁰ For the Lubavitchers study of the Torah and fulfilling the commandments are the highest form of *devekut*.²⁸¹ As has already been stated, the *Tanya* is less concerned with the *zaddik*, as with every believer's capacity to excel in spiritual matters. On the contrary Hasidism in general stresses the redeeming role of the *zaddik* for his followers. The belief is existent in Chabad as well, as the introductory quote expresses. In order to gain an understanding of how Lubavitchers may perceive their *zaddik* as a redeemer, the task of the *zaddik* in elevating or ascending the souls of his people, so as to unite the Holy One with the *Shekhinah*, will now be examined.²⁸²

In early Hasidism the leadership system with a *zaddik* received importance through the mystical belief in the origin of souls, denoting that a group of souls had the same root or family in heaven. The *zaddik* only had "power" to affect the souls that belonged to the same root as his own soul. According to Ada Rapoport-Albert, Rabbi Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye explained that the *zaddik* is the redeemer (גו'על *go'el*, which could also be kinsman) of the people whose souls were connected to him. In Hasidism the kabbalistic belief in the transmigration of souls became a task of the *zaddik*: he was supposed to elevate the souls of his people to their roots through his mystical

²⁸⁰ Steinsaltz 2003:310-311

²⁸¹ Schochet 1995 I:44

²⁸² Steinsaltz 2003:266

union with God.²⁸³ The *zaddik* moved between the spiritual and the mundane worlds and could do away with evil in the life of his followers on both these levels. He could bring repentance, which was spiritual, and secure health and prosperity on the material level.²⁸⁴

The *zaddik* had to act on behalf of the souls of his people, because the sins of one person were believed to influence all the souls that were connected to it – also the soul of the *zaddik*. This was a concept based on kabbalistic theory of metaphysical connections that bind all of the souls of Israel together. In the end it might not matter how holy someone was – his soul could still be affected by the souls of sinners. Besht, on the other hand, believed in the reversed order of things. When he repented as “the head of the generation”, he believed, it had an impact on the moral state of the sinners around him. Rabbi Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye shifted the stress from the leadership doing this to the people: the people had to adhere to the spiritual leader in order to be connected to heavenly realms. In this sense Ḥasidism meant something new: ordinary people were supposed to commune with God in this way. Up until then, mystical communion with God had been seen as the prerogative of the elite. Now the elite became necessary for the ordinary Jew. He had to attach himself to the *zaddik* to be able to fulfil his duty in the service of God, because without the *zaddik* he could not do it.²⁸⁵

²⁸³ Rapoport-Albert 1997:126-128. See also Steinsaltz 2003:310-311.

²⁸⁴ Dan 1997:423

²⁸⁵ Etkes 1997:161-164

3.3 Summary and Discussion

Regarding the *Tanya*, the purpose of the five parts of the work, is to guide the “*beinoni*” (intermediate) in his quest for God. All of the deeply theological and mystical expositions aim at helping the Ḥasid reach further in his spirituality, especially in prayer and feeling love and fear for God. The book is not primarily a doctrinal work, but a pragmatic one. When using the inductive study method on the *Tanya* it becomes evident that a great part of its contents is taken up with topics dealing with worldview and man’s relationship to God. When looking at these two themes in the contemporary Chabad material, the likeness is remarkable. The contemporary theologians, such as Steinsaltz and Schochet, follow the *Tanya* closely.

The *Tanya* has a very positive view of human nature, because of the inheritance that any Jew has in the forms of a godly soul and love hidden in the heart. There is no limit to what a man can accomplish if he only meditates on God and his greatness. This will arouse love and fear for God which in turn fuel man’s divine service in carrying out the commandments. Man has to wage war against the evil inclination coming from his animal soul. The God of the *Tanya* is likewise good and gracious. God is near even the most wicked with his presence, and is always ready to receive the one who wants to repent for past sins and return to God, and willing to live a life devoted to him. The wicked man can also start shattering the *kelipot* by battling evil and thus unite with God. Although the world is under the dominion of *sitra aḥra*, God is in his creation, but he is not contained in creation.

A few themes stand out as one reads the *Tanya*; some of which are recurring. The first one is 1) man's inherent power to determine one's destiny, independent of gender and social and spiritual status. Secondly, the *Tanya* exalts 2) simple Jews, and 3) self-sacrifice for a Jewish way of living and says that 4) it is easy to fulfil the commandments. Furthermore, the *Tanya* advocates 5) man's intimate relationship with God through prayer and obeying the commandments, by which means man is united with God on a mystical level, and by which God's presence is revealed in the material world. God's revelation in the lower or physical world is the purpose of creation, because God desires a home on earth. This is what the messianic era implies: God's indwelling in the physical world, for which man is responsible to cause or build through his actions, but also through thought and speech. From the above we learn that the worldview of the *Tanya* is in fact eschatological, because everything in the world has a messianic purpose.

It is quite a common view among academics that the founders of Ḥasidism were very economic concerning expressed eschatology, that the discussion about redemption was marginal, and moreover, that they simply stayed within the traditional beliefs about messianism. Thus, it is said that messianism was not the motivating factor for Ḥasidism. Additionally redemption was seen to be about the individual's inner salvation and not about the historical redemption of the whole community. It has been stated that it is difficult to map collective redemption in the first four generations of Chabad Ḥasidism.²⁸⁶ Concerning early Chabad Ḥasidism Elijah has stated that

²⁸⁶ See for example Ravitzky 1994:313

it was indifferent to any type of messianic expectations and national redemption—quite a radical statement.²⁸⁷

I would argue that when reading the *Tanya*, the messianic era and the collective redemption is the very climax of its teachings. If one takes out all of the messianic material from the *Tanya*, one is left with teachings about individual spiritual development – without purpose. One could perhaps argue that the purpose of the spiritual practices is for inner harmony and that the experience of God is the central factor for living a life devoted to God and the commandments. But, as Sarachek has said,²⁸⁸ people need hope – and that is not found in a set of rules, rules to be observed for their own sake. The whole purpose for fulfilling the commandments is to create an abode for God on earth – which will take place in the messianic era. By means of observing the commandments and prayer, the presence of God is drawn down, and evil is transformed into holiness, and in this way the Ḥasidim together with the *zaddik* carry the responsibility for ushering in the time of the Messiah and the redemption that will follow in his footsteps.

Furthermore, individualism is not characteristic of Ḥasidism, neither socially or theologically. Socially, Ḥasidim live in tight communities, close to one another. Theologically, one of the core beliefs of Ḥasidism is that all souls are connected to each other. This is of highest centrality, because all souls have the same divine origin, the source to which the Jewish soul longs to return. To return, one has to attach one's soul to someone whose soul has a higher a rank. In Zalman's pastoral letters, *Igeret ha-Kodesh*, in particular, there is an

²⁸⁷ Elijor 1998:386

²⁸⁸ See chapter 2.

emphasis on the community, through the way Zalman looks after his followers and admonishes them to look out for and love one another, especially through the giving of charity. All of this has a messianic impetus in the weighty teachings on the giving of charity – which will result in peace – and the highlighting of the Holy Land, which seems to be of high and emotional value to Zalman himself. He is careful to mention how significant love for the Holy Land is, and how he wishes that it would be rebuilt – “speedily in our days.”²⁸⁹ Redemption is not solely for the individual – but the individual has a cosmic impact, for the benefit of the whole Jewish community.

Both the *Tanya* and the Chabad literature emphasises God’s unity and how any type of separation from God implies idolatry. God is incomparable, he is beyond grasp – he cannot be comprehended or described in anthropomorphic terms. God’s existence is the only true existence, because of his immanence, which creation is totally dependant upon for its existence. God’s immanence is concealed in creation – creation is God’s clothing. This is not how it is supposed to be. On the positive side it means that God is present everywhere, but on the negative side it means that God (i.e. the *Shekhinah* here) is hidden and trapped, in need of redemption. The redemption of the *Shekhinah* will take place alongside man’s redemption.

Concerning man, his soul is his most important aspect, and the means by which man is explained. Man is not understood as inherently evil, although man is created with an animal soul that is under the influence of an evil inclination. Man, however,

²⁸⁹ See *Igeret ha-Kodesh* ch. 21

also has another influence: the good inclination. With time, man receives another soul: the godly soul. The animal soul needs to be transformed by the godly soul, through studying the Torah and fulfilling the commandments. This means that man can control evil, and consequently also his destiny. This in turn has a cosmic and collective significance for the Jewish community at large, as well as for creation, because man influences the destiny of the world through his actions. Man also has the authority to impact God by the same means, observing the commandments and studying the Torah, and so draw down godly influx on the physical world. By way of prayer and meditation the Chabad Ḥasid also unites with God and gains strength to take the right kind of action.

The key role in all of this belongs to the *zaddik*, who is characterized by his great love for God, the absence of evil and his ability to impact his followers by mystical means, both in this world and even more so after his death. When it comes to the doctrine of *zaddikism*, the interpretations in the contemporary material have a slightly different emphasis than the work of the *Tanya*, first of all in the fact that they say much more about the role of the *zaddik*. In fact, Zalman does not say much about the *zaddik* at all, and what he says about the *zaddik*'s character is that the *zaddik* has overcome the evil inclination. Zalman's view on the *zaddik* is highly mystical and one of the *zaddik*'s tasks is to concern himself with esoteric matters. Zalman's emphasis on knowledge and keeping the commandments is mainly directed at the *beinoni*, a level he encouraged all Ḥasidim to reach.

The mystical side of the interpretation of the *zaddik* is seen in how the *zaddik* is said to be the foundation of the world,

without which the world would not last. He does more than just annihilate evil. His light is believed to radiate over his followers and infuse them with the things they need, in order to repent and do good. This is true even more so after the *zaddik*'s death. After his death he is a shield to his followers and he leaves his spirit, his love and fear of God with them. Thus the emphasis is clearly mystical in Zalman's teachings on the *zaddik*. The term *beinoni* is very seldom mentioned outside of the *Tanya*. Thus it seems that *zaddikism* has gained a greater space in contemporary literature, and lesser weight is put on the ordinary, intermediate man.

Chabad shares features with the theology of Ḥasidism at large. Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye saw the *zaddik* as a redeemer and in the *Tanya* there is the view of the *zaddik* as the saviour. The *zaddik* is the one who shines in the darkness for the benefit of this followers and he is also the one to finally defeat darkness so that everything will turn into holiness. On a mystical level he can rule over his disciples by infusing them with thoughts of repentance and energy to obey the commandments. Zalman put a lot of emphasis on the intellect, which is normally said to be the differentiating factor for Chabad from other Ḥasidic schools, but he did not leave out the mystical side of it – the intellect was also a channel to cleave to God. Zalman's view on the Jewish soul and the *zaddik* was likewise mystical.

In this chapter I have attempted to emphasise, first of all, how the worldview of the *Tanya* is inseparable from messianic longings; in the words of the *Tanya* the messianic era is the purpose of creation. Thus, when the *Tanya* speaks of spiritual development, available and attainable for every individual with the help of the

zaddik, it is with a certain purpose: to improve the world in order for it to become a dwelling for God, because observing the commandments draws down the presence of God on the earth. Secondly, I have attempted to point out the explicit references to the Messiah and the messianic era made in the *Tanya*. My argument is that scholars, such as Elijah, Ehrlich and Ravitzky, have failed in taking into account the messianism presented in the *Tanya* when regarding the contemporary messianic fervour in the Chabad-Lubavitch movement. The *Tanya* sees the present time as being at the advent of the Messiah and that the one who observes the commandments will merit experiencing the Messiah coming, thus representing acute or immediate messianism. In addition to observing the commandments, Zalman emphasizes the giving of charity and a self-sacrificial life-style in order to hasten the Messiah's coming. In the following chapter it will become further evident how Rabbi Joseph Isaac Schneersohn and Rabbi Schneerson use the same concepts in their messianic messages.

4. Acute Messianic Awareness in the 20th Century

The purpose of the previous chapter was to form an overview of the foundational work of Chabad-Lubavitch, the Tanya, and establish the centrality of messianism in the worldview of the early movement. As was shown, the mystical background could be clearly seen, as well as the essential role of the messianic ideology. In this chapter we shall see how that ideology has been continued in the texts of the last two Chabad Rebbes, Rabbi Joseph Isaac and Rabbi Schneerson. Do they deviate from the Tanya or develop it? In 4.1 the message of Rabbi Joseph Isaac is sketched out and related to the Tanya. This is followed by that of Rabbi Schneerson in 4.2, related to the message of Rabbi Joseph Isaac and the Tanya. In looking at the message of the two Lubavitcher Rebbes, Arthur Green's methodological advice has been taken into consideration. We have already gained an understanding of the Hasidic perception of the intellectual world and the spiritual world order through chapter two and three.

The research is limited to newly (re)published material in English by Lubavitch organisations and authors. The reason for this is the attempt to establish the self-image of the Lubavitch movement today. Giving out material in English has a clear purpose for the Lubavitch publishers and is following an assertion by Rabbi Schneerson to open up the teachings for a broader audience

*that may not know Hebrew or Yiddish.*²⁹⁰ Translation is always to some extent an interpretation, and hence it might be good to bear in mind that the message can have been altered from the original meaning.

Rachel Elior has put forward the notion that a messianic resurgence took place during the 20th century in the midst of great tribulation in the Jewish community caused by the pogroms in Russia as well as the Holocaust. In chapter three of this study, however, it was demonstrated how in the 18th century messianic expectations were integrated in the theological system of Shneur Zalman. Elior and Ehrlich have tried to demonstrate intensification in the messianic fervour from decade to decade during the 20th century. Contrary to this view is the picture put forward by the authors of Chabad-Lubavitch literature,²⁹¹ who constantly point out messianism in earlier generations of Lubavitch *zaddikim*. This could, of course, simply be an attempt to demonstrate a continuation of the messianic belief in the movement in order to justify their own messianic beliefs. In the section below we shall take a closer look at what the message from the middle of the 20th century until the death of Rabbi Schneerson consisted of. From that we will see whether and to what degree the

²⁹⁰ See most books from *Kehot Publication Society*, for example the foreword of *I Await His Coming Every Day* as well as *From Exile To Redemption* vol. I, p. 163. In the latter, Rabbi Schneerson explains that when expressing one's desire for the coming of the Messiah, any language should be utilized so that the world will know about the anticipation of the Jewish people. In addition he says that many Jews do not know "the Holy Tongue" and since the times are urgent, messianic proclamations should be made also in English (implying that the time is too short to teach Jews Hebrew).

²⁹¹ These authors are Rabbi Joseph Isaac and Rabbi Schneerson, but also in the compilations of talks and quotations on certain themes such as the book *From Exile to Redemption*, vol. I and II, the representatives of Chabad-Lubavitch present the reader with messianic sayings from generations of Chabad-Lubavitch leaders.

messianic message changed or intensified, as well as the impact this had on the Lubavitch campaigns. Most importantly we will see what role the *Tanya*, where acute messianic expectations are put as the core of the worldview, plays for the last two generations of Lubavitch leaders.²⁹²

The fact that times were horrendous for the Eastern European Jewish community in the late 1800s, under Stalin in Soviet Russia, and even more so during the Nazi regimes, is not difficult to understand. Many Jews emigrated to America, but still struggled for a sense of destiny and purpose in their new country. The world was indeed in need of a radical change for the better! Rabbi Joseph Isaac and his successor, being firmly grounded in the teachings of the *Tanya*, turned to the Bible and the sages to proffer strength in a time of need and optimism for the future where doubts concerning God's omnipotence and protection thrived. Rabbi Joseph Isaac offered "eschatological certainty and messianic purpose", as Rachel Elior has articulated it.²⁹³ While I agree that Rabbi Joseph Isaac played a central role in offering hope to his followers and others, my point is to prove that in doing so, he was neither original nor innovative; but rather merely continued on a path already trampled by generations before him, and laid out by Shneur Zalman in the very beginning of Hasidism. The message of Rabbi Joseph Isaac and Rabbi Schneerson, therefore, need to be evaluated in the light of the authoritative work of Chabad – the *Tanya*.

²⁹² Elior 1998:383; Schneersohn 1999 and *From Exile to Redemption* vol. I and II. Mostly orally submitted stories are retold when quoting previous Lubavitch *Rebbses*.

²⁹³ Elior 1998:384

4.1 The Message of Rabbi Joseph Isaac

Oh, how great is that day. There is none like it. It is a time of trouble for Yaakov [the Jews], but he shall be delivered through it.

- Jeremiah 30:7, quoted by Rabbi Joseph Isaac²⁹⁴

Between 1941-1945 the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Joseph Isaac (1880-1950),²⁹⁵ wrote discourses in the periodical, *HaKeriah VehaKedushah* (Reading and Holiness), mostly on the themes of repentance, the keeping of the commandments, the importance of the Torah, as well as self-sacrifice for God and for Judaism – themes that were all connected to the coming of the Messiah. The journal even had a motto: *Let us immediately repent and we will immediately be redeemed*. The discourses from *HaKeriah VehaKedushah* were collected and published in Yiddish under the supervision of Rabbi Schneerson in 1946. They were later published in English for the first time in 1986 in the book *Chassidic Discourses*, and the edition used here is the second, printed in 1999 (volume I) and 2001 (volume II). This is worth noting from the point of view that the Lubavitch publishing house clearly continues to see the message of Rabbi Joseph Isaac as highly relevant.

²⁹⁴ Schneerson 1999:99

²⁹⁵ Rabbi Joseph Isaac Schneerson was born in the town of Lubavitch and was 13 years old when his father became the leader of the Lubavitch dynasty. He was the only child and his father's chief aid for thirty years until he himself assumed leadership in 1920 on his father's death.

The eschatological message of Rabbi Joseph Isaac is also included in part in the collection of talks and writings of the Lubavitcher *Rebbes*, *From Exile To Redemption* from 1992 (volume I) and 1996 (volume II). This source is somewhat problematic in the sense that it includes both quotations and adaptations of speeches. I have used the material where it is clear that Rabbi Joseph Isaac has written it himself (as opposed to oral tradition), i.e. material that can be verified by being printed elsewhere as well, such as in his published letters, called *Igros Kodesh by the Rebbe Rayatz* (Rayatz being the acronym for Rabbi Joseph Isaac's name in Hebrew) or in those works where his speeches have been collected. This material is worth paying attention to, particularly because Elijah states that Rabbi Joseph Isaac only tried to create existential hope in the shadows of the Holocaust.²⁹⁶ Or, additionally because of Ehrlich's view that Rabbi Schneerson is responsible for the messianic fervour in today's Chabad-Lubavitch, because Rabbi Joseph Isaac did not commence his fierce messianic propaganda during the war, but much earlier, from when he had just assumed the office as a *Rebbe* in 1920 and throughout the years of his leadership. The material used in this study was chiefly written during the war, but there is reason to believe that Rabbi Joseph Isaac's messianic expectations was always high, because of quotations (found in the material at hand) from his letters that were written during earlier years. His letters should have to be researched to fully answer the question about his messianic agenda before the Second World War.

²⁹⁶ Elijah 1998:383-384

During the time Rabbi Joseph Isaac lived, the face of Judaism altered; not only had it to counter the mitnaggedim, but also socialists, Zionists and secularists in the Jewish flanks. In addition to that there was also a rise in anti-Semitism. Rabbi Joseph Isaac had witnessed the persecution of the Jews in the Soviet Union, Poland, Lithuania and Latvia firsthand, and on his arrival in New York in 1940 he perceived a great spiritual poverty among the Jewish population. In both Yiddish and English newspapers in New York he urged the community to take responsibility for the situation in Europe and as soon as he arrived in America he also founded a messianic society called *Mahane Israel* (Camp of Israel) for which *HaKeriah VehaKedushah* was the voice. The society began advocating *yiddishkeit* (“Jewishness”) among the secular Jews, but also a devoted religious life to the already observant.²⁹⁷ Rabbi Joseph Isaac repeatedly used the phrase “immediate redemption” (לא לתר לגאול) *le’altar lege’ulah*.²⁹⁸ Just how expectant Rabbi Joseph Isaac was about greeting the Messiah can be seen in the Torah scroll that he commissioned a professional scribe to write. This Torah scroll was the one with which he expected to welcome the Messiah. Apparently he believed the coming of the Messiah was so imminent that he wanted to have this scroll ready when the Messiah arrived in order that he could present it to the Messiah.²⁹⁹

The most recurring themes in Rabbi Joseph Isaac’s message will now be approached.

²⁹⁷ Elior 1998:384, 387-395; Ehrlich 2000:252-253

²⁹⁸ Elior 1998:388

²⁹⁹ *Igros Kodesh* by the Rebbe Rayatz, vol. VI 1987:28. The scroll was written 1941-42, but the final letters was not written until 1970 on the command of Rabbi Schneerson, according to *From Exile to Redemption*, vol. I 1992:96.

4.1.1 Finding Strength despite the Messianic Birthpangs

Rabbi Joseph Isaac believed that he was living at the time when the Messiah would be revealed and he interpreted the hardships imposed on the people through the pogroms and the Holocaust as the labour pain of the Messiah. This becomes evident in the fact that he called the times “the period of *ikvesa diMeshicha*”, a midrashic term meaning “the footsteps of the Messiah”, implying the period at the end of exile.³⁰⁰ In other words, this was the time of the generation following the footsteps of the Messiah,³⁰¹ which meant that the coming of the Messiah was near, according to him. Moreover, the world was at “the eve of redemption”, a time that, according to Isaiah 24, will be characterized by extreme agitation, which Rabbi Joseph Isaac interpreted as “the birthpangs of *Moshiach*”. These had in fact already had an effect on “us all”, he said, thus establishing the fact that these difficult times were already upon the world and that they, leader and followers, were all in it together.³⁰²

Although no reference is made to the *Tanya*, in those sections where Rabbi Joseph Isaac writes about the time being ripe for the Messiah to appear, he quotes rabbinic sources instead, but it is clear that he phrases himself in just the same way as Zalman before him. In *Igeret ha-Kodesh* and *Kuntres Aḥaron* Zalman writes about “the advent of the Messiah”, בעקבות משיח, an expression literally meaning “on the heels of Messiah” or “in the footsteps of Messiah”. The *Tanya* also talks about נשמות דורותינו אלה דעקבי משיח – “the souls

³⁰⁰ Schneersohn 1999:7-8; Sotah 9:15

³⁰¹ *Igros Kodesh* of the Rebbe Rayatz, vol. I 1986:488

³⁰² Schneersohn 2001:230

of our generations who live in the period preceding the coming of the Messiah".³⁰³

If someone is "on the heels" of someone else, there is no time or room for delay. If the generation that Zalman lived in was on the very heels of the Messiah, his messianic expectations were immediate and active. In the same way it is impossible to see Rabbi Joseph Isaac's interpretation of the times he was living in (200 years after Zalman) as being any less acute concerning the coming of the Messiah. Of course Rabbi Joseph Isaac mentions this fact more frequently, but the events of the time, such as the constant pressure of war and persecution, may have prompted him to do so. The words and the interpretation of the time in the eschatological timeline are the same as that of the *Tanya*.

Rabbi Joseph Isaac also offered hope by saying that the birthpangs of the Messiah were not entirely dire, as the dreadful time they were living in would have a cleansing effect on the Jewish nation and purify it from all corporeal filth. He says, "the trouble, G-d forbid, during the end of exile is not only a punishment for the past, but also a cause of ultimate good, the complete Redemption."³⁰⁴ Just as boiling water cleanses, so do troubles and tribulations. What was taking place in the world was also to be likened to the busy preparations for the Sabbath meal, just before the time of lighting the

³⁰³ *Igeret ha-Kodesh* ch. 9; *Kuntres Aḥaron*, essay 8. The *Tanya* makes reference to Sotah 49b, Rashi and Ez Hayim (for mystical implication). This is a wordplay on Psalm 89:52

³⁰⁴ Schneersohn 1999:100, 107, 142-143, 196. Rabbi Joseph Isaac bases his arguments on Ezekiel 20:33, Exodus ("Shemos") 13:14 and Sanhedrin 98b.

candles. In that sense, the Sabbath day is imminent – the final Sabbath day when all hardships would be over.³⁰⁵

Not only were these the times when the Messiah was being birthed, but the (mystical) spiritual and physical exile would end, which pertained yet another threat to the Jewish people. Rabbi Joseph Isaac compared the end of this exile to the Exodus from Egypt, where the Israelites had to face the Amalekites, who endeavoured to make the Israelites cold to the Torah and the commandments. According to Rabbi Joseph Isaac, the time just before the advent of the Messiah would be similar: there would be those attempting to make the Jews unresponsive to God's promises revealed in the Torah.³⁰⁶

In the *Tanya* chapter 47 there is an explanation of the bondage of the soul as a form of slavery in Egypt. Zalman says there also needs be an Exodus for the soul, which means overcoming all obstacles for serving God.

At the time of the original exodus from Egypt, the insolent Amalakites descended upon the Jews in order to make us cold to Torah, *mitzvos* and G-dliness. Just as it was then, so it is prior to the ultimate Redemption. There are those that seek to make Jews frigid and unresponsive to G-d's promises revealed in the Torah and through the words of our prophets and sages of blessed memory.³⁰⁷

According to Rabbi Joseph Isaac, the time of the Messiah was the time when Jews would grow cold in their faith and *yiddishkeit*. It was

³⁰⁵ *Igros Kodesh* of the Rebbe Rayatz, vol. II 1986:531

³⁰⁶ Schneersohn 1999:113

³⁰⁷ Schneersohn 1999:113. Schneersohn makes references to Tanhuma, Teitze 9 and Rashi on Deuteronomy 25:18.

obviously the right time to become aware of the promises in the biblical prophesies, and to see them fulfilled. The Exodus becomes for both Zalman and Rabbi Joseph Isaac a symbol for what needs to take place during the days before the coming of the Messiah. The Jewish soul was faced with obstacles that needed to be overcome – hindrances for obeying the commandments, which in turn need to be fulfilled in order to make this world a place for God. As explained in chapter three, according to the *Tanya* the task to make the earth an abode for God is the messianic purpose of creation.

Rabbi Joseph Isaac also described the difficult times as “thorns in the flesh”. These were in fact evidence for the end time, but Rabbi Joseph Isaac again presented his followers with optimism: every Jew had been given power to overcome, namely through the power of self-sacrifice (מסירת נפש *mesirat nefesh*).³⁰⁸ He makes reference to the *Tanya*, but not to the passages in the *Tanya* that speaks specifically of self-sacrifice. Instead he quotes Zalman’s teaching on how the brain has authority over the heart. Zalman’s point is that it is possible to obey the commandments – by intellectually setting one’s mind to it and contemplating God. The *Tanya*, chapter 51, which Rabbi Joseph Isaac refers to, does, however, also make a connection to the capability in every Jew, saying that *Ein-sof* fills all the worlds, and moreover that the essence of *Ein-sof* is the same in both the upper and the lower worlds. The concept of self-sacrifice is accounted for in the *Tanya*, however, on several occasions. The reason Rabbi Joseph Isaac seems so reluctant to make reference to the *Tanya*,

³⁰⁸ The power of *mesirat nefesh* is explained by Rabbi Joseph Isaac based on the *Tanya* ch. 51: a person’s main life-force is in the brain, from which life goes out to all the parts

even though his major themes are taken directly from the *Tanya*, is unclear. It is possible that the teachings of the *Tanya* are so well-known to the Lubavitchers that no reference is needed. A more plausible theory is that it was thought that biblical and rabbinical sources would make a bigger impact on those readers, who were not necessarily Lubavitchers, and to whom Chabad wanted to reach. The desire to reach over into “new land” is seen in the decision to print material in English and other major modern languages. The message that the Lubavitchers want to convey is that they are firmly founded on the Bible and rabbinical sources and that the messianic belief is central to all of these.

Rabbi Joseph Isaac said that the strength of self-sacrifice would be revealed even more strongly at the end of the exile than at the time of the temple, and thus people in these last days would have enough power to endure whatever hardships lay ahead. What is needed is simple faith in God and the coming of the Messiah. Even, as Rabbi Joseph Isaac says, “simple Jews”, meaning those with simple faith, surpass the scholars because they have a greater *mesirat nefesh* and they will have the power to endure.³⁰⁹ The concept of self-sacrifice is for Zalman connected to the sanctification of God and the revelation of the glory of God on men, as when someone engages in Torah study or on the gathering of ten men (*minyan*). The *Tanya* expresses how every Jew has the capacity to abnegate himself completely to God,³¹⁰ and thus, as Rabbi Joseph Isaac does, also states

of the body. In the same way the soul gives life to the body, since the body is really only a garment for the soul. All bodily organs are subject to the soul.

³⁰⁹ Schneersohn 1999:8, 18

³¹⁰ The *Tanya* ch. 6. ככל איש ישראל למטה שבכחו להיות בטל ממש לגבי הקב"ה במסירת נפשו. על קדושת חז.

the same link between self-sacrifice and all types of Jews, even the simple ones. In the *Tanya*, chapter 18, Zalman writes, “the blessed Ein-sof is clothed in the wisdom of the human soul, of whatever sort of a Jew he may be.”³¹¹

The people of Israel living in the Diaspora are always under different sorts of troubled circumstances. Rabbi Joseph Isaac explains how they feel distressed because of being banished from their homes, even though they know that this is just a temporarily state of being. Being a people without a home also causes feelings of shame and of having been made redundant. Rabbi Joseph Isaac says this is true even for wealthy people, who seem to enjoy physical pleasures in life and living in harmony with the regime of the country they live in. He cautions that they should take heed because rulers “seem like friends when it is for their own benefit” (*Pirkei Avot* 2:3). Additionally, a people in exile does not only suffer physically, but also spiritually. Despite all of this, people can be of good cheer because this will all change in the time of the Messiah. A final consolation will come through the Messiah.³¹²

Thus we see several crucial connections between the *Tanya* and Rabbi Joseph Isaac. First of all they share the belief that this is without a doubt the end time before the Messiah’s arrival. The coming of the Messiah is not a distant hope for either, but both Zalman and Rabbi Joseph Isaac stand as examples of an immediate type of messianism. Secondly, they both stress the ability innate in every Jew, despite one’s social or spiritual standing, to overcome whatever obstacles are necessary in order to bring in the Messiah.

כי אין סוף ב"ה מלובש בבחי' חכמה שבנפש האדם יהיה מי שיהיה משראל. ³¹¹

³¹² Schneersohn 2001:229-233, 249, 330

Most importantly one should make use of the power of self-sacrifice. At the time of Rabbi Joseph Isaac these obstacles were, of course, the hardships and struggles presented by the violent persecutions of Jews, which made his message all the more desperate.

4.1.2 A Spiritual War – Repentance

All that remains is to polish the buttons of our uniforms so that we will be ready to go out and greet out Righteous Mashiach.

- Rabbi Joseph Isaac, 1928³¹³

The difficult times were interpreted by Rabbi Joseph Isaac as a spiritual war through which God would make the people return to him in order for the messianic era to come. He explains that the “great day” that the prophet Jeremiah talks about (see introductory quote in 4.1) relates to the very last stage of exile when the war of *Gog* and *Magog* is waged. At this time there will not be one country unaffected by enmity towards the Jewish people during the exile, but the wrath of God will finally consume the enemy. During the Second World War, Rabbi Joseph Isaac said that because of events in the West, God’s name will be glorified, and holy reverence will arise among people as a consequence of occurrences in the East (without

³¹³ *From Exile to Redemption*, vol. I:109. “The world’s *erev Shabbos* is a busy day of preparation for the imminent holy *Shabbos* day,” he explains this expression about the Sabbath.

making further reference to which these occurrences are). This will lead the Jews to repentance, i.e. *teshuvah*, literally meaning ‘to return’. As long as Zion is in a state of destruction, however, it means the redeemer has not yet come. At the same time, until the redeemer comes, all the buildings in the land of Israel will be classified as ruins. Furthermore, Rabbi Joseph Isaac warns that redemption will not come because the land of Israel is rebuilt, but only by means of repentance. Rather, the main task of the redeemer is to rebuild the land of Israel into a permanently lasting condition.³¹⁴ Since Rabbi Joseph Isaac wrote this during the war, the state of Israel had not yet received its independence, but of course the land was being rebuilt in other ways.

In Hosea 6:1 the people are encouraged to return to the Lord. This means, according to Rabbi Joseph Isaac, that a person who becomes broken hearted and sincerely regrets past misdeeds and who is consequently filled with a desire to study the Torah, becomes observant (most importantly keeps the Sabbath) and prays (put on *tefillin*). The innermost meaning of repentance is to become better. This often implies becoming upset with one’s former lifestyle, the “animalistic lifestyle”. This kind of awakening to do *teshuvah* can actually come from “above” if a person does not awaken a feeling of *teshuvah* himself. This feeling can come upon a person very suddenly

³¹⁴ Schneersohn 2001:247-248. “The enmity towards the Jewish people [during the exile] will be so widespread that it will affect all countries, like a river overflowing its banks causing uncontrolled flooding. But Divine wrath will ultimately consume the enemy [*Rashi, Metzudas Tziyon*, Isaiah 59:19], and the Divine Name will be hallowed as a result of events in the West. At that time, the holy reverence springing from events in the East will overwhelm humanity. Jews will then do *teshuvah*, at which time “a redeemer shall come to *Tziyon*, and those in *Yaakov* who repent of [their] transgression, says the L-rd.” Schneersohn 2001:247

and will ensure a person is counted as good on the Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*).³¹⁵

When Rabbi Joseph Isaac writes about the broken heart meaning that as the rightful repentance, Zalman's teaching on the *kelipah* and *kelipat noga* shines through. The animal soul,³¹⁶ stems from *kelipah* (קליפה),³¹⁷ – a shell that needs to be broken in order to set free the good in the animal soul that comes from *kelipat noga* (נגיפה קליפה). This is done by means of repentance and intense concentration and devotion in prayer (כוונה *kavanah*), according to the *Tanya*.³¹⁸ The animal soul is believed to be situated in the heart of man. Hence to break the shell of *kelipah* the heart needs to be broken.³¹⁹ This is also why Rabbi Joseph Isaac points out the need to be upset with one's "animalistic" lifestyle.

Furthermore Zalman explains in *Igeret ha-Kodesh* that there is a type of circumcision of the heart that will only take place in the messianic era, when God himself will circumcise the hearts of men.³²⁰ This is at the point when everything stemming from *kelipah* has been converted into holiness. Israel was exiled because of divided hearts and hate, along with the withdrawal of the shekhinah into its exile.³²¹ The division of hearts is the heart being divided between *kelipah* and *kelipat noga*.

Teshuvah can also be imposed on the people as a result of distress. God will inflict reprimands and punishments if

³¹⁵ Schneersohn 2001:243-245, 251

³¹⁶ See The *Tanya* chapter 9.

³¹⁷ The *Tanya* ch. 1

³¹⁸ The *Tanya* ch. 1. Chapter 7 explains how the *kelipat nogah* is an intermediate category between the completely unclean or sinful *kelipot*.

³¹⁹ The *Tanya* ch. 9. See beginning of chapter.

³²⁰ The *Tanya* ch. 4. See Deuteronomy 30:6.

people do not repent in such a way that they are lead to return to him and *yiddishkeit*, leading a Jewish observant life. These two ways of getting to the point of *teshuvah* is described by Rabbi Joseph Isaac as a father dealing with misbehaving children. First the father acts kindly in the hope that this will persuade the child to choose the right thing, but if this does not work, the father will deal more severely with the child.³²² The distress of the people is not to be seen as a punishment for sins, even though afflictions will increase in accordance with the sins of the people. Rather Rabbi Joseph Isaac prefers to see God as a father who brings his children to a state of mind where he can do good to them – i.e. end the exile and bring in the Messiah, which will lead to a perfected earth so that God can make it his dwelling place.³²³ Zalman, similarly, has a positive view of God as the one who helps man overcome his sins: “the Holy One, blessed be He, who comes to the aid of the good nature”.³²⁴ The *Tanya* states that without this a person would not be able to overcome the evil inclination. When one contemplates the greatness of God, one gains strength for his godly soul.³²⁵

The one who does not believe in eschatological matters, i.e the resurrection from the dead and the world to come, is worse than an animal that lives only to gratify the yearnings of the body and does not have a higher purpose in life, according to Rabbi Joseph Isaac. God has given man the ability to overcome the most heinous character traits, however, and transform them into good

³²¹ *Igeret ha-Kodesh* ch. 32

³²² Schneersohn 2001:249-250

³²³ Schneersohn 2001:275

³²⁴ The *Tanya* ch. 13

³²⁵ The *Tanya* ch. 13. In The *Tanya* reference is made to Kiddushin 30b.

qualities. A person must ignore his evil inclination and do *teshuvah* instead of being immersed in the material world, because when someone earnestly cries out in repentance it will bring the complete redemption. Additionally, by “calling upon Him in truth” the birthpangs of the Messiah will be eased: “the afflictions of these times serve as an awakening to repentance” which, in turn, will usher in redemption. Thus, prayer and crying out to God is the battle to be fought, because only in that can one overcome the evil inclination and repent in a true spiritual sense. Teshuvah namely has a spiritual meaning where it is not done only for past sins, but the soul reaches greater heights and reverts to the state prior to its descent to earth.³²⁶ As already mentioned, Zalman also said in the *Tanya*, chapter one, that the *kelipah* is overcome by intense prayer; and in chapter 29 and 30 Zalman explains the central role of prayer in breaking the evil nature. Repentance for Zalman has two levels, where the second level is one where the actual essence of the sin is transformed, so that the act is converted into a positive phenomenon.³²⁷ Rabbi Joseph Isaac says that when the sin is transformed the soul becomes completely cleansed – as pure as it was before it came to earth.

The time of the war between Gog and Magog is called the very reason for salvation, during which there is not only a physical war but also a spiritual battle that takes place within man – namely during prayer. This is when the evil inclination must be overcome by the good inclination. The divine soul will enliven the prayers, and cause a person to cry out to God for repentance. Every Jew,

³²⁶ Schneersohn 1999: 94, 97, 106-107, 131, 196, 203. The author refers to Isaiah 40:5 here.

notwithstanding whether he is religious or not, even those who spitefully violate the Torah must repent. Rabbi Joseph Isaac urges, “Everyone must repent in order to merit the redemption.”³²⁸ The *Tanya* also stresses the fact that the godly soul is capable of suppressing and sublimating evil inclinations or impulses (יצר הרע *yezer hara*) coming from the animal soul, which are inherent in everybody.³²⁹

Similarly, Rabbi Joseph Isaac emphasizes the importance of every Jew – also those who may not think they are much. He says the Messiah will be distinguished by his supreme humility, which means the Messiah will not be a respecter of people, but he will teach everybody, “simple folk, too.” In the same way the *Tanya* encourages his readers to attain the level of the *beinoni*, which any person can attain any time.³³⁰ For someone who attains this level, evil has become inactive,³³¹ and it never gains so much power as to make this person sin.³³² These people will even be envied by the scholars, according to Rabbi Joseph Isaac, because the Messiah will have a special delight in the unscholarly, but self-sacrificing Jews, upon which the Torah really stands. When the Messiah comes, even the great men of old will seek to rejoice with simple Jews – Moses will join in the dance with them and King David will take their

³²⁷ The *Tanya* ch. 7. See also the *Tanya* ch. 25, *Igeret ha-Teshuvah* ch. 4 and Steinsaltz 2003: 191-201, 331.

³²⁸ Schneersohn 1999:99-100, 106; Isaiah 30:15; Sanhedrin 97b; Yoma 86a; *Hilchot Teshuvah* 7:5 (by Maimonides).

³²⁹ The *Tanya* ch. 9, 28

³³⁰ The *Tanya* ch. 14

³³¹ The *Tanya* ch. 13

³³² The *Tanya* ch. 12. *Lessons in Tanya* I:185 explains that evil desires may often arise, but the divine soul of the *beinoni* constantly prevent these desires in thought, speech and action.

hand.³³³ Rabbi Joseph Isaac called for observing the Torah with its commandments out of simple and absolute faith in God instead of rationalization or reasoning.³³⁴

Rabbi Joseph Isaac is firmly based on the worldview of the *Tanya* and the belief in the animal soul and the need to break the power of *kelipah*, which is done by repentance, when the soul will become pure as it was before its ascent to earth. In line with Zalman he also knows that God will come to the rescue in this process. Most of all they both emphasise the individual's ability to overcome evil by intense prayer and petition, irrespectively of whether a person is a scholar or not. The ideal of the *beinoni*, which is not mentioned per se by Rabbi Joseph Isaac, still stands out for both Zalman and Rabbi Joseph Isaac.

4.1.3 Meriting the Coming of the Messiah

*What are people waiting for? The Redemption is
being held up! It's already the afternoon of erev
Shabbos!*

- Rabbi Joseph Isaac, 1949³³⁵

In order for the Messiah to come, the world needed to be made ready and it was the responsibility of the people. Quoting

³³³ *From Exile to Redemption*, vol. II 1996:5, 13, 24

³³⁴ *Igros Kodesh* by the Rebbe Rayatz, vol. I 1986:488

³³⁵ *From Exile to Redemption*, vol. I:108

Talmud Yerushalmi and the Midrash *Deuteronomy Rabbah* Rabbi Joseph Isaac lists five causes for redemption, based on how the Jewish people were rescued out of Egypt. These five are a) distress, b) repentance (תשובה *teshuvah*), c) the merit of the patriarchs, d) mercy and e) *keitz*, i.e. the appointed time for ending the exile. Of these he says repentance is most important.³³⁶ He often talks about “meriting the coming of the Messiah and redemption”, meaning that redemption will not come without the Jews taking active part in bringing it.

He follows the words of the mishnaic rabbi, Rabbi Eliezer who opposes Rabbi Yehoshua. The latter is of the opinion that redemption will come at its appointed time, regardless of the state of the Jewish people, whereas Rabbi Eliezer points to the necessity of repentance. According to him God will bring about the circumstances for redemption. The Jews, perforce, will repent if they do not understand to repent on their own. As long as the Jews do not repent, they will remain in exile, but God will see to it and bring repentance and then redemption.³³⁷ Redemption will come only through repentance, Rabbi Joseph Isaac emphasises.³³⁸

Meriting the coming of the Messiah is done through repentance, and particularly truthful repentance, and it receives extra power through *mesirat nefesh*. The miracle of Purim, when the Jews were saved out of the hands of Haman, was the result of the people’s total self-sacrifice for Torah and the commandments, which were brought about by Mordechai’s call for repentance. The people at that time sacrificed themselves for Judaism in hope that God would save

³³⁶ Schneersohn 2001:249-250; Deuteronomy Rabbah 2:23

³³⁷ Schneersohn 1999:99; Isaiah 30:15

³³⁸ Schneersohn 2001:230

them, and, according to Rabbi Joseph Isaac, the people of today need to strengthen their faith in redemption through the Messiah in a similar way in order to see their hopes fulfilled speedily.³³⁹ Those Jews who repent with wholehearted trust will “merit speedily to welcome” the Messiah. It is also of utter importance to think and speak about the coming of the Messiah in order to greet him.³⁴⁰ In several places Rabbi Joseph Isaac uses the phrase “merit speedily” to welcome or greet the Messiah. Thus, saying that a person who wholeheartedly and with simple and self-sacrificial faith and repentance awaits the coming of the Messiah will not only make the world ready for redemption but actually hasten the coming of the Messiah. It is important to note here that Rabbi Joseph Isaac did not only speak of this in relation to the Holocaust, but as the introductory quote in chapter 4.1.2 shows, his messianic rhetoric was strong also in 1928.

In this way we see how, for Rabbi Joseph Isaac, repentance, self-sacrifice and redemption are strongly linked together. It has already been established that the concepts of redemption (i.e. the coming of the Messiah) and self-sacrifice are well founded in the *Tanya*. But how is it with man’s active involvement in meriting the Messiah? The *Tanya* does speak about speeding up the coming of the Messiah, not in direct relation to repentance, but rather according to

³³⁹ Schneersohn 2001:278-280. ”Not only did they repent, but the whole year through they demonstrated total self-sacrifice for Judaism [*Torah Or*, p. 97a, 102b], in hope that G-d Himself would save them from their terrible predicament. This came to pass in the second Purim period, with the miracle of Purim. [---] In our time [when our hopes are again] of redemption, may G-d make us fortunate with His Divine assistance, that we repent and from the depth of our hearts lament that which we have made mundane. May we fulfil Torah and *mitzvos* in complete truth, and strengthen our belief and faith in the complete Redemption through our righteous *Moshiach*. And may we again see our hopes speedily fulfilled.” Schneersohn 2001:280

him charity is of highest value, because “it brings close the redemption”.³⁴¹ One could argue that because the whole work of the *Tanya* is centred on the theme of renewed obedience of the commandment, i.e. repentance, therefore self-sacrifice and repentance are also means for bringing the redemption closer in the *Tanya*. Zalman states that, this time, the advent of the Messiah, is a time in which the act of charity is the principal service, because Israel will only be redeemed through charity.³⁴² The good thing about charity is that it can be dispersed without limitation, he says, and is also preferable to sacrifice. All the blemishes in the upper and lower worlds, caused by man’s sins, can be rectified by means of charity.

Zalman and Rabbi Joseph Isaac seem to divert on this matter. Is it the giving of charity or repentance that will hasten the Messiah’s coming? The most important thing in this context is not actually what will bring the Messiah, but that the belief that his coming can be quickened. The situations that the two leaders were speaking into were very different, and they saw different needs in their time. For Zalman the need connected with the messianic hopes was the immigration of Ḥasidim to Israel. These were people in financial need, and for Zalman it became essential to support their task and thus bring the Messiah, because immigration to Israel was a stage in the messianic timeline.³⁴³ The situation was very different for Rabbi Joseph Isaac. His mission was first and foremost to awaken the

³⁴⁰ Schneersohn 1999:7,18, 97, 113, 131, 193, 203

³⁴¹ *Igeret ha-Kodesh* ch. 21 הגדולה צדקה שמקרבת את ההגאולה, a quote from Bava Batra 10a

³⁴² The *Tanya* ch. 9. ישראל נגאלין אלא בצדקה. (“And all Israel...”); Shabbat 139a and Sanhedrin 98a

³⁴³ *Igeret ha-Kodesh* ch. 6, 14, 21

spiritually impoverished Jews of America to Torah-living.³⁴⁴ His connection to the *Tanya* in admonishing Jews to become observant is apparent: the whole message of the *Tanya* is focused on helping the individual seeing his potential to obey the commandments, based on Deuteronomy 30:14. This, in turn, has the purpose of drawing down godliness on the lower worlds to prepare the world for the Messiah.³⁴⁵

Even though the *Tanya* does not explicitly put repentance and redemption in the same sentence, repentance is also a central topic in the *Tanya*, considering one of the parts are wholly devoted to the subject (*Igeret ha-Teshuvah*). Zalman states that good deeds constitute repentance and they are carried out in order to “restore the portion of the Lord to the Source and Root of all the worlds”. The *Tanya* teaches that one should be in a state of repentance all one’s life, because this is the escape from exile, i.e. the coming of the messianic era.³⁴⁶ Rabbi Joseph Isaac says, “*teshuvah* means returning to the way one is expected to live according to the Torah” and in the same section he continues, “*Teshuvah* prepares us to speedily greet the righteous *Moshiach*.”³⁴⁷ In the previous chapter it became clear that good deeds, i.e. fulfilling the commandments, have a messianic impetus, and thus when Rabbi Joseph Isaac states that repentance will make the Messiah come quicker he is simply echoing the *Tanya*. When Chabad campaigners help non-observant Jews to fulfil the commandments, they are in fact helping them repent – which in turn is believed to hasten the coming of the Messiah, just as both Zalman and Rabbi Joseph Isaac believed.

³⁴⁴ Elior 1998:384, 387-395; Ehrlich 2000:252-253

³⁴⁵ The *Tanya* ch. 1, 36

³⁴⁶ The *Tanya* ch. 31

4.1.4 Taking action

And it shall be on that day that a great shofar shall be sounded, and those who were lost in the land of Ashur and those who were banished in the land of Mitzrayim shall come and bow down to the L-rd on the holy mountain in

Yerushalayim.

- Isaiah 27:13, quoted by Rabbi Joseph Isaac³⁴⁸

Because not all Jews were living an observant lifestyle and needed to repent so that the Messiah could come, Rabbi Joseph Isaac urged his listeners to take part in igniting the Jewish spark within fellow Jews. Rabbi Joseph Isaac quoted the passage from Isaiah 27:13 as a prophecy to be fulfilled in the days before the final redemption. He explains that Isaiah predicts that the Jewish nation will be scattered during the exile, but that all Jews will be gathered to the Jewish nation when the time of redemption comes. Rabbi Joseph Isaac expresses his concern for the Jews living in isolation who would be estranged from Judaism and not willing to go with the Messiah to the land of Israel, because they are so tied up in worldly matters. Rabbi Joseph Isaac questions, “How will G-d’s promise be fulfilled? What will bring these Jews to return to their people?” He answers this by saying that the cataclysmic events of these days will cause even these Jews to remember their Jewish heritage. The sound of the *shofar*

³⁴⁷ Schneersohn 2001:251-252

³⁴⁸ Schneersohn 1999:141. The quotation appeared in a text written during the war. See also Zechariah. 9:14.

will be heard to awaken the spark of Judaism in every Jew and gather even the lost and isolated to Jerusalem.³⁴⁹

Rabbi Joseph Isaac again connects to a very central idea in the *Tanya*, namely the spark of godliness that is inherent in every Jew, independent of how observant a person is. Zalman asserts that the Jewish soul is truly a part of God. Moreover, in his teaching about the five types of men, Zalman says that even the wicked man who has no thoughts of repentance (the one standing lowest in spiritual development) can turn to God because the *Shekhinah* hovers over him. Additionally, because there is good even in the animal soul (*kelipat noga*) there is hope for any Jew to be awakened to the calling to Jewishness.³⁵⁰

The purpose of the sound of the *shofar* is twofold. On one hand, when the sound of it is heard it initiates the battle that God will wage against all nations which were very sinful and did wrong against the Jewish people. On the other hand, it is a call for repentance. Rabbi Joseph Isaac taught that sounding the *shofar* is God's loving and fatherly way of summoning and reaching the Jews, and fanning the Jewish flame within them once more.³⁵¹ He says some

³⁴⁹ Schneersohn 1999:141-143, 196 making reference to *Hilchot Melachim* 11:1. "The 'great *shofar*' shall fan the essential Jewish spark within all Jews, so that each one, in accordance with his or her spiritual standing, will become better and more spiritually elevated in Torah and *mitzvos* life. When *Moshiach* comes, there will then be fulfilled that which is written [Exodus 19:6]: 'You shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' For the birthpangs of *Moshiah* will have cleansed the Jewish nation from all our accumulated [corporeal] grime. The 'great *shofar*' shall awaken [within all the ability] to truly perceive G-d's holiness. Even 'lost and banished' Jews who have fallen so low that they are ashamed of the name 'Jews' and are angered when reminded of their Jewish ancestry, doing everything in their power to distance themselves from Judaism, even such Jews will come to recognize, through the sound of the *shofar* and the 'southerly storm winds,' that they are Jewish." Schneersohn 1999:143

³⁵⁰ The *Tanya* ch. 1, 7, 9, 11, 28; *Igeret ha-Teshuvah* ch. 6

³⁵¹ At a Lubavitch wedding the *niggun* (wordless melody) of *Four Themes* are traditionally sung as the bride and groom are escorted under the *chuppah*. Rabbi Joseph

people are unaware of the coming redemption and its connection to the Torah and fulfilling the commandments and asserted that these must be told about it. Thus, it is the duty of every Jew to inspire his environment to repent and return. This is only to show concern for the welfare of one's neighbour.³⁵² Again, he is lining up with Zalman, who also advocated love for one's fellow Jews, especially in the giving of charity to those in need (in his specific case to immigrants in the land of Israel), which is a very typical and general Jewish idea.³⁵³

Above all, Rabbi Joseph Isaac taught that action is necessary, especially action done with total self-sacrifice, in order to endure the last days of exile in a worthy manner. Namely, as a person sacrifices his self in order to perform the commandments, giving charity and live out *yiddishkeit*, he draws down a flow of divine influx on the corporeal. It is God's desire to live in the world, but for that to take place the world needs to be thoroughly cleansed. The spiritual refinement of the physical world is a task given to the people. It is when God lives among the people that godliness will be manifested in the world, and this manifestation will be visible in each and every Jew, as well as in the rebuilding of the temple. Rabbi Joseph Isaac says that the first person to draw down a flow of the divine through his self-sacrifice was a person living in exile – Abraham. "Avraham's total dedication and self-sacrifice in making G-dliness known lifted him to the highest of levels," he says.³⁵⁴ In order to rise to a higher

Isaac explains that this melody was called *The Shofar of the Mashiach* by Shneur Zalman's Hasidim, because according to them the melody caused a yearning for the Messiah. See *Igros Kodesh* by the Rebbe Rayatz, vol. VI 1987:172

³⁵² *Igros Kodesh* by the Rebbe Rayatz, vol. II 1986:388

³⁵³ The *Tanya* ch. 32

³⁵⁴ Schneersohn 1999:71, 88-89, 219; Schneersohn 2001:258; *From Exile to Redemption*, vol. I:54-55

state of divine service one needs to take action.³⁵⁵ There is, in other words, also a promise of a better reality for the individual living self-sacrificially and taking action in fulfilling the commandments, giving charity and even spreading the word about redemption, as will be seen below.

Rabbi Joseph Isaac has thus taken up Zalman's campaign on giving charity and showing love to other Jews. One should never give up even on the non-observant, because, as Zalman also very strongly emphasises, the Jewish spark inherent in every Jew can be re-awakened. Furthermore Zalman stresses that the fulfilment of this era is in the hands of man: it depends on man's actions and service during the exile.³⁵⁶ So, when Rabbi Joseph Isaac urges his followers to take action, he is standing on the words of the *Tanya*.

4.1.5 Summary and Conclusions

By falling back on biblical prophecies and rabbinic sources, Rabbi Joseph Isaac proclaimed that the Jewish people were in the end of the time of exile, and that the coming of the Messiah was very near and redemption was close at hand. This stage in time was the cause of the trials people were enduring – just in the same way there is pain when a baby is born, there is also pain when the Messiah comes. The people needed to merit the messianic apocalypse by repenting, which had both corporeal and spiritual implications, as well

³⁵⁵ Schneersohn 2001:371

³⁵⁶ The *Tanya* ch. 37; *Igeret ha-Kodesh* ch. 14

as living righteously by obeying the commandments and studying the Torah. The right attitude should be employed, i.e. truthfulness and wholeheartedness, and simple faith in God and in the coming of the Messiah were recommended. It seems as if Rabbi Joseph Isaac wrote for several types of audiences; he wanted to help the Jewish body in Europe and the Jewish soul in America. The needs of each were very different: in Europe the needs were physical, whereas in America the needs were spiritual.

Rabbi Joseph Isaac encouraged his Ḥasidim by saying that these times did not only mean hardships, but that the power to endure was also given to the people, now even more than at any other time in history. The hardships were evidence that the end was near, and that people would soon meet their salvation. It also meant that the people were being cleansed – a necessary event in order for God to make the world his home. In order to hasten the redemption people needed to take action, including repenting, praying, obeying the commandments and proclaiming to those Jews who had not yet heard that redemption was at hand. It is evident in Rabbi Joseph Isaac's writings that he diminishes the gap between himself and his followers, and that his mentality was very much along the lines of “we are in this together” – a leader who was close to his people.³⁵⁷

³⁵⁷ In *Encyclopedia Judaica* 2007 on Chabad the authors, Rubinstein and Elijor, state that there was a “spiritual and social bonding between the *zaddik* and his followers” during the 20th century that changed the movement's leadership (p. 554).

Rabbi Joseph Isaac offered an apocalyptic interpretation of the difficult circumstances in his time,³⁵⁸ and he did so by using the mystical spiritual inheritance in Chabad thought. This becomes evident in the spiritual implications that he adapts to the main themes of his writings: repentance, praying, obeying the commandments and reaching out to the fellow Jews who are ignorant of this. Repentance has a spiritual meaning where the soul ascends back to its origin in God. The way a person lives impacts not only the mundane, but also serves as a magnet that draws down divine powers to earth in order to make it a dwelling place for God. Herein lays the true redemption, meaning that everything will return to its original state in God.

I would like to argue that the message of Rabbi Joseph Isaac does not contain novel inventions, but rather that he merely reiterates the message and the worldview already written down in the foundational work of Chabad – the *Tanya*, in a way that was relevant to his generation. Rabbi Joseph Isaac's fundamental themes of self-sacrifice for God and for Judaism, repentance and the keeping of the commandments are also all pivotal in the *Tanya*. Although Rabbi Joseph Isaac does not refer to Zalman or the *Tanya*, the above has shown the many connections, and it is evident that Rabbi Joseph Isaac was well versed in the *Tanya* and that he was acting on the mandate given by Zalman 200 years earlier. Perhaps most surprisingly, this is very plainly made manifest in the acute messianic expectations, where Rabbi Joseph Isaac's most radical interpretations,

³⁵⁸ Rachel Elior notes that several religious circles interpreted the Second World War in a similar way, but the Lubavitchers were the only ones to react actively and ideologically.

saying that the world is standing on the heels of the Messiah, in fact are taken straight from the texts of Zalman.

Thus, firstly, it is questionable as to whether one can talk about a messianic resurgence, having been started by Rabbi Joseph Isaac, and which would have changed the whole direction of the Chabad movement, as Elijah has discussed. Secondly, it is very doubtful that early Chabad Hasidism was void of explicit and acute messianism. Rabbi Joseph Isaac is seen by Elijah as the initiator of the messianic fervency that lies as the foundation of today's overt messianic claims on Rabbi Schneerson. But if Rabbi Joseph Isaac is merely repeating Zalman, and I would argue that he does, the *Tanya* could not be without acute messianic expectations. Zalman was expecting the Messiah to come very soon, and Rabbi Joseph Isaac shared the same expectations. Neither the *Tanya* nor the texts of Rabbi Joseph Isaac are blatantly messianic in their character and both write about things other than the Messiah, nonetheless, it is clear that the purpose of their writings is to prepare their readers for the arrival of the Messiah.

Rabbi Joseph Isaac anchors his message in the historical setting of his time and he applies the teachings of the *Tanya* with relevance to the political events in the world as well as the spiritual state of the Jews, preferring to use biblical and rabbinical sources rather than explicit quotes from the *Tanya*. Moreover he writes in a slightly midrashic style. The reasons for this may be many; perhaps in writing for an audience that is not limited to only Lubavitchers, he gains more respect in being less exclusive, but he also follows the Hasidic homiletic style. The heart beat of his writings is that of the *Tanya*.

4.2 The Message of Rabbi Schneerson

Rabbi Schneerson (1902-1994) arrived in New York City in 1942. From the time of his arrival in America, he was busy with the outreach campaigns, establishing schools and heading the publishing house, which meant he was in charge of the literature published up to the death of his father-in-law in 1950.³⁵⁹ The journal *HaKeriah VebaKedushah* ceased to appear after the war and Elijah sees this as a sign of failure: Rabbi Joseph Isaac had been wrong in his interpretation of the times. The Messiah had not come, and Rabbi Joseph Isaac's eschatological message was no longer needed. Elijah says there was great disappointment in the movement after the war, because the prophecies, or interpretations of the times, had not come true.³⁶⁰ From that point of view it is very interesting to note that Rabbi Schneerson chose to preserve these writings in book-form, thus all of Rabbi Joseph Isaac's discourses were actually published in Yiddish immediately after the Second World War, in 1946. Moreover, 40 years later in 1986 they were re-published in English, with the foreword that the discourses were "as timely now as they were

³⁵⁹ Rabbi Schneerson arrived from Nice, France, after which he never left New York, though he had travelled extensively in Europe and is said to have studied at prestigious European universities such as the Sorbonne, Paris (though no official documentation of this exists) and graduated in Berlin in electrical engineering. He is said to have spoken ten languages fluently. Rabbi Schneerson was born in Nikolaev in Ukraine and educated by his father in Jewish studies and by his mother in languages and mathematics. 1924 he got engaged to Rabbi Joseph Isaac's (who had no sons) daughter Haya Mushka and they were married in Warsaw when Rabbi Schneerson was permitted to leave Russia in 1929. Already then it was hinted by his father-in-law that he would be the successor and he started learning Chabad manuscripts which previously had not been revealed. See Dein 2001:390; Hacoen 2007:148-149.

³⁶⁰ Elijah 1998:391

then.”³⁶¹ Thus, contrary to what Elior has assumed, even though his father-in-law stopped using the phrase Rabbi Schneerson does not appear to have perceived failure in Rabbi Joseph Isaac’s prophecies concerning immediate redemption (*le’altar lege’ulah*).

Rabbi Joseph Isaac’s continued enthusiasm for igniting the Jewish spark does not show failure or disappointment in the still absent Messiah. After the war Chabad was involved in rescue activities, they worked in camps for displaced persons and among Jews in Northern Africa.³⁶² Elior writes, “Once again Rabbi Yosef Yitzhak transformed a profound sense of powerlessness and despair into a powerful socio-spiritual action, and yet behind the open educational actions and social reaching out there was still a hidden messianic design.”³⁶³ This is not the only way to interpret Rabbi Joseph Isaac’s actions. It is possible that he believed that the Messiah was continually standing at the door, and that therefore he was simply to fulfil an imperative given by God. Rabbi Joseph Isaac died in 1950, and in spite of being hesitant, Rabbi Schneerson finally assumed the office as the new Lubavitcher rebbe in 1951. He continued the work of his father-in-law in launching new Chabad centres around the world with the help of Ḥasidim.³⁶⁴

Elior explains the survival of the movement by means of Leon Festinger’s theory which states that cognitive dissonance in the case of failed prophecies causes a movement to act more strongly in the belief put forward by the prophecy, by trying to

³⁶¹ Schneersohn 1999:XIII

³⁶² Rubinstein 2007:555

³⁶³ Elior 1998:393

³⁶⁴ Elior 1998:393

convert other people to the view held true in the prophecy.³⁶⁵ In the case of Chabad-Lubavitch the failed prophesy, according to Elior, was that the Messiah did not appear as an immediate response to the horrors of the pogroms and the Holocaust as Rabbi Joseph had stated; thus “cognitive dissonance” was created.

On this point J. G. Melton offers another theory, which has been applied, by Simon Dein, to the Lubavitchers.³⁶⁶ Melton says believers may try to resolve the dissonance by spiritualizing that which has happened within the framework of the “unfalsifiable beliefs” of the theology of the movement in question, and so reaffirm its basic faith and make a reassessment of the situation.³⁶⁷ According to Dein in the Lubavitch context, this would manifest in saying that the generation had not been ready to merit the Messiah or that they “thought they knew the script, but were wrong”, because only God knows the time of the Messiah’s coming.³⁶⁸

Dein also applies Melton’s theory about spiritualization to Rabbi Schneerson’s interpretation of his father-in-law’s death. In a quotation Rabbi Schneerson states that his predecessor would be more present in the physical world after his death, giving strength and power to his devoted disciples.³⁶⁹ This cannot be said to be a spiritualization of earlier beliefs, but is actually a belief that is already accounted for in the *Tanya* and taken from the *Zohar* which states that when a *zaddik* dies he is to be found in all the

³⁶⁵ Elior 1998:391 (footnote); Festinger et. al. 1964:2

³⁶⁶ Simon Dein 2001. What Really Happens When Prophecy Fails: The Case of Lubavitch. *Sociology of Religion*, 62:3, 383-401.

³⁶⁷ Melton 1985:82

³⁶⁸ Dein 2001:399

³⁶⁹ Dein 2001:399

worlds even more than during his lifetime.³⁷⁰ Thus, an already existing belief was pointed out without spiritualizing it. In fact, there was no cognitive dissonance at all, for Zalman had created a hermeneutical solution for this beforehand – as opposed to Nathan of Gaza, who found new solutions as things “went wrong” in the case of Shabbetai Zevi. I would argue that neither Festinger’s nor Melton’s theories work in the Lubavitch context, because the Lubavitchers has the prerogative of falling back on the *Tanya* and its messianic worldview and upon hermeneutical explanations about the *zaddik*. Festinger’s theory contains the presupposition that the messianic expectations had failed, but what others might see as failures are for the Lubavitchers characteristic of messianic expectations. Thus, the acute anticipation of the Messiah’s arrival was maintained.

In the following we shall investigate how Rabbi Schneerson carried on the messianic message. His message has been arranged according to the most recurring topics that I have found in the literature. Most of Rabbi Schneerson’s eschatological speeches were given during the 1980s and early 1990s, until his death in 1994. These years gave birth to yet another wave of acute messianism among the Lubavitch adherents, which among other things resulted in the publishing of several books with eschatological contents. These specific books are not written by Rabbi Schneerson in their entirety. These are collections - in various forms - of adaptations of Rabbi Schneerson’s discourses given during the so called *farbrengen* (the Lubavitch community gatherings) or are texts published in the volumes of his letters. Additionally, some of the videoed talks are

³⁷⁰ See *Igeret ha-Kodesh* ch. 27 – an idea taken directly from The Zohar III:71b.

available on the Internet, and it is therefore possible to verify how the printed material concurs with the original talks. In other words, the eschatological material of Rabbi Schneerson has been taken out of his published books, and compiled and translated into English to make the messianic message more easily accessible. In addition to these compilations such as *Letters by the Lubavitcher Rebbe* from 1979 and *I Await His Coming Every Day*, of which parts were published by Rabbi Schneerson in Hebrew and subsequently translated into English and compiled in 1992, as well as *Igros Kodesh* which contain Rabbi Schneerson's collected discourses, are all written by Rabbi Schneerson.

4.2.1 The Last Generation Before the Messianic Era

In its time I will expedite it
- Isaiah 60:22, quoted by Rabbi Schneerson³⁷¹

In the same way as his forerunner, Rabbi Schneerson emphasized the significance of the time as an utterly special period in history, specifically in relation to the eschatological timeline, which he said was evidenced by different political events in the world. He spoke about “our era”, “our generation” as being at “the very dawn of the Redemption” and thus being “the last generation” and “the

³⁷¹ *From Exile to Redemption*, vol. I 1992:82

generation of *ikvesa diMeshicha*". Rabbi Schneerson also asserted that the Messiah "is watching through the windows, peering through the crevices" – and was on the other side of the wall; waiting just like the bridegroom in the Song of Songs.³⁷² In 1984 he promised that this generation would "be privileged to experience the Ultimate Redemption" and stated that divinity is revealed only minimally in these latter generations, and moreover, that this is a lowly generation, but at the same time this generation benefits from all the accumulated energy of its predecessors.³⁷³ "We are now at the conclusion of the exile. We have already been through the labors of *beirurim* – sifting and refining and elevating the exile – with all their attendant trials. [---] It is clear that our generation is the last generation of the exile and the first generation of the Redemption."³⁷⁴

To explain the urgency of the time, Rabbi Schneerson used the image his father-in-law had created about "polishing the buttons of our uniforms", saying that everything was in principle ready: the buttons are already there and all that is needed is the finishing touch and added beauty. According to him this meant that the Messiah must surely bring redemption at once, otherwise the buttons would be ruined by too much polishing! The people have been polishing the buttons long enough, he said in 1984.³⁷⁵ Moreover, because the people are at "the footsteps of the Messiah", and every minute is precious and should be used for things that yield fruit; Rabbi Schneerson urged that "We must make haste".³⁷⁶

³⁷² *From Exile to Redemption*, vol. I 1992:53-54, 79, 80, 107, 115; Song of Songs 2:9

³⁷³ *From Exile to Redemption*, vol. I 1992:53-54

³⁷⁴ *From Exile to Redemption*, vol. I 1992:112

³⁷⁵ *From Exile to Redemption*, vol. I 1992:109-110

³⁷⁶ *From Exile to Redemption*, vol. I 1992:116

He stated that these were difficult times just as the sages had foretold: “each day’s curse will be heavier than that of the preceding day”. This was actually a prophecy that was spoken to bring confidence and to prepare the people who live “at the eve of the coming of the Messiah” for hardships, in order that they would know that their afflictions had a purpose,³⁷⁷ and therefore prevent them from becoming disheartened. In 1990 he further encouraged his people by saying that “all the appointed times by the sages have passed” and that “the footsteps of the Messiah” were surely approaching.³⁷⁸ According to him this was the time when the Jewish people were coming ever closer to what had been promised, and it would come quickly, because Isaiah 60:22 promised that “in its time I will expedite it” – referring to the time of the coming and revelation of the Messiah.³⁷⁹

Even though the darkness of the exile grows denser all the time, Rabbi Schneerson declared that there was hope for this time, because as events took place, a more powerful and intense revelation of light and holiness would enable the Jewish people to overcome the darkness.³⁸⁰ Using the Song of Songs and the metaphor of the Messiah peering through the wall, Rabbi Schneerson said that the people could catch a glance of the Messiah, which would give a person the energy to complete the required preparations to greet him. The strength to endure would also surface when one resolves to act, and this would take place when the verse, “The weak will say, ‘I am strong’” becomes fulfilled.³⁸¹

³⁷⁷ *From Exile to Redemption*, vol. I 1992:61; Sotah 49a. This was said in 1982.

³⁷⁸ *From Exile to Redemption*, vol. I 1992:112. כלו כלל הקיצין. Sanhedrin 97b.

³⁷⁹ *From Exile to Redemption*, vol. I 1992:82

³⁸⁰ *From Exile to Redemption*, vol. I 1992:86, 108, 117

³⁸¹ *Igros Kodesh*, vol. VIII 1988:353. The quote is taken from Joel 3:10.

Speaking of the times as being the last generation, the generation being in the footsteps, or on the heels of the Messiah, of course echoes Rabbi Joseph Isaac, as well as the *Tanya*.³⁸² The belief that the world is standing at the verge of Messiah's coming is clearly accounted for in the *Tanya*. In this sense Rabbi Schneerson did not invent something new, but rather continued the rhetoric and applied it to his time. Calling the time difficult was also a decisive subject in the discourses of Rabbi Joseph Isaac,³⁸³ as well as for Zalman who made a connection between enduring difficulties and meriting seeing the redemption being fulfilled: "Therefore, [the man who accepts affliction with joy], merits [seeing] the 'Sun going forth in its might' – in the world to come".³⁸⁴ This way of connecting the concept of the last days to the need for hastening to get everything ready, as well as the encouraging words about overcoming darkness, are crucial to both Rabbi Joseph Isaac and the *Tanya*, and it is clear that the stress on observing the commandments had a messianic implementation for both Zalman and Rabbi Joseph Isaac, in the same way as it is pivotal to Rabbi Schneerson.

Rabbi Schneerson also alluded to the political changes in the world, especially during the years 1990-1991. He spoke of the "radical revolutions" that were taking place all across the globe, in Russia, China, India and other places. He states that the sages had taught that when nations challenge one another, it means that the Messiah is near and one should watch out for him. One example of

³⁸² *Igros Kodesh* of the Rebbe Rayatz, vol. I 1986:488; *Igeret ha-Kodesh* ch. 9; *Kuntres Aharon* essay 8

³⁸³ Schneerson 1999:113

³⁸⁴ The *Tanya* ch. 26

this was the Gulf War, which Rabbi Schneerson interpreted as the king of Paras challenging an Arab king.

The *Yalkut Shimoni* predicts: “In the year that the King *Mashiach* will be revealed, the kings of all other nations of the world will challenge one another. The King of Paras will challenge an Arab king, and the Arab king will go to Aram (or, according to another reading: ‘to Edom’) to consult with them, ...and all the nations of the world will panic and will be stricken with consternation.... G-d will tell the Jews: ‘My children, have no fear. Whatever I have done, I have done only for your sake....’ When the King *Mashiach* comes, he will stand on the roof of the *Beis HaMikdash* and proclaim to Israel, ‘Humble ones: The time of your redemption has arrived!’”

It is clear, then, that the Gulf War is a sign of the imminent Redemption, for one of these signs is [*Bereishit Rabbah* 42:4] “kingdoms challenging one another,” especially when (as above) ‘the King of Paras will challenge an Arab king,’ as was the case in this war.³⁸⁵

Rabbi Schneerson was happy to say that it was unprecedented in history that these revolutions happened in a quiet manner, without much bloodshed, but nonetheless, the divine idea behind it was that the world was being refined and “increasingly fit” for the time of the Messiah.³⁸⁶

Moreover, Rabbi Schneerson interpreted that regimes were changing in favour of justice and equity, and laws were changed for the better concerning belief in God. Another important sign was the collapse of the Iron Curtain, resulting in freedom for the Jews so that they could find refuge, particularly in Israel. This, according to

³⁸⁵ *From Exile to Redemption*, vol. I 1992:135

³⁸⁶ *From Exile to Redemption*, vol. I 1992:133-137; *Yalkut Shimoni* (14th century) interpreting Isaiah 60:1

Rabbi Schneerson, was the fulfilment of the prophecy in Jeremiah 31:7 about the ingathering of the exiles. Not only did Russia open its borders, but the country even helped Jews reach Israel. Rabbi Schneerson interpreted all of this as a foreshadow of what would take place when the Messiah arrived because justice and impartiality would characterize the days of the Messiah³⁸⁷ This type of gradual process into the messianic era must be seen as innovative for Rabbi Schneerson.

4.2.2 Exile, Repentance and Messianic Redemption

Exile, repentance and redemption through the Messiah are all classical Jewish themes and Rabbi Schneerson taught substantially on them. The exile (גולה *golah*) is explained by Rabbi Schneerson as being twofold: the spiritual exile, which is an inner exile caused by evil inclination and sin, and the Diaspora. These two are connected in the destruction of the temple: as Megillah 29a says, “When they were exiled to Edom the Divine Presence accompanied them”.³⁸⁸ Man is in a state of exile because of “the exile of the divine presence”.³⁸⁹ Because of the destruction of the temple and the expulsion of Jews from the land of Israel, the Jewish body lives in exile. According to Rabbi Schneerson, however, that does not mean that the Jewish soul has to be in exile. He states that if the people repented and returned (תשובה *teshuvah*) the redemption (גאולה *ge'ulah*)

³⁸⁷ *From Exile to Redemption*, vol. I 1992:133-137; Isaiah 66:20

³⁸⁸ *From Exile to Redemption*, vol. I 1992:81

would take place immediately. Being in exile is a danger for the Jewish people and Rabbi Schneerson warns that in order to secure spiritual and physical survival the Torah must be taught so that the people will receive prosperity.³⁹⁰

The inner spiritual exile is accounted for in the *Tanya*, where Zalman expresses it as the godly soul being exiled in the animal soul. By obeying the commandments one is clothed in the godly soul.³⁹¹ When Rabbi Schneerson says that the Torah must be taught, he is expressing the view of the *Tanya* which states that the soul can be released from its exile through study of the Torah and observing the commandments.³⁹²

Rabbi Schneerson says that God desires a dwelling on earth and it is man's responsibility to create such an abode for the exiled divine presence. Moreover, he teaches that "it is man's spiritual endeavours in this physical world, particularly on the nethermost level of practical action" that create a residence for God.³⁹³ Because God desires a home in the lower worlds there will be no more exile once redemption comes. Rabbi Schneerson affirms that man's divine service throughout the years has elevated the lowest elements of the universe so a further experience of exile is not possible. Furthermore, he states that the darkness of the exile will be transformed into light, the exile will be transformed into redemption in the future – and a gradual transformation is already taking place as demonstrated by the fact that Jews – even in exile – "are granted mastery over worldly

³⁸⁹ *From Exile to Redemption*, vol. I 1992:79

³⁹⁰ Schneerson 1979:258; *I Await His Coming Every Day* 1992:80-81

³⁹¹ The *Tanya* ch. 23 , 24 and 25

³⁹² The *Tanya* ch. 32. This is done because of how the godly soul is situated in the brain, which has authority over the heart, in which the animal soul has its home.

things, and receive assistance from the governments under which they live” (especially USA and Russia).³⁹⁴ He points out that these countries even help the Jews out of distress into freedom and explains the reason for this as being that this is the last generation of the exile and the first generation of the redemption. Moreover, in 1990, Rabbi Schneerson stated that the world was being prepared for the transformation of the exile in the imminent redemption.³⁹⁵ Furthermore, that “all good actions unite to make the world as a whole progressively better”³⁹⁶ and therefore one should not lose heart because of one small mistake or one sign of this not being the case.³⁹⁷

The purpose and goal of creation, including man, according to the *Tanya*, is that God should have a dwelling here below.³⁹⁸ By observing the commandments, man can draw down God’s presence on earth and for the soul to unite with God, man must perform good deeds.³⁹⁹ Zalman expressed the idea that by studying the Torah man makes a temple and habitation for God, long before Rabbi Schneerson did so. Thus, since the destruction of the temple, the study of the Torah and the observance of the commandments have become the abode of God.⁴⁰⁰ Just as Rabbi Schneerson taught that action in the lower worlds is essential, Zalman stated that fulfilment of commandments through action, is the only way that light of the *Shekhinah* is drawn down upon one’s animal soul and the body.⁴⁰¹ Similarly, the

³⁹³ *From Exile to Redemption*, vol. I 1992:55

³⁹⁴ *From Exile to Redemption*, vol. I 1992:101

³⁹⁵ *From Exile to Redemption*, vol. I 1992:101-102

³⁹⁶ Schneerson 1979:14

³⁹⁷ Schneerson 1979:13-14

³⁹⁸ The *Tanya* ch. 33

³⁹⁹ The *Tanya* ch. 34

⁴⁰⁰ The *Tanya* ch. 35

⁴⁰¹ The *Tanya* ch. 35; *Kuntres Aḥaron* essays 1 and 2

thought of man elevating the lower realms that Rabbi Schneerson speak of, is also an idea taken from the *Tanya*. The responsibility of man is to elevate the vitality of the entire world from *kelipat nogah* to the realm of holiness in order to banish the spirit of impurity from the world. Additionally, according to the *Tanya*, every Jewish soul is given the ability and responsibility to elevate a part of this physical world.⁴⁰²

Teshuvah is necessary because the world is in exile i.e. a time where life is lived as in a dark tunnel without light. Rabbi Schneerson explains, however, that there is light in the tunnel; there is hope – in the coming redemption, and without it observing the commandments and living a virtuous life would be without meaning. By harking to the divine spark in each Jew the darkness in exile is illuminated, and thus, every good deed is important in bringing light and even more so in this time because God is near. The responsibility for the next step lies with man, however,⁴⁰³ and thus, observing the commandments is really to come back to *yiddishkeit*, which means that one comes back to the source and starts living as whole Jews in letting every day be formed by the will of God as is set out in the Torah.⁴⁰⁴

When a person returns to his *yiddishkeit*, when he repents or does *teshuvah*, there are, according to Rabbi Schneerson, two implications; it affects both his past and his future,. Through *teshuvah* a person can regain his control of the past, because it erases anything that has happened in the past retroactively. This is possible

⁴⁰² The *Tanya* ch. 37

⁴⁰³ "The Rebbe" <http://www.chabad.org/therebbe/article.asp?AID=60702> March 4, 2005

⁴⁰⁴ Schneerson 1979:69, 134

because God, the source of *teshuvah*, is beyond time. One does *teshuvah* by sincere brokenness and penance over negative aspects in the past and undivided decisiveness concerning the future; *teshuvah* must run so deeply that it transforms a person's thoughts, words and actions.⁴⁰⁵ *Teshuvah* also has a profound significance for redemption in the fact that *teshuvah* builds a person up. Rabbi Schneerson uses the temple as an allegory, saying that the temple was destroyed because of the sins of the people. Nonetheless, through *teshuvah* and observing the commandments during exile, the godly dwelling in every man is built up and will cause redemption to come closer.⁴⁰⁶

In this we can clearly see the links to both Zalman and Rabbi Joseph Isaac, for whom repentance was central. Rabbi Schneerson similarly defines repentance as coming back to Judaism, so did his forerunners before him.⁴⁰⁷ Moreover, just as Rabbi Joseph Isaac wrote about the need for a broken heart, so does Rabbi Schneerson. Thus, in the link between the broken heart and the *kelipah* which needs to be shattered in order to convert darkness into holiness, it can be seen that Rabbi Schneerson was also very much grounded in the worldview of the *Tanya*. Similarly, it is also possible to see the centrality of man in elevating the world through his actions to the world of holiness in both the *Tanya* and in the message of Rabbi Schneerson. Making the world holy is part of the messianic plan, and Rabbi Schneerson explains it as the world being prepared for the change that will take place in the messianic era. Rabbi Schneerson, in actual fact, goes so far as to call this generation the first of the

⁴⁰⁵ Schneerson 1979:13, 25-26

⁴⁰⁶ Schneerson 1979:216-217

⁴⁰⁷ The *Tanya* ch. 1, 7, 9

redemption, which is taking the matter a bit further than the *Tanya*. Nonetheless, undoubtedly Rabbi Schneerson in his inherited messianic fervour must have looked at historical events, observed how things seemed to brighten up and thus interpreted them as the prophecies being fulfilled.

4.2.3 The Messiah

Neither the *Tanya* nor Rabbi Joseph Isaac gives any description of the messianic figure. Rabbi Schneerson on the other hand says more about the Messiah. According to the Bible the Messiah can come in two possible ways: with the clouds in heaven⁴⁰⁸ or riding on a donkey.⁴⁰⁹ Rabbi Schneerson interprets these scriptures in saying that the Messiah will be powerfully exalted as the skies and humble as the one riding a donkey.⁴¹⁰ He will be more exalted than Moses and he will teach the inner mystical dimensions of the Torah. For this reason the Messiah is called a mentor, whose wisdom will supersede that of King Solomon.⁴¹¹ He is also called king because when he comes there will be an unseen transcendence over all the souls of Israel. As a king the Messiah will be in the position to judge. The Messiah will be a descendant from the house of David, which Rabbi Schneerson sees as to be expected, since it is the royal family. The Messiah is also said to be from the seed of Solomon, which has a

⁴⁰⁸ Daniel 7:13

⁴⁰⁹ Zechariah 9:9

⁴¹⁰ *From Exile to Redemption*, vol. II 1996:6

⁴¹¹ *From Exile to Redemption*, vol. II 1996:8

meaning of its own. Namely, differentiating from King David, Solomon reigned in peace and in the same spirit the Messiah will reign in a time of perfect peace on earth. The reason for Solomon reigning in peace was due to his wisdom, which was highly valued by neighbouring kingdoms. The Messiah will likewise have wisdom (or in fact be wiser than Solomon) and teach the Torah.⁴¹²

In Rabbi Schneerson's teachings the Messiah is compared to Moses, who was the first redeemer of Israel, and it is in his spirit that the Messiah will be the last redeemer of Israel. It is said that Moses will be the first and the last redeemer, but Rabbi Schneerson explains that cannot be because Moses is of the tribe of Levi, and the Messiah will be of the tribe of Judah and a descendant of King David. The Messiah will be like Moses in as far as the Torah came through Moses, and the ability to redeem Israel is derived from the Torah. Additionally, the connection between Moses and the Messiah is further proved by the numerical value of the name Moses (משה *Moshe*) and the word for the unity of God, one (אחד *ehad*), which are equal to the word for Messiah (משיח *mashiah*).⁴¹³

The Messiah will be "The Ultimate Jewish Monarch", reigning as king in Israel over the ingathered exiles during the messianic age. (After which "the world to come" will be inaugurated and the resurrection from the dead will take place.) "The King Messiah" will arise and restore the Davidic dynasty, just as it was during David's life, and he will redeem the Jewish people from exile and put them in a land where they can study the Torah and live,

⁴¹² *Igros Kodesh*, vol. IV 1987:181 *From Exile to Redemption*, vol. II 1996:7-10. See also Isaiah 11:9.

according to the Torah, in peace – even concerning the aspects that, to date, have been lacking in exile, i.e. the sacrificial rituals. Restoring the Davidic dynasty implies that as a king, the Messiah will complete the conquest of the land of Israel, he will secure peace in that land and begin the building of the temple – just as David did in his time.⁴¹⁴

Rabbi Schneerson expounds on what he calls the four prophecies that Maimonides mentions concerning the Messiah. These are all taken from Numbers (“Bamidbar”) 24:17-18 about Balaam’s prophecy. Each prophecy concerns two anointed kings: King David and the Messiah. The prophecies thus move on two levels at the same time, according to Rabbi Schneerson, i.e. in the same way as David saved Israel, the Messiah will save Israel at the end of days. The first two prophecies are, “I see it, but not now; I perceive it, but not in the near future” and “A star shall go forth from Yaakov, and a staff shall arise in Yisrael”. The first one, says Rabbi Schneerson, refers to the existence of King David and the Messiah, whereas the second one shows that the prophecies concerning the Messiah exceed those of King David. Rabbi Schneerson says that “star” only speaks of a person’s greatness, whereas “staff” relates to authority. Likewise the first part talks about “Yaakov”, while the second part mentions “Yisrael” – which indicates greater merits, according to Rabbi Schneerson, because Yisrael was the name that Yaakov received later.⁴¹⁵ Firstly, the prophecies prove the doctrine of the messiah –

⁴¹³ *From Exile to Redemption*, vol. II 1996:10-15. He makes further reference to Exodus Rabbah 2:2.

⁴¹⁴ *I Await His Coming Every Day* 1992:33-36; 2 Samuel 7:1; *Hilchot Melachim* 1:2; Divrei HaYamim ch. 28-29. As for the exiles coming to the land of Israel, they will “ascend on the clouds of heaven”, as described in Daniel 7:13. See *From Exile to Redemption*, vol. II 1996:32.

⁴¹⁵ *I Await His Coming Every Day* 1992:38-39

someone who will be like King David. And secondly, they show that the ministries of David and the Messiah are similar, but still the task of the Messiah is greater in authority and content. David is likened to the star, which in Rabbi Schneerson's interpretation only speaks of earthly greatness, whereas the staff speaks of the Messiah's authority which supersedes that of David's. Thus, Rabbi Schneerson has established the doctrine about the Messiah as a ruler.

The third prophecy, "He shall crush all of Moab's princes, he shall break down all of Seth's descendants", where "Seth" refers to the Messiah and implying domination over many peoples, is likened to 2 Samuel 8:2, in Rabbi Schneerson's view. The fourth prophecy, "Edom will be demolished; his enemy, Seir, will be destroyed", is interpreted with reference to 2 Samuel, 8:6 and 8:14. The last prophecy talks about the total dominion of the Messiah and how all the nations of the world will appreciate God's sovereignty and accept the Messiah as king.⁴¹⁶ In this second set of prophecies Rabbi Schneerson establishes how the reign of the Messiah will be extended over all the earth and how he will actually destroy his enemies, not only demolish them, as was the case with Edom during the reign of King David.

Rabbi Schneerson teaches that redemption will come through the Messiah, who is the true and righteous redeemer, called "*Moshiach Tsidkeinu*" (our *zaddik* the Messiah). When the Messiah comes his assignment is twofold: he will rebuild the temple in Jerusalem and gather all Jews in the land of Israel. In Israel they will assemble in the courtyard of the third and forever-standing temple.

⁴¹⁶ *I Await His Coming Every Day* 1992:38-39. See also Zechariah 9:10, "He will rule from sea to sea."

When redemption comes, the world will be brought to ultimate perfection because the earth will be filled with the knowledge of God, just like the waters cover the earth, as the prophet Isaiah says.⁴¹⁷

The *Tanya*, on the other hand, does not write much about the Messiah, except that he will come at an unexpected time and that he will circumcise the hearts of men.⁴¹⁸ The *Tanya* does, however, say a few things about the time of the Messiah. The messianic era is described simply as the revelation of the divine light of *Ein-sof* in the material world.⁴¹⁹ Moreover, it states that in the messianic era God will be revealed to all, because he will live on earth and he will actually fill the earth. In the physical world God is hidden, or concealed, but in the messianic era he will be revealed without garments.⁴²⁰ The *Tanya* does not aim to sketch an accurate picture of either the Messiah, or the messianic era, but it should be emphasized that the work is filled with messianic expectation, even though he did not put these down in so many words. Moreover, it can be seen in the worldview and in the urgency with which the *Tanya* speaks of eschatological matters, as well as the burning appeal for matters concerning the land of Israel and the giving of charity. Both the *Tanya's* Zalman and Rabbi Schneerson, thus, look forward to a time when God will fill the earth with his knowledge and his presence.

Based on Maimonides' *Hilchot Melachim* from the *Mishneh Torah* chapters 11 and 12, Rabbi Schneerson says it seems

⁴¹⁷ Schneerson 1979:98, 137, 249, 287; Isaiah 11:9

⁴¹⁸ *Igeret ha-Kodesh* ch. 4

⁴¹⁹ The *Tanya* ch. 37. See the very beginning of chapter 37. See also *Igeret ha-Kodesh* ch. 14.

⁴²⁰ The *Tanya* ch. 36. It is said in the Tikkunim that "There was no place from which he did not speak to them" at the giving of the Decalogue. See also *Lessons in Tanya* II:482-483

that there will be two stages in the messianic era. The first one is associated with the coming of the Messiah and at that time the natural world order will prevail, which among other things means it is of no importance whether the Messiah has the ability to perform miracles or not. Thus, according to Rabbi Schneerson, the identity of the Messiah is not established on the criteria of the ability of performing miracles. Rather, all the promises that refer to miracles during this stage are to be interpreted allegorically, whereas the subsequent stage will be an era of miracles, one being the resurrection from the dead. The purpose of the coming of the Messiah, therefore, according to Rabbi Schneerson, is that “the world at large will be elevated to a perfect stage of knowledge and practice”.⁴²¹ Thus, the mission of the Messiah is to create a world where the study of the Torah and observing the commandments are possible without any hindrances. Rabbi Schneerson also says that according to Maimonides this signifies that the Messiah “will restore the monarchy, build the *Beis HaMikdash* [the temple], and gather in the Jewish people”,⁴²² and states that this will happen during the natural world order.⁴²³

Rabbi Schneerson thus divides the messianic era into two orders, one where the natural world order will persist and another world order of miracles. He expounds on these matters with the help of the acclaimed Maimonides. The fact is that Rabbi Schneerson stands on a perception that is laid out in the *Tanya*. Just like Rabbi Joseph Isaac, Rabbi Schneerson does not quote the *Tanya* explicitly, but rather goes to the Jewish traditional authorities and

⁴²¹ *I Await His Coming Every Day* 1992:60

⁴²² *I Await His Coming Every Day* 1992:60

⁴²³ *I Await His Coming Every Day* 1992:37, 59-61

among them Maimonides. The *Tanya* separates the physical redemption from the spiritual and it is the resurrection from the dead that marks the difference between the two. Thus, according to Zalman, in the time of the Messiah the world will still be under the natural laws as well as the law of the Torah, and the world order of miracles will occur with the resurrection from the dead. The physical redemption taking place at the coming of the Messiah means that Israel will be freed from the nations. The role of studying the Torah will be of knowing its secret aspects, because everybody will already know the revealed Torah innately.⁴²⁴ Rabbi Schneerson says there will, therefore, be no hindrances for studying the Torah.

So what are the criteria for judging whether a person is the Messiah or not, according to Rabbi Schneerson? The answer is very short: he will restore and establish the complete observance of the Torah and the commandments. When this happens, the era of redemption will have come.⁴²⁵ The redemption does not imply the annulment of this world order or the loss of good things acquired in this world, but rather the redemption will be a time of total perfection; there will be no illnesses because God will remove them in order that man can be fully capable of studying the Torah.⁴²⁶

⁴²⁴ The *Tanya* ch. 26

⁴²⁵ *I Await His Coming Every Day* 1992:37-38

⁴²⁶ *From Exile to Redemption*, vol. I 1992:119; *I Await His Coming Every Day* 1992:80-81

4.2.4 Anticipating the Coming of the Messiah and Redemption

Rabbi Schneerson frequently admonished his followers to actively anticipate the Messiah, meaning that this was a vital part of the Jewish faith. He explained that according to the 12th of Maimonides' articles of faith, one should await the Messiah's coming every day. Rabbi Schneerson adds that one should wait for the Messiah's immediate coming, as opposed to believing he will come whenever the appointed time comes, because the times are pressing. He argued that one can become so permeated with the feeling of exile that he is unaware of the impending redemption, but both by proclaiming and publicizing that we live in special times people can be made ready. Thus, he taught that the times we live in, the coming of the Messiah and redemption, should be spoken of over and over again, because living in the exile should be like living in the week, all the time waiting for the Sabbath. One should prepare for redemption during the exile and keep the redemption in mind in the same way as one prepares for the Sabbath during the week.⁴²⁷ Likening the waiting for Messiah with preparing for the Sabbath was something that was also done by Rabbi Joseph Isaac.⁴²⁸ This is a very powerful picture, because the Sabbath is constantly just ahead and preparations must be done every week.

Rabbi Schneerson defends the slogan "We want Moshiach NOW!" by saying that this is no new invention, and argues

⁴²⁷ *From Exile to Redemption*, vol. I 1992:119-120, 152, 155-158 (Taken from talks.); Siddur Tehillat HaShem p. 56

⁴²⁸ *Igros Kodesh* of the Rebbe Rayatz, vol. II 1986:531

that throughout the Bible people have cried out in a similar way because they have felt they could not take the exile much longer. He states that just like the Israelites cried out in Egypt and God heard them, so too will God hear the righteous of the contemporary era cry out. Rabbi Schneerson says that it is, in fact, pleasing to God, that men entreat him to take them out of exile, which is also proven by the fact that this supplication has been incorporated into the daily prayers three times a day.⁴²⁹ Anticipating the coming of the Messiah was something that Rabbi Schneerson had in common with his predecessor who also said it is of utter importance to think and speak about the coming of the Messiah in order to greet him.⁴³⁰

Zalman does not admonish his followers to anticipate the coming of the messiah actively in the same way as Rabbi Joseph Isaac and Rabbi Schneerson do, but nevertheless his own active anticipation is apparent in the way he speaks of the land of Israel and the importance he attaches to living a spiritual lifestyle in order to bring in the messianic era.

4.2.5 Everybody's Responsibility in Hastening the Coming of the Messiah

Every Jew should not only have an active faith in and anticipation of the coming of the Messiah, but everybody was said to

⁴²⁹ *From Exile to Redemption*, vol. I 1992:163-168

⁴³⁰ Schneersohn 1999:7, 18, 97, 113, 131, 193, 203. The thought is to “merit speedily to welcome.”

have a role in bringing in the messianic redemption and even hastening it. In 1991 Rabbi Schneerson declared that even though the Messiah had not yet come, he was about to come imminently and therefore it was time for every single Jew to bring him in.⁴³¹ This was explained by saying that the advent of the future redemption and the resurrection from the dead depend on the actions and divine service throughout the exile, and thus the Messiah would only come if the generation was worthy. Long before this Rabbi Joseph Isaac had proclaimed “immediate redemption” once people repented, but according to Rabbi Schneerson, in 1987, that salvation still had not come. The only explanation for this, according to Rabbi Schneerson, was that the matter has been passed on from the *nasi* (as he called his father-in-law) to every individual. Consequently, his message was that from that moment on the task of men, women and children was to bring about redemption.⁴³²

That speech, given in 1991, became decisive for the Lubavitchers, but in truth these words had already also been expressed by the *Tanya*. As has been stated before, the *Tanya* says, “This ultimate perfection of the messianic era and of the resurrection of the dead, which is the revelation of the light of the blessed *Ein-sof* in this material world, depends on our actions and service throughout the duration of the exile” and taught that the fulfilment of this era was in the hands of man: i.e. it depended on man’s actions and service during the exile.⁴³³ The *Tanya* also repeats the matter, saying that even a person with limited understanding, a woman, or “whatever sort he

⁴³¹ *From Exile to Redemption*, vol. I 1992:xiii, 126

⁴³² *From Exile to Redemption*, vol. I 1992:126, 178-179; *From Exile to Redemption*, vol. II 1996:16; *I Await His Coming Every Day* 1992:85

may be” can fulfil Deuteronomy 30:14 because of the hidden love (אהבה מסתרת *ahavah mesuteret*) that is in the hearts of all Jews as inherited from the patriarchs.⁴³⁴

Numbers 10:25 describes how the tribe of Dan would come last and Rabbi Schneerson says they were called to pick up any lost property of the Jews, including any people who had been lost, even spiritually, in order to bring them back to the camp (מחנה *mahane*). Rabbi Schneerson uses this story to demonstrate that this generation, which is the last generation in his estimation, also has a crucial task of bringing in all those who are lost to the camp. This is done, he says, by influencing, arousing and guiding one’s environment to the spiritual lifestyle of the Hasidim, the study of the Torah and *teshuvah*. He states that it is the task of every Jew to spread the Hasidic teachings, which is the spiritual labour that will bring about redemption. Rabbi Schneerson calls this part the “battle of the house of David” and reassures his followers that it is in the reach of every Jew to do this.⁴³⁵

Any person, despite of their personal spiritual attainment or age, should feel free to influence those around him in inspiring and guiding them in divine service. The obvious characteristic of divine service is observing the commandments, but Rabbi Schneerson also stresses a lifestyle in accordance with the Hasidic teachings, which must begin with the studying the commandments as well as the Torah in both its revealed and mystical facet, just as Zalman had said with regard to the importance of the

⁴³³ The *Tanya* ch. 37; *Igeret ha-Kodesh* ch. 14

⁴³⁴ The *Tanya* chapters 18-25

mystical teachings.⁴³⁶ The light within the Torah is to be found by means of the Ḥasidic teachings, among them the *Tanya*, according to Rabbi Schneerson. It may so happen that a young person meets a much more accomplished scholar, but one that has not yet experienced the light of the Ḥasidic teachings, or it may be that in a home may take some of the commandments lightly; in such cases the young person should be an example and will thus impact those that are older in age.⁴³⁷

Rabbi Schneerson explains that what could only be done by the priests in the time of the temple can, in the exile, be done by those in inferior spiritual standing. This is achieved by means of prayer, which has replaced the sacrificial service, and thus any ordinary Jew can, today, bring about the same heavenly result as the priest could earlier. In 1987, he said that it was necessary that everyone should think about the redemption being actualized through the coming of the Messiah, and then do something about it – both in one’s own life and in encouraging others. Every Jew should understand the precepts of Besht, because those who do so will stand at the head of those who greet the Messiah.⁴³⁸ Furthermore, he taught that what was additionally needed to make the time ripe for the coming of the Messiah, was the partaking in the Ḥasidic custom called “the festive meal of the Messiah” (which was initiated by Besht). This meal is intended to draw down the radiance of the Messiah into every

⁴³⁵ *From Exile to Repentance*, vol. I 1992:57, 64, 77, 111. “The house of David” implicates messianic contents: David is the messianic prototype.

⁴³⁶ *Igeret ha-Kodesh* ch. 15

⁴³⁷ *Igros Kodesh*, vol. VII 1988:90

⁴³⁸ *From Exile to Redemption*, vol. I 1992:78. “The precepts of Besht” are said to have been clarified in minute detail in the teachings of Chabad, thus meaning that the school

aspect of one's daily life throughout the year. Holiness should permeate all of man's activities to the point where he is willing to sacrifice the innermost core of this soul, which is the element of the Messiah in him. This obligation to draw down the revelation of the Messiah to completion rests upon this generation.⁴³⁹

Every individual Jew is important insofar as that there resides a spark of the Messiah in everyone. Similarly, the Messiah comes to redeem every Jew, regardless of his spiritual achievements, and therefore every Jew is obligated to prepare himself for redemption. In this lies the whole capability of the Messiah to redeem the Jewish people; i.e. he is connected with the whole people.⁴⁴⁰ Rabbi Schneerson takes an interesting passage from Numbers 11:21 as an example here: in this passage God says, "The people in whose midst I am, are six hundred thousand men on foot". Schneerson interprets this as God "intimating that there was a part of himself within every single one of those six hundred thousand."⁴⁴¹

Thus, the key to the redemption is in the hand of absolutely every individual and is unaffected by distinctions, but concerns the whole house of Israel. Moreover, just as redemption will come to all, and no Jew will remain in exile when redemption comes, the responsibility belongs to everyone, and God gives strength according to the ability of each and everyone.⁴⁴² This concept is one

of Chabad has been able to continue in the spirit of Besht and that everything in the Chabad theology is in line with Besht.

⁴³⁹ *From Exile to Redemption*, vol. I 1992:87, 123, 181.

⁴⁴⁰ *From Exile to Redemption*, vol. I 1992:88-89, 174-176; *From Exile to Redemption*, vol. II 1996:5

⁴⁴¹ *From Exile to Redemption*, vol. I 1992:174

⁴⁴² *From Exile to Redemption*, vol. I 1992:177-178; *From Exile to Redemption*, vol. II 1996:21-23

of the most often repeated, in both the teachings of Rabbi Joseph Isaac as well as of the *Tanya*.

Based on a prophetic promise, Rabbi Schneerson asserts that the redemption must be hurried along.⁴⁴³ By observing the Torah and spreading the light of the Torah, the darkness of exile can be pushed aside and the coming of the Messiah will, as a consequence, draw nearer. Thus, it is possible to hasten the coming of the Messiah.⁴⁴⁴ As has already been demonstrated, observing the Torah is linked to igniting the Jewish spark in oneself so that it governs one's every thought, speech and action. Arousing this spark will hasten the advent of the Messiah. This is in fact an act of individual redemption, which uncovers the spark of the Messiah's soul within the individual.⁴⁴⁵ In this context Rabbi Schneerson says,

When a Jew arouses the *yechidah* within himself, his quintessential Jewish spark, so that it governs his thought, speech and action, this is an act of individual redemption. Through this he uncovers the spark of the soul of *Mashiach* within him – and this hastens the advent of the all-embracing Redemption, with the coming of the *Mashiach*.⁴⁴⁶

Although Rabbi Schneerson does not refer to the *Tanya*, it plainly teaches that the commandments, when expressed through thought, speech and action will clothe the human soul, God

⁴⁴³ *From Exile to Redemption*, vol. I 1992:196 referring to Sanhedrin 98a on Isaiah 60:22.

⁴⁴⁴ Schneerson 1979:96-97, 141, 158, 185, 229, 249

⁴⁴⁵ *From Exile to Repentance*, vol. I 1992:173

⁴⁴⁶ *From Exile to Repentance*, vol. I 1992:173. Note here that Rabbi Schneerson speaks about both an individual and a national redemption. The “*yechida*” that he speaks of is, elsewhere, explained by him as “the element of *Mashiach* in his soul” (p. 88 in the aforementioned work) and he also says that “Within every Jew there resides a spark of *Mashiach*” (p. 89).

cannot be comprehended, but man can encompass the commandments through understanding, and following them in thought, speech and deed. It is also taught that the *kelipot* and *sitra aħra* have a hold on man through the prohibitive commandments, but nonetheless, according to Zalman, every Jew has the ability subdue the *kelipot* because of their godly soul.⁴⁴⁷ Rabbi Schneerson falls back on this idea by saying that the Jewish spark should govern one's entire being.

Rabbi Schneerson also stresses that the coming of the Messiah is hastened when it is asked for and eagerly anticipated. Hoping and yearning for the coming of the Messiah hastens his coming, because if a man longs for the Messiah he will live a worthier life and as a consequence, because of his endeavours, the whole Jewish people will live in a more worthy manner. "One *mitzvah* brings another in its train", the sages say.⁴⁴⁸ Consequently, observing one custom will encourage a person to undertake further activities, which in turn hastens the coming of the future redemption. Thus, Rabbi Schneerson states that "Saving one more Jew from being overwhelmed by exile thus speeds the universal redemption,"⁴⁴⁹ emphasizing that if a person anticipates the coming of the Messiah he will live a better life in that he observes the commandments, which, as shown earlier, brings light into the darkness of exile. In carrying out the commandments a person can influence another person, and this will save him from exile.⁴⁵⁰

In spite of Jews praying three times a day for many hundred years for God would bring salvation and restore the temple

⁴⁴⁷ The *Tanya* ch. 4

⁴⁴⁸ *From Exile to Repentance*, vol. I 1992:88 referring to Avot 4:2.

⁴⁴⁹ *From Exile to Repentance*, vol. I 1992:188

service to Jerusalem, the people are still in exile. Rabbi Schneerson approaches this conundrum by asking rhetorically whether God answers the prayer of his people or not. He argues that a request made to God “in the course of a blessing” is certainly fulfilled, since one is forbidden to recite “a blessing of doubtful obligation”. And, therefore, the request for redemption has already been fulfilled.⁴⁵¹ This is one of the rare occasions when Rabbi Schneerson does in fact makes a direct reference to the *Tanya*. The context in the *Tanya* is not related to redemption, but actually speaks about God being gracious and forgiving towards those who come to him in repentance. It teaches that if someone does that, he can be sure that God will answer his prayers and forgive them.

Joined to this is the faith and confidence, the heart being firm and certain in G-d that he desires goodness [Mika 7:18], and is gracious and merciful [Nehemiah 9:17] and generously forgiving [Isaiah 55:7] the instant one pleads for forgiveness and atonement of Him.⁴⁵²

Rabbi Schneerson interprets this to apply to God’s goodness in all matters – including, for example, redemption, which God in his kindness must grant his children. Moreover, the *Tanya* does speak of intense concentration and devotion in prayer (כוונה *kavanah*) that will shatter the *kelipot* and subdue the darkness in the world.⁴⁵³

Rabbi Schneerson also explains that the exile came about because of man’s hatred, but that the messianic era will be

⁴⁵⁰ *From Exile to Repentance*, vol. I 1992:88-89, 143, 160; Isaiah 64:3

⁴⁵¹ *From Exile to Repentance*, vol. I 1992:161 referring to Berakhot 8a. Rabbi Schneerson makes a reference to *Igeret ha-Teshuvah* ch. 11 here.

⁴⁵² *Igeret ha-Teshuvah* ch. 11

⁴⁵³ The *Tanya* ch. 1, 7

characterized by harmony. Thus, man can hasten the coming of redemption by means of peace, unity and brotherly love. Rabbi Schneerson says, “Undoing the *cause* of the exile, hatred, will thus erase its *effect*, the exile itself.”⁴⁵⁴ This is taken directly from the *Tanya*, which states that “the sin of groundless hate and a division of hearts” caused Israel’s exile, but teaches that man’s actions and service during the exile will bring in the fulfilment of this era.⁴⁵⁵ For Zalman, man’s actions and service referred to the showing love for fellow Jews (especially through charity) and the observance of the commandments.⁴⁵⁶ Another tradition that will hasten redemption, however, was mentioned by Rabbi Schneerson in 1952. He referred to the custom that the previous rebbe had commenced: “the dance of Messiah”. According to Rabbi Schneerson the dance is not only related to the coming of Messiah and hastens his coming, but the Messiah also takes part in the dance now.⁴⁵⁷

4.2.6 The Messianic Significance in Studying the Torah and Spreading Ḥasidic Teachings

There are in particular two ways of bringing the Messianic era, in the teachings of Rabbi Schneerson: studying the Messiah and the ultimate redemption in both the written and the oral Torah, and spreading the Ḥasidic way of life through its teachings.

⁴⁵⁴ *I Await His Coming Every Day* 1992:75 referring to Yoma 9b; Gittin 55b.

⁴⁵⁵ *Igeret ha-Kodesh* ch. 14, 32; The *Tanya* ch. 37

⁴⁵⁶ *Igeret ha-Kodesh* ch. 9

⁴⁵⁷ *From Exile to Redemption*, vol. I 1992:93; *I Await His Coming Every Day* 1992:30

Concerning studying, he taught that the works from the mystical tradition should be consulted in particular, beginning with the *Zohar* and then Ḥasidic teachings especially those of the *nasi* of our generation, as Rabbi Schneerson referred to his diseased father-in-law, Rabbi Joseph Isaac. The Torah should be studied on all levels; in its plain meaning, meanings implied by allusion, by homiletic interpretation as in the Midrash and Aggada and finally in the kabbalistic mysteries,⁴⁵⁸ because “every spiritual occurrence is actualized by means of the Torah”.⁴⁵⁹ According to Rabbi Schneerson the *Zohar* states that if people waste opportunities to study the Torah, the coming of the Messiah will be postponed and the exile prolonged. According to him the last generation will serve God in a spirit of self-sacrifice and study the Torah, the mystical and revealed, and observe the commandments. Studying, thus in his view, is the final push in hastening the Messiah.⁴⁶⁰

Rabbi Schneerson finds this on the *Zohar*, but the *Tanya* similarly calls for an understanding of mystical matters as being of the utmost importance. According to the *Tanya* this is what will lead to love and fear for God, which is the root or source of all the commandments and which also motivates observance of them. The comprehension of mystical matters moreover, inspires and elevates a Jew’s service.⁴⁶¹ Thus, every Jewish soul should elevate a part of this physical world, and everybody also has the capacity to do so.⁴⁶²

⁴⁵⁸ *From Exile to Redemption*, vol. I 1992:xiii, 64, 75, 192-195; *From Exile to Redemption*, vol. II 1996:15; *Zohar Chadash* on Genesis 8:4

⁴⁵⁹ *From Exile to Redemption*, vol. I 1992:75

⁴⁶⁰ *From Exile to Redemption*, vol. I 1992:192

⁴⁶¹ *Igeret ha-Kodesh* ch. 15

⁴⁶² The *Tanya* ch. 37

In 1987 Rabbi Schneerson stated that even though the redemption was near and surely coming, it was not a time to sit down and do nothing. On the contrary, just like the Israelites set up the tent of meeting in the wilderness even when they camped for only a short period of time, he saw every moment in this short exile as being filled with the erection of the tabernacle – i.e. studying the Torah and observing the commandments. Rabbi Schneerson quotes Maimonides, who says that in the time of the Messiah the occupation of the whole world will be to know God, i.e. through the study of the Torah, stating that in these days, studying the Torah is a foretaste of knowing God as he will be known in the messianic era.⁴⁶³

In this context Rabbi Schneerson is clearly influenced by the *Tanya*, who says that the world has already had a foretaste of the messianic era – at the time of the giving of the Torah, because at that time God filled the earth, just as he will in the messianic era. In the physical world God is hidden, or concealed, but in the messianic era he will be revealed without garments (i.e. the physical world that we see with our eye).⁴⁶⁴ Likewise, there is a connection to the *Tanya* in urging the people to take action through various means. The *Tanya* speaks much about “the quantity of the act” or “the quantitative action” that will refine the soul and speed up the coming of redemption.⁴⁶⁵ In this context the *Tanya* is actually referring to acts of charity, which will cause an arousal from above – especially when people are engaging in helping the land of Israel. The point here is not so much in precisely what kind of action will bring

⁴⁶³ *From Exile to Redemption*, vol. I 1992:111-118, 193; *Hilchot Melachim* 12:5 “In that era...the occupation of the whole world will be solely to know G-d.”

⁴⁶⁴ The *Tanya* ch. 36

redemption, but rather that action is needed. What sort of act seems to depend on the time and situation. Fulfilling the commandments is, in any case, primary also to the *Tanya*, although he expresses this in the context of meriting and hastening the redemption as charity towards the Ḥasidim living in the land of Israel.

In studying the Torah, Rabbi Schneerson puts the highest emphasis on the Ḥasidic teachings, which he says receive their high rank because the inner Torah is revealed through them in the fullest manner. He says that Besht's revelations reached a momentum when Chabad thought was exposed, because in Chabad thought Besht's teachings found an intellectual expression. When Rabbi Schneerson speaks about "Ḥasidic teachings" he is in fact speaking foremost about the *Tanya* and the teachings of other Chabad leaders, because these have been able to carry on the precepts of Besht correctly.

Every single Jew anticipates and believes in the coming of *Mashiach* – speedily, in our own days, and the preparation for this is the spreading of the wellsprings of the Baal Shem Tov ever outward. Accordingly, every Jew should utilize every opportunity to absorb the precepts of the Baal Shem Tov, which have been clarified in minute detail the teachings of the school of *Chassidus* known as *Chabad*. [---] And the people who absorb these precepts will thereby be enabled to stand at the head of those who will soon be privileged to greet the righteous *Mashiach*.⁴⁶⁵

Based on Besht's words, the destiny of these teachings must be fulfilled and no corner of the globe should remain untouched of the Ḥasidic teachings.

⁴⁶⁵ *Igeret ha-Kodesh* ch. 21

And since we are now in the era that is hearing the approaching footstep of *Mashiach*, who “is standing behind our wall,” waiting only for the finishing touches to our refinement of this physical world, it is thus imperative that *Chassidus* be studied in Australia too. This applies not only to the Russian-born Chassidim who were sent there as emissaries: it should likewise permeate the local Jewish population. And since this is something that must happen, all the necessary resources will no doubt be forthcoming.⁴⁶⁷

Rabbi Schneerson states that because of the work of his father-in-law and his disciples and emissaries, the teachings have gone out to far corners of the earth and “the labor have been done,” meaning that the preparation for the coming of the Messiah is in fact the spreading of the Ḥasidic teachings.⁴⁶⁸

The Ḥasidic teachings have a special standing with regard to the Messiah, according to Rabbi Schneerson. He says the entire mission of Besht is bound up in the revelation of the Messiah.⁴⁶⁹ The reason for this is that the revelation, or the light, in the Ḥasidic teachings is the vessel for the revelation of the Messiah, and the condition for this revelation is its dissemination. Rabbi Schneerson urges his followers by saying that vessels to contain the light of the Messiah should be expanded everywhere. This, namely, is the preparation for the fulfilment of the prophecy in Isaiah 11:9 which says that the knowledge of the Lord shall fill the earth. This knowledge is believed to refer to the knowledge of the Messiah, who

⁴⁶⁶ *From Exile to Redemption*, vol. I 1992:78

⁴⁶⁷ *Igros Kodesh*, vol. IX 1988:322

⁴⁶⁸ *Igros Kodesh*, vol. IX 1988:322; *From Exile to Redemption*, vol. I 1992:76-79, 80-81

⁴⁶⁹ *From Exile to Redemption*, vol. I 1992:85. That messianism was important to Besht is for Rabbi Schneerson shown also through the Ḥasidic custom of “the festive meal of the Messiah”, which was the third meal on the last day of Passover and initiated by Besht.

will give Torah understanding that is far superior to the insight of today.⁴⁷⁰

The revelations that the Messiah will bring about must find worthy recipients and therefore the Jewish people need to be purified. This is the purpose of the exile, not to punish but to cleanse and refine.⁴⁷¹ During the exile vessels are created and these vessels are the Ḥasidic teachings, which is why in his vision Besht is told by the Messiah to spread the Ḥasidic teachings. These teaching are the vessel which can receive the revelation of the Messiah. Rabbi Schneerson finds proof of the urgency of this time in the fact that the dissemination of Ḥasidic teachings has met with opposition. The people who combat the work the Lubavitchers do in spreading the Ḥasidic teachings, are, according to him, delaying the coming of the Messiah. He cautions against being drawn into debates with them, however, since doing so takes the focus off of what is important.⁴⁷² According to Schneerson, disseminating these teachings, however, is an imperative demand. In fact, the performing of the commandments is dependant on the spreading of the Ḥasidic teachings.⁴⁷³ Everybody should stand ready to do one's duty. If anyone forfeits this duty the exile will be prolonged; the exile of the divine presence as well as the exile which causes much anguish for the Jewish people.⁴⁷⁴ Rabbi Schneerson avows that "the dissemination of the wellsprings of *Chassidus* is the essential call of the hour."⁴⁷⁵

⁴⁷⁰ *Igros Kodesh*, vol. III 1987:222; *From Exile to Redemption*, vol. I 1992:82

⁴⁷¹ *Igros Kodesh*, vol. I 1987:216

⁴⁷² *Igros Kodesh*, vol. I 1987:216; *Igros Kodesh*, vol. XIV 1989:349; *From Exile to Redemption*, vol. I 1992:29, 79, 151

⁴⁷³ *Igros Kodesh*, vol. XVII 1990:264

⁴⁷⁴ *Igros Kodesh*, vol. XIX 1989:422; *Igros Kodesh*, vol. IV 1987:436

⁴⁷⁵ *Igros Kodesh*, vol. XIV 1989:349

4.2.7 Summary and discussion

When speaking on eschatological matters Rabbi Schneerson is simple and direct, without being banal. In brief, the message of Rabbi Schneerson is (1) hastening the coming of the Messiah by (2) reaching out (do) to fellow Jews by spreading the Ḥasidic teachings and (3) reaching in (by way of thinking) to yourself in repentance, study of the Torah and anticipation of the messianic advent. Bringing the Messiah seems to be imperative in every deed, according to the message of Rabbi Schneerson. The message is more inspirational and practical in its character, rather than expository, even though he emphasizes the study of the Torah in all its dimensions, particularly stressing its mystical dimensions which in his view, are most clearly outlined in the Ḥasidic teachings. Rabbi Schneerson follows Rabbi Joseph Isaac in that his teachings state that two things above all will hasten the coming of the Messiah: anticipating or having a simple faith in the Messiah and observing the Torah, two themes that stand in direct connection with Deuteronomy 30:14: “For it is exceedingly near to you, in your mouth and in your heart, to do”. Zalman also gives this central place in the *Tanya*. Anybody’s faith is important, and everybody has the ability to observe the Torah.

Very important is the belief that the Messiah will not come at a pre-appointed time, but that the Jewish people as a whole are responsible for bringing him. When the people are ready, the Messiah will come. The people become ready by deeds that have a mystical spiritual implication in the fact that they draw down not only the divinity but also the Messiah. In this way the Messiah is connected to God, or the concept of the immanent God also applies to the

Messiah. This is not explained anywhere, but it seems very natural to speak about the Messiah and God in the same way. In the messianic era it is in fact the Messiah who will live among the people, moreover, he is imminent in the people already through the Jewish spark – just like God.

Gradualism is another feature important in the messianic doctrine of Rabbi Schneerson. The coming of the messianic era is a gradual process where the world is transformed over a long time, rather than happening as a radical change in the world order. According to Rabbi Schneerson the same holds true within the messianic era, when there will be a gradual process towards the fulfilment of all the promises, among them miracles and the resurrection from the dead. Rabbi Schneerson founded this idea upon Maimonides' teachings on the messianic era. Gradualism is evident in Rabbi Schneerson's teaching on the importance of studying the Torah as well as his positive interpretation of political events: i.e. the world is being transformed into a better place filled with the knowledge of God.

Rabbi Schneerson's message is explicitly messianic, and displays an acute or immediate type of messianism that has resulted in an active messianic movement. Even though the coming of the redemptive era is said to be a gradual process, Rabbi Schneerson uses a language that is pregnant with apocalyptic anticipation for the immediate future: this is the last generation and the one which will meet the Messiah and thus experience redemption. Even though the political situation in the world was not critical or life-threatening for the Jews, Rabbi Schneerson still talks about the difficulty of the times,

but this refers to the inner spiritual darkness a person experiences because the world is still in exile.

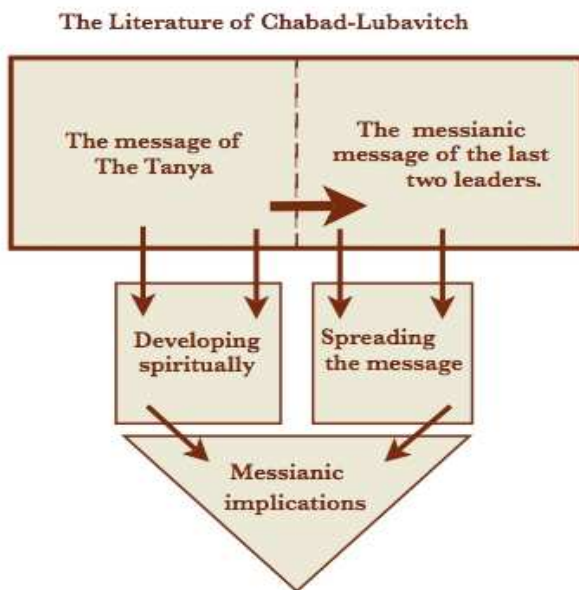
Even though the issues raised by Rabbi Schneerson's teachings echo both Rabbi Joseph Isaac and the *Tanya*, the tone of voice is different. While no time seems to have elapsed between Rabbi Joseph Isaac and the *Tanya*, Rabbi Schneerson is different. He is less formal in speech, and furthermore his charismatic way of conveying a message shines through even the written words. He puts his special mark on the teachings, and in particular goes much further than both the *Tanya* and Rabbi Joseph Isaac in explaining the messianic purpose. He speaks openly about the world around him, which he seems to know very well, including the political situation. Like Rabbi Joseph Isaac and the *Tanya* before him, Rabbi Schneerson makes the message relevant for the time and the listeners and moreover he makes it accessible for people on all levels.

5. Conclusions

This work has been purposed at providing relevant keys to understanding the messianic message in the Jewish Chabad-Lubavitch movement, which today is mostly known for its outreach campaigns and its deceased leader, Rabbi Schneerson, who has been claimed to be the Messiah. The most important cornerstones of the Chabad-Lubavitch messianic ideology was presented in chapter four, where it could be seen that the messages of both Rabbi Schneerson, and Rabbi Joseph Isaac before him, culminated in an activism that implied reaching out to other Jews in order to encourage them in observant Judaism, so that the world would become fit to greet the Messiah. Their message is firmly founded in the Chabad work the *Tanya*.

As the graph below shows, and simplistically put, the message of the *Tanya* and the last two Chabad leaders are coherent. The message of the *Tanya* is messianic in the way it urges the adherents to improve in order for the messianic era to appear, which is a theme that is repeated in the message of Rabbi Joseph Isaac and Rabbi Schneerson. The *Tanya* also speaks of the importance of helping fellow Jews in their spiritual development, which must be seen as the ground for Lubavitch activism, where the spreading of the

Hasidic teachings, as was strongly encouraged by Besht, is imperative. The motive for these actions is to bring the Messiah.



Schematic overview of the findings and results

The thesis of this work is that scholars have failed to pay close attention to the early teachings of Chabad Hasidism, i.e. the *Tanya*, when attempting to understand messianism in the contemporary Chabad movement. The worldview in the *Tanya* is, in fact, emphatically messianic in its character and contains the same core message as Rabbi Joseph Isaac and Rabbi Schneerson preached: repent and witness the coming of the messianic era! In this instance repentance implies turning to observant Judaism and developing one's

spiritual life. This two hundred year old message has provided the Lubavitchers with hope and expectation for generations. Together with the mystical interpretation of the *zaddik*, the Ḥasidic *Rebbe*, the anticipation of the coming of the Messiah grants the perfect grounds for a messianic claim on Rabbi Schneerson.

Scholars are still divided on the topic about messianism at the inception of Ḥasidism. As late as 1997 and 1998 scholars Green and Elior clearly stated that messianism had nothing to do with the early success of Ḥasidism and argue that Chabad-Lubavitch was totally indifferent to messianic claims. Conversely, Idel argues in favour of revising the theological sources for Ḥasidism. In 2006, Altshuler argued that Ḥasidism was strongly infused with active messianism at its very beginning, but that it had had to dilute it in order to stay in the Jewish fold. This would be in agreement with Ehrlich's statement that the mitnaggedim were afraid that the Hasidic movement was secretly messianic and resembling Shabbateanism (even though he is not of the opinion that Ḥasidism was messianic at the outset).

In addition to the question concerning messianism in the beginning stages of Ḥasidism, the fierce opinions of Berger were mentioned in the introductory chapter. In line with the mitnaggedim in the 1700s, Berger says Chabad-Lubavitch is a threat to Judaism. The issues which Berger sees as dangerous – the messianic claims on a dead person – are explained by the Lubavitchers based on 12th century kabbalah. The *Zohar* says that “When a *zaddik* dies he is to be found in all the worlds even more than during his lifetime...” He is thus, still present, even in this world, even though he is no longer here in his body. That the worldview of Ḥasidism is, to a great extent, founded on

mystical doctrines is not debated in the academic world. Elijah defines mysticism as crossing borders of the traditional beliefs in order to experience God. Thus it can be argued that even though some of the mystical concepts stretch the framework of traditional Judaism, they can still be an integral and accepted part of Judaism.

The *Tanya* as well as other Lubavitch literature, has been approached through an inductive study method, following the advice given by Green on how to read religious and Hasidic texts. Green's method is to know the intellectual, spiritual and historical world of the Hasidim and to look for philosophical and phenomenological issues in the text. Chapter two presented the Hasidic backdrop: the context for its formation and the roots in kabbalah. Its special and novel features, such as the mystical leadership, the emphasis on cleaving to God (to experience God) and repentance were presented in chapter three. Chapter three also answered questions about the worldview: God, the world and man. When reading the *Tanya*, the questions of what the primary topics of the text were taken into consideration.

According to Werblowsky's theory on messianism, a messianic movement is contingent upon a messianic ideology. I would argue that the active messianism that was stirred up by the last two Chabad Rebbes, resulting in an outreaching movement with fulltime missionaries, was not only formed as an answer to a catastrophic event in history, but that these times actually served the messianic ideology, already existent since the very beginning of Chabad Hasidism. Rabbi Joseph Isaac and Rabbi Schneerson stood together in the cause articulated by Shneur Zalman: i.e., to prepare the world for the coming of the Messiah and to make it a home for God.

We have been able to follow the teachings of the foundational work, the *Tanya*. Likewise, Rabbi Joseph Isaac is in line with the *Tanya* as he interprets the historical events in his lifetime, endeavouring to comfort and awake the Jewry. The central doctrines of the *Tanya*, repentance, praying, obeying the commandments and reaching out to fellow Jews who are ignorant as a means to bring the Messiah, ring out in Rabbi Joseph Isaac's writings. It is also possible to see how Rabbi Schneerson echoes the same themes, in such a way to make them relevant for this time and accessible to more people. This research stresses the similarities between the *Tanya* and the 20th century message of Chabad-Lubavitch. It furthermore demonstrates that the messianic worldview which already existed in the *Tanya* is very often repeated by Rabbi Joseph Isaac and Rabbi Schneerson. Moreover, this research has shown, that key phrases and ideas that originate with the *Tanya*, are found in their writings, even though they themselves seldom specifically refer to the *Tanya*. It is for this reason that it is has not been self-evident that their message is indeed founded on the *Tanya*. The last two *Rebbs* seem reluctant to making overt reference to the *Tanya*, for reasons that can only be speculated upon. It is plausible that they wanted to stress the messianic belief as central to Judaism in general, not only to the Chabad school of thought, and therefore left out explicit references to the *Tanya*.

There are, however, dissimilarities between the *Tanya* and Rabbi Joseph Isaac and Rabbi Schneerson. Novel to Rabbi Schneerson is the development of the idea of a gradual transformation of the world into the messianic era, which cannot be found in the *Tanya*. Moreover, Rabbi Joseph Isaac and Rabbi Schneerson's urgent and pressing cry with regard to the hastening of the messianic arrival

is absent in the *Tanya* even though the work does mention the necessity of preparing this world for the Messianic era. Zalman also lacks some of the acuteness that is present with the others, although this difference can be difficult to discern at times since the style of the writers differs and the historical circumstances for their messages are also different. Nonetheless, even if we suppose that the *Tanya* was less concerned with hastening the redemption, the two last *Rebbes* followed a thought pattern laid out by their early forefathers of Ḥasidism in general.

In the same way as the group in the time of Besht wanted to settle in the land of Israel to greet the Messiah published Besht's Epistle in the hope that it would hasten the coming of the Messiah, so did Rabbi Joseph Isaac start the writing of the *Tanya*, which Rabbi Schneerson finished, in order to greet the Messiah with it. Thus, the importance of spreading the Ḥasidic teachings was always fundamental in Ḥasidism. As demonstrated by Altshuler the hastening of the messianic era was a path laid out already by Besht. The spreading of Ḥasidic teachings is seen in contemporary Lubavitch activism. Moreover, that Chabad-Lubavitch is one of the few of the Ḥasidic movements to take this task seriously, is perhaps because an understanding of the messianic purpose of creation has been kept alive in the movement. Hence the motivation for Lubavitch activism can be found already in early Ḥasidism, where it was also a method of bringing the Messiah, just as it is today. One could also argue that Zalman put greater emphasis on charity than spreading the Ḥasidic teachings, but even if the acts differ (Zalman stressed charity and today there is focus on reaching out through the teachings) the motivation remains the same: bringing in the Messiah.

Three themes are strongly present with all three *Rebbes*: 1) the idea of man and his abilities and responsibilities, 2) the perception of the present time in relation to the end of the present world order and 3) the task of every Jew to make this world a home for God with all that it implies. These themes should be seen as central to the *Tanya* and also in the messages of Rabbi Joseph Isaac and Rabbi Schneerson, evidence that the last two *Rebbes* were not as innovative as scholars seem to believe. The messianic message did not commence as a result of the horrors of the pogroms and the Holocaust, but has always been a central part of Chabad theology. What happened was that Rabbi Schneerson and Rabbi Joseph Isaac before him, as any good homiletic, were both able to apply the messianic message inherited from the *Tanya* to the horrors of the pogroms and the Holocaust.

First of all, shining through the texts of the *Tanya* and the discourses of both Rabbi Joseph Isaac and Rabbi Schneerson is the high evaluation of man and the perception of the leader as a partner rather than a forerunner. The leader cheers his disciples on at the same time as he himself experiences and feels what they feel. This is perhaps apparent above all in the writings of Rabbi Joseph Isaac, which are best understood by the exceptional circumstances the Jewry was under during the time of his leadership. But there is also a very encouraging element in the *Tanya* itself. By no means does this mean that leader and disciple are the same or on the same level, but rather a leadership that is not distant but involved can be perceived, one which by way of drawing, rebuking and most of all encouraging, directs and guides a community.

Leaders speak to everybody in the community. The expressions “simple faith” and “simple Jews” are reoccurring and highlighted. One should not think of oneself as being insignificant; rather everybody has a place to fill in performing the Jewish task. This also concerns women and even young people, who should not be afraid of inspiring other Jews, even if they are older or more learned, to live according to the Ḥasidic teachings. It is not enough to have scholars do all the work, but in particular it is the work and lives of ordinary people with a simple faith that will bring this world to where it needs to be in order for the Messiah to come. Particularly with regard to redemption, it is emphasised that everybody has to repent.

Living the Jewish lifestyle is possible. It is possible first of all because of the Jewish soul and its divine origin – the spark of the *Shekhinah* existing in everybody – and the potential inherited from the patriarchs – a hidden love in the heart. Thus, there is no excuse for the Jewish person: the ability to reach spiritual heights and obey the commandments is limitless and innate in anybody – even the wicked. Furthermore, this possibility and ability lie in the superior position of the brain over the body and feelings. Feelings are not at all insignificant, in fact they are necessary in order to reach *devekut* – communion with God – but the intellectual faculties are central in prayer and meditation, as well as in overcoming evil. In overcoming evil man’s great capability is for his life’s purpose. Man has two souls, an animal soul and a godly soul, and therefore he can take authority over evil impulses until it is totally nullified and converted into holiness, which is the ideal. In this task the special term *mesirat nefesh*, self-sacrifice, is of the utmost importance. This means overcoming obstacles for divine service and it is a special kind of

power to triumph over hardships. By negating himself man has the power to live to his full potential and fulfil his purpose.

Secondly, the *Tanya*, Rabbi Joseph Isaac and Rabbi Schneerson all share the belief that the Messiah's arrival is imminent. This is in fact the time of the advent of the Messiah, which is why man must fulfil his responsibilities. This is not difficult because everybody has the inherent capability to do whatever is needed. The redemption is believed, especially by Rabbi Joseph Isaac and Rabbi Schneerson, to have been delayed because of man's refusal to take action. The *Tanya* also expressed the idea that if people overcame evil they would merit seeing the messianic arrival. The *Shekhinah* went into exile, the cause for man being in exile – both spiritual and physical – because man did not fulfil the commandments to love and was disunited in the heart. It is taught that the exile will end if man arouses love in his heart, both for God but also for fellow Jews. Moreover, Rabbi Schneerson taught that man is in exile because of hatred, but ultimately love would triumph and the exile would end. In his words, the redemption will be hastened by brotherly love and unity. If man only studies the Torah, especially its mystical implications, and obeys the commandments, in particular the physical ones such as wearing the *zitzit*, putting on the phylacteries and giving charity, these actions will culminate in the messianic era because they draw down divine powers on the lower world and transform it to a place where God can make his abode. The giving of charity in particular plays a predominant role, primarily in Zalman's pastoral letters.

Thus we can say that the inner motive for taking action, especially through the physical commandments, such as

wearing the fringes, putting on *tefillin* and charity, is to bring the messianic era. Thus, there is a messianic purpose when the Lubavitch *Rebbes* encourage their followers to take action and help people obey the commandments. This idea is not novel to the 20th and 21st centuries, but way back in the 18th century, Zalman expressed the very same thing in the *Tanya*, perhaps in an even clearer way than the later *Rebbes* have done. The idea is that the purpose for creation is for God, the king, to have a kingdom in which he would live and rule. Because of his greatness, there was also room for evil in creation. Evil is explained as being everything that has an identity apart from God. Man's role is to mend the world that has been broken so that it will be fit for God to live in. By keeping the commandments and thus fighting evil within and around as man does –evil is transformed into holiness and draws godliness down on the material world. The special men, the *zaddikim*, help men in accomplishing this task and they perfect it by wholly converting evil.

Thus obeying the commandments serves a collective purpose aimed at redeeming creation. This is of course ultimately the duty of the Messiah, but man assists the Messiah and makes the world ready for his coming, so that the Messiah can finish the redemptive commission in truly making this world a home for God, which is the purpose of creation. Thus the *Tanya* can say that the messianic era is the purpose of creation.

Thirdly, obeying the commandments is closely linked to the concept of *teshuvah*, returning to God in repentance and also returning to God in deeper devotion to him. The *Tanya* says that good deeds constitute repentance and the motivation for fulfilling the commandments should be a desire to return the soul to its source in

God. In repentance there is also a feature of turning evil into holiness, also explained as shattering the *kelipot* – the shells of evil concealing holiness. In Chabad this thought has a messianic impetus, because it concerns transforming the earth into a home for God – the essence of the messianic era. It is for this reason that the coming of the Messiah and redemption is said to be merited only through repentance, especially repentance empowered by *mesirat nefesh*. The spiritual meaning of repentance according to Rabbi Schneerson is the soul's returning to its source prior to its descent to earth.

In order to rise to a higher state of divine service one needs to take action, Rabbi Joseph Isaac says. Rabbi Schneerson teaches that it is especially man's endeavours on the nethermost level of action that create a residence for God. Man has a responsibility for fellow Jews and their material and spiritual wellbeing, which also has messianic importance, because the more people obeying the commandments and crying out to God in earnest repentance the quicker the exile will end. Furthermore, the Ḥasidim has a promise given to Besht from the Messiah, saying that he will arrive when all of the Ḥasidic teachings have been spread across the globe. The *Tanya* also expresses this by stressing the importance of understanding mystical matters (especially the understanding of the doctrine of *sefirot*). A comprehension of the *sefirot* inspires the right kind of feelings toward God and it elevates a Jew's service. The mystical Ḥasidic doctrines receive a central position not only because they are a means of cleaving to God, but also because of the promise of Messiah's advent once these have been dispersed.

One could perhaps argue that the number of messianic sayings by Rabbi Schneerson is more numerous compared

to those of Rabbi Joseph Isaac, just as the Messiah is not mentioned as much in early Ḥasidic writings. There is additionally more published material written by Rabbi Schneerson. Rabbi Schneerson was also active as the leader of the movement for more than a decade longer than his father-in-law, and he also lived 24 years longer, meaning that he had more time at his disposal, which could also have resulted in his uttering more messages on the Messiah. One thing is clear, however: the yearning for the Messiah in the messages is the same.

The early Chabad Ḥasidic movement was infused with messianic expectation. This messianic belief was central and there is no sign of wanting to dismiss it. The kernel of Zalman's the *Tanya* is the significance of religious practice as a means of drawing down divine powers on earth, which in the lurianic kabbalah is the way the world is restored to its original state, and brought to completion by the Messiah. Already in lurianic thought repentance, spreading kabbalistic teachings and the Messiah played the utmost role in redemption. These themes are very much present in the *Tanya* as well as in modern Chabad thought.

The modern day messianic fervour in Chabad-Lubavitch is not a new development. Rather, Rabbi Schneerson, Rabbi Joseph Isaac and the *Tanya* all stand united with the kabbalistic writings, especially those of Isaac Luria, in the cause of bringing the Messiah through religious deeds (most importantly the act of repentance, meaning return and thus having several implications including keeping the commandments) and spreading the message.

Chabad-Lubavitch is an excellent object of case-studies of contemporary messianic movements, their formation, growth and survival. Further research would be welcomed,

particularly on the continual growth and survival of the movement. There is a vast body of contemporary literature concerning the messianic doctrine written after the death of Rabbi Schneerson. These works would give report on how the message of Rabbi Joseph Isaac and Rabbi Schneerson has continued in the vacuum of a single leader in the organisation. There is also locally-produced material such as pamphlets, bulletins and magazines that could, for example, be compared in order to find out whether there are geographical differences in the messianic message. It seems plausible that there are more messianists living in Israel, but this would have to be studied.

Concerning the formation of the contemporary messianic activity in Chabad-Lubavitch, this study shows that it has grown from an ideology that has been imprinted in the Lubavitchers for generations through the meticulous study of the *Tanya* each week. One of the two essential discoveries in this study is that the worldview presented in the *Tanya* receives its purpose in the messianic doctrine. The meaning of creation lies in the coming of the messianic era and national redemption. Without this expectant belief, Zalman's admonitions for drawing closer to God would be futile. It is important to note that contrary to what scholars have earlier said about redemption in Hasidism, Zalman's worldview demonstrates how redemption is neither merely spiritual nor only personal, but concerns the whole creation.

It is true that Zalman also speaks of a redemption that is spiritual and individual: the main focus of the *Tanya* is the ability of the ordinary person to develop spiritually, but this has its value chiefly in the fact that it prepares the world for the Messiah. Fulfilling the commandments, in particular showing love for fellow Jews and giving

charity as well as studying the Torah and praying with great concentration, are imperative in making this earth a home for God, which characterizes the messianic era. This is something which scholars have overlooked when describing the initial stages of Chabad Ḥasidism. The purpose of the *Tanya* is not to convince the adherents that the Messiah's arrival is immanent, and therefore Zalman only rarely specifically mentions the Messiah. Instead Zalman is more focused on the question of how to bring the messianic era: through observance of the commandments.

The second essential discovery in this work is that Rabbi Joseph Isaac and Rabbi Schneerson stand united with Zalman in the messianic cause. The message of the 20th century Lubavitch *Rebbs* must be read and interpreted in the light of the *Tanya*. When done so, it becomes evident that, contrary to the view of earlier scholars, messianism in Chabad-Lubavitch is not limited to the 20th century, but rather that the zealous anticipation of the coming of the Messiah has its roots in 18th century Chabad Ḥasidism. Crucial here is their common belief that the Messiah is on the verge of coming. The differences in messages of Rabbi Joseph Isaac, Rabbi Schneerson and the *Tanya* are due to their ability to interpret the core values of Chabad in ways applicable to their respective generations, making messianism seem more acute in the times of pogroms and the Holocaust.

The messianic movement of Chabad-Lubavitch, together with other Ḥasidic groups, overcame the obstacles set before them by the Second World War as well as the modern world, and is now thriving. Chabad-Lubavitch, in particular, has managed to use modern technology actively in reaching out to secular Lubavitchers

and non-Lubavitchers alike. The growth and activism are motivated on messianic doctrinal grounds already evident at the inception of Chabad. Firstly, the *Tanya* communicates a return to observant Judaism in order to make this world an abode for God. Central to being observant to this were the call to love and to help fellow Jews (especially through charity). Secondly, there was a significant general belief in early Hasidism that the Messiah would come when the Hasidic teachings had been dispersed. Rabbi Joseph Isaac and Rabbi Schneerson clearly made this an imperative for the Chabad Hasidim when they formed the system of sending out missionaries. It is also evidenced by the work of the publishing company (Kehot Publications Society) and their consciousness in spreading Hasidic literature in several languages.

Messianism in Chabad Hasidism was not initially immediate and then later becoming distant, as often is the case with messianic movements, but rather in the *Tanya* Zalman presented a hermeneutical solution for the dilemma that arises when what has been prophesied does not occur. This solution simply notes that if the Messiah does not arrive, it means that the generation has not been ready, but nonetheless the Messiah is still as close to coming as he has always been. This is the key for understanding the messianic activity in the Chabad-Lubavitch movement. The Messiah is always standing at the threshold of entering into this world, but the Jewish people need to get ready to greet him! And so the Lubavitchers cry out, “We want Moshiach NOW!”

Bibliography

Chabad-Lubavitch Literature

Avtzon, Sholom Dov Ber
2005

The Alter Rebbe Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi. Brooklyn, New York: Rabbi Sholom D. Avtzon.

Boteach, Shmuel
1993

The Wolf Shall Lie With the Lamb. The Messiah in Hasidic Thought. Northvale, New Jersey, London: Jason Aronson Inc.

From Exile to Redemption
1992

From Exile to Redemption. Chassidic Teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson and the preceding Rebbeim of Chabad ז"ל of the Future Redemption and the Coming of Mashiach, vol. I. Brooklyn, New York: "Kehot" Publication Society.

1996

From Exile to Redemption. Chassidic Teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson and the preceding Rebbeim of Chabad ז"ל of the Future Redemption and the Coming of Mashiach, vol. II. Brooklyn, New York: "Kehot" Publication Society.

I Await His Coming Every Day
1992

I Await His Coming Every Day. Analytical Studies by the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, שליט"א on the Rambam's Rulings on Mashiach and the Ultimate Redemption. Brooklyn, New York: Kehot Publication Society.

Igros Kodesh by the Lubavitcher Rebbe

- 1987 *Igros Kodesh by the Lubavitcher Rebbe, vol. I.* Brooklyn, New York: Kehot Publication Society.
- 1987 *Igros Kodesh by the Lubavitcher Rebbe, vol. III.* Brooklyn, New York: Kehot Publication Society.
- 1987 *Igros Kodesh by the Lubavitcher Rebbe, vol. IV.* Brooklyn, New York: Kehot Publication Society.
- 1988 *Igros Kodesh by the Lubavitcher Rebbe, vol. VII.* Brooklyn, New York: Kehot Publication Society.
- 1988 *Igros Kodesh by the Lubavitcher Rebbe, vol. VIII.* Brooklyn, New York: Kehot Publication Society.
- 1988 *Igros Kodesh by the Lubavitcher Rebbe, vol. IX.* Brooklyn, New York: Kehot Publication Society.
- 1989 *Igros Kodesh by the Lubavitcher Rebbe, vol. XIV.* Brooklyn, New York: Kehot Publication Society.
- 1989 *Igros Kodesh by the Lubavitcher Rebbe, vol. XIX.* Brooklyn, New York: Kehot Publication Society.
- 1990 *Igros Kodesh by the Lubavitcher Rebbe, vol. XVII.* Brooklyn, New York: Kehot Publication Society.

Igros Kodesh by the Rebbe Rayatz

- 1986 *Igros Kodesh by the Rebbe Rayatz, vol I.* Brooklyn, New York: Kehot Publication Society.
- 1986 *Igros Kodesh by the Rebbe Rayatz, vol II.* Brooklyn, New York: Kehot Publication Society.
- 1987 *Igros Kodesh by the Rebbe Rayatz, vol VI.* Brooklyn, New York: Kehot Publication Society.

Lessons in Tanya

2004

Lessons in Tanya. The Tanya of R. Shneur Zalman of Liadi. תְּצַוְקֵלֶלֶה י"ה נבג"מ זי"ע, vol. 1-5, Compact edition. Brooklyn, New York: Kehot Publication Society.

Mangel, Nisen

1993

“Part II. Introduction.” Pp. 854-859 in *Likutei Amarim Tanya*, Bi-Lingual Edition. Brooklyn, New York: “Kehot” Publication Society.

Schneersohn, Shmuel

2002

True Existence. Brooklyn, New York: Kehot Publication Society.

Schneersohn, Yosef Yitschak

1999

Chassidic Discourses, Vol. I. Brooklyn, New York: “Kehot” Publication Society.

2001

Chassidic Discourses, Vol. II. Brooklyn, New York: “Kehot” Publication Society.

2003

The Four Worlds. Brooklyn, New York: Kehot Publication Society.

Schneerson, Menachem M.

1979

Letters by the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Vol. I. New York: Kehot Publication Society.

Schochet, Jacob Immanuel

1993

“Part IV. Introduction.” Pp. 864-867 in *Likutei Amarim Tanya*, Bi-Lingual Edition. Brooklyn, New York: “Kehot” Publication Society.

1995

The Mystical Dimension, Vol. I. The Mystical Tradition. New York: Kehot Publication Society.

1995

The Mystical Dimension, Vol. II. Deep Calling unto Deep. New York: Kehot Publication Society.

-
- 1995 *The Mystical Dimension, Vol. III. Chassidic Dimensions.* New York: Kehot Publication Society.
- 1998 *Tzava'at Harivash. The testament of Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov.* Brooklyn, New York: Kehot Publication Society.
- Sound the Great Shofar
1992 *Sound the Great Shofar – Essays on the Imminence of Redemption Adapted from Addresses of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, שליט"א.* Brooklyn, New York: Kehot Publication Society.
- Steinsaltz, Adin
2003 *Opening the Tanya. Discovering the Moral and Mystical Teachings of a Classic Work of Kabbalah.* United States of America: Jossey-Bass.
- The Rebbe – An Appreciation
2005 *The Rebbe – An Appreciation.* Lubavitch of Wisconsin.
- The Tanya
1993 *Likkutei Amarim – Tanya. By Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi. Bi-lingual Edition.* Brooklyn, New York: "Kehot" Publication Society.

Secondary Literature

- Altshuler, Mor
2006 *The Messianic Secret of Hasidism*. Leiden and Boston: Brill.
- Berger, David
2001 *The Rebbe, The Messiah, and the Scandal of Orthodox Indifference*. Oxford: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization.
- Buber, Martin
1948 *Hasidism*. New York: Citadel.
- Dan, Joseph
1997 "Hasidism: The Third Century." Pp. 415-426 in *Hasidism Appraised*. Ada Rapoport-Albert (ed.), London and Portland, Oregon: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization.
- 1999 *Jewish Mysticism. General Characteristics and Comparative Studies. Volume IV*. Northvale, New Jersey and Jerusalem: Jason Aronson Inc.
- 2006 *Kabbalah. A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press.
- Cohon, Samuel, S.
1971 *Jewish Theology: A Historical and Systematic Interpretation of Judaism and its Foundations*. Assen: Royal VanGorcum.
- Dein, Simon
2001 "What Really Happens When Prophecy Fails: The Case of Lubavitch." Pp. 383-401 in *Sociology of Religion*, 62:3.
- Dubnow, Simon
1969 *Geschichte des Chassidismus*. Jerusalem: The Jewish Publ. House.

- Ehrlich, Avrum M.
2000 *Leadership in the HaBaD Movement. A Critical Evaluation of HaBaD Leadership, History, and Succession.* New Jersey and Jerusalem: Jason Aronson Inc., Northvale.
- Elior, Rachel
1998 “The Lubavitch Messianic Resurgence – The Historical and Mystical Background.” Pp. 383-408 in *Toward the Millenium – Messianic Expectations From the Bible to Waco*, Peter Schäfer et.c (ed.), Leiden: Brill.
- 2007 *Jewish Mysticism. The Infinite Expression of Freedom.* Oxford and Portland, Oregon: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization.
- Encyclopedia Judaica
2007 *Encyclopedia Judaica*, Second Edition.
- Etkes, Immanuel
1997 “The Zaddik: The Interrelationship between Religious Doctrine and Social Organization.” Pp. 159-167 in *Hasidism Appraised.* Ada Rapoport-Albert (ed.), London and Portland, Oregon: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization.
- 2005 *The Besht: Magician, Mystic and Leader.* Waltham, Massachusetts: Brandeis University Press.
- Ettinger, Shmuel
1997 “Hasidism and the *Kahal* in Eastern Europe.” Pp. 63-75 in *Hasidism Appraised.* Ada Rapoport-Albert (ed.), London and Portland, Oregon: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization.

-
- Festinger, Leon, Riecken, Henry W., Schachter, Stanley
1964 *When Prophecy Fails*. New York: Harper Torchbooks.
- Fine, Lawrence
1984 "Kabbalistic Texts." In *Back to the Sources. Reading the Classical Jewish Texts*. Barry W. Holtz (ed.), New York et.c.: A Touchstone Book.
1987 "The Contemplative Practice of Yihudim in Lurianic Kabbalah." Pp. 64-98 in *Jewish Spirituality II. From the Sixteenth-Century Revival to the Present. Volume 14 of World Spirituality: An Encyclopedic History of the Religious Quest*. Arthur Green (ed.), New York: Crossroad.
- Fishkoff, Sue
2003 *The Rebbe's Army. Inside the World of Chabad-Lubavitch*. New York: Schocken Books.
- Friedman, Menachem
1994 "Habad as Messianic Fundamentalism: From Local Particularism to Universal Mission." Pp. 328-357 in *Accounting for Fundamentalisms: The Dynamic Character of Movements* (Fundamentalism Project, vol. 4). Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (ed.), Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Green, Arthur
1984 "Teachings of the Hasidic Masters." In *Back to the Sources. Reading the Classical Jewish Texts*. Barry W. Holtz (ed.), New York et.c.: A Touchstone Book.
1997 "Early Hasidism: Some Old/New Questions." Pp. 441-446 in *Hasidism Appraised*. Ada Rapoport-Albert (ed.),

London and Portland, Oregon: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization.

Hacohen, Shmuel Avidor
2007

“Schneersohn, Menachem Mendel.” Pp. 148-140 in *Encyclopedia Judaica*, Second Edition, vol. 18.

Holm, Nils G.
1984

Religionshistoria. En introduktion med textläsning. Åbo: Åbo Akademi.

Holtz, Barry W.
1984

”Introduction: On Reading Jewish Texts.” In *Back to the Sources. Reading the Classical Jewish Texts*. Barry W. Holtz (ed.), New York et.c.: A Touchstone Book.

Idel, Moshe
1995

Hasidism Between Ecstasy and Magic. New York: State University of New York Press.

1998

Messianic Mystics. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

Illman, Karl-Johan and
Harviainen Tapani
2002

Judisk Historia. Åbo Akademi, Åbo, 8:e korrigerade upplagan.

Jacobs, Louis
1976

Jewish Mystical Testimonies. New York: Schocken Books.

1999

Beyond Reasonable Doubt. London and Portland, Oregon: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization.

Klausner, Joseph
1955

The Messianic Idea in Israel. From Its Beginning to the Completion of the

Mishnah. New York: The Macmillian Company.

La Barre, Weston
1971

Materials for a History of Studies of Crisis Cults: A Bibliographic Essay. Current Anthropology.

Laato, Antti
1997

A Star Is Rising. The Historical Development of the Old Testament Royal Ideology and the Rise of the Jewish Messianic Expectations. Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press.

Landau, David
1993

Piety and Power. The World of Jewish Fundamentalism. New York: Hill and Wang.

Lenowitz, Harris
1998

The Jewish Messiahs. From Galilee to Crown Heights. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Loewenthal, Naftali
1990

Communicating the Infinite: The Emergence of the Habad School. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

1997

“Habad Approaches to Contemplative Prayer.” Pp. 288-300 in *Hasidism Appraised*. Ada Rapoport-Albert (ed.), London and Portland, Oregon: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization.

Magid, Shaul
2003

Hasidism on the Margin: Reconciliation, Antinomianism, and Messianism in Izbica and Radzin Hasidism. Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press.

- Marcus, Joel
2000
“The Once and Future Messiah in Early Christianity and Chabad.” Pp. 381-401 in *New Testament Studies* 46. United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.
- Meijers, Daniel
1997
“Differences in Attitudes to Study and Work between Present-day Hasidim and Mitnaggedim: A Sociological View.” Pp. 427-438 in *Hasidism Appraised*. Ada Rapoport-Albert (ed.), London and Portland, Oregon: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization.
- Melton, J. G.
1985
“Spiritualization and Reaffirmation: What Really Happens When Prophecy Fails.” P. 82 in *American Studies* 26(2).
- Neusner, Jacob
1984
Messiah In Context. Israel’s History and Destiny in Formative Judaism. Philadelphia: Fortress Press.
- Newman, Louis I.
1944
The Hasidic Anthology. Tales and Teachings of the Hasidim. New York: Bloch Publishing Company “The Jewish Book Concern”.
- Nigal, Gedaliah
1997
“The Hasidic Tale and its Sources.” Pp. 345-354 in *Hasidism Appraised*. Ada Rapoport-Albert (ed.), London and Portland, Oregon: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization.

-
- Rapoport-Albert Ada
1997 “Hasidism after 1772.” Pp. 76-140 in *Hasidism Appraised*. Ada Rapoport-Albert (ed.), London and Portland, Oregon: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization.
- Ravitzky, Aviezer,
1994 “The Contemporary Lubavitch Hasidic Movement: Between Conservatism and Messianism.” Pp. 303-327 in *Accounting for Fundamentalisms: The Dynamic Character of Movements (Fundamentalism Project, vol. 4)*. Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (ed.), Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Rubinstein, Avraham
2007 “Chabad.” Pp. 553-555 in *Encyclopedia Judaica*, Second Edition, vol. 4.
- Scholem, Gershom
1969 *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*. New York: Schocken Books.
1971 *The Messianic Idea in Judaism. And Other Essays on Jewish Spirituality*. London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd.
- Singer, David
2003 “The Rebbe, The Messiah and the Heresy Hunter.” Pp. 42-49 in *First Things* [Online], May.
- Stroll, Avrum
2007 “Shneur Zalman of Lyady”. Pp. 501-505 in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Second edition, vol 18.
- The Zohar
2003 *The Zohar by Shimon bar Yochai with the Sulam commentary by Yehuda Ashlag*. Edited and compiled by Michael Berg. New York: Kabbalah Centre International.

-
- 2004 ספר הזוהר *The Zohar. Pritzker Edition.*
Translation and Commentary by Daniel C.
Matt. Stanford, California: Stanford
University Press.
- Tishby, Isaiah
1989 *The Wisdom of the Zohar. Vol. II.* Oxford:
The Littman Library.
- 1989 *The Wisdom of the Zohar. Vol. III.* Oxford:
The Littman Library.
- Werblowsky, Rafael J. Zwi
1974 “Messiah and Messianic Movements”. Pp.
1017-1022 in *The New Encyclopaedia*
Britannica, vol. 11. Chicago:
Encyclopaedia Britannica Inc.

Magazines

“A Faith Grows in Brooklyn.” *National Geographic*, February, 2006.

“Men In Black.” *New York Times Magazine*, September 21, 2003.

Online Material

<http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/pages/ShArt.jhtml?itemNo=824393>

April 17, 2008.

Last update - 14:00 13/02/2007 “The Lubavitcher Rebbe as a god “

By Saul Sadka

<http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/doctrine> April 18, 2008.

<http://www.chabad.org/therebbe/article.asp?AID=60702> March

4, 2005

<http://www.chabad.org/global/about/article.asp?AID=36226> March

24, 2008

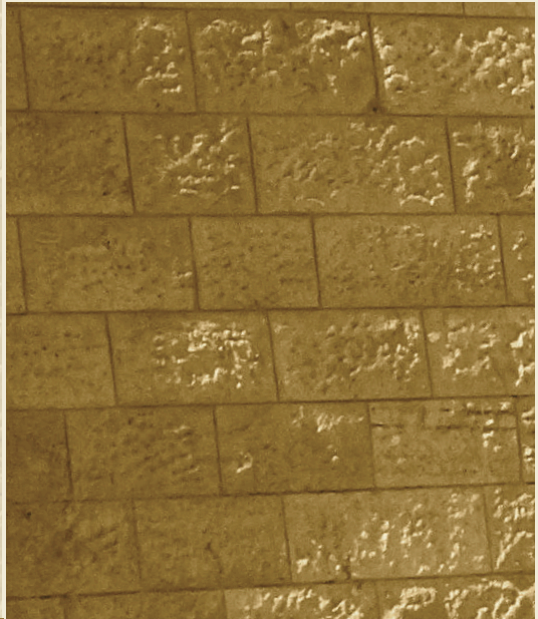
<http://store.kehotonline.com/index.php?action=help&helpfile=aboutus>

.htm March 24, 2008

“When the Rebbe was alive, just about every Lubavitcher (---) was confident that he was the Messiah.”

Is this sort of a belief a new phenomenon in the Chabad-Lubavitch movement or is there more to the story?

Chabad-Lubavitch is a Jewish movement that has become well known both for its active outreach campaigns, bringing life to Jewish communities around the world, and their expectant belief in the Messiah. This belief is often associated with Rabbi Schneerson, who is said to be the Messiah by some Lubavitchers, and by scholars to have created a messianic fervor among his adherents. The thesis at hand pinpoints the most important messianic beliefs put forward by the last two generations of leaders in Chabad-Lubavitch, relating them back to the first generations of the movement in the 1700s.



Åbo Akademi University Press
ISBN 978-951-765-514-9