

LETTERS TO THE REBBE :

RELIGION AND HEALING AMONG

THE LUBAVITCH OF STAMFORD HILL

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis examines sickness and healing among Lubavitchers, a group of Chassidic Jews living in North London. It attempts to answer a number of questions: To what extent do their ideas about the body, sickness and the cosmos derive from their religious texts? How do they conceptualise the relation between words and objects, between religious texts and the body? Under what circumstances do they resort to symbolic healing? How do they understand healing? Are rituals intended to effect change in the world or their own dispositions or both?

Lubavitchers response to sickness must be understood within the context of Chassidic ideas relating to suffering and misfortune. At times of severe sickness or that not responding to biomedical treatments, appeal is made to their spiritual leader, the Rebbe. He mediates between the material and spiritual worlds and effects physical healing through the manipulation of religious artefacts. Deriving from *Tanya*, Lubavitchers emphasise the unity of everything in the universe and the close interrelation between the physical and spiritual, words and objects and religious texts and the body. Healing "works" on account of the fact that there is a close correspondence between Hebrew words and parts of the body. These esoteric expertises are only applied in times of sickness not in other areas of daily life.

Much of the time Lubavitchers live in an enchanted world where the divine intrudes into mundane events and miracles are commonplace. However at other times they live in a pragmatic world of cause and effect. The thesis confirms the Malinowskian hypothesis that symbolic measures come into play when pragmatic actions fail. In the accounts presented the petitioners argue that they expect, through the Rebbe, to effect some definite change in the natural world: ie their petitions are strong illocutionary acts. From the analyst's point of view, a "magical view" of the world may be imputed to Lubavitchers. In practice their explanations of their actions are often not well systematised and actions we might call "magical" they themselves call religious.

The various Lubavitcher campaigns reinforce the power of the Rebbe and legitimate his authority. This is especially the case with the Messiah Campaign. Following his death, messianic expectations intensified as did proselytisation.

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis is based on fieldwork carried out in the Stamford Hill Jewish community in North London from 1992-1996. It concerns the experience of sickness and healing amongst the Lubavitch, a group of Chassidic Jews. They are members of a much larger group based in New York, led until his death in June 1994, by the Rebbe, Menachem Schneerson who was their spiritual leader. Specifically it will attempt to examine how the principal religious texts of the group (particularly the *Tanya*) provide an archive of ideas about the body and the world and how these ideas relate to practice at times of sickness i.e. the relation between myth and praxis. It examines how a notion of 'healing' is constructed amongst Lubavitchers.

Superficially homogenous, the group consists of members of varying degrees of religiosity and commitment both to the group and to the Rebbe and with varying degrees of knowledge concerning Talmud and mysticism. Lubavitch is characterised by a large proportion of 'converts', many of whom although of Jewish origin, have belonged to other religious groups and cults prior to joining Lubavitch and many still adhering to secular beliefs. Unlike other Chassidic groups, there is some, although in most cases limited, contact with secular Jews and non-Jews. Joining Lubavitch and adopting its ideologies is a slow process for many members and is characterised by the gradual acquisition of religious knowledge and the increasing performance of *mitzvot* (good deeds) and often the new member comes into conflict with his or her peer group and family outside Lubavitch. The process

involves a gradual detachment from significant others outside the group with increasing interaction with established members (see Lofland and Stark 1965). Reasons for joining vary a great deal but many members reported psychological benefits of belonging such as a sense of community and 'finding meaning, purpose and direction' in their lives, appealing to popular psychological rationalisations. Davidman & Stocks (1995) argue that a major aspect of Lubavitcher Chassidism's appeal to modern secular Jews is their emphasis on and a support for the maintenance of 'traditional' family life.

The group cannot be analyzed as if it were a 'timeless small scale society' with which many anthropologists have been traditionally concerned (see however Bourdieu 1977, Featherstone 1990), although many of the anthropological insights pertinent to the understanding of myth and ritual, can be applied to this group (see Tambiah 1990). They do not live in a small enclave cut off from the rest of society but are influenced by secular ideas and technology including those of biomedicine. One problem is to understand how their religious ideas articulate with these secular ideas, especially at times of sickness.

This thesis combines textual with fieldwork research. Bennett (1996) points out how both anthropologists and students of religion have abandoned impersonal "objective" approaches in favour of personal engagement with their subjects, replacing observation with conversation, monologue with dialogue, and text based with people based approaches. The focus should be on how religious people

practice their lives and interpret their religious symbols. Deriving from this is the idea that religions are not monolithic structures but rather that religion is multidimensional and multifaceted not unitary and monodimensional (See for instance Banu 1992 on Islam in Bangladesh, and Geertz 1968 on Islam in Morocco and Indonesia). As Wilfred Cantwell Smith states (1959:35):

"The externals of religion - symbols, institutions, doctrines, practices - can be examined separately... but these things are not in themselves religion, which lies rather in the area of what these mean to those who are religious. The student is making effective progress when he recognises that he has to do not with religious systems basically but with religious persons; or at least with something interior to persons."

Fieldwork with religious groups presents a number of problems. During my three years as a 'member', I was under increasing pressure to conform to their way of life and perform an increasing number of rituals. I was frequently asked whether I would join the group and live in Stamford Hill as part of the community. Bryan Wilson (1992:13) addresses some of these problems.

"It will be apparent that the cultivation of what I call 'sympathetic detachment' will always remain a matter of difficulty, and between sympathy and detachment there is a frontier of tension. Mixing with a religious group, a sociologist may feel deeply drawn to them and their activities, and this may be necessary for the fullest

understanding of them. But he must also remember that his brief is to interpret religion sociologically; his values lie in a scientific discipline, and in consequence he must always maintain appropriate distance. It is sometimes objected by religious people that properly to understand a religion one must belong to it. Scholars of any of the disciplines that make religion their object of study cannot accept that. One does not need to be a medieval man to study medieval society, nor a tribesman to understand a tribal group. Indeed, this objection to the sociological study of religion is an objection to the detached and objective approach to any academic discipline."

For four years I lived in a large Victorian house with a Lubavitcher family consisting of a father (a forty-five year old physiotherapist), a mother (a forty-one year old housewife) and five children aged eleven, nine, seven, five and two years of age (in 1995). I joined in activities with the family and attended ceremonies. I formed several close friendships with members of the community (both male and female) and was frequently invited to eat within other families on the Sabbath. Although I did not dress in the Chassidic garb, I was generally accepted by the community who were keen to talk to me about various matters both religious and secular. Interviews were conducted in English and in all I knew closely about one hundred Lubavitchers. Although I was often asked why I did not join the group, my usual response was to express doubts about my ability to follow Orthodox Jewish teachings which members of the community accepted generally.

Not surprisingly, in a community which emphasises strong gender segregation, it was initially difficult to interview women alone. Married women would only talk to me in the presence of their husbands and single women were reluctant to talk at all. However, as time went on, it became possible to speak to both single and married women.

Rather than presenting an "overall representation" of Chassidic culture, the thesis comprises of a number of interviews between myself and my informants which is in line with the assertion that ethnography is not a represented world but specific instances of discourse whereby monophonic authority is questioned and dialogism and polyphony are emphasised (see Clifford 1986:14 for a discussion of this matter).

What of my own reactions to living in the community? Initially I found it difficult to mix freely with members of the community. There seemed to be a great distance between myself coming from a secular Jewish background and members of the community who were ultra-Orthodox. I found myself asking myself frequently how anyone could lead what I perceived as such a restrictive life. At times I felt resentful towards some of my informants for being critical of my lifestyle and secular culture generally, almost exhibiting a form of elitism in that they held themselves to be morally superior to outsiders. One of my greatest problems arose during rituals. As a child I had been "forced" to attend Hebrew classes and attend Jewish ceremonies which I then found boring and senseless. During the first few

months I found rituals tiresome and as an agnostic, was continuously asking myself,

"How could they believe this?"

However, after several months I started to become more enthusiastic and often felt uplifted by attending ceremonies. I looked forward to the Sabbath and found it a time to relax and switch off from daily activities. After meeting the Rebbe and as the messianic fervour increased in intensity, I seriously thought about becoming more involved with the group and perhaps becoming a Lubavitcher myself.

During my four years in the community I had been through a number of personal crises and the messianic teachings of Lubavitch became more attractive to me. I now feel it was perhaps my job as a psychiatrist at Guy's Hospital that stopped me ultimately joining, although I contemplated this at times.

Although the literature on Chassidic lifestyle is fairly voluminous (Buber 1975, Mintz 1968, Dresner 1974, Sharot 1982, Mintz 1992, Rabinowicz 1997), some specifically focusing on Lubavitch (Mintz 1968, Shaffir 1974, Kupferman 1976, Wallach 1977, Hoffman 1991), there has been little examination of their medical practices. My particular interest during my field work focused on their interpretations and responses to sickness. At times of sickness Lubavitchers write to the Rebbe, who in response, tells them to check their religious artefacts such as **mezuzot** or **tefillen**. They relate physical disorders to aberrations in the religious text which, when corrected, result in 'healing'. The thesis provides a number of personal narratives of sickness or "autopathographies" (Couser 1997). The

theoretical underpinnings derive from the anthropological work on the "power of words" in ritual. The thesis attempts to answer a number of questions:

1. To what extent do Lubavitcher ideas about the body, sickness and the cosmos derive from their religious texts?
2. How do Lubavitchers conceptualise the relation between words and objects and religious texts and the body?
3. Under what circumstances do they resort to "symbolic healing"?
4. How do Lubavitchers conceptualise healing?
5. Are healing rituals intended to effect change in the world or their own dispositions or both ?

Chapter 1 is essentially historical and examines the significance of 'healing' in early Chassidism emphasising the use of divine names, a sort of talismanic magic which draws down spiritual energy into the material world. It considers the extent to which anthropological models are useful for understanding the development of Chassidism. Chapter 2 is theoretical and examines the notion of 'healing' raising a number of issues in medical anthropology relating to the power of words in healing and the question of 'efficacy' of ritual. Chapter 3 describes the ethnography of the Stamford Hill community. Chapter 4 concentrates on the Rebbe and his miracles. Chapter 5 and 6 look at how the *Tanya*, the principal religious text of Lubavitch, provides an archive of ideas about the body, language and the cosmos. Chapter 7 describes how Lubavitchers deal with sickness focusing on the relation between

symbolic and pragmatic healing. Chapter 8 looks at the messianic campaign among Lubavitchers and their reactions to failed prophecy.

A KABBALISTIC PRIMER

The major religious text used by the Lubavitch is the *Tanya*, a philosophical work written by Rabbi Schneur Zalman in 1800 which, comprising a synthesis between the mystical and rational currents of Jewish thought, contains ideas deriving from Kabbalistic texts. The term *Kabbalah* ('tradition' or that which had been received) has been used since the 11th century CE to refer to a diffuse tradition of Jewish mystical thought said to be "hidden" in religious law and which was received from the remote past, perhaps even given to Adam from the angels before the fall. The aversion of Talmudic and Rabbinical Judaism to myth has been frequently pointed out (Scholem 1965). The medieval Jewish philosophers concerned themselves with the purity of the concept of God and were determined to divest it of all mythical and anthropomorphic elements and to divide the immediate and the divine worlds.

Scholem (1965) argues for the Kabbalah being a reaction to this, an attempt to reconnect these worlds:

"The Kabbalah was a mythical reaction in realms which monotheistic thinking had with utmost difficulty wrested from myth", an "eruption of subterranean forces" which attempted to "construct and describe a mythical world by means of thinking that had excluded myth" (Scholem 1965:98-99).

It is said to have first been communicated as secret teaching to a privileged few, but by the early modern period had become a more open pursuit particularly in

Chassidism. The most important of the more than three thousand extant texts is the *Zohar*, edited in the late thirteenth century probably by Moses de Leon (died 1305) and which came to be regarded as the "bible of the Kabbalists" and is a lengthy collection of tales, anecdotes, homiletics, and commentaries. The ideas were further elaborated by Isaac Luria (1543-1572) in Palestine in what is known as the Lurianic Kabbalah (1) which introduced a strong messianic element.

The *Zohar* explores the inner workings of the divine in its relationship to man. Its recurrent themes are the nature of the deity and his manifestations in the universe; the mysteries of the divine names; the soul of man, its source and future destiny; the nature of good and evil; the importance of the written and oral Torah; the expected coming of the Messiah and the future redemption. It speaks of the ultimate ultrahuman order as manifest in man, one which can be directly known through study or ecstatic experience. The experienced phenomenological world can be understood as an imperfect reflection of hidden, 'deeper' or higher principles. Knowledge of these can serve as a practical key to confer insight and sometimes power over mundane everyday events. The *Zohar* contains a number of medical and demonological themes.

According to the *Zohar*, the Infinite (*En Sof*) (2) himself without qualities or attributes, made his existence perceptible by projecting ten successive channels of light, the *sefirot* in order to serve as media for his manifestations in the finite. These *sefirot* are understood as the names, agencies, attributes and qualities of God and

are the divine attributes which make up all existence. They are the ten divine structures which bring the world into being through emanation and make up the different levels of reality. They act as intermediaries between the completely spiritual and unknowable creator and the material world. The ten Sefirot form a unity and should not be thought of as separate entities. They are figured in different patterns but may be divided up into three triads; the first representing the imminent intellectual power of the universe; the second the moral world and the third the physical universe. The tenth sefira is the female aspect of the divinity, the *shekinah*

The human individual is understood as a microcosm of the whole universe by which each person reproduces what is above in the celestial worlds. The Sefirotic structure of man simultaneously reflects and is reflected onto that of the universe, and the Sefirot may be represented in various ways as concentric circles, as the tree of being or as the cosmic man, *Adam Kadmon* (3). The Sefirot are immanent in bodily experience. As the Zohar states (2.212):

"We were formed after the supernal pattern, each limb corresponding to something in the scheme of wisdom".

The process of emanation of divine energy and divine light was also characterised by Kabbalists as the unfolding of the Hebrew language. In relation to the process of emanation, Kabbalists speak of both attributes and spheres of light but at the same time they also speak of divine names and the letters of which they are composed:

"The secret world of the godhead is a world of language, a world of divine names that unfold in accordance with a law of their own. The elements of the divine language appear as the letters of the Holy Scriptures. Letters and names are not only conventional means of communication. They are far more. Each one of them represents a concentration of energy and expresses a wealth of meaning which cannot be translated, or not fully at least into human language. There is of course, an obvious discrepancy between the two symbolisms. When the Kabbalists speak of divine attributes and Sefirot, they are describing the hidden world under ten aspects; when, on the other hand, they speak of divine names and letters, they necessarily operate with the twenty-two consonants of the Hebrew alphabet, in which the Torah is written, or as they would have said, in which its secret essence was made communicable. Several ways of resolving this glaring contradiction were put forward. One explanation was that since letters and sefirot are different configurations of the divine power, they cannot be reduced to a mechanical identity" (Scholem 1969:36)

Language in the Kabbalah has a metaphysical reality of its own. The letters mediate between the Sefirotic world and the material one, and permit operations that bridge the gap between the human and the Divine. Words are more than descriptive, they are an integral part of the reality they describe.

Kabbalists describe four distinct worlds corresponding to different orders of Sefirot which are in descending order of revealed divinity: **Aziluth** (emanation); **Briah**;

(creation); **Yetzirah** (formation) and **Asiyah** (making corresponding to our material world). The levels are simultaneous as well as successive, with an intimate relationship between the physical and spiritual worlds, each not only reciprocally influencing each other but actively participating in the other "From an activity below there is stimulated a corresponding activity on high" (Zohar 1934). There is a reciprocal relationship between the divine and the material world.

The Torah (and Hebrew alphabet) are represented in various ways in the Kabbalah: as the individual physical body; the body of the Jews and even the body of God. Some have even maintained that it existed before the creation of the world. The Kabbalist uses the Torah as a symbolic instrument where beneath the letters there is a mystical and metaphysical reality. In the written Torah there are no vowels, punctuation or numerals. The twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet are exchanged or substituted for their numerical value. This leaves it open to a large number of interpretations. As Scholem (1954:14) states:

"The Torah is to the [Jewish mystics] a living organism animated by a secret life which steams and pulsates below the crust of literal meaning; every one of the innumerable strata of the hidden region corresponds to a new and profound meaning of the Torah."

Many of the ideas in the Zohar were elaborated on by Isaac Luria (1514-1572). Central to Luria's system is the doctrine of **zimzum** (contraction). According to the

Lurianic cosmogony used by the Lubavitch, creation was preceded by a voluntary contraction or self-limitation of the infinite, to make room for the finite world of phenomena. Into the dark vacuum formed, God projected ten successive channels of light which served as media for his manifestations in the finite. The first cosmic creation was a being of light in human form. Beams of light radiated out from him, except from his eyes, from which the light streamed out in sparks or isolated points. To provide form for the holy sparks of light, special vessels were created to catch and hold them. The force of light proved so powerful that the vessels could not contain it and shattered under the impact (4). The forces of chaos that caused the breaking of the vessels imprisoned the holy sparks in the shards of the vessels (shells of evil) where they remain waiting for the action of mankind to free them.

However, most significantly, the breaking caused the exile of the Shekinah, the feminine and maternal aspect of God, at once part of God and separate from him. Lutzky (1989) argues that the desire for contact with the deity, 'the absent one', is a major theme of all mystical experience, expressed in images of quest or journey, of sexual encounter, of possessing God within or being one with him and of harmony, unity or wholeness. This theme, clearly related to the issues of separation and loss, underlies the Kabbalistic myth of *tikkun*.

This situation was aggravated through the sins of the first man, Adam (5). All human souls were created with him. Originally, they were all good with harmony prevailing amongst them. Following Adam's sin in the garden of Eden, they all

became tainted to varying degrees, depending on their power of resistance. This led to a disruption in the pre-existent harmony allowing the potential for evil to become active.

"Adam's fall corresponds on the anthropological plane to the breaking of the vessels on the theosophical plane " (Scholem 1969 :115)

The state of disharmony is not destined to last forever. It will be terminated after the messianic arrival. He will restore the original harmony both to the souls of men and to the entire cosmos. The fate of man is thus a reflection of the cosmic fate. Every stage of biblical history presents an opportunity for redemption. Every person who acts in accordance with the Talmudic law is involved in the process of *tikkun* (6,7) bringing back to the Godhead the divine sparks and his own soul as well. When *tikkun* is realised, creation will be returned to its intended state of wholeness, harmony and perfection, heralding the messianic age. There will be an end to suffering. All religious rites are involved in this process. Among Chassidic Jews, Kabbalistic texts such as the *Zohar* are a constant source of reference.

Chapter 1

THE ORIGINS OF CHASSIDISM AND ITS PRACTICES OF HEALING

The use of religious language for "healing" purposes among Chassidim has a long historical legacy. Although there has been much debate among anthropologists concerning the relevance of history for fully understanding a contemporary cultural pattern (1), I would argue that Lubavitchers draw on practices which have existed since the foundation of Chassidism and that contemporary healing can only be understood in a historical context. This chapter examines the history of Chassidism, one which is known by Lubavitchers and is taught to children. In fact much of the teaching in Lubavitcher schools involves the narration of stories about the founder of Chassidism, the Baal Shem Tov and past zaddikim and their feats (including episodes of sickness and healing). Lubavitchers are expected to be familiar with the lives, works and teachings of past zaddikim and the movement's sense of itself is a moral history, understood principally through their written works and stories about them .

An understanding of the development of any 'religious' movement requires an analysis of social, psychological and religious aspects. Those aspects significant in the origin of the movement may differ from those related to its propagation. The history of Chassidism (2) has been well described by Jewish historians (Ettinger

1968, Dubnow 1971, Dinur 1955, Buber 1975, Scholem 1974, Sharot 1982, Hundert 1996). Buber's existential subjective writings emphasising the 'legendary' aspects of Chassidic literature are to be contrasted with the historical - psychological approach of Scholem (3) which has been accepted as the standard method of modern scholars.

According to Sharot (1982), those historians who have concentrated on Jewish social history have rarely demonstrated the interrelationships between the political and religious histories. Exceptions include some Marxist analyses (eg Mahler 1971) which are limited by an inflexible dichotomy of base (economic relations) to superstructure (religious beliefs).

Idel (1995) argues that Chassidism can only be understood as an aggregation of multiple streams encompassing both ecstasy and magic (4). Chassidic thought and experience is characterised by a sustained effort to keep together the two extremes of ecstasy (the spiritual) and magic (the material) as part of both the religious and social system. The former refers to the temporary effacement of one's own personality, during which time one is possessed by the divine power. The latter, relates to the preternatural control over nature by human beings with the assistance of forces more powerful than they. Magical elements, the drawing down of the divine effluence for the benefit of the community, played a large part in the development of the movement and, as will be demonstrated later, continue to be influential in the modern day Lubavitch movement. (5)

The term **Chassidism** generally refers to a Jewish pietistic movement which developed in Eastern Europe in the second half of the eighteenth century. Its main centres were in Podolia and Volhynia in Eastern Poland. Its accepted founder was the Baal Shem Tov or Bescht (1700-1760). Although the Baal Shem Tov attracted no more than a few thousand followers of the forty to fifty thousand Jews in Podolia, the Chassidic movement grew to influence the majority of Jews in Eastern Europe. The movement withstood fierce opposition from the organised Jewish rabbinical establishment (6) but its influence continued to increase, although the reasons for its astonishing success remain controversial.

Jewish historians are largely in agreement that three events were related to the emergence of Chassidism: the Cossack insurrections of 1648 (7), the Shabbatean crisis (8), and the local decline in importance and autonomy of the local Jewish self-government (*kehillot*) in the mid eighteenth century. As Sharot (1982:135) states "At this time the Jews were economically weakened and poverty was rife, their communities divided and were caught in a state of religious confusion". Did these factors predispose them to the influence of mass social, religious or messianic movements? Dinur (1955: 80) correctly emphasises that the social context provides only the potential for such a movement to arise. It does not inevitably cause them to do so. The background socio-political events alone cannot produce such movements:

"Historical enquiry into the origin of folk movements cannot simply describe the process of social and ideological breakdown that caused or necessitated the emergence of such movements. It must locate and identify these new social elements within the overall context of social decomposition, providing the basis for a new societal formation. The historian must look for the actual mechanisms by which the movement succeeded through the ideological or organisational form it took."

Social background of early Chassidism

The condition of the Jews in modern times (post 1648) differs radically from their situation in the Middle Ages. The social, cultural and economic conditions of the Middle Ages gave the Jews a special status in their own view and in the eyes of their Christian and Moslem neighbours. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the Jews of Poland-Lithuania were considered as 'serfs of the Royal chamber' but the Roman Catholic Church displayed the same animosity towards them as in other countries. However, despite this, the Polish Jews attained a unique legal and social status and favourable conditions for Jewish life and activity. Economic activity played a major part in consolidating this status along with a number of social and religious factors. The Polish/Lithuanian Jewish community was so large compared to other Jewish communities in Europe and was seen by Jews as a relative paradise despite periodic attacks and this gave it a totally different ambience from other European Jewish communities. Ben Sasson (1994) argues that

Poland-Lithuania served as a haven for radical Protestants and the social conditions that initially enhanced religious tolerance towards them indirectly fostered a better attitude towards the Jews.

The Polish nobility allowed Jews to settle on their estates and established 'private cities' where they received special privileges. These private townlets enhanced ties between the Jews and the nobility. Although the king still exercised authority over the Jews, they were increasingly subject to the protection and goodwill of the magnates. This situation along with economic progress proved very favourable for the Jewish community until 1648. Following this relatively successful period characterised by expansion and an increase in the range of occupations, the Polish Jews were subject to a number of massacres which placed the Polish and Lithuanian Jews under a severe strain.

Successive invasions by the Ukrainian Cossacks under the leadership of Bogdan Khmel'nitski (1648), Russia (1654-67) and Sweden (1655-60) resulted in economic decline and political disintegration in Poland. The power of the Polish monarch was significantly diminished. The population declined because of war deaths and famine, and a fall in foreign and internal trade and mounting conflict between classes, political and religious groups. Most of Poland was ceded to Russia (1772), Austria (1793) and Prussia (1795). After the Congress of Vienna (1815), the remaining part of Poland, Congress Poland, was made a semiautonomous kingdom under Russian rule. The Polish Jews were estimated at half a million in 1750. They

occupied an intermediate position between the Roman Catholic nobility and the peasant masses. The peasants made up three-quarters of the total Polish population, and around 85 percent of them were serfs. The nobility and gentry constituted 8% of the population. According to a census of Polish Jewry in 1763, only a third of the Jews lived in villages and the Jews made up a significant section of the urban population (Mahler 1954). Most male Jews in Polish villages were arrendators or innkeepers. The arenda system allowed a person to lease a group of estates at a fixed rate and for a specified number of years and to receive the income. The arrendators leased the rights from nobles to produce and/or sell bread, alcohol and milk. The urban Jewish population were merchants and generally wealthier than their rural counterparts. The latter lived in close proximity to the peasants and were subject to frequent attacks by them.

During the 1648 Cossack massacres led by Chmielnicki, about a quarter of Polish Jewry was destroyed. In the eighteenth century the southern provinces were attacked by the Haidamaks-Cossack and peasant rebels from the Russian side of the Ukraine. In 1768 thousands of Jews were massacred in the town of Uman. Economic restrictions on Jews, introduced by the Catholic clergy and merchant guilds in the mid-eighteenth century, forced many Jews out of the towns. They moved to the villages resulting in competition for leases, and in turn, this led to increased rents. The authorities imposed heavy tax burdens on the Jewish communities.

All these 'pressures' significantly weakened the *kehillot*, the semi-autonomous Jewish community organisations, especially in South East Poland. The *kehillah* became a purely exploitive body whose main concern was the imposition and collection of taxes. Impoverished Jews spoke out against the *kehillot* especially on account of 'unjust' and 'corrupt' acts by the rich. The common Jews expressed opposition towards the rabbis, many of whom had bought their positions from the state (see Dresner 1974). The standard of Jewish scholarship had declined, and over the whole country, the religious distance between the rabbinic elite and the masses was wide. The rabbis increasingly castigated the common people on account of their failure to observe their strict demands for religious observance. The Jewish leadership was widely criticised. For example one complaint submitted by the people of Shavle in Lithuania, to the official in charge of the estate stated:

"We, the Jewish residents of Shavle, declare with tears in our eyes, that we have need neither of a rabbi nor of leaders since they...engage in extortion and plotting and are destroying us utterly, and since they are connected among themselves by family ties, they rob us of our last coins only in order to enrich themselves " (Ben Sasson 1994:766).

The Chassidic movement arose in eastern Poland during this period of widespread suffering and social disorganisation. The situation in Southeastern Poland was particularly bad. Dinur (1955) explained Chassidism as a movement of social protest. Chassidism emerged not from the higher social strata but from a group of

wandering preachers in Podolia. The major social carrier of early Chassidism was the impoverished, lower middle class of rural and small town Jews: the arrendators and their employees, innkeepers, small shopkeepers, peddlers, hawkers and the unemployed. In his analysis of Galician Jews, Mahler (1971) points out that the major support for Chassidism derived from the petite bourgeoisie, the class most dependent on feudal economy. Ettinger (1968) however makes the point that even at the dawn of Chassidism, it has proven hard to define the early movement socially (in terms of occupation or class). Throughout its history Chassidism has defied class differentiation and Marxist explanations have remained generally unsuccessful. Comparing the literature of non-Chassidic Jews, it seems that the early literature and sermons of the Chassidim had little to say as social criticism and consequently the early Chassidic movement cannot be seen as a formal political protest. There have been attempts to understand Chassidism as a response to economic deprivation experienced by Eastern European Jews but this will not be elaborated upon here (9).

The teachings of Chassidism

Contrary to what has often been asserted, Chassidism did not introduce any fundamentally new ideas into Judaism. What distinguishes Chassidism from other forms of Orthodox Judaism is its emphasis on and devotion to the **zaddik**, the spiritual leader who acts as an intermediary between man and God (to be described later). Idel (1995) makes the point that Chassidism is not merely a popularisation of

Kabbalah, a psychological interpretation of Lurianism or the generic name for social groups rotating around charismatic figures but it is a unique spiritual countenance, one that is a continuation of earlier types of thought. The Chassidim upheld the accepted Talmudic and Kabbalistic texts and diligently observed the system of Jewish rituals. As opposed to the collective salvation of the non-Chassidic orthodox Jews, the possibility of something more like individual redemption was emphasised; a shift from the social to the individual. Epstein (1959:271) points out how every person was able to participate in the process of redemption as long as "his heart was willing to cleave to God and enter into communion with him."

The founder of Chassidism, the Bescht (the Baal Shem Tov), communicated his teachings orally and his teachings are known only through the works of his disciples, particularly Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye who published the first Chassidic book in 1780, twenty years after the death of the Bescht. The legends along with reminiscences were collected in a book *In Praise Of The Bescht*, published in 1815, fifty five years after his death (translated into English by Ben Amos and Mintz 1970)

This emphasises the Bescht's solitude: the Bescht is said to have sat alone in a forest in his youth and during a long period of solitude in the Carpathian mountains, he received his mystical revelations.

The central theme of the teachings of the Baal Shem Tov and his disciples was *devekut*, the cleaving or "adhesion" of man to God, an ecstatic experience whereby man is taken over by the Divine. In earlier Kabbalistic thought *devekut*, in the sense

of communion rather than union with God was only an ideal, the last step in the ascent to the divine, a feat attained by a few spiritually gifted men. With Chassidism *devekut* became more immediate and accessible. The early teachings held that there was a fundamental difference between the *devekut* of ordinary people and the *devekut* of the spiritually endowed. The Divine was directly accessible to the latter only, others could achieve the heights of *devekut* only if they cleaved to these spiritual men. However, a degree of communion was available to the ordinary man.

The Chassidim reinterpreted some fundamental Kabbalistic ideas. They turned from the Lurianic emphasis on separate evil spheres to emphasise that every object and activity contained a spark of divinity: "there is no place empty of him" as the Bescht is reputed to have said. Divinity exists within all spheres. Evil had no independent existence and the spiritual was a higher level of the material. Man could only lift up the divine sparks through contact with and transformation of the material world (see Jacobs 1973).

Joy was emphasised as a fundamental religious value. Although this was stressed in pre-Kabbalistic literature, the Chassidic emphasis on joy and its opposition to asceticism represented a radical shift in Judaism. The Baal Shem Tov reputedly said "That physician is best who administers medicine with a drink as sweet as honey" again emphasising joy. In eighteenth century Poland extreme asceticism was widespread among Orthodox Jews, some even hastening their own death through

extreme ascetic practices. The Baal Shem Tov emphasised that asceticism and sorrow expressed ingratitude to God and hindered the attachment to the Divine, whereas joy indicated complete trust and belief in God. Ben Sasson (1994) argues for the emphasis on joy as being an important factor in attracting the masses, especially the young, to Chassidism.

Devekut was attainable not only through specifically religious acts, such as prayer and Torah study, but also through everyday activities such as eating, drinking, sexual relations (Magonet 1995) and earning a living. Any act, including those concerned with physical pleasure and the achievement of material needs, could become a religious act if the intention was to cleave to God. The body was seen as sacramental. Devekut through all material and physical activities was possible because of the immanence of God in all creation. The Baal Shem Tov taught that man could life up the divine sparks only through contact with, and transformation of the material world.

The proper form of prayer involving intention, contemplation, joy and enthusiasm was regarded as the ideal means to achieve devekut and to help men achieve the proper frame of mind for this, they engaged in highly demonstrative movements during prayer. Some even shouted, jumped around and turned somersaults (10). The use of alcohol was even accepted as an aid to reaching a higher mystical state. The Bescht also used "attachment to the letters" of religious texts whereby one

contemplated and meditated on each letter until it lost its contour and the divine attributes became visible and devekut was attained.

According to Sharot (1982:141) "The centrality of prayer in Chassidism represented a restructuring of the hierarchy of Jewish religious values." Mystical fervour was considered more important than scholarship, and scholarship without devekut was considered worthless. Menachem Mendel of Peremyshlany (born 1728), a disciple of the Bescht, held that the study of Torah and religious devotion were incompatible and many early Chassidim challenged the notion that religious study was the major religious value. Some argued that too much study might interfere with the attempt to achieve devekut. According to the Bescht, the technique of attachment to the letters applied to study as well as prayer. By this technique the text was atomised and the literal meaning lost its importance. Study became a contemplative rather than an intellectual pursuit. Language, especially its discrete components, was considered to be a technique to attain a mystical experience. To approach the Torah with love and enthusiasm was held to be more important than to learn its precise meanings. The early Chassidim adopted a lenient approach to the performance of mitzvot, and emphasised quality rather than quantity that was important. When a man fulfilled only one commandment with *kavanah* (intention) and cleaving to God, it was as though he had fulfilled all the commandments of the Torah.

Ben Sasson (1994) argues that from an early stage, the Bescht held that his teachings could serve as a guide to the people and bring the redemption nearer. The place of

messianism in early Chassidism is a topic of dispute among historians with Scholem (1971) arguing for a 'neutralisation' of messianism in early Chassidism as a response to the Shabbatean crisis. Early Chassidim adhered to traditional Jewish beliefs about the Messiah but the question which remains unresolved is whether they believed in and worked for the imminent coming of the Messiah. There have been conflicting interpretations of a letter from the Bescht to his brother -in -law in the Holy Land. In this letter he describes a mystical vision in which he saw the ascent of his soul to heaven where the Messiah promised to come "when your [the Baal Shem Tov's] learning is known and revealed in the world and your springs flow out", ie when the Chassidic teachings became widespread. Dinur (1955) argues that this letter is the most important evidence to support the contention that Chassidism was from its inception a messianic movement. Arguing against Scholem (1971), Tishby (1967) asserts that Chassidism was not forced by its environment to neutralise messianism.

The Chassidic movement elicited much condemnation from other groups of non-Chassidic Orthodox Jews, the **Mitnagdim**. The campaign against Chassidism began in Vilna the 'Jerusalem of Lithuania', the most important centre of religious study in Poland. In 1772 the Vilna community addressed a letter to all other communities to find and excommunicate all Chassidim. The condemnation was intensified when the Chassidim began to publish their own books without the approval of the community rabbis. The movement against the Chassidim was led by the Gaon of Vilna, Rabbi Elijah who was known as one of the greatest Jewish

scholars of the time, a strict ascetic who wrote several influential commentaries on the Mishnah and Talmud. He opposed the Chassidic claim that God could be worshipped in the temporal world through both the good and evil impulses that existed in men. He believed this approach blurred the boundaries between 'sacred' and 'secular'. He was convinced that emphasis on inner devotion and deviation from clearly designated laws could lead Chassidim to transgress against the Torah. The concept of the zaddik, as an intermediary between God and the people appeared to him as a form of idolatry and he declared that "all those who follow this path never return-it is heresy" (Ben Sasson 1994:773). When the Gaon died in 1797, the opponents of the Chassidim claimed that the sect in Vilna held a feast and festivities after his death. Various anti Chassidic writings were published in the late eighteenth century. Polemicists such as Rabbi Israel Leibel, Rabbi David of Makov and others scorned the Chassidim for their way of life and emphasis on their rebbes.

Popular Jewish religion and the influence of the Baal Sham Tov

Chassidism developed in Eastern Europe at a time when popular 'magic' was widely practiced. This consisted of actions or the use of formulae to influence the material world. As Butler (1949) argues the aim of magic is to impose the human will on nature, on other human beings or on the supersensual world in order to master them. Prayers of petition are not frequent in official Jewish ritual and those that do exist refer to the people of Israel as a group. The individual is provided

with little supernatural assistance in times of misfortune. The rabbinical tradition provided no help in dealing with personal misfortune and sickness. This was the 'function' of Jewish popular religion: to protect the individual against illness and misfortune, to cure illness and infertility, and to fight against evil forces such as demons and the evil eye (11). Sharot (1982) argues however that official and popular Judaism were not distinct religious systems but overlapped considerably in their assumptions and symbols. They were divided in function, however, since official Judaism did not satisfy man's ubiquitous desire for supernatural means of control over his earthly environment. According to him, 'magic' was an essential element of the Jewish popular tradition (12).

The popular religion employed the sacred symbols and writings of official Judaism as well as a wide variety of magical beliefs and practices at times appealing to various angels or demons (on which see Trachtenberg 1977). At the popular level people were unaware of the distinctions between forbidden and permitted 'magic'. It was not uncommon for unscholarly Jews to practice magic. There is little information available in the historical literature describing how and under what conditions daily life was 'magical'. Women were involved in magical activity such as providing charms and love potions. Only men were considered to have sufficient religious education to know the holy names. Magicians came to be known as *baalei shem*, Masters of the Name, on account of their ability to deploy the various Hebrew names of God to influence the material world. They utilised

various combinations of the divine names for magical purposes. They became popular in Germany and Poland in the sixteenth century.

A common practice was the invocation of the names of God, of the angels and occasionally of the demons, a practice which Trachtenberg (1977) argues ultimately derives from Egyptian magic. Similarly medieval Christendom, influenced by Gnostic and Hellenistic ideas, recognised the effects of name invocation. Some names were taken from the Bible or Talmud and some from Kabbalistic sources. The Talmud permitted the use of sacred names only if they involved an appeal to the supernatural and a recognition of the supremacy of God. However, uneducated Jews used the names to manipulate the supernatural in order to control events on earth. It was commonly held that a name contained the essence of a being and that by using this name they could control the province over which the supernatural being had authority. The essential character of things and men was held to reside in their names and to know the name was to exercise power over that person. The medieval Jews inherited a vast lore of angel names and names of various spirits which were deployed to various ends. The recitation of these names was the commonest feature of medieval Jewish magic .

Invocations most often consisted of a name or a series of names which were often accompanied by other actions. Prior to the recitation the practitioner was warned to prepare himself conscientiously for these rites, to purify himself, body and soul by ritual cleansings, by abstinence from women and unclean things, by restricting the

diet and fasting over a period of days. There were many reports of names being used to kill and resurrect. The thirteenth century German Chassidim were especially intrigued by the problem of creating a living being. From them derives the word **golem** (shapeless or lifeless matter) to designate a homunculus created by the invocation of names. Perhaps the best known account of this relates to the famous Golem of Prague.

Various popular works listed the holy names and the use to which they could be put. Nigal (1994) provides a good overview of various Baalei Shem and their common appeal to the use of the divine names. Numerous objects, formulae and actions were held to provide protection against malevolent powers. Typically, written amulets began with the invocation "in the name of", followed by the names of God and angels, stated the purpose using a relevant biblical verse, and concluded with the name of the person the amulet was to protect. The various names of God were considered most powerful in the hierarchy of magical terms, the name YHVH and its permutations being especially important. Various other names of God consisting of 22, 47 and 72 elements were considered powerful. In fact the latter name was considered so powerful that it was held that no magic could effectively be carried out without appealing to it. While the names of God were in themselves effective for the prescribed ends, it was often through specific angels that the given task was carried out. For instance the *Sefer Raziel* states that in using the great name of 72, appeal must also be made to angel names including Haniel, Hasdiel and Zadkiel. The angels who appear most frequently in these incantations are Michael,

Gabriel and Raphael. Some of the names in use had a non-Jewish origin. In the Hebrew form they were unrecognisable to the medieval Jews who were not acquainted with the mythology and languages of the Graeco-Roman and Christian worlds.

Various religious artefacts were held to have power to influence the material world. Of special importance was the **mezuzah** (a scroll containing the first two paragraphs of the Shema and affixed in a case to the right hand doorposts in the home). During the medieval period it was invested with pragmatic properties. When a community was destroyed by plague, the leaders inspected the mezuzot on the doorposts to discover whether it was improperly written and hence responsible for the visitation. During the First World War many Jewish soldiers carried a mezuzah in their pockets to deflect enemy bullets. In a similar fashion the **tefillin** (phylacteries) were used to drive off demons (13). Biblical verses and especially psalms were held to be potent protective devices because of the holy names hidden in each sentence. Certain numbers (especially three, seven and nine) were said to have special potency.

In addition to personal study, human saliva, the circle and water provided protection against demons (14). A common custom during childbirth was to lay a scroll of the Torah on the woman in labour to relieve pain, the nine verses of Psalm 20 corresponding to the nine months of pregnancy and its seventy words representing the seventy pangs of labour. Trachtenberg (1977:106) points out that

these practices aroused opposition from Orthodox Jews "It is not enough to brand people who do this as sorcerers and conjurers, they pervert the fundamental principle of Torah in making it a healing for the body when it is intended only as a healing of the soul". Psalms were highly regarded for their potency and were commonly read at times of sickness. The book *Shimmush Tehillim* "The Magical Use of the Psalms" opens with the words "The entire Torah is composed of the names of God, and in consequence it has the property of saving and protecting man"(p78). Yet other biblical texts were extensively drawn upon for similar purposes. For instance Exodus 22:17 "Though shall not suffer a sorceress to live" was frequently deployed to counter the effects of witchcraft .

These practices were common in Poland during the nineteenth century. Zborwsky and Hertzog (1952:354) attempt to recreate daily life in the Eastern European *shtetl* in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries:

"Nothing is worse than illness. Even the loss of *parnosseh* [wealth] is feared less than the loss of *gezunt* [health]. Illness of one member upsets the whole household, arouses the anxiety of everyone from parents to distant relatives and neighbours. With sighs, advice and money, all participate in efforts to cure the ailment."

Generally it was the women who actively 'treated' the sick person, the men stood by praying. The most popular method of treatment of any sickness was by enema. Other folk treatments included infusions and compresses. If these treatments failed

a *feltsher*, a healer, would be called. He would use castor oil or cupping with leeches for more serious illnesses. A doctor would be called in extreme cases and if he could not help, the zaddik with his amulets and prayers would be summoned.

The Baal Shem Tov ("Besht")

There is little accurate information on the life of the founder of Chassidism, Israel Ben Eliazer. The main tenets of his beliefs are clearly known to us although he left no written works apart from a few letters and a series of sayings noted down by his disciples (see Rosman 1996). Dubnow (1971:80) writes:

"the veil woven by the imagination of his contemporaries and of later generations obscures the reality of the Baal Shem Tov's actual character to such an extent that it sometimes seems as if he was not a real person at all, but a myth, an imaginary name attached to the force that created a religious movement that shook the Jewish world."

He was born in Podolia in 1700. His father, Eliazer, had been taken prisoner prior to Israel's birth by a group of Tartars. Many stories are told about Eliazer's time in captivity. According to one story, the prophet Elijah appeared to him, and told him that "on account of his exemplary conduct" he would father a child "who would bring enlightenment to all Israel." Israel was orphaned at a young age and the local Jewish community of Okup in the Carpathian Mountains adopted him and gave

him a Jewish education. He refused to study for long periods and frequently wandered off from classes. After leaving school he became a teacher's assistant and then a watchman. Later he studied at night when others were asleep. He spent his time studying the practical Kabbalah (the attempt to influence the higher worlds by certain prescribed acts: the formulae that were used by the Baalei Shem).

When the local community found that the orphan was following a righteous path, and was showing an interest in study and prayer, they arranged a marriage for him. His first wife died shortly after the wedding and he remarried the daughter of a prominent rabbi in the town. The couple settled in a small village between Kutowa and Kosow, in a valley in the Carpathian mountains. Here, Israel spent most of his time in seclusion in the hills. Twice a week his wife brought a horse and empty wagon so that he would take the clay he had dug to the market. During his solitude he would fast most of the time. His thoughts were "lost in the upper spheres". It was here that he developed his mystical teachings: "All the world is full of his Glory." In all he spent seven years in solitude then returned to Brody to run an inn for a short while. In 1730 Israel finally settled in the Galician town of Tluste where he became a teacher and his healing mission started. His teachings have not been systematically preserved, but they were eventually collected and published in rabbinic Hebrew and presumably delivered in Yiddish. It is said that in order to focus his mind he used to smoke a pipe and make wild gestures as an aid to concentration pointing out that a drowning man is not ashamed to gesticulate wildly so that others would come and rescue him (Cohn-Sherbok 1995).

The Baal Shem Tov and "healing"

In the mid eighteenth century in Eastern Poland, numerous baalei shem were active in Poland. These men were miracle workers, folk healers who deployed the names of God and could use them for pragmatic effect. Among the activities of a Baal Shem were writing amulets, exorcism, healing mental illness, protecting people against demons, exorcising spirits and dispensing herbal cures. While some of those to whom the title was applied were only semi-literate, others were regarded as great scholars (15). The baalei shem exerted an influence among the local population. As Sharot (1982:163) says "Among the east European Jews, untouched by the growth of empirical and rational explanation in western Europe, subject to unrelenting persecution and pauperisation, and suspicious of messianic pretenders, the appeal of the thaumaturge was great". The baalei shem dealt with misfortune in its widest sense (16). There were many who used their position solely for pecuniary profit. For others, however, the healing they performed was not done merely for their own livelihood, but as a means of redeeming the souls of those who approached them for help.

The Baal Shem Tov turned to his calling first out of poverty, but as the Chassidic philosophy developed, he realised that the "miracle worker" sobriquet was likely to influence people to accept his teachings (See Dubnow 1971 for a discussion of this).

"There can be little doubt," argues Sharot (1982:141) "that the Bescht's reputation for miracle making was accepted as an important proof of his charisma and his teachings" (17). Similarly Ben Sasson (1994) argues that his main power lay not in his teachings, but in the force of his personality. A number of stories were written about the healing of the Baal Shem Tov. A book written by his successor and son-in-law, Rabbi Dov Baer, fifty years after his death related the events of his life. The book *Shivhei Ha Bescht* (In Praise of the Baal Shem Tov, Ben Amos and Mintz 1970) contains a number of accounts of miraculous healing as the following examples demonstrate :-

1. The Baal Shem Tov Exorcises a Mad Woman (pp 34-35 of *Shivhei Ha Bescht*)

"The Bescht once came to a town where there was a mad woman, who revealed to everyone his virtues and vices. When the Bescht, God bless his holy memory, came to the town, Rabbi Gershon asked the Bescht to see the woman. When Rabbi Gershon entered she said 'welcome to you who are holy and pure'. She greeted each one according to his merits. The Bescht came in last and when she saw him she said 'welcome Rabbi Israel' although he was still a young man. 'Do you suppose I am afraid of you since I know that you have been warned from heaven not to practice with holy names until you are thirty -six years old'.

"The Bescht said to the spirit 'Look what you have done. My advice to you is to leave this woman without causing any difficulty and all of us will study on your behalf' and he asked the spirit for his name.

"He answered 'I cannot reveal it before the others. Let the people leave here and I will reveal it to you.' Otherwise it would have shamed his children, who were living in the town. When the people left, he revealed his name to the Bescht. My father-in-law, blessed be his memory, also knew him. He had become a spirit only because he had mocked the Hasidim of Kutty. Then the spirit released himself from that woman, without causing any trouble"

2. The Bescht and the Angel of Death (pp116, *Shivhei Ha Bescht*)

"I heard from the Rabbi of our community that Rabbi Leibush of the holy community of Mezhirich visited the Bescht for the days of awe. Before Rosh Hashanah he became sick. The Bescht was busy curing him on the night of Rosh Hashanah and did not see any sign of death, God forbid, at all. When he went to the **beth hamidrash** [study room] at the time for prayer, Rabbi Leibush felt very faint and felt very weak. They tried to tell the Bescht but he did not hear them. When Rabbi Isaac, of the community of Mezhirich saw that the Bescht did not respond, he shouted to him in a loud voice.

"The Bescht answered 'why didn't you tell me?' he hurried home and found the angel of death standing at his bed. The Bescht scolded the angel of death severely and he ran away. The Bescht then held Rabbi Leibush by the hand and he recovered immediately. He led him to the beth hamidrash, as he was afraid to leave him at home, lest the angel of death return.

"After that the Bescht said that because of what had happened, the angels wanted to reject him both from this world and the next world. He said he only did it because it happened so quickly. He had not seen any sign of death earlier. 'When I saw the angel of death, I suddenly felt grief stricken and acted'.

3. The Bescht Resuscitates a Child (pp 119, *Shiohei Ha Bescht*)

"I heard from Rabbi Pesoh, the son of Rabbi Jacob of Kamenka, that while the Bescht was travelling he came to a city and a herald told him he should stay as a guest in a certain house. He came to that house and they refused to receive him as a guest, because the son of the household was seriously ill. The Bescht sent his scribe to the house and the woman said 'How is it possible for you to stay here overnight. Don't you see that the boy is sick and I am in great sorrow', and she cursed the Bescht. The householder did not dare interfere. He went to appease the Bescht and told him it was impossible to stay there. The Bescht promised that if he remained with him as a guest, the boy would live and so he was received into the home.

"The Bescht went immediately to the mikvah [ritual bath] and he perceived that the boy's condition was poor. He asked that no one remain in the house. Everybody went to another house. He ordered his scribe to leave the house as well. He would call him to ask for wine for the kiddush [benediction over wine] since this took place on the eve of the Holy Sabbath. The Bescht remained alone with the boy. He prayed minhah [afternoon prayer] near him. He remained awake late into the

night. The scribe was afraid that the Bescht would endanger himself, God forbid by his great efforts in praying for the sick boy, since it was a dangerous situation. The scribe went to the door and slowly opened it and heard the Bescht saying to the boy's soul 'enter this body, you must enter it because I cannot swear a false oath'.

"The scribe did not know whether the boy was dead or still alive. The boy had a little bit of life in him. The scribe went away from the door and after a short while he returned and entered. He found the Bescht lying on the floor with his arms and legs stretched out. The Bescht stood up and said 'I told you, didn't I, to enter the boy's body' and he shouted 'Hirsch, bring me the wine for the Kiddush [which includes reciting prayers and blessings over a cup of wine]'. He ate with the scribe and did not sleep the entire night. In the morning he gave the scribe instructions and medicines and went to pray in the **beth Ha- Midrash** [study hall].

"The boy's mother gathered that the child had recovered and she began to sob. The scribe heard her and asked 'why are you crying?' She said to him 'How can I not cry, after I cursed such a pious man?' He answered 'Do not cry, my Rabbi is a good man, and he will forgive you'. When the Bescht returned from prayer, he also heard her crying. He asked the scribe about it and learned the reason. He sent the scribe to her and told him "Tell her not to cry, she should prepare a good dinner for this meal. I promise her that the boy will sit with us at the table".

"The reason why the Bescht lay on the floor with his hands and legs extended, was his agreement to accept 'fiery lashes' for his oath to cure the boy. The soul was compelled to re-enter the boy's body. His action ensured that the boy would live more than sixty years and that he would have sons and earn a good living all of his life. From this we see that the time for the boy's death had come and therefore the Bescht had to pray for the number of years he would live, for his livelihood and for his having children."

The Baal Shem Tov seems to have 'healed' both the physical body and the soul and made little differentiation between the two. He utilised both medicines and prayer to transcend the physical world and communicate with the spiritual world. Apart from miraculous healings many other feats are described in *Shivhei Ha Bescht*. These include the ability to see into the future, to find lost objects from a distance, and to bring an end to a period of drought. It is difficult to say what part of the appeal of the Baal Shem Tov derived from his curing and exorcism and what part from his teachings. According to Sharot (1982), one of his first disciples, Rabbi Arye Lieb, was attracted by his miracles rather than his teachings. Later Chassidic literature tried to erase the image of him as a professional magician and to emphasise that he was a great scholar. He was a comparatively unscholarly religious teacher who taught by simple stories and parables. He was familiar with the religious literature and was not opposed to learning. He tried to obtain support of scholars with some success. The immediate circle of the Baal Shem Tov held that he had exceptional

spiritual qualities, they even reported lights and fire emanating from him when he prayed.

The majority of the early followers of Chassidism derived from the impoverished, lower middle classes of the rural and small town Jews in Podolia and Volhynia (Sharot 1982) but he did attract some wealthy leaseholders (Dinur 1955). The relationship of the poor people to the Baal Shem Tov is difficult to evaluate on the basis of available historical sources. He was relatively well known outside his circle of disciples. After some time his following became so large that he had to employ a full time scribe. The majority of the Jewish population in Podolia joined the movement sometime after his death (Rapoport - Albert 1979) but according to Scholem (1960), there was no doubt that he was a charismatic leader during his lifetime. Several of the Baal Shem Tov's associates had their own followings and were themselves regarded as 'charismatic'.

Little evidence remains of the immediate religious background of the Baal Shem Tov's close disciples and followers. Some were known as 'Chassidim' before they came into contact. They were pious men who came together to pray and study. The Chassidic groups were small with no prominent leaders and they varied greatly in their religious character (i.e., ascetic and non-ascetic, Kabbalistic, traditional and Shabbatean). It was particularly from the non-ascetic groups that the Baal Shem Tov drew his followers, although he attracted a number of men who had not formerly been Chassidim. He was less successful in attracting members from

scholarly circles in other towns (Ben Amos and Mintz 1970). The successor to the Baal Shem Tov, Dov Baer was the son of a poor teacher in Volhynia, but in contrast to the Baal Shem Tov he was a great scholar of Talmud and Kabbalah (18). Following a period of employment as a teacher, he became a **maggid** (preacher). After the death of the Baal Shem Tov, he settled in Mezhirech, where he attracted many scholars, rabbis and kabbalists.

Idel (1995) rightly points out that Chassidism was not at first a mass movement but consisted of a small group of God seekers whose spiritual guide was the Bescht. Nonetheless, Chassidism did become a popular movement offering “mysticism to the masses. From the late eighteenth century onwards, there was a proliferation of spiritual leaders each with his own following of Chassidim.

The cult of the zaddik

Epstein (1959:274) points out that Chassidism would not have spread with such rapidity, nor attained such a large following but for the ‘galaxy of saint mystics’ or ‘veritable human dynamos’ it produced during the first fifty years of its existence. The term **zaddik** (‘perfectly righteous’) was introduced into Chassidism by Rabbi Dov Baer. The concept of the zaddik set clear boundaries in theory and practice between Chassidic and non-Chassidic Jews. He is the spiritual leader of the Chassidic group (19) around whose personality Chassidim grouped themselves. He was considered to be the incarnation of Torah (Scholem 1974) whose personality took the place of doctrinal exegesis. The new ideal of the religious leader, the

zaddik, differed from the traditional ideal of rabbinical Judaism, the **talmid khokhem** or student of Torah, in that character was now considered more important than learning (20).

For the Chassidim, the zaddik had three related roles: He was a cosmic redeemer, the redeemer of the individual soul and protector of men from evil spirits and who was attributed with some ability to change the material conditions of this world. He was able to rescue the divine sparks from their captivity within the material and evil world. A zaddik was considered to be beyond criticism for "every zaddik contains a spark of Moses in him" (according to the *Tikkunei Zohar*). He communicated profound mysteries through stories and parables rather than through abstruse analysis of Talmudic texts. Acting as a link between the ordinary Jew and God, his spiritual powers were held to be so great that he even instructed God how to deal with the world of men. His followers sought his spiritual guidance and blessing for their physical welfare such as helping infertile couples and healing sickness.

The cosmic role was often emphasised in Chassidic religious writings but most adherents concerned themselves with more 'mundane' matters affecting their everyday lives. A central notion was the descent of the zaddik from the heights of his *devekut* to redeem the fallen souls of sinners. "But only a perfect zaddik can accomplish this meditation, for he alone is worthy to descend, and make a selection from among the *kelippath*, the realms of the other side, even against their will" (Scholem 1965:133). In the *Zohar* (vol. III) it is said that at the point of extreme

ecstasy, the zaddik surrenders himself to the tree of death and must be prepared to die. It was considered dangerous for anyone else during life to send down his soul into the realms of kelippah, since he may not be able to raise up the other souls or even his own. The soul of the zaddik and the souls of his followers were believed to be related, but the zaddik had to establish contact with his followers in order to raise and redeem their souls in his subsequent ascent to the divine. The connection between the soul of the zaddik and his followers continued after death and it was held that the zaddik could prevent a sinner being sent to hell.

The zaddik became more prominent in the third and fourth generations of the movement. For the Baal Shem Tov and Dov Baer, the zaddik was an important idea, but not a central focus. The central importance of the zaddik developed only after the death of Rabbi Dov Baer. The Baal Shem Tov had taught that prayer was possible for everyone nor was its efficacy conditioned by any special qualifications. Dov Baer however, did not believe that the average man preoccupied with the cares and distractions of everyday life, could attain the height of ecstasy which close communion with God demanded. It was only the zaddik, being perfectly righteous himself, who could free his mind from all distracting thoughts and earthly things who was able to concentrate on God and offer effective prayer and supplication. Ordinary Jews were expected to attach themselves to the zaddik. By his example, the zaddik could help and develop the spiritual faculties of his adherents, while at the same time through the mediation of his communion with God, he could secure favours for them in both earthly and heavenly matters.

Jacob Joseph of Pollonoye, a disciple of the Baal Shem Tov, wrote in detail on the role of the zaddik. He published the first Chassidic book in 1780, twenty years after the Bescht's death. In it, he emphasised the role of the zaddik as a spiritual redeemer of Jewish souls, a mediating principle, joining the people with Heaven, from which they were otherwise set apart and opposed, and as a 'channel' transmitting and clearing the way for the spiritual outpourings of heaven to the people. The zaddik had the ability to move between the higher and lower realms, and during his descent he was willing to endure suffering and expose himself to danger for the sake of the people. He emphasised that the people and zaddik were like a body and soul. The sins of the masses lowered the stature of the zaddik, and if the zaddik had sinful thoughts, these stimulated others to commit actual sins (Dresner 1974).

Each zaddik specialised in a particular quality or activity. Some were known for their fervent devotions, some for their ecstatic visions, some for their 'magic' powers, some for their miraculous works and others for their love and compassion. Pinchas of Koritz (d1791) was well known for his compassion even for sinners and declared that the evil person should be loved more in order to compensate for the lack of the power of love he himself has caused in his place in the world. Moses Lieb of Sassow (d 1807) said "He who cannot suck the matter from the boils of a child sick with the plague has not yet gone half way up the height of love for his fellow men" (Spiegel 1931:137)

The leaders of the various Chassidic groups differed in their attitudes towards 'practical zaddikism' ie, the involvement of the zaddik in the everyday problems of his followers. Jacob Joseph did not envisage such activities as curing and exorcism of *dybbukim* (devils) as part of the zaddik's role. Instead he emphasised the redemptive spiritual role of the zaddik. Dov Baer of Mezhirech also conceived of the zaddik in essentially spiritual terms. Although he agreed that the zaddik needed to pray for the health and livelihood of his followers, he discounted any involvement in worldly affairs. He spoke of the zaddik in his cosmic role. "In his prayers the zaddik was able completely to immerse himself in divine nothingness, and he should not, therefore, have practical needs in mind when he prays" (Dubnow 1944).

The most important legitimation of 'practical zaddikism' was written by a disciple of Dov Baer, Elimelech of Lyzhansk (1717-1787). In his book *Noam Elimelch* (1789) he wrote that God had given the zaddikim powers to influence the higher spheres and determine the fate of men both in this world and also in the next. He distinguished two types of zaddikim: the ascetic removed himself from the world who purified his own soul, whilst the more important type concerned himself with the troubles of all the Jews and called down benefits from the higher spheres to the world. Through his prayers, the zaddik provided his followers with health, children and livelihood and could even nullify a divine decree that a person should die. Failure of the zaddik to attain the request of a follower was a sign that the followers belief was not sufficiently strong. Although some zaddikim restricted

their activities to spiritual matters, the majority concerned themselves with the immediate practical goals of their followers. This, according to Sharot (1982), was crucial in the spread of Chassidism in eastern Europe.

Despite his emphasis on practical zaddikism, Elimelech of Lyzhansk strictly distinguished in his writings between the zaddik and magician. Unlike the latter, the zaddik understood that he had no automatic coercive power over the supernatural, and interpreted any success as answers to his prayers deriving from God, and not as the consequence of human power or knowledge. The majority of Chassidim were not interested in this distinction; their devotion to their zaddik seems to have been based on his thaumaturgical powers. Even though some zaddikim objected that they could not work miracles, followers still came to them with requests for health, wealth and protection from evil spirits. Idel (1995) calls attention to the dual role of the zaddik, bringing his followers up to God and God down to his followers. He argues that the miracle-worker role of zaddik has often been overlooked by modern scholars of Chassidism although the Chassidim have always seen the zaddik as a channel through which miracles occur.

The court of the zaddik

The Baal Shem Tov himself was initially a wandering preacher who only later settled in a community. As the Chassidic movement grew it underwent a process of routinisation whereby it developed an administrative apparatus and acquired material possessions. It was only following his death that zaddikim developed courts. It could be argued that Chassidism could not be seen as a 'movement' until his successors developed something like courts. These varied in size according to the number and wealth of his following. Although the majority of followers lived in the vicinity of the court, some came from long distances. The zaddik's court contained the living quarters for the zaddik and his family, a synagogue, study room, mikvah (bath house) and stables for the horses. His staff included servants, teachers for the children, cantors and a gabai (secretary) who managed the zaddik's affairs. A pilgrimage to the zaddik was seen as a religious obligation. Each zaddik's court was given a holy name: Zion, Temple or the Holy of Holies. According to Green (1977) the followers of Israel Friedman described Sadegora, the site of his court as "the place of the temple" and when Nahman of Bratslav arrived in Bratslav his disciples referred to the town as the "new Zion".

It was common for a Chassid to visit the court of his zaddik once a year. The most important event for a Chassid on his visit was a private audience with the zaddik. Followers would purify themselves first with prayer and study. A Chassid would give money to the gabai who in return would write a *kvitl*, a short note stating the

name of the petitioner and the nature of his request. This would be given to the zaddik. A number of customs developed around the kvitl, such as the danger ensuing from it falling to the ground or containing a mistake. Advice was sought for marriage, divorce, business, education and healing. In most cases a major source of income for the court was the *pidyan*, a monetary contribution which accompanied the kvitl. This was not fixed and varied with the wealth of the Chassid. Chassidim joined their zaddik at ritual meals where a popular custom was to distribute and eat the remains from the Zaddik's own meal. At a time when the traditional rabbinical and community organisations were weakening, Chassidism provided an important new focus for integration at local and regional levels and Sharot (1982) argues that this routinisation was instrumental in the spread of the movement in Eastern Europe.

Turner (1974) has argued that pilgrimage is a 'liminal' phenomenon which leads to the temporary elimination of social structure, a phenomenon he calls *communitas*. In pilgrimage people from different social statuses and areas are brought together and structured social relationships are attenuated. The mixing of social strata was a feature of the annual pilgrimages to the zaddikim on the religious holidays. Wealthier Chassidim invited their poorer friends to join them in their carriages, share their meals and stay in their lodgings. An atmosphere of informality prevailed (Minkin 1932). The general tendency was to forget the social differences that prevailed outside the court and to indicate solely the distance between the zaddik and followers.

In the early generations of Chassidism succession by followers took precedence over hereditary succession. Although the Baal Shem Tov had a son there is no evidence he was ever considered. The founder of the Lubavitcher movement was Rabbi Schneur Zalman (1747-1812), a disciple of Rabbi Dov Baer (see Chapter 3 for a history of Lubavitch). His death resulted in a split between those who supported one of his sons, Dov Baer of Lubavitch and those who supported Aaron ha Levi, Zalman's favourite disciple. The latter set up a separate court in Starasselje. Both groups claimed to present the single authentic interpretation of Zalman's teachings. The coexistence of the hereditary and discipleship principles of succession was most evident during the period of rapid growth. Of the disciples of Rabbi Dov Baer who established important Chassidic branches, two were succeeded by disciples and three by family heirs. From the fourth generation, however, hereditary succession became normative. Among Lubavitchers, succession is dynastic: the late Lubavitcher Rebbe was the son-in-law and third cousin of the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe. In sociological terms, the leadership of the Rebbe is perhaps closer to Weber's traditional authority than to his charismatic authority.

Anthropological types and the zaddik

Three well known anthropological institutions recall the zaddik; the charismatic leader, the divine king and the shaman. Sperber (1985) argues that most of such terms argued to have a substantive status in the study of cultural phenomena, are nothing but 'interpretive terms', even though anthropologists seem usually not aware of that fact. Similarly Leach underscores the arbitrary and ethnocentric

character of such typologies whilst Needham argues that most do not correspond to precise concepts, but rather to polythetic notions, classes of phenomena having no more in common than a family resemblance. There is no reason to assume that these terms correspond to homogenous and distinct classes of phenomena, i.e., to potential objects of empirical enquiry.

I would similarly argue that many of the terms deployed by anthropologists are best regarded as 'models', as simply devices employed in order to aid the interpretation of a social reality and the building of theory, not descriptions of reality. The exact significance of the concept of a model and its relationship to theory and to empirical evidence is not clearly defined in the social sciences. There is much disagreement in anthropology about the theoretical significance and status of models, although it is generally agreed that a model occupies an intermediate status between the levels of empirical observation of specific cases and abstract or general theory. In anthropological theory and writing, 'models' are deployed with a considerable degree of variation: In some cases they are taken to be actual representations of reality 'truly' corresponding to the phenomena they represent; in other cases they are useful heuristic devices which are fairly arbitrary in their relation to reality and whose only test of validity is the extent to which they aid us in our comprehension of the phenomena under study. The above criticisms aside, Sperber (1985) notes that such interpretive terms are useful in that they serve to make an alien experience intelligible, at least intuitively: in other words they force comparison with other institutions.

The zaddik as charismatic leader

Eliade (1987:vol 6 :208) proposed that "The theory of the zaddik presented Judaism with a concept of religious leadership that was both charismatic and mystically motivated". Poll (1995) discusses how the early Chassidic leaders have been portrayed as charismatic figures - innovating personalities who disrupted the normative system of rabbinical authority and claimed to be legitimated by divine grace. Contemporary leaders of Chassidism are still regarded as creative, innovating personalities to whom divine grace is imputed by their followers. As Poll states "He is recognised for his extraordinary qualities, but above all the Rebbe is trusted, obeyed, and revered because the followers believe in his charisma" (1995:259).

A number of authors have stressed the importance of 'personality' in the formation of religious movements. According to Lienhardt (1964), millennial movements are largely instituted by charismatic leaders and bear the hallmark of his or her personality. Whitworth (1975:7) wrote "Sectarian groups frequently bear the impress of the character of their founder through their development and this character infused through the particular theology and cultural emphasis of the group may exert greater attraction for certain types of individuals or social groups than others". Both Lienhardt and Whitworth emphasise the 'personality' of the founder in relation to the formation of religious movements. Similarly Vittorio

Lanternari (1963: 304) who has written of the 'religions of the oppressed', argues "There is probably no known religious phenomenon in which the dialectical interpretation of relationships between personality (the individual personality of the prophet) and culture (the social personality of the group) becomes more convincing than it does in regard to messianic cults."

The term charisma is frequently loosely employed by sociologists of religion. The sociological use of the term must be differentiated from its derived popular or lay use, as strength of personality or ultrahuman power. Weber (1968:241-2) defined charisma as "a certain quality of an individual's personality by which he is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities. Whether the person possesses these extraordinary powers is to a certain extent irrelevant. What is important is these powers are attributed by the followers." Weber conceived of charisma as a form of authority which is dependent on the recognition of a group of people.

"It is the recognition on the part of those subject to authority which is decisive for the validity of charisma. This is freely given and guaranteed by what is held to be a sign or proof, originally always a miracle and consists in devotion to the corresponding revelation, hero worship or absolute trust in the leader" (Weber 1922:49)

Worsley (1973) argues that charisma has no explanatory value. It is not an explanation of behaviour, it is a dictum, itself an element of social analysis. The leader is able to "magnetise" followers because he (she) evokes or plays upon some strand of emotion or intellectual disposition. Leaders are chosen because they articulate and consolidate their aspirations. He suggests that what is important is the social significance of the leader as a symbol, catalyst or message bearer. The message he brings is more important than his personality (21,22).

According to Sharot (1982:23) "conceived as a unique gift based on strictly personal relationships and distant from everyday routine structures the 'pure' type of charismatic authority is necessarily a transitory and intermittent phenomenon". If a movement founded on charisma is to continue as a permanent and stable structure, a transformation of the charismatic type of authority is required. Weber introduced the term routinisation to refer to the transformation of charismatic leadership into institutionalised leadership (23). Weber argued that charismatic authority becomes traditionalised, rationalised or a combination of both. At the same time he emphasised that the element of charisma, in the sense of gift of grace or supernatural or extraordinary elements, does not completely disappear. The distinctive elements of 'pure' charisma, the concentration of a unique gift of grace in a single individual and the absence of routine procedures, will necessarily disappear, but the gift of grace may be transformed into a quality that is personally acquirable or attached to an office. We may argue that from the third generation of Chassidism this process of routinisation is well exemplified .

Although some authors have claimed that the Baal Shem Tov raised no great interest in his lifetime (Aescoly 1956), Scholem (1960) argues that the Bescht was a charismatic leader during his lifetime. There is little known of the 'personality' of the Baal Shem Tov or of his relationship with his followers. To this extent 'charisma' as a concept does not help us in understanding the formation of the Chassidic movement.

The zaddik as divine ruler

'Monarchs' in traditional African societies, in Polynesia and in the Americas were often invested with supernatural powers. The king was considered as a mediator between the parts and interests that make up the social order and between the human and extrahuman worlds. Eliade (1987:vol 8:313) writes:

"He holds the social cosmos together. His rule is like that of a supreme being of many religious systems. As a symbol of totality, often his person and abode are symbolically indicated as a microcosm or as the centre of the cosmos. The religious power of kings is represented mainly by the connection between the king's person and the global welfare of the country, people and state."

Political institutions have a long history of utilising religious beliefs and symbols in order to legitimate their earthly power. This was especially true in cultures dominated by Christianity. Medieval Tudor jurists held a mystical view of the

king's two bodies: just as Christ was a god-man, so Christian kings were 'persona mixta' having both secular and spiritual capacities. The king or queen in the middle ages, because of their divine aspects, was considered to have personal healing ability (Bloch 1973, Hocart 1970, Kantarowicz 1957). Healing of scrofula is the standard example (also called the King's Evil). The king's touch was a ritual performed by the monarchs in France and England to cure tuberculous adenitis or scrofula (Littlewood 1996) (24). Queen Anne was the last British monarch to touch for scrofula.

The zaddik too legitimises his authority from divine sources, is considered to have the ability to partake of divine power and use it for miraculous purposes including healing (in a similar way to the divine monarch). Mintz 1968 (111,125) reports how the zaddik had the power to heal by physical touch, or through the touch of a Mezuzah he has blessed. The soul of the Zaddik is believed to be more truly divine than that of the ordinary Chassid. A zaddik was considered to have an element of the soul of Moses and as such was beyond the criticism of his followers (Unterman 1991). This is similar to the divine body of the king. Just as in divine kingship, the monarch is a symbol of the totality of the society, so is the zaddik: "For all the world together is called one figure and the masses of people are the legs of the figure and the righteous are the eyes of the community" (Rabbi Jacob Joseph of Polonye). The role of the Rebbe is dynastic in most Chassidic groups: the power of the zaddik passes from the father to the son or son-in-law (like royal blood). Lastly, for Chassidim the welfare of the community is directly dependent on that of their

Zaddik (in a similar way the zaddik's welfare is dependent on the behaviour of his followers). In many ways the model of the divine king fits the zaddik well. Unlike the king however the position of zaddik is not necessarily associated with wealth.

The zaddik as shaman

The third institution we might compare is that of the shaman. The term is not culturally authentic for widespread use (the term actually comes from one of the Paleo-Siberian groups) but the word has come to be used by many interchangeably with native healer, medicine man etc. The term is used more restrictively to refer to a circum polar or Amerindian healer whose power and calling come from close contact with the spiritual world.

The shamanic experience is characteristically associated by anthropologists with altered states of consciousness. The shaman is expected to provide an account of why a person is ill and he does so by consulting spiritual helpers. By performing sacred songs and supplicating his powers to come to the aid of the patient, the shaman discovers the reasons for the patient's illness or dilemma. The diagnostic and therapeutic process is a contest between the powers of the shaman and those of the spirits or objects causing distress. "In place of the patient, the shaman substitutes himself. The battle between the malevolent power and the patient is transformed into warfare between the shaman and sorcerer" (Opler 1936:1382)

In many ways the zaddik shares some similarities with the shaman. The zaddik's authority is articulated in terms of a doctrine of intercession between mystical forces and ordinary people. He mediates between the natural and supernatural worlds. The 'cult' of the zaddik derived from an older doctrine (*descensus ad infernum*) in the zohar which states that before the soul of the zaddik rises to paradise, it must first go down to **Gehinnom** (Hell) to bring up the souls of some of the sinners. This descent into evil was potentially dangerous. In a similar way to the contest between the powers of the shaman and those of the sorcerers or spirits, the zaddik had the power to annihilate the forces of severity by getting down to their root and 'sweetening' them at their original place. He faces the dark powers at their root and transforms them by meditating on the element of holiness which is inherent in them. It has been reported that some Zaddikim went into an altered state of consciousness (Weiss 1960) (25). Perhaps the most striking similarity between the shaman and Zaddik is the fact as the spiritual leader of the Chassidic community, the Zaddik deals with many types of problems apart from sickness and, like the shaman, deals with misfortune and threat in their general sense. The early zaddikim used herbs (as did the Baal Shem Tov) resembling the medicines of the shaman. Today, however, the zaddikim do not deploy physical methods for healing but resort solely to spiritual healing. Idel (1995:214) argues that the zaddik functions in a way that is reminiscent of the shaman. "The society becomes the shaman's collective patient. The shaman mediates with the sacred, he heals and is the ritual mediator in his dual sacred and social role."

CONCLUSION

Anthropological types and models are useful in helping to make intelligible aspects of another culture, and hence to formulate empirical questions about them, not that they refer to distinct empirical categories in themselves. The model of the divine king best 'fits' the Zaddik and I would argue that his healing abilities of the various Zaddikim, legitimated by close relationship to higher spiritual sources, played a large part in the development of the various Chassidic groups. Another identifiable type which will be considered later is that of the magus or medieval 'magician' who focuses on divine names as part of his magical activity. This chapter emphasises the use of language in healing, an element which persists in modern day Chassidism where Lubavitchers emphasise the healing ability in sacred texts.

There are parallels with the Chassidic concept of the Zaddik who possesses a certain "power" on account of his intermediary role between a human and divine and the Islamic concept of *baraka* which means sanctity or blessing and which is available from holy people. Ruthven (1991:253) describes the Islamic shaikhs or Sufi masters who were gifted with *baraka* and acted under direct divine guidance. Miraculous claims were constantly made on behalf of them. They were credited with thaumaturgical powers and the belief that the *baraka* retained potency after death gave rise to cults of the saint which today flourishes mainly in mountainous, rural and desert areas. As well as reputedly being able to cure physical ailments, the saints tended to create a miraculous ambience around a person. Almost anything

they did acquired a miraculous character in the eyes of their followers. Gilsenan (1973) describes the modern Cairene Saint Shaikh Salama Ibn Hesam Salama (1867-1940) the founder of the Himidiya branch of the Shadhili order. His activities range from supernatural interventions, for instance the occasion when the shaikh eliminated the writing from the ledger of an English clerk who had offended him, to more mundane instances such as the unexpected discovery of a sum of money. Gilsenan (1973) sees these miracles (*karamas*) literally, acts of divine grace, as part of the wider universe of explanation by means of which people come to terms with their world. The Shaikh is "a means that a mysterious, transcendent, predestinating god is assumed to use in the regulation of all things"(Gilsenan 1973: 33). He is a personalised channel of communication with the Divine from whom they can obtain baraka and through him they intercede for assistance in mundane affairs. In a similar way to the zaddik, baraka can be translated as mystical power and may be transmitted through the blood line.

This chapter raises a number of issues for fieldwork. How is religious language conceptualised by modern day Lubavitchers? What part does it play in healing? How do they view 'practical zaddikism'? What part does the Rebbe play in healing?

CHAPTER 2

WORDS OF HEALING

The academic study of a society's practices of healing is central to medical anthropology. The terms therapy, treatment and healing are terms that define the domain of active response to illness, disease and distress. What counts as healing first depends upon what is defined as a problem (Littlewood 1990, Csordas 1990). As opposed to biomedicine's emphasis on healing of the physical body (and its emphasis on disease) the idiom of healing may be deployed in relation to the social body (Douglas 1970) and the entire cosmos. The notion of healing cannot be taken as unproblematic. What constitutes healing in a given context depends on some locally shared understanding of the nature of the problem, its causes and some agreement on its resolution. The 'traditional' approach has always emphasised mechanism: that is how it works. Recently there has been a shift in emphasis from how healing works (Ellenberger 1970, Kiev 1964, Frank 1961, Dow 1986) to what constitutes healing in a given situation (Kleinman and Sung 1979), a move from a concern with an efficacy which can be externally demonstrated as in biomedical treatments (where the disease may be cured but the patient still has the illness see Pietroni 1990), to affirm the internal contextual meaning of what it is to be healed, "an acceptance by the patient and others that a transformation of bodily state or sensibility has been effected" (Littlewood and Dein 1995:342: see also McGuire 1983, Csordas 1988, Desjarlais 1992, Good 1994, Laderman and Roseman 1996).

There is a recent concern with healing as performance emphasising “the experience near aspects of social phenomena: with actions more than text, with illocutionary rather than with propositional force - with the social construction, rather than just the representation of reality “(Schieffelin 1996: 59). This is in line with the perspective which sees ritual as an action intended in some way by participants to aesthetically evoke or modify their consensual experience as well as (or instead of) instrumentally effecting events in the material world (Tambiah 1968, 1990, Young 1976, Ahern 1979, Kapferer 1983, Grimes 1990, Csordas 1990, 1994a).

This chapter addresses the question of how symbolic healing 'works' ie healing by words, myths and symbols which relates to the question of how words are effective in ritual. It argues that there has been a shift from approaches which emphasise *mechanism* to those which emphasise *meaning and experience*. Beyond this, it asks what are the intentions of the actors involved in healing rituals?. Do they intend ritual to change their own mental states or to instrumentally affect the world or in fact both ?

Words in ritual

In his 1968 paper “The magical power of words” Tambiah makes the point that words are an important part of rituals (1) exploiting a number of verbal forms including prayers, spells, addresses and blessings.

“In most cases it would appear that ritual words are at least as important as other kinds of ritual act: but beside that, and this is an intriguing point, very often (but not always) if the ethnographer questions his informants ‘Why is this ritual effective?’ the reply takes the form of a formally expressed belief that the power is in the ‘words’ even though the words only become effective if uttered in a very special context of other action”(1968:168).

He then goes on to examine the assertion that sacred words are thought to possess a special kind of power not normally associated with ordinary language. To what extent is related to the fact that the sacred language is exclusive and different from secular or profane language? In Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism and Judaism, the sacred words recited at religious ceremonies are in the language of the authorised sacred texts. Until 1967 the Catholic church held the view that the service should be conducted in Latin. Whether or not the congregation understood the words was not considered to be a major factor influencing the efficacy of the ritual. Tambiah argues that the sacred words of Islam, Christianity and Judaism came to be written down at some time. By doing this religious dogma was fixed in a manner that was different from the flexible and adaptive dogma of oral tradition. This cannot alone account for the power of sacred words. In many rituals the words are not in the sacred language and do not differ from profane language so this fact itself cannot explain the efficacy of ritual words.

Religious language may have a number of roles beyond the purely descriptive; this may include the view that language is creative (see Katz 1992). Tambiah (1968) discusses the prevalent religious beliefs in the creative power of words. Words do not just describe, they create the reality they purport to describe (see Taylor 1985). In many religious traditions the universe is held to be created through language. The Vedic hymns pointed out the importance of words and held that the gods ruled the world through magical formulae. In the Parsi religion, it is asserted that chaos was transformed into cosmos through the spoken word. The Greek doctrine of the *logos* stated that the soul or essence of things resided in their names. The Gospel of St John also refers to the *logos*: the word made flesh in Jesus Christ. The Bible describes three postulates: The first idea is that God created the world by assigning names "And God called the light day, and the darkness he called night" (Genesis 1:5).

Second, the Bible postulates that after God had created heaven and earth, man assumed the naming function through speech:

"And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto the man to see what he would call them; and whatsoever the man called every living creature, that was the name thereof (Genesis 2: 19-20).

Third, the word becomes entity which itself is able to act and produce effects in its own right

“So shall my word be that goeth forth of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it” (Isaiah 55: 11).

Words have the power to act, an illocutionary force which Austin (1962) refers to as ‘speech acts.’

Tambiah states (1968: 184) “Thus it is clear that we are dealing with three notions which form an interrelated set: deities or first ancestors or their equivalents instituted speech and the classificatory activity; man himself is the creator and user of this propensity; finally language as such has an independent existence and has the power to influence reality.”

A number of anthropologists have postulated theories of magical language. However, it was Malinowski (1965) who examined this in greatest detail. He reported the fact that the Trobrianders themselves made a distinction between the language of magic and the language of ordinary speech. The former consisted of meaningless words, (the ‘coefficient of weirdness’), strange and archaic grammatical forms, condensed structures and words containing esoteric meanings. He argued that these nonsense elements help differentiate ritual from ordinary conversation and contributed to its performative efficacy. However for Malinowski, the issue as to whether ritual speech is a different genre from ordinary speech or is an intensification of ordinary speech like poetic diction, remains unsettled. In

certain contexts he argued for their difference, in others he affirmed that ritual speech was like common language. Other writers have argued for the "atrophy of meaning" (Tambiah 1981:164) as being important for the efficacy of ritual. Bloch (1974) speaks of the formalised language of ritual in which form and content are highly constrained, this 'drifting out of meaning' of ritual words results in greater ambiguity, thus affording such speech enhanced social, emotional and performative force.

Second, Malinowski emphasised the pragmatic character of language. Words were not simply vehicles for expressing ideas, concepts or categories. They achieved practical effects. Speech is an "adjunct to bodily activities", words are equivalent to actions. He spoke of the "pragmatic setting of utterances". The role of language could only be understood in relation to other activities "language regulated concerted work, transmitted knowledge and set in motion a series of tribal activities, and the 'effective force' of such verbal acts lies in directly reproducing their consequences" (1965:49). He argued that the belief in the mystic and binding power of words related to the fact that language gave man the sense of power over his environment "The belief that to know the name of a thing is to get a hold on it is thus empirically true (1965:233)." He saw magical language as a distortion of ordinary language and related the pragmatic power of words to childhood experience whereby the mother reacts to the baby's cries. The latter learns that he or she can instrumentally affect the environment. Malinowski compared magical language to the binding character of legal formulae which is very close to

explaining their efficacy in Austin's (1962) terms - "saying is doing". In a similar way, McGuire (1983) argues that ritual language is a primary element of empowerment since it both represents and objectifies power, words are powerful because they carry thoughts, feelings or images from one person to another. Language is linked to power through its "autonomy as an objectification of human reality "(Berger and Luckman 1967) and once adopted by people is perceived as a taken for granted object with coercive power.

Malinowski understood magical language in a third way deriving from Frazer's principle of sympathy. He emphasised that the Trobrianders lived in a world pervaded by sympathetic affinities and held that magical speech, man made, existed from the very beginning as "primeval text coeval with reality". He spoke of the "creative metaphor of magic"(1965:238), the belief that the repetitive statement of certain magical words is believed to produce the reality stated. There was a direct link between magical language and reality which was not the case for ordinary language. This led Malinowski to the conclusion that "the essence of verbal magic, then, consists in a statement which is untrue, irrational in nature and which stands in direct opposition to the context of reality" (1965: 235).

In a similar way to the above, Ogden and Richards (1923) in their *Meaning of Meaning* argues for the primitive view that sees a direct, even causal relation between the word and the thing it referred to, between symbol and referent as an explanation for the mistaken belief in the magical power of words. There is little

empirical evidence for this hypothesis. Cassirer's (1953) theory of symbolic forms argued that it was language which actually produced the organisation of reality and this was reflected in man's attitude towards language and related the hypostatisation of the word to the 'mythic consciousness'. Tambiah (1968) argues his theory is based on shaky ethnography and is based on the assumption and acceptance that the 'primitive' has in fact such an attitude.

Later in his work Malinowski asserted that magical language was an "emotive use" of language. Magic derived from the emotional tension of particular situations and spells, ritual acts and gestures, like poetry, expressed a spontaneous flow of emotions. Tambiah argues that these statements do not do justice to the highly formalised nature of Trobriand rituals.

Moving towards a more phenomenological position, Tambiah examines the question: to whom are rituals addressed and what kind of effects do they seek to produce? Using Malinowski's data, he argues that rituals affect the participants emotionally as opposed to affecting the real world. Ritual is pragmatically effective by creating a change in the actor's mental state. This is similar to Burke's ideas of the 'rhetoric of motives', the use of words by human agents to form attitudes or to induce actions in other human agents. Using as an example the cultivation of yams in the Trobriands, Malinowski states:

“Whereas the objective effects reveal to us that the whole performance is directed at the yam-house, at the food accumulated there, the comments of the native make the human organism the real subject matter of magic influence” (Malinowski 1965:226). and later states:

“While the rite says that the yam house, yams and the village should endure, the Trobrianders have not the slightest doubt that it does not directly act on food but on the human organism, specifically the human belly. If the *vilamalia* were not performed, man and woman would want to eat all the time, but after its performance hunger would be reduced, and the yams would rot in the storehouse.”

Tambiah argues “The Trobriand logic is that a rite conducted realistically to make the storehouse endure is really a metaphorical analogy urging the human belly to restrain its hunger and greed for food. It is the belly that ‘hears’ and ‘understands’ the rite which is externally performed on an inanimate object (1968:202). He concludes his paper:

“Thus it is possible to argue that all ritual, whatever the idiom, is addressed to the human participants and uses a technique which attempts to restructure and integrate the minds and emotions of the actors. The technique combines verbal and non-verbal behaviour and exploits their special properties. Language is an artificial construct and its strength is that its form owes nothing to external reality: it thus enjoys the power to invoke images and comparisons, refer to time past and future

and relate events which cannot be represented in action. Non-verbal action on the other hand excels in what words cannot easily do - it can codify analogically by imitating real events, reproduce technical acts and express multiple implications simultaneously. Words excel in expressive enlargement, physical actions in realistic presentation."

In summary, Tambiah (1968) argues that magical statements should be understood as performative actions rather than as scientifically instrumental actions (2). In a similar way, the study of symbolic healing has moved to a phenomenological position .

Symbolic Healing

Comparative analysis of a number of religious systems argues that at times of sickness appeal is made to some higher 'source' of casualty and meaning which we may posit as 'religious'. Often the most important figure or symbol in any given religious tradition is the source of healing (see Sullivan 1987). Healing occupies an important place in religious experience throughout the world (3,4,5). Religious symbols are commonly 'manipulated' to effect healing. The previous chapter describes healing by the manipulation of language. How has this "symbolic healing" ie healing by words, myths and symbols been understood by anthropologists? I would argue that medical anthropologists have moved from an emphasis on mechanism to an emphasises on meaning and phenomenology (6).

This is in line with the approaches to the 'anthropology of the body'. As opposed to seeing the body as a sign (eg Douglas 1973) where cultural values are inscribed on the body, there has been a shift into phenomenology (eg Bourdieu 1977, Csordas 1994b, Jackson 1983,1986) where embodiment is seen as the existential grounds of culture (7&8). As Csordas (1994b:6) argues "Why then not begin with the premise that the fact of our embodiment can be a valuable starting point for rethinking the nature of culture and our existential situation as cultural beings ? " (For a review see Dein 1995). Similarly, work on ritual has adopted this phenomenological perspective (9).

There have been many attempts in the anthropological and psychiatric literature to argue that all forms of symbolic healing are based on similar mechanisms. Psychotherapy has been used as a model for traditional healing (Dow 1986, Kakar 1984, Kleinman 1988), with western psychotherapists arguing for an incomplete parallelism with their own practices (Littlewood 1990). Some therapists (Opler 1936, Frank 1973, Kiev 1964, Torrey 1971) argued that the traditional healing of physical illness was a partial form of dynamic psychotherapy. Western psychotherapy claimed to achieve lasting insight, as opposed to the traditional healers who achieved only temporary and partial relief. These analysts saw the transcultural application of psychotherapy as being unproblematic, although Kiev (1964) argued that the universal techniques in these other cultures were 'primitive' and consisted of suggestion, imitation and projection, ie those of psychotherapy practised before Freud. Csordas (1990) points out that despite the existence of a

broad repertoire of techniques deployed by traditional healers, arguments about efficacy fall back on nonspecific mechanisms such as suggestion (Calestro 1972), catharsis (Scheff 1979) or placebo effect (Ornstein and Swencionis 1990). Kakar (1984) and Obeyesekere (1991) who both examine Asian healers, argue for the symbolic "work of culture". Symbols heal because they provide a dynamic compromise between warring factions of the self without providing insight. In terms of the classic psychoanalytic hierarchy of values, these therapies provide only a temporary relief of symptoms and are held to be inferior to the "pure gold" of insight supposedly leading to cure.

Frank (1973) postulated that all forms of therapy included a number of general features including: a healer recognised as having a superior status to the patient, shared understanding of illness by therapist and patient, a new perspective offered to the patient, mobilisation of hope, facilitation of emotional arousal and provision of various experiences of success for the patient during therapy. He emphasised the importance of cultivation of expectant faith by the healer and the rhetorical devices that bring about a shift in the persons' 'assumptive' world as being crucial to the therapy. Frank emphasised the importance of rhetoric in healing. Rhetoric refers to the use of language to transform meanings or conceptions along with perceptions and moral convictions and may be effective through either logical argument or the 'poetics and pragmatics of rhetoric' (see Perelman 1982). The pragmatics of rhetoric includes such elements as institutional authority, social power, drama and 'charisma', whereas the poetics of rhetoric concerns the evocative

power of language and has centred on the study of metaphor. Friedrich (1986:17) has argued "it is the relatively poetic nature of language, formed and articulated through figures of speech that most deeply and massively affects the imagination, to the extent of seeming to be its, paradoxically, not only its dress but its incarnation". Related to this is Bourguignon's (1976) assertion that the primary effect of therapy is to transform the meaning of the illness for the sufferer (Bourguignon 1976). Similarly, Csordas (1988) argues that performance in ritual of metaphors effects a qualitative transformation in participants. This is either a movement from one state to another, or movement from formlessness or lack of identity to definitiveness and specificity. We can see a shift from an emphasis on mechanism to one on meaning.

Kirmayer (1993) makes the point that rhetoric aims to move a particular audience in a specific direction which it does through language, symbols and performance specific to the audience and aim. The nature of the rhetorical process and the mechanisms of symbolic healing are tied to the specific content of discourse and action "it is not just any meaning that heals, nor simply any meaning that fits, but those meanings that offer to the sufferer and his companions a way to continue" (1993:164).

Recent authors (Torrey 1971, Scheff 1979, Kleinman and Sung 1979, Good and Good 1986, Littlewood 1995) stress the idea of a shared set of ideas which patient and healer hold in common before the process of healing and which are then deployed in a particular way in the course of their encounter, a cultural congruence between

experienced illness and some social representation of it. It is difficult to characterise any social action as healing without assuming some agreement on a shared representation of the immediate problem. In a similar way most anthropological formulations propose a model in which the healers first "draw on metaphors resonant within the culture to construct the illness reality, and then symbolically manipulate it to effect healing" (Good and Good 1986). Similarly, Eisenberg (1981) states,

"The decision to seek medical consultation is a request for interpretation..... Patient and doctor together reconstruct the meaning of events in a shared mythopoesis..... Once things fall in place, once experience and interpretation appear to coincide; once the patient has a coherent 'explanation' which leaves him no longer feeling the victim of the inexplicable and the uncontrollable, the symptoms are, usually, exorcised."

However the extent to which sick individuals search for meaning in their illness is an empirical question which remains to be answered. It may be in chronic rather than in acute illness that this is the case (10). Last (1981) in his study of the Hausa Malumfashi points out how the patient is not interested in knowing about the theory of the cure nor about medical ideas, nor are doctors necessarily interested in all the causes "Indeed what is striking is how little either patient or doctor needs (or wants) to know."

Emphasising the shared understandings between patient and healer, Levi-Strauss's (1949) influential paper *The Effectiveness of Symbols*, analyses the role of symbols in the healing process. He discusses how a Cuna pregnancy chant recapitulates on a symbolic level the physiological process of childbirth. He sets up a set of formal homologies between the body of a woman in obstructed labour, the shaman's chant and the shared myth which both represents the process of birth as a cosmological process and which is embodied in the physical woman. The chant includes a narrative about mythical characters, whose actions represent the progression of the foetus through the birth canal. Levi-Strauss argues that the Shaman directly influences the woman's body through his narrative. The narrative creates a metaphoric landscape that represents the patient's suffering in detail. Again the shared cultural understanding is stressed (see however Laderman 1987). Levi - Strauss set a precedent for the structural approach to healing (11). He accounts for the efficacy of symbolic healing in terms of a close coupling of embodied experience to a society's received cognitions.

Kirmayer (1993) argues that although structural relationships are implicit in the healing process, they alone do not provide an explanation of its evocative or healing power. The efficacy of the ritual does not simply derive from setting up an analogy between the woman's body and the mythical realm but in some metaphorical movement with psychophysiological effects:

"Whatever metaphoric work is done by the suffering woman is not to be found in the formal structure of the Shaman's incantation but in expectations engendered by the larger social context of healing and in idiosyncratic bodily feelings and images evoked by nonverbal and paralinguistic aspects of the ritual process." (1993:169)

Structural models do not always correspond with local understandings. Structuralist models of healing such as that of Levi Strauss (1949) seem to correspond closely with local exegesis in societies where the body and its sickness are indeed highly mythologised: where upper and lower register, mythic reality and embodied experience are understood as already reflecting and recreating each other in a ubiquitous and closed narrative, where psychology is a cosmology, mythic reality being experienced by individuals as in accordance with events and actions which were not seen as situationally specific, nor justified as personal agency. In increasingly less 'tight' societies (low grid, low group in Douglas' 1973 terminology), such as the pluralistic post-modern world where biomedicine, whilst arguably evoking core notions of self and agency (Lock and Gordon 1988), has considerably less representational coherence and certainly no obvious formal homology with some ultimate reality, we may expect the notion of 'mythic healing' to become more extraordinary both for observer and participants.

Following both Levi Strauss and Moerman (1979), Dow (1986) proposed a general account of symbolic healing. Again he highlighted the importance of articulating distress in terms of cultural idioms (see Crapanzano 1973, Dow 1986, Good and

Good 1986, Kleinman 1980). Deploying the idiom of 'myth' he postulated that every system of symbolic healing is based on a model of experiential reality that can be called its mythic world. According to Dow the idea of 'clinical reality' and 'explanatory model' (Kleinman 1980) also describe the mythical basis of symbolic healing. The initial requirement for symbolic healing is that the culture establish a general model of the mythic world believed in by both healer and potential patients. The myths couple together personal experience and the social order through shared representations. In the healing process the healer particularises part of the general mythical world for the patient and interprets the patient's problem in terms of the disorder of the particular segment. The healer persuades the patient that it is possible to define his or her problem in terms of a particularised part of the mythic world. Symbols may be sacred ideas, beings and objects and are often the dominant religious symbols.

To explain how symbols affect somatic processes, he proposes a hierarchical system in which myths influence emotions which in turn influence the body. Emotions are the generalised media that link the self and somatic systems in the healing process. Healers 'attach' the patient's emotions to transactional symbols particularised from the general myth and then manipulate the transactional symbols to help the patient transact his or her emotions. For him, the relationship between somatic and symbolic, between bodily experience and its symbolic representation, can be characterised as analogous to that of a thermostat, an image which Csordas (1988) argues is too mechanistic, in that it still accepts a naturalistically understood body

and is predicated on a tendency to distinguish between and reify the social, the self and the somatic, such that we must then specify mechanisms of bridging and causally transacting between them. Dow fails to take into account that symbols act on the symbolic body as opposed to the body, naturalistically understood. Any account of symbolic healing must take into consideration the symbolic construction of the body in a given society. Dow's account can be seen as somewhat 'cognitive', emphasising symbolic understandings which in some way is related to healing.

Dow's model is a structuralist model to the extent that it attributes healing to the mapping of the sufferer's local world and idiosyncratic experience onto the formal order of the culturally mythical world. Dow uses the terms 'persuade', 'attach', 'manipulate' and 'transact' in his account. Kirmayer (1993) argues that it is insufficient to notice the homologies between bodily, social and symbolic worlds. It is also important to understand the process of change at the level of physiological, psychological or social mechanisms. Structuralist accounts leave out the nonsemiotic social and biological processes such as persuading, attaching, and transacting (see Deely 1990).

Kirmayer (1993), employing ideas from metaphor theory, proposes a pluralistic view of the therapeutic enterprise based on the cultural trope of metaphor, whereby rhetoric deploys metaphor to evoke then to bridge the compelling narratives of cultural myths and the bodily felt immediacy of experience (in a similar way that Dow uses emotions). He separates three levels of discourse: the mythical level of

coherent narratives, the archetypal level of bodily givens and the metaphoric level of temporary constructions.

By myth he refers to those narratives that are employed by a culture and by which a society structures and legitimates itself. Myths occur outside ordinary time and space and become the occasion for the belief in something larger than ourselves (Kolakowski 1990). He conceptualises myth both as narrative/ideology and as transcendental knowledge or experience (Veyne 1988).

Archetype refers to the bodily given and is rooted in the nervous system or emergent in the form of social life "archetype refers to the subjectively compelling images/experiences that seem to be present to us before reflection or invention or which we experience on discovery as already familiar." (Kirmayer 1993:171) Some representations may be directly related to biological processes. The body is primed to pick out of common social experiences (eg birth and death) and certain recurrent patterns that then constitute a universal substrate of human experience or imagination. McDougall (1977) has argued that certain symbols may have psychobiological determinants, Needham's 'primary factors of human experience' and she uses as examples primitive art related to phosphenes and the Mandala pattern so well described by Jung.

By metaphor, Kirmayer refers to the notion of thinking one thing in terms of another (Lakoff and Johnson 1980), and is the basic process of creative thought or invention.

Fernandez (1986) similarly argues that metaphorical thinking is the primary way that individuals and cultures make sense of the world and allows one to move from the abstract and inchoate of lived experience to the concrete and easily graspable. It allows suffering to be communicated in a creative and flexible way. Foucault (1970) argues that metaphors are seen as the key to epistemological shifts. They need not be expressed in words but can be expressed in images or gestures. Kirmayer emphasises the metaphor is not simply an isomorphic mapping of one concept onto a schematic alternative, not just representation, it goes beyond analogy to transform its topic by an "interaction with the sensory, affective and cognitive aspects of juxtaposed concepts." (1993:172). Kirmayer argues that metaphors are derivative of our experience of embodiment, as Lakoff and Johnson (1980) and Lakoff (1987) have emphasised (12).

Myth and archetype are "good to think with". They conflate the biological and experiential meanings of body and society. According to him myth, metaphor and archetype capture the social, psychological and bodily contributions to truth and meaning.

However, I would argue that the use of these cultural tropes does not take us much further on and we have not moved far away from Dow's model. This model still to some extent emphasises semiotics .

Recent trends in anthropology examine how meanings are constructed via the non discursive, dramaturgical and rhetorical levels of performance. From the time that anthropologists moved from viewing rituals in purely structural - functional terms and began to look at them as systems of symbols, attention has focused on how rituals 'work'. How do they effect social and psychological transformations? Ortner (1973,1978) from a semiotic perspective, states that symbols are effective because they formulate or make sense of particular problematic cultural and psychological situations and reframe them leading to a new orientation of the participants to their situation. Analysis of efficacy is an analysis of the permutation of meanings of the symbols themselves "as if the participants undergo the ritual transformations automatically as they are exposed to symbolic meanings and that an understanding of how symbols are effective is simply a matter of understanding the logic of thought that underlies them" (Kapferer 1979).

In contrast to the interpretive approach, many anthropologists argue that the efficacy of symbols in ritual is to be found less in their semantic character than in the non -semantic, non- propositional aspects of performance and linguistic form. They analyse ritual not as text but as performance which has the power to constitute a new reality (Csordas 1988, Kapferer 1993, Schieffelin 1985, Tambiah 1981, Grimes 1990, Schechner and Appel 1990, Brown 1991, Desjarlais 1992). Kapferer (1993) writes:

"an approach grounded in participant's *own experience* and perceptions of change may arrive at a more pragmatic conceptualisation of healing as a cultural process

(and that what is needed.... is specification of how therapeutic processes effect transformation in existential states "through the way that symbols are deployed in actual situations").

These authors emphasise issues of subjective experience among ritual participants, the impacts of utterance and actions carried out within specific ritual genres, and the performative transformation of contexts as well as meaning.

This performance terminology has been used in a number of ways. For example Lewis (1980: 22, 33-4, 38) likens ritual to a play or piece of music which elicit an emotional response and argues that we should not be preoccupied with deciphering the meaning of rituals. He further asks why we often impute motives or intentions to those involved in ritual and magic without asking them whether they possess them. The intentions of the actors is not always obvious "To identify magic we must pay attention to the ideas behind action" (1986:421). The anthropologist studying magic or ritual may impute beliefs to the participants which they may not themselves hold and fails to see it in its sensual experiential context which may make it appear strange. He fails to see the mixture of literal and metaphorical interpretation in the statements of participants. Whether or not informants statements about ritual and magic are literal or metaphorical may depend on the situation, the events and the questions asked by the anthropologist. Bell (1991) argues that Lewis has been the most cautious of those who invoke performance and by contrast, V Turner (1982,1986) was one of the most enthusiastic.

Kapferer's (1979) analysis of an exorcism ceremony in Sri Lanka exemplifies this approach. He directs his attention to the arrangement of space and the organisation of the audience and participants in the performance setting. Secondly, he examines the media (dance, song, comedy), in which the symbolic action is carried out. Changes in the organisation of the performance, effect changes in the roles and relationships of participants. Adopting the symbolic interactionism approach of the psychologist G H Mead, possession is associated by him with negation of the self and therapy with its reconstruction. Following exorcism, the demons are relegated to the lower worlds and the cosmic order is re-established. 'Healing' can be glossed as restoration or reconstruction. The notion of healing is constructed according to the way in which symbols are presented. It is not simply the presentation of symbols but the way in which they are presented which is important (13).

A more recent text is that by Desjarlais (1992). His work *Body and Emotion* provides a good example of the symbolic-phenomenological approach in medical anthropology. He examines soul loss among Yolmo sherpas. He attempts to understand Yolmo culture by *feeling* what they feel "I felt that my body developed a partial, experiential understanding of their world ,from the ways in which they held their bodies to how they felt, hurt, and healed" (1992:13). By this process he attempts to obtain a "visceral engagement with symbolic forms" and later states "The shaman changes how a body feels by altering what it feels " (1992:206). This is tautology as Kleinman (1995:228) argues "The idea of being healed because you are

made to feel different or better also begins to seem less and less like a highly original reversal of the commonsensical and more and more like tautology (1995:228).

Laderman and Roseman (1996) provide a good overview of this approach. As they argue (1996:4):

"Reading through these essays we cannot escape the idea that if healing is to be effective or successful, the senses must be engaged. Think of the belief, common to many mystical philosophies, that the way to the soul is through the senses. Is the way to health also through the senses? Are people simultaneously moved artistically, psychologically and physiologically? Are there specific connections between particular kinds of aesthetic activity in the shaman's performance and the patient's experience of it? Are practitioners who are themselves strongly moved by music, singing, dancing, and language better able to perform as healers? If a patient is unmoved, will the illness be more difficult to treat? Are successful healers psychologically different from other people within their culture? Is what was known in Western culture (before widespread antibiotic therapy) as 'the bedside manner' a comment on the satisfactory performance of the healer, whose style of interaction with a patient was understood as contributing to a cure? "

However they leave many of these questions unanswered. From a biomedical point of view healing can occur without the evocation of the senses. The major problem

with the phenomenological perspective is the problem of knowing another person's experience. How can experience be validated? We can only know another person's experience by what they say. How can we know that what we experience in ritual is what other people experience? Kapferer (1986:189) remarks "I do not experience your experience ...I experience my experience of you." We cannot know the experience for sure. Geertz (1986:373) argues "Whatever sense we have of how things stand with someone else's inner life, we gain it through their expressions, not through some magical intrusion into their consciousness. It's all a matter of scratching surfaces." Abu Lughod and Lutz (1990) even argue that these experiences may themselves be illusory. Geertz argues that we can only understand another way of life by analysing the symbolic forms -words, images, institutions, behaviours -in term of which people represent themselves to themselves and one another. Desjarlais (1992:35) however argues against this, emphasising the necessity for visceral engagement with symbolic form . During fieldwork among Yolmo sherpas he attempts to understand healing by *feeling what they feel*. According to him "we have lost an understanding of the body as an experiencing, soulful being, before and beyond its capacity to house icon and metaphor" and "A less cognate, more sensate treatment now seems needed" (Desjarlais 1992:29). And later:

"Whatever the answers (and novelists certainly have their own), the ethnographic entails special constraints. Empathy rides on the faith that the grounds of experience between two people are similar, such that we can 'know' what another is feeling based on what we ourselves would feel in that situation " (1992:35)

and

"Unless we can achieve a basic understanding of how another person makes sense of the most elemental aspects of their being -how he or she experiences body, pain or gender -any efforts toward empathy with that person will run aground, particularly when this involves cultural lands as distant as Helambu and the United States "(1992:35)

However I would argue that it is impossible for one individual to know how another experiences pain or gender and to this extent the phenomenological enterprise is problematic.

The analysis of ritual as performance raises an interesting question which performance theorists find difficult to answer. How can ritual be differentiated from other forms of performance such as dramatic theatre or spectator sports? This is a problem which Geertz (1983) addresses in *Local Knowledge*. Rappoport (1979:176) argues that ritual is not drama, although performance, like formality, is a sine qua non of ritual. Schechner (1998) points out that whether a specific performance is ritual or theatre depends on context and function. If the specific purpose is to get "results" such as healing or to appeal to or appease gods, the performance may be regarded as ritual .

Ahern (1979) takes issue with the notion of ritualisation as dramatisation that is meant to affect the participants as opposed to the external world. Performance theory denies any validity to indigenous claims that certain actions affect the gods or the harvest. All that ritual changes is the dispositions of the actors or audience. In her own work on the Chinese soul settling ceremony, she questions how much shared understanding there can be between Chinese participants and Western interpreters if the former genuinely intend their rituals to instrumentally affect the world. I would similarly argue that in many instances the participants in ritual intend to transform nature or the world (Ahern's 1979 strong illocutionary acts) and are not purely rhetorical, a point argued by both Durkheim and Frazer (1955:242-3). The former argues:

"The efficacy of these (increase) rites is never doubted by the natives: he is convinced that they must produce the results he expects, with a sort of necessity" (Durkheim 1965:373-4) (14)

CONCLUSION

This chapter has discussed the move from empirical explanation to cultural interpretation and thence phenomenology in medical anthropology. This is paralleled in psychotherapy where there is a shift from a concern with the alleviation of symptoms to one relating to the promotion of self knowledge and facilitating a new shared interpretation currently glossed as 'personal growth' or

`awareness', `self-actualization' or `raised consciousness'. According to this phenomenologist anthropology, the experiencing self must be understood without recourse to any objectification of the material world (Csordas 1994) and even both biology and culture are forms of objectification or representation. We are left with meanings and experiences, a retreat to subjectivity. What is the status of the naturalistic body in all this?

The naturalistic body has itself become theoretically redundant, as just another social representation of an external reality whose ontological status is no longer the concern of anthropology. As Leder (1990) argues from a phenomenological standpoint, in everyday life our experience is characterised by the disappearance of our body from awareness, describing how it falls back into unexperientiable depths.

It is only in disease, distress or dysfunction that it reappears. In this quest for meaning and interconnectedness by medical anthropology, the naturalistic body has been relinquished to the physician and it has become difficult to distinguish healing from other social patterns except by analogy with Western medicine. The very subject matter of medical anthropology, becomes uncertain, `sickness' is reframed into `affliction' and `healing' into `performance' and `transaction'.

The anthropology's complete abandonment of the objectified naturalistic body as one valid commentary on human experience has been strongly criticised (Littlewood 1991, 1995). However, unless one adopts an extreme idealist position, the naturalistic body does set limits on our experiences of the world. An attempt

has been made in a number of disciplines to reconcile naturalistic (emphasising the empirical world potentially accessible to direct observation) and personalistic approaches (emphasising intentions and experiences of individuals). In cognitive science, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) in my opinion successfully reconcile these two approaches by grounding thought in basic physical actions. Thought is constrained by the body "it is embodied, that is, the structures used to put together our conceptual systems grow out of bodily experience and make sense in terms of it; moreover, the core of our conceptual systems is directly grounded in perception, body movement, and experience of a physical and social character" (Lakoff 1987).

This chapter raises a number of issues for fieldwork among Lubavitchers. When they manipulate religious artefacts, do they attempt to change their experiences or do they attempt to instrumentally effect events in the material world or both? How do they themselves understand the role of words in healing? Is a semiotic model more appropriate than a phenomenological model? Lewis (1986) argues that an idea or action may seem magical if we take it literally but not if we take someone to mean it figuratively. Do Lubavitchers hold that the manipulation of texts affects the material world (a literal interpretation) or are their actions figurative (a symbolist view) or a mixture of the two? Are the petitions to the Rebbe "strong" or "weak" illocutionary acts; requests to change the world or purely wishes?

CHAPTER 3

ETHNOGRAPHY OF THE STAMFORD HILL COMMUNITY

The Lubavitch movement was founded by Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi (1746-1813), a disciple of Rabbi Dov Baer. He was born in Lozna in Lithuania and after obtaining a thorough training in Talmud, moved to Meseritz and became a follower of Dov Baer, the "great Maggid". He has been described as the "Maimonides of Chassidism" on account of his synthesis of Lithuanian scholarship with Chassidic fervour. According to Epstein (1959:171) the Chassidism that previously proceeded from Meseritz was "all emotion and feeling" containing little of the speculative element in it. Of central importance was the fact that there were sparks of divinity everywhere in everything, good and bad, and these could be 'raised' by the performance of good deeds. This attitude was well suited to the uneducated Lithuanians. However it could not commend itself to the intellectually minded. Rabbi Schneur Zalman formulated a new type of Chassidism characterised by an emphasis on rational thought as opposed to emotion. This system was called **Chabad**, a term derived from the three highest Sefirot, i.e., **chochma** (wisdom), **binah** (understanding) and **daath** (knowledge). He presented his teachings in the major text of the Lubavitcher Chassidim, the *Sefer Tanya* (Book of Teaching). It is published in Stamford Hill by the Kehot Publication Society. Tanya is considered as the 'written law of Chabad'. It is a synthesis between the Kabbalah and Halacha (Jewish law); between the mystical and rational currents of

Jewish thought. Scholem (1974) takes the text as giving a new emphasis to 'psychology' instead of 'theosophy', the secrets of the divine realm now being presented as a mystical psychology.

Rabbi Schneur Zalman was imprisoned twice by the Czar for allegedly formenting subversion by raising funds for Russia's enemy, Turkey (which then ruled the Holy Land). In fact he was collecting donations to support the emigrant Chassidic community. He was released on both occasions due to the lack of evidence. His release from prison is still celebrated by contemporary Lubavitchers. He is said to have been influential in helping the Czar defeat Napoleon. Soon after Napoleon's retreat in 1812, Rabbi Schneur Zalman died.

His successor was his son Rabbi Dov Baer who during his fifteen years of leadership accomplished a great deal, both through his mystically orientated leadership and by alleviating the material hardships experienced by his followers. In 1823 he created a Chassidic colony in Hebron in Israel. Under his guidance Chabad Chassidism became based in the Russian town of Lubavitch.

On account of the work of the third Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel, the son-in-law of his predecessor, who assumed leadership in 1827, and then his son Rabbi Schmuel, who became the fourth Rebbe in 1866, the Chabad movement progressively grew. Both strongly opposed the liberalising trend of the **Haskalah** (Enlightenment), and especially resisted attempts by Czarist ministers to introduce

secular subjects into religious schools. With increasingly violent pogroms against the East European Jewry in the 1880's, Rabbi Schmeul and his son, Rabbi Shalom Dov Baer (who became the fifth Lubavitcher Rebbe in 1882) fought to protect their fellow Jews.

The Lubavitcher way of life was seriously affected by the First World War. In 1915 following the German invasion of White Russia, the town of Lubavitch was evacuated. The Chabad headquarters moved to a series of temporary sites. In 1921 the Communist Party's 'Jewish section' began to destroy all aspects of religious Judaism. Jewish schools and synagogues were closed down and within two years nearly all of Russia's Jewish leaders had fled to Poland, Lithuania and the United States. The sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneerson, refused to leave. He became the leader of Chabad in 1920 at the age of forty and had fought to protect Russian Jewish rights. In 1927 he was arrested as a counter-revolutionary and sentenced to death. On account of protest by the USA President Herbert Hoover, he was released and over the next twelve years developed a network of religious academies in Poland. He travelled widely through Europe, Israel and the United States. Besides promoting the establishment of religious schools and synagogues across the globe, he was a prolific writer. Through his efforts, Lubavitch was transformed into an international movement.

With little hope of Judaism flourishing under Communism, he encouraged all Chassidim to emigrate if they possibly could. He realised though, that most

families would be compelled to remain in the country, and left in place his organised underground network of loyal Lubavitchers to carry on Jewish religious life, without schools and synagogues institutions. In September, 1939 the Nazis invaded Poland and Warsaw fell within days. In March, 1940, he escaped to New York. Many Lubavitchers managed to escape from Poland to Shanghai during 1940.

The majority of Eastern European Chassidim perished in the Holocaust (ninety percent of Polish Jews perished during the Second World War). With support from his American followers, Rabbi Yosef Schneerson established Lubavitch's world headquarters in Crown Heights in Brooklyn. A small nucleus of Chabad-trained rabbis founded yeshivot (academies of Jewish studies) across North America. At the end of the Second World War, he provided religious encouragement for European Jews who had survived the Holocaust. He sent emissaries to the Near East, Italy, England and Australia. The Stamford Hill Lubavitch centre was established in the 1940' s.

After the death of the sixth Rebbe, it was virtually unanimously agreed by Lubavitchers that only one man possessed the requisite qualities to lead the movement. This was Rabbi Menachem Schneerson, then aged forty-eight years old.

He was the son-in-law and third cousin of the deceased rebbe and had himself been involved with organising three newly formed Chabad divisions during the Holocaust. At first, he refused to assume the position on account of the great responsibility it entailed, but after several months he reluctantly agreed. In January 1951, on the first anniversary of his father's-in-law death, he was crowned as the

seventh Lubavitcher Rebbe and continued in this position until his death in 1994 from a stroke. He survived one previous heart attack and one stroke. His many addresses have been published in a collection of twenty-six volumes entitled *Likkutei Sichot* (Collected Talks).

The British Lubavitcher movement was established by Yochanan Moses Shapiro (1852 - 1915), a native of Warsaw, who before the First World War, had a small Chabad minyan (collection of ten men for prayer) at his home at 10 Raven Road, Whitechapel. Another Chabad minyan in London was established by Rabbi Yerachmiel Benyaminson known as the Zhlobiner Rav (d. 17 Adar 1955). He was born in Beshenkovitzky, Russia, and studied in the Lithuanian Yeshivot. He arrived in London in 1935. He lived in Letchworth during the Second World War then came to London where he established a Chabad minyan at 112 Cazenove Road, Hackney. Later, because of health problems, he emigrated to Montreal, Canada. He sold his house in London to Reb Yankel Gurkov who maintained the Chabad minyan. Rabbi Banyaminson died in Israel and was buried in New York, near the ohel (tomb) of the Rebbe of Lubavitch in New York.

The founder of present day Lubavitch in England was Rabbi Benzion Szentov (d. 1975). Born in Warsaw, he was arrested in 1927 while working for Lubavitch in Russia and sentenced to six years imprisonment in Siberia. His wife joined him there. He left Russia in 1947 in the company of a number of Lubavitch Chasidim and settled in Paris. He was given the responsibility for extending Lubavitch

activity in Britain in 1948. He settled in Cazenove Road, and turned the front room of his house into a cheder. He 'targeted' children who were getting no Jewish education in this country to foster Lubavitch ideology, and he established a Talmud Torah in Hackney.

Lubavitch is a world-wide organisation of Chassidic Jews whose main centre is in New York and until 1994 was led by the Rebbe, its spiritual leader. Lubavitch institutions exist in a large number of countries. The largest communities are in New York, Antwerp, Tel Aviv and Stamford Hill. Young men and women are sent out by the Rebbe as emissaries to various parts of the world. The function of these emissaries is to administer and organise Lubavitch activities usually from Chabad Houses which act as administrative and outreach centres and incorporate a library and resource centre. These Chabad Houses are supported by modest donations from the Lubavitch Foundation. It is generously estimated that there are about 250,000 Lubavitchers in the world (Shaffir 1974). In the U.S. it is estimated there are 250 Chabad houses. There are 180 in Israel and in Britain there are 15. A major aspect of the work of Lubavitchers is to go out into communities in an attempt to bring back secularised Jews to Judaism. No Jew, whatever his or her background is beyond redemption. Each one has a Jewish spark which may be employed to rekindle the interest in Judaism. Other Chassidic groups are strongly opposed to this idea and argue that unless a person is brought up in an Orthodox way, the possibility of change is remote. The Lubavitch Mitzvah and holiday campaigns have raised the awareness of Jewish life and Jewish practice among many Jews,

motivating them to explore and examine their identity. It is this outreach work which differentiates Lubavitch from other Chassidic groups and acts as a form of boundary maintenance from them (1). As will be described below, although Lubavitcher religious practice is in no way at variance with Jewish law, some Lubavitcher customs especially in relation to festivals do differ from those of other Orthodox Jews. This in turn enhances the boundaries between Lubavitch and other Orthodox groups.

The organisation runs a large number of educational institutions and there are about 40,000 students from orthodox and non-orthodox backgrounds scattered over the world. The latest educational aids such as computers are deployed. Lubavitch also run weekend seminars for families to teach the principles of Judaism. In many countries Lubavitchers are involved in social issues such as homelessness, prostitution and drug addiction among Jews. There are several drug rehabilitation programmes run by the Lubavitch in the United States. The most impressive is that in Beverly Woods in California, which has 32 beds.

Lubavitch employs the latest technology such as faxes to spread its message and there are regular radio link ups between Brooklyn and Lubavitch centres over the world. Faxes and telephones are regularly used to send messages to the Rebbe's secretary to ask for blessings. The Lubavitch publishing house, Kehot Publication Society, is one of the largest Jewish publishing houses in the world. It publishes and distributes books, journals, pamphlets and cassettes and educational material for all

ages in English, Hebrew, Yiddish, French, Italian, Russian and German. The Central Library in Brooklyn is a great repository of rare books and manuscripts.

The movement is bound together by a vast kinship network acting as the "spinal chord" of Lubavitch. Lubavitchers born into the movement and their parents come from very large families which not uncommonly have more than ten children. They have a vast array of cousins spread across the world who are likely to be part of the organisation.

The movement is administered centrally by the rebbe through a committee called **Agudas Chassidei Chabad**. This administers synagogues and communal affairs for the world wide Lubavitch community. There are representatives from over the world who make international decisions about Lubavitch. This committee meets about four times a year more often than not in Brooklyn. Although the Rebbe has the power to make ultimate decisions, everyday decisions about Lubavitch are left to Agadas Chassidei Chabad who consulted with the Rebbe whenever it was considered appropriate. This organisation has been in existence since 1940. Since the Rebbe's death in 1994 the organisation has been run by Agadas Chassidei Chabad and the Rebbe's charisma has undergone a process of routinisation. Each country has a representative (**shliach**) who organises Lubavitch activities within that country and is in direct contact with the Rebbe. These representatives are chosen by the Rebbe. The organisation is financed by donations from wealthy

Lubavitcher businessmen. The Lubavitch budget is over one hundred million dollars a year.

THE STAMFORD HILL COMMUNITY

Stamford Hill in the London Borough of Hackney is an inner-city area in North London with a population of about 27,000 people in an area of three square miles. Less than half of the population of Stamford Hill are Jews, mainly lower middle class tradesmen, religious teachers and small business men. The other minority groups living there include West Indians, South Asians, Irish, Greek and Turkish families. There are a number of different Chassidic groups in the area each with their separate identity. The largest groups include Gur, Satmar, Belzers, and Lubavitch (2), each with their own Rebbe in New York. In the London Borough of Hackney there are about two thousand Chassidic families: Satmar is the largest group followed by Belz. There are about two hundred Lubavitcher families spread out over Stamford Hill. Although today Stamford Hill is virtually synonymous with Jewish ultra-Orthodoxy, this has not always been the case. Before the Second World War, the many local congregations included United Synagogue and Sephardic. These have largely moved out to the more affluent suburbs of London such as Golders Green. There are also a small number of non-Orthodox Jews living in the area. Stamford Hill is reknowned for racism, prostitution and burglaries. Racial attacks are common and graffiti with the words "Jews out" and swastika daubings

are not unknown. During the night used injection needles and condoms are often thrown into Jewish school playgrounds.

The British Lubavitch organisation is led by the hanholoo (governing body) consisting of four rabbis who are involved in decisions about Lubavitch in the UK. These are Rabbis Suffrin, Vogel, Lou and Sudak. Rabbi Sudak is the Rebbe's representative in Britain and head of the Lubavitch Foundation (as the British Lubavitch movement is called). He is directly answerable to the Agudas Chassidei Chabad (and until his death the Rebbe) and has the power to veto any decisions made by the hanholoo. He is responsible for choosing the other members of the hanholoo. They meet weekly and administer the British Lubavitch Foundation. In Stamford Hill there is a committee (called the "committee") of eleven rabbis who make major decisions within the community and decide on local policy and practice. They are held in high esteem by the community and generally their word is accepted. There is also a representative council made up of thirty representatives from the various organisations of the Lubavitch Foundation such as the educational department and the publications department. This is a consultative body. During my fieldwork, it was difficult to establish exactly how Lubavitch was being run, most Lubavitchers could not give me a clear picture of the lines of authority apart from saying that the Rebbe made ultimate decisions. Everyone interviewed appeared to accept decisions made by the various committees. However from time to time, I did hear complaints about the way that various people were being paid, especially from teachers who were angry that they were rarely paid on time

Although from time to time there are what one Lubavitcher referred to as "rumblings", complaints about their decisions, this never amounts to any action being taken to change things. The major conflict which I encountered during fieldwork were between those who publicly announced that the Rebbe was the Messiah and those who thought this was going too far (see chapter 8).

However, there are instances when there is dissent and Lubavitchers go against the wishes of Rabbi Sudak. For instance, Rabbi Sudak felt strongly that young Lubavitcher women should not wear skirts down to their ankles as this was immodest. He preached in synagogue about this and personally told women not to do this but his words were unheeded and women continued to wear them. Men who do not conform to Lubavitcher standards of dress may not be called up for aliyahs.

Status of Lubavitchers is determined by the amount of work done on behalf of the community, knowledge of Chassidus, and background (yikhes). Those who are emissaries, teachers and congregational rabbis are highly regarded by the community. Although congregational rabbis may lead communities outside Stamford Hill, they spend some of their time working for the Lubavitcher community and their children usually attend Lubavitcher schools. Some Lubavitchers do not have jobs directly related to the community although some may do some part time community work. For instance one man works as a public librarian but spends a day a week as a librarian in Lubavitch House. Two terms are

applied to members; **balabotim** (private individuals) and **anash** (lit Men of the Brotherhood).

The British organisation is financed from private donations, council and European grants and from revenue collected from members such as tuition fees for schooling. There are several wealthy businessmen who regularly donate large sums of money to Lubavitch. Each working member of the community is expected to pay towards the upkeep of Lubavitch House and parents pay regular school fees. Lubavitchers are expected to give money regularly for **tzedakah** (charity) and there is a collection box in every house. Those experiencing financial difficulties receive a donation from the community which they pay back interest free. The very wealthy Lubavitcher families in Stamford Hill donate large sums of money towards the Lubavitch organisation which helps to fund the community. The money obtained in **tzedakah** is redistributed to those in need.

There are certain key members of the community who are generally approached for advice about religious matters and are considered very influential in this respect. The Rebbe teaches that each member of the community should have his or her own spiritual advisor (**maspiach**) whom they can approach for advice. Rabbi Sudak, a middle aged man originally from Kiev is the Rebbe's emissary in England and is considered an expert on Tanya. He is often approached for advice on spiritual matters. He is a very friendly man in his sixties who runs regular study groups in Tanya and 'exudes' a wealth of knowledge about Chassidic philosophy at his regular

Sunday morning study groups. He has a very strong Yiddish accent and on account of this can be very difficult to understand. He has an office in a Lubavitch house where he is frequently consulted by Lubavitchers about various religious matters. Although he appears very busy, he can always spare a few minutes to talk.

Another prominent member of the community is Dayan Ruskin who acts as an advisor and makes important decisions about Jewish law. He is a man in his forties who is quite serious and officious in manner and rarely smiles. Although Lubavitchers are subject to the British legal system, they will often approach Dayan Ruskin when there is a legal conflict. Mr Kaser, a local butcher, recounted to me how he approached Mr Ruskin when he bought a faulty car from a Jewish salesman. Both the salesman and Mr Kaser approached Dayan Ruskin who mediated between them and ruled that the salesman should repay some of the money to Mr Kaser.

The main administrative centre of the Stamford Hill Lubavitch movement is Lubavitch House on Stamford Hill. This is an impressively modern building with a concrete and steel facade, situated on Stamford Hill itself. In the window is a sign 'University of Judaism'. This building reflects Lubavitch's concern with the modern image and marks this group off sharply from other Chassidic groups. The centre, opened in 1968, is described in one Lubavitch book *Challenge* as "not merely a building, but as the realisation of a dream and justification of faith". It comprises of offices, a library, a nursery school, a girl's school, a synagogue and a swimming

pool. It is the centre of constant activity with lights blazing well into the night. Men, women and children are seen running up the steps to go to a class or to pray. Men in the community spend much of their day there, attending for prayer or study groups. There are close phone, radio and fax links with '770', the Rebbe's residence in Brooklyn, and up till 1992, when the Rebbe had his first stroke there were frequent live radio broadcasts from America late at night. Lubavitch House is the focal meeting point for Stamford Hill Lubavitchers. It is here that introductory meetings are held to instruct beginners into the doctrine of Chabad. There is a regular Wednesday evening seminar held for this purpose called 'Project Return'. This is attended by non-Orthodox Jews who are interested in learning more about Judaism. The British movement publishes a booklet "Lubavitch Direct" which lists all the activities of the Lubavitch Foundation. These include: adult education; youth programmes; camps; counseling; hospital visiting; personal Torah study and various festival programmes.

There are two smaller Chabad houses close to Stamford Hill, one in Hendon and one in Ilford both of which have a large Jewish population. The latter opened in 1987 and it similarly carries out a large number of activities including "Drugline Chabad" run by Rabbi Aryeh Suffrin .

In Stamford Hill, families live in large Victorian semi-detached houses amongst their non-Jewish neighbours. Many of the houses are large with at least four bedrooms and two bathrooms and a kitchen. Lubavitchers make full use of modern

technology such as microwave ovens. Similar sexed children often share one room.

Lubavitchers frequent the local non-Jewish shops to buy household goods such as lightbulbs and electrical goods. However, it is only permissible to buy food from certain shops recognised under the *bet din*, the organisation which licences food as being pure (Kosher). There are several of these in Stamford Hill such as Fantasy Delicatessan and the Moses Superstore both on Stamford Hill. The former is open twenty -four hours a day and is renown for selling the most delicious falafels in London. Kosher food is also sold in supermarkets such as Safeways. Some of the grocery shops open after the Sabbath 'goes out' and I found it a unique experience shopping for smoked salmon at midnight amongst Chassidic families queing up for cakes, sweets and bottles of Coca-Cola. Much of the weekly budget is spent on buying food for the Sabbath along with other relatively expensive items such as the Sabbath wine.

Although I visited a number of families in Stamford Hill during my stay and had the opportunity to see a number of houses, it was particularly during *Purim*, where there was an `open door policy' , that strangers can go from house to house and partake in food and drink. I visited several very large and particularly ornate houses, a few of which had an almost palatial quality about them. These are owned by wealthy business men in the community, who, although having a lot of money, preferred to stay in Stamford Hill, as opposed to moving to more affluent suburbs such as Hendon and Golders Green. There is even one house where I was told that the owner had an indoor swimming pool.

Many families have radios at home but I only encountered one family with a television. Several Lubavitchers emphasised that television programmes contain material which could be detrimental to their children especially those programmes where men and women are free to interact closely. Similarly, families do not go to cinemas, theatres or opera. Socialising generally involves visiting other Chassidic families locally and attending *simchas* (functions) and various social gatherings in Lubavitch homes. There are no Kosher restaurants in Stamford Hill (many have opened but due to poor business closed down very soon), but for special occasions such as birthdays a family may visit a Kosher restaurant in Golders Green. Children are often taken for walks to the local park and this is an occasion where young mothers meet up and discuss their families. There is no problem, apart from on the Sabbath, using public transport and many families regularly venture into central London and Wood Green to go shopping. Although in most of the families I visited, the bookshelves were full with religious texts, occasionally I would encounter a family who read secular books such as the novels of Dickens. A few families read secular newspapers such as the Guardian and the Times. Many of the Lubavitcher families travel abroad once a year often to other Lubavitcher communities around the world. Until his death, it was common for families to travel to Brooklyn once every two or three years to see the Rebbe.

Unlike other Chassidic groups, most Stamford Hill Lubavitchers speak English at home although some also speak Yiddish. Hebrew is reserved for prayer. A number of publications are produced in the community such as the *Mosiach Times*, *L'Chaim*

(dedicated to the memory of the Rebbe's wife) and *Chabad Magazine*. All are in English.

There are no streets in Stamford Hill where only Jews reside but interaction with non-Jews (*goyim*) is limited to business purposes. Relationships with non-Jewish neighbours are generally good and occasionally a family may invite a non-Jewish family into their house. I myself was living next door to a Catholic family with whom I myself and my landlord had a good relationship, which occasionally extended to going into each others houses to discuss mainly practical matters.

When I first moved into the area, I met Mr Levine, a librarian at Lubavitch House. He has been a member of Lubavitch for twenty years and I had frequent discussions with him in the library. He was born into a non-Orthodox family in Hackney and only became religious at the age of twenty. He is now forty -six years old and lives with his wife Sarah and their three children. Quite abrupt in manner and not particularly liked by other members of the community, he was always keen to give his point of view when asked questions. Although he was a good source of information, I always felt uncomfortable in his presence, perhaps because it seemed he was talking down to one. Several members of the community pointed out that he could be a very difficult man and wondered how his wife put up with him sometimes. He had strong views concerning non-Jews:

"We do not have much in common. Our lives are religious, we do not have a specific social life as such. They go to the cinema, theatre or watch television, none

of which we do. Of course one could do these things, but it is not considered by Lubavitchers as the acceptable thing to do. All our social activities have a sacred element such as weddings; for this is not just a physical union but a spiritual union.

"Sometimes I get invited into secular schools to talk about Judaism. Usually the kids are very receptive. A few weeks ago I was invited by a nun to talk about Jewish ideas in a school in Bow. The children were Catholic. They asked what Jews were and why they did not live in Bow. I of course did not discuss with them my views about Yoshke [Jesus]; well we all know he was **mumsah** [illegitimate]!

"Around here there are some arguments between Jewish and non Jewish children but generally the relationship is good. Often Jewish children provoke non-Jewish children: Sometimes a group of Jewish children will stare at a non-Jewish child walking by. This must be upsetting for them.

"According to Tanya, there are profound differences between Jews and non-Jews. At the end of the first chapter of Tanya it states that the souls of the non-Jews derive from the kelipot, the fragments of the vessels at creation, from which evil derives (3). The souls of the Jews derive from pure divine light. It also states that what non-Jews do is for their own aggradisement, this is not the case for Jews. I am not saying this is all non-Jews since some non-Jews do good for its own sake. Perhaps Schindler was like this. Have you read the book *Schindler's Ark* ?

"Children have little contact directly with non-Jews. They are aware that their way of life differs from those of children in the secular world. From my own observations Lubavitch children have little knowledge of well known secular television figures such as Superman or Batman, instead they revere Rabbinic figures especially the past Lubavitcher rebbes. They are discouraged from reading secular story books although some may be allowed to read classical novelists such as Dickens. For Chassidic children, socialising involves attending *simchas* [joyful events] and parties at their schools."

Apart from Lubavitchers, there are several other Chassidic groups in Stamford Hill including Satmar, Belzers, Vishnitz and Ger, each with their own Rebbe and pattern of dress. Relations between the various Chassidic groups are generally cordial although as one of my key informants, Mr Maurice Levy (with whom I lived for four years and whom we shall meet again a little later) explained:

"We do not mix with the other Chassidic groups as much as they mix with each other. For this reason they think that we are separatist. Unlike Belzer and Ger, we tend to keep to ourselves. We are similar to Satmar in that respect. Sometimes there is a friction between Satmar and ourselves. Several weeks ago I went into a Satmar Synagogue. One Satmar was reading the *Yid*, their newspaper, and looked up and said 'He's one of them, the group who believe that their leader is the Messiah.' He told me that this was blasphemy. I explained that this was not the case. We might be wrong in believing this but it certainly was not blasphemy. Satmar have at times

been violently opposed to us on grounds that they do not believe in the pre-messianic establishment of the state of Israel. Although for us it is not ideal, we accept it."

Some Lubavitchers attend other Chassidic Synagogues, particularly Belzer or Vishnitz. However many Lubavitchers emphasise that their Rebbe is different from other Chassidic Rebbes in his knowledge of *yiddishkayt* (Jewish life) and is more successful in bringing Jews back to Judaism. There is limited intermarriage between the groups. Lubavitchers may marry into another Chassidic group if it consolidates ties with the wider community or adds another dimension of prestige to a member of the upper echelon. In this case the non-Lubavitcher usually comes over to the Lubavitcher side.

The number of Lubavitcher families increases every year in Stamford Hill. This is partly as a result of their encouragement of large families and partly because of their emphasis on 'conversion'. The explicit goal of this proselytising campaign is not to add to the ranks of Lubavitch but rather to draw Jews into Orthodox practice. I discussed this with Rabbi Rabin, a middle aged man who has a PhD in Jewish history and who is considered by members of the community to be an expert on Chassidus. He became religious at the age of twenty and prior to this had studied a number of philosophies such as Buddhism and Marxism. He is a very approachable man who appears very enthusiastic and works as a teacher in the local Lubavitcher girls school and runs regular Monday night teaching programmes

called "Project Aleph". I regularly visited his house to discuss various matters with him and his wife Sadie, herself quite a prolific woman who despite having thirteen children, works as a university lecturer:

"One of our most important jobs is to bring back Jews who have strayed from Judaism back to Orthodoxy. Some people call this 'conversion' but this is the wrong term. We are giving Jews back something they legitimately have a right to. We conduct large campaigns with this aim in mind. Lubavitchers attempt to 'convert' young intellectual men and women. We try to educate Jews about Judaism. There are three major campaigns; these are the **mezuzah** campaign, the **tefillen** campaign, the **Shabbos** candle campaign. The latter campaign is directed towards women specifically:

"All Jews should have a mezuzah on the right hand doorpost of every door of the house in accordance with Deuteronomy 6.4 (the Shema) where it is said 'These words shall be written on the doorposts of the house'. These two portions must be written by hand on a piece of parchment, placed in a case, and affixed to the doorpost of rooms used for residential purposes (not bathrooms). The mezuzah is a constant reminder of our obligations to God. It marks the house as a Jewish home dedicated to Jewish living. Regularly we approach Jews to enquire whether they have a mezuzah. We will check their existing mezuzot to see if they are kosher and if not we will change them."

Another important object is the tefillen (Phylacteries), Rabbi Rabin continued:

"Every Jewish man should lay tefillen every day apart from the Sabbath. In four passages of the Torah there is an injunction to have 'These words bound upon the arm and head' (Deuteronomy 6.8, Exodus 13.9). The arm tefillen are first placed on the upper part of the left arm and the strap is wound around it seven times and then around the fingers. The tefillen for the head are placed on the middle of the head just above the forehead. We send out **mitzvah** tanks around the streets of Stamford Hill. These are lorries driven by Lubavitchers which have religious objects inside. Male Jews are called inside to lay tefillen.

"A campaign specifically directed towards women is the Shabbos candle campaign. It is a mitzvah for a woman to light the candles on the Sabbath. One of our jobs is to, educate Jewish women and their children about this process. The Rebbe directs is to perform these campaigns and help bring Mosiach in our time."

About seventy percent of the Stamford Hill Lubavitcher community are 'converts' from non-Orthodox Judaism. Some of these have belonged to other religious sects or cults such as Scientology prior to becoming Lubavitchers. Occasionally a Christian will convert to Judaism and then become a Lubavitcher. There are several ex-Christians in the Stamford Hill community. Conversion campaigns are commonly held on university campuses where young, educated single adults are found. 'Conversion' is a gradual process in which the convert returns to Judaism

employing more and more rituals in daily life (4). However only a small proportion of Jews approached by Lubavitchers actually become more religious. Joining the group can cause conflict with the families of the converts, especially when a student gives up his university studies or career. Sometimes non-religious parents are upset by their sons and daughters joining Lubavitch since they believe that religious life is futile and detracts from the material benefits of the secular world. They often try to stop them. One parent whom I had known for several years as a personal friend and was not herself a member, expressed her concern when her son started to attend meetings:

"They are like a cult. Once you join, it is difficult to leave. They try and indoctrinate you and they virtually worship their leader, the Rebbe, who after all is just an old man who will die soon. For many of them they give up their lives for him and he controls what they do. I wish my son would stop seeing them."

During my fieldwork I only heard of three people who left Lubavitch. The first was a man of twenty-seven who met a girl at university who became increasingly religious. When she joined the movement he did so as well. The couple married but separated four months later. Shortly afterwards he left the movement. The second person was a woman of twenty who had been brought up as a Lubavitcher. She was one of ten children. She left after moving in with a Catholic boy much to her parents disgust. The third instance related to a young man who became increasingly involved in Lubavitch. He had been a talented pianist but gave this up

upon joining. He took his parents to meet the Rebbe. The parents recounted how he had given up a promising career as a professional pianist. "So what", answered the Rebbe, "Let him become a shopkeeper." Very angry, the parents coerced their son to leave Lubavitch. I was only told about one man who was actually asked to leave the movement. This was a Lubavitcher who refused to marry a woman he had got pregnant. Rabbi Sudak said he had no place in the movement. Although minor indiscretions seem to be tolerated very well, major indiscretions are severely sanctioned. When a local rabbi was found to be having an affair, there was a major uproar in the Stamford Hill community and he was forced to move to the USA.

Maurice Levy is a 45 year old physiotherapist living in Stamford Hill with his wife Hannah and their five children, Jane (11), Menachem (9), Leah (6), Tali (5), and Yitzchak (2). I spent four years living with his family and he was one of my key informants. He has been a member of Lubavitch for 16 years. He is a very amicable, humorous man who likes to help other people and is generally liked by the community. He generally dresses in a long black coat, a Homberg hat and has a long black beard. He enjoyed talking to me about his background.

"I was brought up in Hammersmith as a non-Orthodox Jew. Of course I went to Hebrew classes but was not particularly interested. At school there were only a handful of Jews. I remember one day that one of the teachers took all of the Jewish boys into a room and asked us to define what a Jew was. One boy stood up and

said that the Jews believe that the Messiah will return. I knew that he was wrong but did not really know what to say.

"I grew up in the hippie era during the sixties. As a teenager I was involved in 'Flower Power', the Beatles were my idols. Oh yes I had good trips then. It was common place to take LSD and for several months I lived in a commune. It was really the first time in my life that I had a sense of belonging. Life on the communes was fun but there was no sense of privacy.

"When I was 18 years old I got a scholarship to Oxford University to read politics, philosophy and economics. I did not like the people there very much. I remember on my first day a boy said to me 'Hello, I'm from Harrow, where are you from ?' When I told him that I was from Shepherds Bush he got up and walked away. I did however join the Jewish Society where I met more Jews and it was here that I met Lubavitchers. Slowly I became more interested in Judaism.

"When I left university I trained to become a statistician. I enjoyed this a lot. I kept up my links with Lubavitchers and spent weekends in Stamford Hill with various families. Although I liked it there, I did not feel ready to live there. In 1979 I went to have a private *yehidut* [audience] with the Lubavitcher Rebbe. By the time he saw me he had had only about an hour's sleep. Before I went in, I wrote my name, my mother's name and my questions on a piece of paper. I was not sure what I wanted to do in the future: to marry and have a family, to go back to Yeshivah or to

return to England and work. He advised that the most important thing was to get married and every decision came after this. I felt that he knew exactly what to answer even though he knew very little about me.

"I knew at that time I could not commit myself and always dreamed of travelling. Shortly afterwards I left for Egypt and in all I spent four years cycling around Africa through Sudan to Ghana, Nigeria and Mali. I always carried a copy of Tanya with me. One day I was in Kenya. The sun was going down and my bike got stuck in a mud ditch. Suddenly I was surrounded by wild animals. I remember thinking that the only way to survive would be to take out my copy of Tanya and read it. I did this and almost from nowhere a Safari van drove up to me. I heard shouting in Hebrew, a man said to me 'Are you mad? What are you doing here at this time of the day?' I got into the van with my bike and was driven to safety. It was a miracle. I could easily have been killed.

"I remember one day that I came across a tribe in Uganda who claimed that they were Jewish. Because they had a taboo against eating pork, when missionaries arrived they taught them that the Jews were those people who did not eat pork, and on account of this they believed themselves to be Jews. They even had a copy of the Torah. They asked me what types of locust Jews were permitted to eat but I could not answer their questions. I wrote a short article about it when I returned to London which I can show to you.

"When I returned to England, I came to live in Stamford Hill, initially with a family and then I was introduced to Hannah by a friend. Hannah was also a Baltshuve, a convert from non-Orthodox Judaism. She had originally studied sociology at college and had a non -Jewish upbringing. In fact as a child she had attended Sunday school even though her parents were Jewish. She had never visited a synagogue until she was sixteen years of age. We married after nine months and have been so for eleven years. I was unsure what I wanted to do when I returned to England. I had always been interested in health and therefore trained as a physiotherapist. I find it difficult to make a living doing this although I have several Chassidic clients in the area. Most of my clients come from Tottenham and I work with a lot of ethnic minorities.

"I think Stamford Hill gives you a sense of community, something which is lacking in the West today. I feel like I belong here. It's not just the religious aspect that's important. Of course I lead as far as possible a Chassidic life, but other people living here make it worthwhile. There is always someone that you can go round to, you feel wanted. When you have a personal misfortune one feels that it can be shared with other people. For instance four years ago our son, Svi, died (it was a cot death). For me it was the greatest tragedy of my life. However, I did not feel alone in my suffering, I felt I could share it with the rest of the community. If someone is ill there is always someone who can help and take some responsibility off you. I really like living here.

"For me Judaism provides a standard for living. We are all driven to some extent by our physical drives. Judaism teaches you to control them. We learn to delay our pleasure until another time and to develop self control. Recently I have met people I knew twenty years ago who are now divorced. One told me he had an affair. In the secular world, people are driven by their appetites and this brings much hardship upon them. There is no sense of permanence. This is not so in the religious world. Marriage is sacred. Having an affair is virtually unheard of.

"There are problems with Lubavitch. I think the main problem is their continual criticism of other Orthodox Jewish groups for not being 'proper Jews' and following the Jewish laws as Lubavitchers do. However, on the other hand they are accepting of non-Orthodox Jews and even non-Jews. There is a very positive side to Lubavitch. Although there are many problems in this world, Lubavitchers do not see this in a negative way, but as a positive opportunity to change things and bring Godliness into the world."

Unlike other Chassidic groups in Stamford Hill, most Stamford Hill Lubavitcher families consist of **baltshuves** (converts to Orthodox Judaism). Only a minority of families are Lubavitcher stretching back several generations. Traditionally it is accepted that these families will intermarry and they are accorded much respect on account of their heritage. Several Lubavitchers expressed the opinion that they provide stability in the community and have lower rates of family breakup than the other Lubavitcher families (which are already very low).

Mrs Gold (sixty years of age) kindly agreed to speak to me one evening (November 1995). She is a very well known lady in the Stamford Hill community on account of the fact that she has been a Lubavitcher all her life, having escaped from the oppressive Communist regime in Russia in the 1930's. She is renowned for her hospitality and ability as a raconteur. Initially she was suspicious of my motives since she too was in the process of writing a book-about her life in Russia. Her second husband, Menachem, was present during the interview and occasionally interjected with his own comments. She has seven children aged from twenty to forty. While simultaneously looking through some insurance documents and not giving me her undivided attention, she said:

"I have always had a difficult life. During my childhood I remember running from place to place. The Communists were trying to do away with Yiddishkeit. We were not free to practice our religion. I am from a religious family, I had ten brothers and sisters some of whom died in the camps. Many Jews were unable to work in Russia. They were discriminated against and were not given rights or privileges. My father told me that keeping mitzvot was the most important thing in your life and this is what we did. My father was unable to get a job because he would not work on Shabbat. In 1937 he was arrested by the communist police and classed as a 'Refusnik' since he did not go along with the regime. I left Russia in 1937 before the Second World War and for three years was continuously changing towns. My brothers and sisters and myself went from town to town through Poland,

Czechoslovakia, Germany, France and we finally arrived in Belfast where I married and lived for ten years before coming to London, twenty years ago.

"I have been a Lubavitcher all my life. Although I never met the Freidriche (sixth) Rebbe, I met the current Rebbe on many occasions and had a Yehidus with him. The aim of Lubavitch is to bring Jews back to Judaism, not as some people say to 'convert' them. Jews must be aware of their rich heritage. In the past twenty years Lubavitch has changed considerably. There are now representatives all over the world. Jews are free to practice their religion freely. I have changed from a defensive approach to an offensive one. We are on the offensive and 'fight' to bring Jews back to Judaism.

"I know that there have been many changes in Lubavitch recently but the organisation will continue. The Rebbe is still with us although not bodily. He has left us a legacy. Mosiach will arrive soon, we have been waiting long enough. I have no doubt that the Rebbe is Mosiach but you have to work this out for yourself.

He is a very powerful man. My husband and I have written to the Rebbe on numerous occasions. I shall recount one. My first child, Hannah, was born with a club foot. Do you know what that is? I went to see a specialist in Belfast who recommended an operation. I was not happy about this and wrote to the Rebbe. He suggested we sought a second opinion. There was only one other doctor in Belfast who dealt with these problems and we could not afford his fees. We went to see him and he was very kind and recommended conservative management. He

realised our poor financial situation and waived the fee. We got a calliper for Hannah and she got better without the operation."

I attempted to ask more questions about her family. Her husband, himself a Russian Jew who had spent most of his life in Russia, interjected and explained to me that one should not ask questions about such things as size of family on account of the *ain hara*, the evil eye. If you have a large family, naturally another person may become jealous and cause harm to the family. He recounted to me a story about a relatively young man who had the 'strength of an ox', well built and tall who could carry heavy loads easily. He had seen him recently looking weak, having lost weight and speculated that this may have been on account of the evil eye.

A community of texts

Chassidic life centres around the fulfilment of the commandments. All the commandments that Jews are required to keep are based on the Torah. There are 613 commandments in all, 248 injunctions and 365 prohibitions. Breaking these laws constitutes a sin or *aveirah* which literally means a transgression. Sin is a move away from the Divine and may be remedied by *teshuvah* (repentance), a term which literally means to return. There is no sin which cannot be remedied or mended by repentance. This involves various prayers which in the post-biblical

period have replaced sacrifice. As it is stated in the *Philosophy Of Chabad* (Mindel 1974:103):

"The Torah embodies the wisdom of God. When a person is engaged in the study of Torah, there is an intellectual communion between the human intellect and the divine intellect, and since wisdom is the first faculty, and of all the faculties the closest to the essence of the soul, intellectual communion leads to essential communion, namely the unity of essence with essence. Moreover, when the human intellect is engaged in the study of Torah and apprehends its wisdom to the utmost extent of its capacity, it is not only absorbed in the divine wisdom, but the latter is, at the same time and to the same extent, absorbed in the human intelligence. There is thus attained a reciprocal and interlocking union between the finite and infinite, where all barriers are dissolved in the merging of the two. Such a perfect union, Rabbi Schneur Zalman emphasises, is possible only through the comprehension of the Torah, surpassing in quality even the union attained by the performance of the precepts. Symbolically the precepts are said to provide the 'garments' of the soul, while the study of the Torah provides both a 'garment' and a 'food'. This explains, says Rabbi Schneur Zalman, the rabbinic statement that 'the study of Torah balances against all the other commandments combined.'"

However, it is not only the study of Torah but the actual practice of the commandments (**mitzvot**) which is important.

It is stated in Tanya (Chap.35).

"On the other hand, Rabbi Schneur Zalman points out that the performance of the ritual is invested with mystical aspects, which in certain respects, surpass even the excellence of intellectual activity. The performance of the ritual, involving physical action and in most cases, also some physical object, contributes to the spiritualisation of the animal soul and the physical body, as well as nature in general."

Rabbi Rabin explained that the performance of mitzvot is not an intellectual exercise but is heavily invested with emotion:

"When one lays tefillin, one should not just think about the meaning of it, certain feelings are aroused because you are in the presence of God. These feelings are love and awe. When you perform this mitzvah you are overcome by a feeling of great awe. As it states in Tanya (Chap.35) 'The hidden love provides a subconscious urge for oneness with God; the sense of awe for the divine being provides a dread of separateness'. Love and awe are not therefore conflicting, but rather complimentary categories."

Another 26 year old man, originally from France, but now living in Stamford Hill explained the emotional aspect of laying Tefillin:

"When I lay Tefillin I feel a sense of superiority. I am different from non-Jews who do not perform mitzvot. It also arouses great feelings of being in contact with Hashem [God]."

Daily life in the community is in principle determined by the Talmud (5), the rabbinical collection of legal, ethical and historical writings. More specifically it is the *halacha*, the compendium which includes everything that regulates human conduct and everything that is or can be expressed in the imperative, whether or not it is enforceable, which determines Lubavitchers' daily lives. This contrasts with the *aggadah* which is everything else: theology, history, legend and parable and is descriptive. Other commonly used texts of Jewish law include the *Mishnah Torah* compiled by Moses Maimonides (1135-1204) and the *Shulchan Aruch* of Joseph Caro (1488-1575). Lubavitch practice is in no way at variance with Jewish law, however certain customs are specific to Lubavitch. For example Lubavitchers have a specific way of laying tefillin which differs from that of other Orthodox Jews. It is customary to put on the hand tefillin and recite the blessings while seated whereas other Orthodox Jews do this standing. During certain festivals, some blessings may be added.

Minimal standards of observance for all the community include strict Kashrut together with Sabbath and festival observance. These standards are kept by everyone in the community. For men there is regular attendance at the Synagogue and the daily study of sacred texts, with conservative clothing (usually plain black

or grey suits), beard, curly sidelocks (*peyes*) and a covered head. Some men wear a *gartl*, a cord worn by Orthodox men to separate the upper and lower parts of the body during prayer. This derives from the Halachic requirement to separate the heart and the sexual organs. Generally Lubavitcher men wear regular trousers. As opposed to other Chassidic groups who wear *streimels* (fur hats), Lubavitchers wear black or grey Trilbys both on weekdays and on the Sabbath. Among the different Chassidic groups there are different styles of dress. Some wear breeches tied below the knee and others have knickerbockers gathered above the ankle.

A key word used in the community is *kosher*. Rabbi Berkovitz is key the member of the community and the headmaster of the Lubavitcher boys primary school. He has been a member of Lubavitch for thirty years. Originally born in Brooklyn ,he has lived in Stamford Hill for over twenty years and is a well respected man, known for his understanding of Tanya. He has a close relationship with the Rebbe and frequently flies to Crown Heights. He is a regular teacher in Project Return and is recognised for his wit and humour. He explained in his usual helpful and sometimes humorous manner:

"Kosher refers to anything which is spiritually acceptable. Every physical item can be used for good or bad purposes. If something is Kosher it has the potential for spiritual elevation. When something is non-Kosher it does not have this potential in it. In a more limited sense the term refers to anything which the Torah allows us to eat."

Laws relating to the food which may or may not be eaten are given in a number of passages in the Torah (6). The reason for their observance is given in Leviticus 6, "For I am the Lord your God; sanctify yourselves, therefore, and be holy for I am holy." The Torah states that the purpose of the dietary laws is to attain the ideal of holiness. Food is divided up into Kosher, fit to eat and *terefah*, food forbidden by Jewish Law. Cattle or beasts may only be eaten if they have a cloven hoof and chew the cud. Fish can only be eaten if they have fins and scales. Apart from certain types of locust, insects are forbidden and "every creeping thing which creeps upon the earth must be an abomination" (Lev 11). Eating the blood of beasts and birds is not allowed "for the life of all flesh is the blood thereof" (Lev 17). The Talmud describes in detail the laws of *shechitah* relating to the slaughter of animals. Milk and meat must never be cooked or eaten together and every Lubavitcher household has two sets of utensils, one for milk and one for meat. There are also separate fridges and sinks for these products. Certain restrictions apply to fruits. The fruit of trees which grow during the first three years after planting is considered 'uncircumcised' and is forbidden. Unlike other Orthodox Jews, Lubavitchers wash their hands three times before eating bread (as opposed to twice). Similarly they dip bread into salt three times before eating it rather than sprinkle the salt over the bread when saying the prayer over bread.

Men attend the synagogue three times a day for prayer. Regular study of the sacred texts is expected. Women do not have the same obligations imposed upon them and many of them pray at home. The fixed periods for daily prayer introduced in

the rabbinical period, correspond to the pre-exilic times when sacrifices were previously offered in the temple. The morning prayer or **shaharit**, and the afternoon prayer **minhah** correspond to the morning and afternoon sacrifices. The evening service, **ma'ariv** corresponds to the nightly burning of the fats and limbs. On the Sabbath and festival days there is an additional service, the **mosaf** corresponding to the additional burning of the fats. Unlike in other Orthodox Jewish services, in Lubavitch the person leading the service does not wear a **tallis**.

The Lubavitch synagogue in Stamford Hill is situated on the second floor of Lubavitch House in a large room which doubles as a school gymnasium. The room is divided by a wooden partition into two parts. During the services (7) women sit in an upstairs room separated from the men although the mens' service is visible through a curtain. Although most of the Stamford Hill Lubavitch community attend services at Lubavitch House, some attend other synagogues, either non-Chassidic or belonging to other Chassidic groups.

Orthodox Jewish life focuses around the Sabbath and festivals (8). The Sabbath day is considered the most holy day in the week: Rabbi Berkovitz quoted from Exodus:

"Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days you shall labour, and do all your work; but the seventh day is a Sabbath unto the Lord your God: on it you shall not do any work. You or your son, or your daughter, your manservant, or your maidservant, or your cattle, or your stranger who is within your gates: for in six

days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all that is therein, and rested on the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the seventh day and hallowed it" (Ex 20).

According to the fourth commandment, by observing the Sabbath's holiness, belief in God who created the world for the benefit of mankind is reaffirmed. The Sabbath also reminds Jews of God as the redeemer and of Israel's permanent freedom from bondage. Rabbi Berkovitz explained the importance of the Sabbath :

"It's the most spiritual time of the week when you are closest to God. The Sabbath reaffirms our union with him and strengthens our bonds. On Shabbos every Jew possesses an additional soul. The meaning of Shabbos is so bound up with the plan and purpose of our lives that the very foundations of faith are built upon it. The very meaning of Shabbos expresses all that a Jew must strive for. It is an everlasting sign between man and God that he is our creator, and as such has brought us into being in order to fulfil some divinely ordained function. The Jew who fails to realise the true meaning of Shabbos has yet to realise the true purpose of his life. On Shabbos he undergoes a change. The limitations of his weekday-self fall away, and an overwhelming awareness of his divine origin permeates his entire being, revitalising him with a force which will carry him through the entire week. The additional soul is bestowed once a week upon every Jew, and he is oblivious to its presence. On Shabbos, the Jew must become elevated to a higher plane and be

imbued with a revivifying force which will uphold him during the coming week.

All the following days are blessed from the Shabbos." (9).

During the Sabbath Jews are enjoined to refrain from work and in addition a number of acts are prohibited that would lead to a desecration of the Sabbath; objects not intended for the Sabbath cannot be handled. Rather than rejecting altogether consumer goods produced outside the community, Lubavitchers transform them from purely secular items into items with religious meaning. Some members of the community have time clocks in their homes and synagogues which, set before the Sabbath, will switch their various electrical appliances on and off (**Shabbes zeiger**). Occasionally these devices break down and Lubavitchers are obligated to ask a non-Jew (**Shabbes goy**) to help. One Sabbath I was invited to the house of Mr Zeitlin, a forty-two year old teacher with whom I became very friendly.

I was particularly struck by the fact that he always appeared cheerful despite the fact he lives with his wife Helen who is chronically disabled by depression. Apart from looking after his wife, he looks after his three children and still works as a teacher. He studied philosophy at university and only became orthodox about the age of twenty-five after attending seminars at Lubavitch House. Prior to this he had very little to do with Orthodox Jewish Life. He recounted to me:

"It's sometimes very embarrassing. Last Shabbat the timer did not work on the cooker. I had to ask a non-Jewish stranger to do it. However you cannot directly ask him to do something you would not do yourself. I went into the street and told

him it was the Sabbath. I asked him if he would like a piece of chicken. He came into my house and took the chicken out of the oven and turned it off."

The Sabbath day is a day of happiness and in the home the Friday night table is adorned with candles, loaves of bread and wine. The kindling of the lights by the mother of the household heralds the start of the Sabbath. There are two loaves of bread to serve as a reminder of the double portion of **manna** which was provided for the Israelites in the wilderness to last them two days. The two candles are lit as a reminder of the two forms of the first word of the fourth commandment: remember and observe. At least three meals are prescribed by the rabbis at which hymns are sung in praise of God. In line with the joyful nature of the Sabbath, it is customary to wear one's finest clothes even if mourning. Among Lubavitchers, it is customary for families to invite several guests (often complete strangers) to stay with them over the Sabbath and I myself spent time staying with several different families.

The Sabbath eve service begins with a special liturgy called *Kabbalat Shabbat* which includes a sequence of psalms celebrating God's rule over nature as well as a hymn written by the mystic, Solomon Alkabetz in which the Sabbath is conceptualised as a bride who meets the bridegroom Israel: "Come my friend, to greet the bride, let us welcome the Sabbath day." At home the father asks God's blessing for the children and in honour of his wife recites the praise of 'the woman of worth' from the thirty - first chapter of the Book of Proverbs. Unlike other Orthodox Jews, Lubavitchers immerse themselves in the **mikvah** on the eve of the Sabbath and on the Sabbath

morning. Apart from public and private prayer, the Sabbath day provides an opportunity for learning and it is customary for men, women and children to study various religious texts particularly the Rambam (Maimonides) and Tanya, the philosophical work of Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi in which the principles of Chabad are expounded. Men and women engage separately in *shiurim*, lessons about the Torah or Talmud given by eminent talmudic scholars in the community. The Sabbath presents an opportunity to relax and it is the time when stories of old rabbis are recounted. During one Sabbath afternoon meal held at Mr Levy's house, the following story was recounted :

"A poor rabbi in Poland visited the Baal Shem Tov. He was in great financial difficulties and came to ask for advice. He had eight children and had only enough money to feed his family for another week and to pay the rent. The Baal Shem Tov advised that he go to the market place and buy the first object he sees. He could not understand this advice but having real faith in his teacher followed his instructions.

"He arrived at the market and was immediately approached by a man holding up a sheep's skin. Following the advice which he had been given, he gave all his savings to this salesman rendering him penniless. Since he could no longer afford to pay his rent his family were evicted and he was thrown into prison as a debtor. For several days he languished in a cell thinking about what the Baal Shem Tov had said. One morning he heard loud music in the adjoining palace and asked the jailor what was going on. 'It's the king's birthday, what have you given him as a present?'

jeered the jailor. The rabbi had a sudden thought. 'I'll give him the sheep's skin, its not much but he may like it'. He called the jailor and asked him to give it to the king, which he did. Upon receipt of this gift, the king laughed and shouted 'Who is this fool who gives such a present to a King? Bring him to me !' and threw the skin on the ground. Suddenly the sheeps skin sparkled and changed colour from white to gold. The king was most impressed.

"The guards dragged the rabbi in trembling. The king looked at him and said 'This is the best present I have ever had. You can go free now and because I have enjoyed my birthday so much, I will give you wealth so that you and your family can live in wealth all the days of your life.'

Following the Sabbath morning service there is often a **farbrengen** for the men. This is a gathering of Chassidim to discuss **Chassidus**, the philosophy of Chassidism. The farbrengen has played an important role in perpetuating and regenerating Chassidic ideas. It is said by Chassidim that "It is at the farbrengen that the Chassid is made." Here he receives guidance, encouragement and at times chiding and 'drinks from the waters of Chassidic wisdom'. Men of all age groups gather around a table, some are seated, others stand. Food is provided and includes gherkins, pickled herrings and dry crackers. As soon as the food is brought people rush to fill their plates with food. It is customary for men to drink vodka on the Sabbath and several bottles of Russian vodka are provided along with soft drinks. Small glasses of vodka (**mashke**) are offered around to make a **lechaim**, the toast for

life. Only rarely is enough vodka drunk for one to become *shikah* (drunk). Messianic topics are frequently discussed. During the Rebbe's illness, the fact that the Rebbe was Mosiach was publicly stated. A number of songs are sung. Music plays a large part in Lubavitcher life; they refer to music as the words of the heart. Words, they say are from the brain whereas music, especially a *nigun* (melody), expresses the essence of the soul that lies in the heart of every Jew.

The best known Jewish festival is **Pesach** (Passover), the first of the three pilgrimage festivals (*shalosh regalim*). This lasts nine days from the fourteenth day of Nissan. The festival alludes to the last of the ten plagues, when God destroyed the first born of the Egyptians but spared or 'passed over' the houses of the Israelites. It commemorates the redemption of the Israelite slaves from Egypt and points ahead to the final redemption of the world in the age of the Messiah. It is preceded by a cleaning of the house looking for *chametz*, leavened bread which is forbidden during the festival. Only *matzah* or unleavened bread can be eaten to recall the haste of the flight from Egypt which did not permit them to leaven dough. The first two, and the last two days are holy days; on the intervening days, work is permitted.

The major feature of the festival is the celebratory meal which takes place at home on the first and second evenings. It is a Lubavitcher custom to finish the **Afikoman** (the last piece of *matzah*) by midnight on the first night of Pesach and the first seder

begins immediately after the evening service unlike among other Orthodox Jews who may begin the service much later. Similarly, unlike other Orthodox Jews, it is not Lubavitcher custom to wear a kittel. (white robe) for the seder. The principle purpose of this seder is to recount the Exodus story for "You shall tell your son on that day" (Exodus 13:8). The celebration is structured by the reading of the **haggadah** which is an account of the Exodus. The meal consists of a lamb bone, a roasted egg, a dish of parsley, horse radish, salt water, mixed apples, nuts and raisins, unleavened bread and bitter herbs (without ginger and cinnamon), the latter representing the suffering of the slaves in Egypt. Traditionally the youngest son asks the question "Why is this night different from all other nights?" and the reply goes over the narrative of the Exodus and the redemption by God.

The service consists of prayer and psalms in an atmosphere of mixed solemnity and jollity to relive the liberation of their ancestors where "in every generation the individual should regard himself as if he had personally come out of Egypt." Four cups of wine are drunk in the course of the evening representing the four divine promises, "I will bring you out, I will deliver you, I will redeem you and I will take you for my people" (Exodus 6.6). During the ceremony the prophet Elijah, the forerunner of the Messiah, is invited to enter and announce the advent of the messianic age. A cup of wine is left for him. Specific to Pesach is the reading of the *Song of Songs*, an allegory of the love between God and Israel. The end of Pesach commemorates the time when the Israelites crossed over the Red sea and the Egyptians perished. The festival emphasises a sense of renewed hope. The

Lubavitcher view of Pesach is described in *Challenge-An Encounter with Lubavitch Chabad* (p81):

"The word Pesach essentially refers to self sacrifice, and a preparedness for suffering, exile and insecurity. For is it not a fact that Pesach, and everything involved in the liberation from bondage was based on these qualities? Therefore anyone who seeks the easy way in life; who wishes to swim with the current and not against it; who is not prepared to be part of a creative minority, bound by its historical past and destiny, and serve as a light to the nations; who prefers the easy and socially acceptable life rather than the eternal Torah way, has learned nothing from the eternal message of the word Pesach. Matzah is the symbol of freedom. On each of the first two nights of Pesach, at the Seder, when we demonstrate our sense of complete freedom, it is mandatory for each man, woman or child to eat Matzah. This sense of freedom is intertwined with a recognition that true freedom can only be achieved in the service of the Lord. Therefore, while we enjoy our freedom from physical enslavement, we must secure our moral and religious freedom. This is the concept of Matzah. Anyone who is a slave to his uncontrolled desires is not truly free but enslaved.

"The idea conveyed by the word **maror** which reminds us of the bitterness of our days in Egypt, is that no matter how bitter our lot, how helpless our situation, how awesome the odds are against us and frightening the forces seeking to destroy us, how insecure and unstable our present and terrifying our future, we must never

despair. In the midst of the indescribable persecutions and sufferings, the terrible tragedies and emergencies that fill the pages of our natural history, there has always arisen leaders who have shown the way, and breathed new spirit into the shattered lives of their people. Events totally unexpected, miracles hardly imagined possible, have occurred to save the Jewish people.

"How often has it happened that an individual has given up all hope because of varying personal problems, frustration and disappointment. In the midst of this despair and disillusionment, a remarkable thing happens. He is healed from illness; he makes a financial recovery; he is reinstated in the good graces of society. He begins to breathe new self confidence and becomes ambitious again. An act of God indeed. Fortunate is the man who recognizes the hand of God in this house. The festival of Pesach demands a reappraisal of oneself and one's degree of confidence and faith in God, learning from the history of our forefathers in Egypt."

On the last night of Pesach, Lubavitchers celebrate a **Mosiach sora** where each member brings along food which is shared out. There is a discussion about messianic topics and four cups of wine are drunk.

The fiftieth day after the beginning of Passover is the feast of **Shavuot**. The period between Passover and Shavuot is called the **Omer**, a time of austerity and semi-mourning for forty nine days. During this period it is considered improper to arrange a wedding, to cut one's hair or to wear new clothes. A particular

Lubavitcher custom is to study a page a day of the Talmudic tractate *Sotah* in addition to their regular studies. There are, however, three days allowed to interrupt this sombreness. The most important is the **Lag Ba Omer**, on the thirty third day when the restrictions of the season are suspended and weddings allowed. The festival of Shavuot falls on the 6 Sivan (the third month of the Jewish calendar) and lasts for two days. It commemorates entering the wilderness of the Sinai and the season of giving of the Torah. There is a public reading of the Ten Commandments and the book of Ruth. Dairy dishes are eaten during the festival. A popular practice among Lubavitchers is to read a little volume called *Tikkun Leil Shavuout*, a compilation of passages from the Pentateuch, Mishna and Zohar.

Just over five weeks after the Pentecost, there is a three week period of mourning remembering the events surrounding the destruction of the First and Second Temples in the sixth century BCE and the first century CE. The period ends with a twenty-five hour fast called **Tish'ah Be Ave (9 Ave)**, the most mournful day of the year during which no leather shoes may be worn and Jews do not sit on normal chairs but on the ground and read the book of lamentations. Weddings are not allowed for these three weeks and drinking of wine and eating of meat are restricted. The mourning represents the sufferings experienced in the exile.

The year begins in late September with the new year festival *Rosh Hashanah*. This is a period of divine judgement in which the fate of the world in the year ahead is determined "Remember us unto life, for you, O king, delight in life; inscribe us in

the book of life, for your sake, O God of life." It is a time of repentance. The **shofar** (ram's horn) is blown in the synagogue "summoning man to an awareness of his shortcomings" in the hope that the great shofar of universal redemption will sound".

Sweet foods such as apples and honey are eaten as a symbol of the good year to come. In a ceremony called **tashlich**, Jews go to a bank of a river to cast away their sins "Thou will cast all your sins into the depths of the sea". Stamford Hill Lubavitchers visit the river Lee in Hackney where they pray by the riverside and cast away their sins. It is quite a dramatic sight, with often several hundred people standing by the bank of the river praying.

Ten days after the Rosh Hashanah is **Yom Kippur**, the day of atonement. This is a twenty-five hour fast day where all food and drink is forbidden as are leather shoes and sexual relations are not permitted between man and wife. The day focuses on atonement - "You shall afflict yourselves" - and is spent in the synagogue reading from the Pentateuch and the book of Jonah. The liturgy is a long confession listing all the sins an individual may have committed during the past year. Change of conduct rather than remorse is emphasised: "He saw what they did, how they had turned from the evil way" (Jonah 3.10). It is the holiest day of Judaism's calendar. On the eve of the festival, many worshippers wear a white robe, a **kittel** (which is also used for burial).

Five days later comes the festival of **Sukkot** (Tabernacles or booths), a joyful festival. During this festival Jews dwell in booths (**sukkot**) and often Jewish

families build their own sukkot in the garden and eat and sometimes sleep in them.

During the week preceding this festival there is frantic activity with many families constructing their own Sukkot out of planks of wood in the garden. It is sometimes impossible to keep rain out of the Sukkot and some Lubavitchers will continue eating despite being drenched with rain. One evening, I sat for four hours deluged with rain and talked about religious topics! There is the ritual use of the four spices; the **lulav** or palm branch, tied together with two willow and three myrtle twigs, and a citron, called an **etrog**. These are held and waved in all directions, as a symbol of God's dominion over the universe. The seventh day of Sukkot is called **Hoshanah Rabbah** during which a seven circuit procession is made in the synagogue with the Torah scrolls as well as the Lulav and Etrog. Lubavitchers obtain their etrog from Calabria in Southern Italy unlike other British Jews and the etrog should be yellow not Green. The last two days are celebrated as a time of rejoicing of the Torah (**Simchat Torah**) when the Pentateuchal cycle of yearly readings is completed and begun again from Genesis. There is great rejoicing in the synagogue, singing, dancing and alcohol is drunk, sometimes in rather large quantities.

In the winter there is another festival, **Chanukah**, which lasts eight days. It commemorates the rededication of the temple of the Maccabees. The principle feature of the festival is the progressive kindling of the lights of the *menorah*, an eight branched candelabrum in every home. During this festival Lubavitcher cars drive around London with menorahs attached to their cars and a giant menorah is constructed in gold and green which Lubavitchers climb publicly to light the

candles. The annual cycle of festivals ends with *Purim* (lots). This commemorates the events recounted in the book of Esther and is celebrated on the fourteenth day of the twelfth month. The chief observance is the reading of the book of Esther from a scroll (*megillah*). It is a joyous festival associated with much joviality, singing, dancing and fancy dress. Special cakes are eaten (*hamantashen*) and intoxicating drinks are permitted beyond normal limits.

Everyday life and rites of passage

Men are expected to wear 'conservative clothing' . Long black coats are worn by some on the Sabbath. During the week it is customary for men to wear black or grey suits. The coats are buttoned from right to left. Rabbi Berkovitz explained,

"right represents goodness and left represents severity and stringency. We want to neutralise the power of severity with goodness and for this reason our coats are buttoned from the right to left".

Trilby hats are worn on the head. The men grow their beards in accordance with Leviticus 19 "You shall not round the corners of your beards." It is forbidden to shave the sidelocks and men sport *peyes*. A black rope like belt (*gartel*) is worn during prayer, without which no Chassid will pray, approach his Rebbe, or perform any ritual or ceremonial act. This is in line with the law which requires a separation between the heart and the sexual organs.

Women are expected to dress modestly and not to expose their arms and legs and are covered down to their knees and elbows; "Any part of the body which is normally concealed cannot be revealed" stated one Lubavitcher lady. Women must preserve their modesty and married women wear a wig (*sheytl*). They are not permitted to expose their hair to anyone but their husbands. This is in accordance with the law that a married woman must not exhibit her real hair in public, again as a sign of modesty. Under the *Sheytl*, Lubavitcher women leave their natural hair short.

Children up to the age of three are educated together in Lubavitcher nursery schools. After the age of three, boys are separated from girls and taught separately.

Lubavitch do not place any value on secular activity as such, and their educational institutions are always orientated towards religious education. Lubavitcher children are entirely socialised within the community. There are basically two age sets: childhood and adulthood; adolescence is not culturally recognised and there is no autonomous youth culture. The agencies of socialisation, the family, peer group, and formal educational institutions emphasise the same values and reinforce each other.

Certain subjects are not taught in schools such as the theory of evolution and any allusion to unmarried men and women mixing freely. Books discussing magic, witchcraft and ghosts are strictly forbidden "so children will learn that only the miracles carried out by God are genuine", stated one Lubavitcher. The Rebbe

recommends that young children should read books containing only kosher animals and likewise they should have similar pictures up in their rooms. Before distribution to students, books are scanned by teachers and any offensive material removed.

In London there are 1,500 Lubavitcher children of school age, cared for by 80 teachers, in Lubavitch schools. The Lubavitch House Junior Boy's school is located at 135 Clapton Common. 'Our responsibilities', states the headmistress, 'are to become interested in and to care for each of the children individually, to seek and to bring out their good inborn traits' (Rabinowitz 1997:167). In the primary school, Jewish studies occupy half of the school day, and special assistance is given to pupils if required.

The Lubavitch House Girls Junior School is located at 105 Stamford Hill in Lubavitch House. Emphasis is placed on character development and social responsibility. The school has a gymnasium and a swimming pool. The senior school started with nine girls in modest premises at 113 Stamford Hill, and later moved to Lubavitch House in 1964. The curriculum is fairly wideranging. Eleven subjects are taught to G.S.C.E - level, and four to A level standard. There have been consistently high success rates. One project in the computing department involves students setting up a computer program which presents an outline of the 83 halachot (laws) from the Mishneh Torah by Maimonides.

Boys attend a **mechinah** (religious school) after the age of eleven. Parents are given a choice of a total Jewish education not involving any secular subjects or a half secular education (including maths, science and secular history). One Lubavitcher explained that a total Jewish education is preferred by many since a good Jewish knowledge holds a boy in high esteem. Mr Zeitlin, a Lubavitcher maths teacher in the Lubavitch girl's school, whom we have met before, gave his views on Jewish education:

"I have two sons and a daughter. At their secondary school, the boys had a total Jewish education. I think that helps them to live a fulfilling life in the Lubavitcher community. Some boys learn some secular subjects which are taught by non-Jews. These subjects include maths, English, sometimes science and history. My impression is that the boys who have a total Jewish education have a good knowledge of science and have no problem with reading, writing or maths."

Achievement in a future career is not emphasised. After **mechinah**, most boys will attend a **yeshivah** for about two years in Britain, then go abroad for two years study, for example to Brooklyn (Morristown), Kfar Chabad in Israel or to Amsterdam. After attending Yeshivot, boys are encouraged to become **shlikhim**, emissaries over the world and may be sent as far afield as Africa, the Far East or Australia. It is the Rebbe who decides upon the exact location. After this some boys take **smicha** and become rabbis, while other work in the Stamford Hill community

as teachers, administrators, ritual slaughterers (**shohet**) and as shop workers. Going into a 'profession' is not encouraged.

The schooling of girls is different. Girls are not expected to have as much Jewish education as the boys and in the Lubavitcher secondary schools all girls have a part-secular education. After secondary school many of the girls go off to seminaries for about two years often abroad in Belgium, France, the USA and Israel. They are taught similar Jewish subjects to the boys. When they leave "Sem" many marry or find a job; the brightest teach, the others work as secretaries or in administrative jobs.

Almost half of the Lubavitcher community in Stamford Hill are employed by the organisation itself as teachers, clerks, and administrators. Professional qualifications are not held in high esteem. The gaining of occupational success is of no intrinsic significance and it is not a criterion whereby others may judge the true worth of the Lubavitcher. Wealth is seen as 'good' only to the extent that their money is given for **tzedakah** (charity). Some of the wealthier Lubavitchers move out to the suburbs such as Golders Green. There are no Lubavitcher doctors in the community. There are two accountants. There are a few exceptionally wealthy families in Stamford Hill. Mr Levy, himself from a strong socialist background explained how wealth was viewed in the community.

"It is OK to be wealthy as long as you give money for charity to needy people. This is considered very virtuous. Generally these families who have a lot of money are not very ostentatious. They live in ordinary houses and drive ordinary cars."

Lubavitchers emphasise gender segregation as do all Chassidic Jews. Male and female children are taught at separate schools. Unmarried women and men generally do not socialise together and at social functions men and women are separated by a screen (*mechitza*). There are some occasions however where unmarried men and women meet face to face, for instance at a Sabbath meal where men and women sit on opposite sides of the table. Physical contact is strictly forbidden between unmarried men and women and this extends to hand shaking and social kissing.

The domestic role of women is emphasised (10). As for all Orthodox Jews there are the 613 commandments. Women are obligated in all the negative mitzvot, and all the positive mitzvot which do not depend on time. Many Lubavitchers interpret this as being due to the fact that woman's familial duties have a high priority and these would be difficult to perform. Lubavitcher women consider themselves more "liberated" than Chassidic women in other groups because of her equal share in doing the "Rebbe's work" and her higher level of education. One Lubavitcher woman stated "We are better off than other Chassidic women, they have no purpose and only live for themselves. We get out into the world." Lubavitch, while essentially a male dominated society, makes some concessions to its women which

other groups do not do. Women are not solely confined to the domestic role but can, while doing the Rebbe's work, participate in the outside world. Some women in the community work part-time as well as fulfilling household duties. This sometimes occurs in the newly married couples where, lacking the financial support traditionally given by the wife's father while the husband continues his Torah studies, the wife will go out and support the family in some cases.

Mrs Rabin (the wife of Rabbi Rabin whom we have met), a fifty year old lady with eleven children was keen to explain this to me. She is an impressive lady who despite having a large family teaches psychology at London University. I frequently discussed my interest in psychology of religion with her. It is of particular interest to me that she has converted from a Christian background about twenty years of age after meeting her future husband:

"As we say every morning in our daily blessings, a woman's nature is in accordance with his will. Women do not need these external reminders. In practice, the number of positive mitzvot dependent on time from which women are exempted amounts to about seven but Jewish women have taken on themselves all but tallis and tefillin. There are three mitzvot which pertain specifically to women. These are the lighting of the Shabbos candles, the separation of the dough from the **challah** (the `priestly portion') and the laws of **mikvah** and family purity in the Jewish marriage."

Both men and women in the community emphasise that women are more 'spiritually elevated' than men. They have the ability to procreate and the woman's body reflects in a sense more of God's essence than does man's. A woman has the ability to create a new life from nothing and is more spiritually sensitive than a man.

Modesty is an essential attribute of Chassidic women. The same lady quoted to me from a book *The Modern Jewish Woman*, a Lubavitch publication:

"In the value system of Torah, that which is most precious, most sensitive, most potentially holy is that which is most private in the spiritual as well as the physical realms. The holiest objects are covered, such as the scroll of the Torah. In Torah, modesty and inwardness are prime spiritual values in contrast to the prevailing norms of contemporary culture, where self advertisement and public recognition are emphasised. Modesty of dress is an important aspect of spiritual modesty." (p 25)

Several women stated that women who seek aliyah (going up) to read or to don tallis or tefillin (all three of which women do not perform) must ask themselves if they are motivated by a desire for more spirituality, or for public display for, according to one lady: "When anyone male or female serves God, he must concentrate on the inner dimensions of his or her personality."

Although men and women are obliged to pray, men's obligation is more rigidly defined, and required at certain times, and consequently the public functions of the

synagogue are more the man's province. A typical comment during a discussion about gender roles with a fourteen year old girl was:

"At present, I attend a Lubavitcher secondary school. When I am eighteen years of age, I will leave and probably work for a year or at least until I am married. For women, higher education is not so important. Our role is to bring up the family and I would hope to marry about the age of twenty but who knows. Lubavitchers emphasise the importance of the family and the woman's main commitment is to her family. If I wanted, I could go to university, but that is not the usual thing to do in our community."

At a heated discussion during a Sabbath meal, Mrs Sarah Levine, another librarian at Lubavitch House, gave her views about the role of women :

"We're not expected to attend synagogue three times a day, we can pray at home. Women are different from men, their role is very different and we all accept this. Women are made for childbearing and it is natural that we look after the children and the house. We could not expect men to do this. Our lives are largely separate. We have our own social activities. We congregate regularly at **Beis Chanah**, a house in Stamford Hill. This is the Lubavitch's women's centre. A number of activities occur there. There are weekly **shiurim** where we learn about Chassidus. One night is devoted to a discussion of how to be a good Jewish housewife where we discuss cooking and looking after the house. Last week was the anniversary of

the death of the Rebetzin, the Rebbe's wife. A lady came to talk about her life and give a very vivid description of her death. She was a very spiritual person. I think it is only right that we meet separately from men. Occasionally there are joint meetings where both men and women attend. Then there is a screen which separates the sexes."

I interrupted and asked if all women accepted this way of life. Her husband Mr Levine, known for his bad temper, suddenly became angry and shouted:

"Your question is absurd ! Its always been natural for women to do these things. If you look at the world one hundred years ago, women did not question their role. Women's lib has had a disastrous effect on families. These attitudes break up families. How can you ever ask such a question ?"

Childbearing is positively valued. There is an expectation that a woman will have several children and the largest family I encountered in Stamford Hill was of two parents and their sixteen children. Infertility is a disaster and grounds for divorce whether it is the male or female who is infertile. Marriages in the community are arranged by a *shidukh* maker, a matchmaker. Couples are matched predominantly on the basis of their degree of orthodoxy. Physical attraction is not deemed an important consideration in the choice of partner. Partners are chosen from within the community or from other Lubavitcher communities in New York, Amsterdam and Tel Aviv. A man may visit another community to meet his

potential partner but courtship does not exist, although the couple will meet on a number of occasions, usually chaperoned, before deciding to become engaged. Until the Rebbe's death no betrothal could be entered into without his blessing. If this blessing was not obtained the marriage could not occur. Arranging a **shidukh** is a mitzvah. Mrs Greenblatt, a lady who is well known in the community for arranging shidduchim, gave her view on marriage. She is approached by many members of the community to find partners and seems to know the local community well:

"In heaven, the male and female aspects of a soul are joined, but they separate when the soul leaves Gan Eden to descend into the body. When a man marries a woman, their souls unite again. When a man meets a woman and they marry, it is not just a physical union but a spiritual union. Their souls are joined."

Men marry at twenty-two to twenty-five years of age. Women marry earlier at eighteen to twenty years of age. This is later than in other Chassidic groups, a fact which Lubavitchers justify as providing a sounder marriage, and they compare their practice favourably with the other groups which have a greater divorce rate. There is no formal betrothal. For a week prior to the wedding the bride and groom refrain from meeting. Marriage is a communal affair, often held in the open air under a **chuppah** (canopy) and consists of two parts. In the **kiddushin** (consecration) the groom gives the bride a ring and says "Behold, you are consecrated to me by this ring according to the law of Moses and Israel." The rabbi

then reads out the **ketubbah** (marriage contract). There follows the **nissuin** (nuptials) where benedictions are read out. At the end of the service the bridegroom breaks a glass in remembrance of the ancient destruction of Jerusalem. Following the service there is a party. I attended one large simcha in Stamford Hill. There were about two hundred guests. Men and women were separated by a screen. Men danced with men, and women with women to the sound of traditional melodies. The climax of the party is when the bride and groom are carried on chairs high in the air. The ceremony is frequently interrupted with a **l'chaim** (toast). It is a Lubavitcher custom for the fathers of the bridegroom and bride to escort the bridegroom to the chuppah and for their mothers to escort the bride.

Mrs Greenblatt enthusiastically explained to me the key points of the Chassidic wedding ceremony:

"We usually marry in the open air under the chuppah. The open chuppah represents the open house the couple will have during their married life which everyone is free to visit. It is done in the open air so everyone can see the large number of stars which represent the large number of children the couple will have during their married life. The bride dances around the husband seven times in a circle which signifies the fact that the groom will be the centre of her life and just as the circle is complete, so her husband's life is complete. Another custom is for the bride and groom to be left alone in a room so they may unite physically. They must not be interrupted during this time. Prior to the wedding ceremony, both bride and

groom must fast overnight. All the sins of both bride and groom will be forgiven on their wedding day. During the week following the wedding, it is custom to visit a different family every night who will play host to them and invite guests to meet them. This is the *sheva bracha*."

From the time the woman is married, she is obliged to follow the laws of *nidah* (ritual purity). When a woman perceives vaginal bleeding either during her monthly menstrual cycle or at any other time (also when pregnant, breastfeeding or during the menopause), she is *nidah* and both she and her husband must observe the rules of separation (11). This separation starts from the moment she bleeds and lasts until the period of bleeding has ceased and she has been immersed in a ritual bath. As soon as the woman becomes a *nidah*, not only is sexual intercourse forbidden but man and wife are forbidden to engage in any sort of intimacy or any sort of contact.

All newborn boys are circumcised on the eighth day in a ceremony called *bris* (covenant of circumcision). In Stamford Hill this is a communal celebration and often as many as one hundred people attend. Only men are allowed to watch the actual circumcision carried out by a *mohel*. As the child is brought in for the ritual, those present call out "*Barukh ha ba*" (blessed is he that comes). As the *mohel* cuts away the foreskin, he recites "Blessed are you, O Lord our God, King of the Universe who has sancified us with your commandments and commanded us concerning circumcision." The child is usually held by his father during the

procedure. The mohel then dips his finger into a cup of wine and wets the baby's lips. Women will congregate in another room and throughout the proceedings men and women are separated. Following the circumcision much food is consumed and vodka is drunk. If the infant is medically ill, the circumcision is postponed. On the day of the Berit Milah the father is honoured by being called up to the reading of the Torah. On the day of the circumcision, it is a particular Lubavitch custom to make an advance payment on the child's tuition fees in anticipation of his future Torah studies. A festive gathering called the *shalom zohar* (peace or welcome to the male child) is held in the home of the newborn child on the first Friday night following the birth. Rabbi Berkovitz explained the origins of this custom:

"In the Talmud it states that the embryo in the mother's womb enjoys a state of sanctity, because while it rests there it learns the entire Torah. Just before birth an angel taps the unborn child on the shoulder and the child forgets what it has learnt. The child is born with free will, not as one whose sanctified state leaves no room for choice. At the Shalom Zohar we offer comfort to the child for having lost his state of sanctity (12)."

A most important milestone for a Jewish boy is reached when he becomes thirteen years old. On that day he becomes *bar mitzvah* (son of commandment) meaning in Jewish law that he has now come of age and is subject to the observances of the various mitzvot. The ceremony is characterised by two rituals which the celebrant commences to observe on this day and will continue after; one is tefillin, the other is

being called up to the Torah (from which he has been barred before as a minor). In Stamford Hill it is customary for the Bar Mitzvah boy to deliver a Talmudic discourse usually relating to Tefillin. This is accompanied by a meal and the drinking of Vodka along with the recitation of L'Chaim (toast for life). On the Sabbath prior to his Bar Mitzvah the boy is called up in the synagogue to read the Maftir, the concluding part of the weekly portion and the Haftarah, a passage from Prophets.

Death is characterised by a number of rituals (see Riemer 1995 for a detailed account). As soon as a person dies his or her eyes are closed since, according to the Kabbalah, "man is not privileged to observe simultaneously both worlds, the physical and the spiritual." As long as his eyes are open to this world, he cannot behold the glory of the other world. Therefore upon death, the eyes of the deceased are closed immediately. The body is placed on the floor and candles are lit. "When you walk, it shall lead you; when you lie down, it shall watch over you" (Proverbs 6:22). Close relatives rend their clothing a custom called *keri'ah*. The body is washed and dressed in a shroud. A man is wrapped in a tallit. It is mandatory to perform the burial as soon as possible after death. Rabbi Berkovitz who officiates frequently at funerals recounted how, "according to Zohar, the soul which dwelt in the body for so many years is grief stricken at the departure and this grief lasts as long as the body is not buried. Also by not burying the dead immediately we may be interfering with God's plan to transfer the soul into another living body."

There are four distinct and separate periods of mourning. In the first phase called *aninut*, during the period between death and burial, the bereaved person is exempt from performing any religious commandments. The second phase lasting seven days is called *shiv'ah* and the first degree relatives are prohibited from wearing shoes, washing, learning Torah, having conjugal relations and must refrain from work. Visitors come for seven days to comfort the mourners although the mourner is not allowed to greet people. Over the Sabbath he or she is allowed to wash and attend synagogue. Lubavitchers do not eat or drink at the *Shiv'ah* (in contrast to the Anglo-Jewish *Shiv'ah* where food and drink is offered to guests). Unlike other Orthodox Jews, at a funeral, Lubavitcher children do not follow the bier of either a father or a mother on its way to the grave.

The third period following this is called *sheloshim*, the thirty days when the mourner re-engages in daily life, can wash and work. The mourning period ends for all relatives after thirty days, but for parents it continues for another eleven months. Happy events, festive occasions and amusements should be avoided. The son recites the mourning prayer *Kaddish* every day for his parents for eleven months. Rabbi Berkovitz explained:

"The son's reciting the *Kaddish* raises the soul of the parent from purgatory to paradise. No man or woman is completely free of sin and every deceased soul will spend some time in purgatory. When a son recites *Kaddish* and walks in the path of righteousness he credits this merit to the soul which is elevated to a higher

spiritual level. If a son would say Kaddish for a whole year he would seem to assume that his father was a sinner. By saying it for only eleven months the son demonstrates his belief that his parent must have done some good deeds."

Among Lubavitchers the anniversary of a person's death is a cause for celebration since it is believed that the deceased is ascending year after year to the higher spiritual realms of paradise. This anniversary is called *yahrzeit*.

Mr Levy, who himself had lost a child a few years previously, emphasised the importance of the shiv'ah -

"It has great psychological benefits for the mourners. It is a time when they can withdraw from social obligations and can focus on their loss. They feel supported by the people around them who talk about the bereaved person and offer their condolences. Four years ago I lost my son Svi, he was only nine months old and I was told it was a cot death. It was the worst thing that has ever happened to me. I could not understand it at all. People in this community talk about divine providence, Hashem has a plan although we do not always understand it. This was beyond my comprehension, and for a long time I questioned my faith in God. If a misfortune falls upon a person the Chassid asks what have I done to deserve this. One should think of any religious acts one has failed to perform. When Svi died I could not understand what I had done for this to happen.

"At the shiv'ah people came up to me to offer their condolences. I thought to myself, how could they possibly understand. It was only when a man who had himself lost a baby came up to me and said 'I know how it feels, I've been through it', I felt very comforted by this. However, I did feel supported by all the community. Four years on I cannot talk about Svi without crying."

"Although we are taught to believe in the afterlife, there is not a lot written about it by Lubavitch. This contrasts with the voluminous Halachic writings about mourning. Everyone will spend some time in Gehinnom [purgatory] although I do not know how long. The soul moves to Gan Eden forever. It is said that the wicked are incarcerated in Gehinnom indefinitely, though even they have some respite on Shabbat and festivals."

CHAPTER 4

THE REBBE AND HIS MIRACLES : THE POWER OF NARRATIVES

"The difference between a miracle and a natural event is only in frequency" (The Baal Shem Tov)

Story telling has always been an important aspect of the Chassidic way of life. Both Buber (1975) and Nigal (1994) point out the importance of this technique, providing us with hundreds of collections of Chassidic stories most of which centre on the Zaddik who performs miracles on behalf of specific individuals or on behalf of the community as a whole. The Zaddikim used this medium to attract the masses and to elevate them to a higher spiritual status. However, the more extreme view quoted by several eminent Chassidim is that the recounting of the story influences the 'root of the miracles' and can cause the miracle to occur. Chassidic theory also places great importance on the narrative act itself, especially to the story about the Zaddik. The telling of the story is a religious act which is no less important than the observance of the commandments, the study of Torah, or prayer. The repetition of a certain sacred text may cause the reiteration of the primordial event in the present by virtue of the power inherent in the letters that constitute the story. In the Chassidic text *Darkhei Zedek*, the remedy is acquired by the study of stories on medical miracles in the Talmud

and Rabbi Hayyim of Chernovitz even recommends reciting the miracles performed by God according to the Bible whenever someone needs a miracle.

Rabbi Yisrael of Ryzhin (1906) in *Knesset Israel* related one story relating to the Baal Shem Tov:

"Our holy master told us a story of the Baal Shem Tov, blessed be his memory. Once there was a stringent necessity to save an only son, who was a very good person. He ordered that a candle of wax be made and he travelled to a forest where he attached this waxen candle to a tree, and did some other things and performed some yihudim (unifications) etc, and he succeeded in saving the son with the help of God. Afterwards there was such an incident involving my grandfather, the Holy Maggid, and he did likewise, as mentioned above and he said 'The yihudim and the kavvanot performed by the Bescht are not known to me but I shall do this on the basis of kavvanah that the Bescht intended' and his prayer was also answered. Afterwards, a similar thing happened to the holy Rabbi Moshe Leib of Sassov, blessed be his memory, and he said 'we do not even have the power to do that, but I shall only tell the story to God, so as he will help. And so it happened, with God's help."

The magical act of the Bescht is replaced by a prayer and ultimately only by a story. By the time of Moshe Lieb of Sassov, both the external deed and the theurgic prayer are forgotten but they all gave rise to the same result.

The concept of 'sacramental repetition' according to Idel (1995:187) also explains the value of telling stories about the Chassidic masters:

"The holiness of the Zaddik, his being the chariot of God, as well as his being an imitation of God, endows the repetition of his deeds with a special aura. By telling stories someone is counted as if he is studying the secrets of the merkavah (divine chariot)."

Similarly, Rabbi Zekhariah Mendel of Yaroslav states "The telling of the good qualities of the Zaddikim draws good things to the world."

Even the act of committing to writing someone's innovations on the Torah affects the supernal vitality. "The writer is drawing upon his soul's vitality from the lives of lives by every move of his pen." (Idel 1995 :188).

Lubavitchers themselves do not hold that the telling of a story is effective in itself but recounting "miracle" stories of the Lubavitcher Rebbe is commonplace.

The Rebbe's miracles

Chassidic groups are characterised by their affiliation to the Rebbe, their religious leader. Each Rebbe is held by his followers to possess remarkable powers on account of his holiness, his devotion to the law and to prayer. While

visiting the rebbe his followers may ask for help and receive his blessing. He or she may present a petition containing the name of the petitioner, the problem to be resolved and the blessings needed. It lists the name of the petitioner and his mother through whom it is possible to trace the lineage of the petitioners soul. As Mintz (1992:3) says:

“The Rebbes are thought to move in spheres not understood by ordinary men. It is believed that the Rebbes can, in dire circumstances, intercede on behalf of their followers with the heavenly court. Their prayers, unhampered by the gross sins of lesser men, fly upward and are received on high.”

Chassidic groups vary in their expectations that their Rebbe should perform miracles. Among Boyaner Chassidim there is not generally this expectation: “They came to him because he was a man of God and not because of miracles. They came for compassion and for his blessing. They didn’t need miracles. What they are looking for is not someone to give advice, but someone around whom to be unified” (Mintz p16). The Stoliner Rebbe was said by his followers to have limited intellectual gifts. He did not say *toyre* on the Sabbath and offered no teachings or governing philosophy yet the Stolin Chassidim treated him as a ‘miracle Rebbe’ and extolled his ability to heal the sick, foretell the future and provide a livelihood for his followers. “When he was asked to give a blessing for someone who was ill, if he said ‘okay,’ if he asked, ‘how is he doing?’ I knew that that person was going to be all right. If he ignored

mentioning the person the prognosis was poor. A man came to the Rebbe saying, 'my daughter is ill, save her.' He tried to give the Rebbe money but the Rebbe refused it. "(Mintz p 16)

One Chassidic group may label an event as a miracle (1), while another group may see it as an ordinary event. Different Chassidic groups can interpret the same event in different ways. Following a raid by Israelis on a plane held by terrorists at Entebbe airport in Uganda, the Lubavitcher Rebbe called the event a miracle, whereas the Satmar Rebbe scorned it as a misguided risk.

This chapter will concentrate on miracle stories relating to the Lubavitcher Rebbe (2). Lubavitchers distinguish between *teva* (nature) and *nes* (a miracle). The latter refers to events out of the ordinary which cannot be accounted for by natural processes. Ultimately everything is a miracle. "The fact that the sun comes up every day and there is a physical world at all is miraculous. Nature itself is a miracle," as one yeshivah student pointed out to me. God can perform any miracle and certain spiritually gifted people such as the Rebbe can cause blessings to descend from heaven and bring about miracles.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, is the seventh leader in the Lubavitch-Chabad dynasty. He was born in the Russian town of Nikolaev on 18 April 1902 and was named after his grandfather, the third Chabad leader, himself the grandson of Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi, the

founder of the Chabad movement. He died on June 12th, 1994, following a two year illness.

In 1907 the Rebbe's father, a renowned Kabbalist and Talmudic scholar, became the rabbi of the community of Yekatrinslav and it was here that the Rebbe spent most of his youth until the age of twenty-seven. His father was arrested in 1939 by the NKVD for preaching **Yiddishkayt** (Jewish teachings) and died in 1944 while exiled to the small town of Chilli. His mother died in New York in 1964. On the day that the Rebbe was born, Rabbi Sholem Dov Ber, the fifth leader of the Chabad dynasty, sent six telegrams with detailed instructions regarding the infant. His mother was instructed always to wash the baby's hands before he ate; she even washed his hands before nursing him. He never ate in his life without first washing his hands. At two years of age, Menachem Mendel was able to ask the four questions at the Passover Seder. At two and a half he knew how to daven (pray) like an adult. From early childhood the Rebbe displayed a prodigious mental activity and had to leave his cheder (Jewish school) because he was so far ahead of his classmates. His father hired private tutors for him. By the time of his Barmitzvah, he was considered an **illuy**, a 'Torah Prodigy.' Four years later he was ordained as a Rabbi by virtue of his mastery of the entire Talmud and codes of Jewish law.

Lubavitchers recount a number of miracle stories about his childhood. One famous story recounts how, at the age of nine years of age, he dived into the

Black Sea to save the life of another boy who had fallen from the deck of a moored ship. At the age of twenty-seven he married the second daughter of the then late Lubavitcher Rebbe who was called Chaya Moussia and studied diligently under his father-in-law. When the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe was arrested by the secret police in the spring of 1927, Menachem Schneerson risked arrest himself to ensure that incriminating papers that dealt with their underground efforts on behalf of Judaism were destroyed before the NKVD found them. He spent some time in various countries including Russia, Poland, Germany and France before arriving in the United States in 1941. During this period he took courses at the universities of Leningrad, Berlin and the Sorbonne in Paris where he studied electrical engineering.

Lubavitchers emphasise that the Rebbe had the strength to avoid being influenced by the secular world. Stories are told about his time in the Sorbonne. One day his professor noticed the orthodox rabbi absorbed in a Hebrew text, apparently oblivious to the lecture. Striding over, the professor demanded "Have you heard a single word I've said?" Rabbi Schneerson repeated the entire lecture word for word demonstrating his phenomenal memory.

In 1941 he emigrated to the United States. His father-in-law appointed him chairman of the executive committee of his newly founded organisation that included the Merkos Linyonei Chinuch, the educational arm of the Lubavitch movement. Shortly afterwards he began writing notations to various Chassidic

and Kabbalistic treatises as well as responsa on Torah subjects. After the death of his father -in -law in 1950, Menachem reluctantly assumed the leadership of Lubavitch. Lubavitcher centres opened in many cities in the USA in accordance with the principle "And you shall spread forth to the West and to the East and to the North and to the South" (Genesis 28:14). Other centres were established abroad in Australia, England, France, Holland, North and South Africa and Canada. Lubavitcher schools were set up worldwide. Young rabbinical graduates were sent out to reinvigorate small, isolated Jewish communities, while the Rebbe stayed in Brooklyn.

He played an influential part in Israeli politics although he never visited Israel. When asked why he never visited Israel the answer given on his behalf was that he would never be allowed by God to leave the promised land if he once set foot in it. He was involved in Israeli elections. In 1990 when Israel's Labour party was close to forming a coalition government committed to peace talks with Arab neighbours, two ultra-orthodox members of the Knesset, whose support was required, phoned Brooklyn to ask the Rebbe's advice. He told them not to go ahead and both the coalition and peace talks ended. He ardently supported a greater Israel which would incorporate the West Bank as biblical Samaria and Judea. His rationale was criticised by the British Chief Rabbi who pointed out that there was a contradiction between the Rebbe's militant Israeli nationalism and his simultaneous withholding of religious recognition of the state. His favourable attitude towards the state of Israel provoked strong resentment from

the Satmar Chassidim who argue that the state of Israel cannot be established prior to the coming of the Messiah.

Several months after arriving in Brooklyn's Crown Heights, he became deeply involved with day-to-day organisational concerns besides Torah scholarship. Over the next few years he wrote several rabbinic texts, including a Hebrew calendar of Chassidic aphorisms for daily study and a special Passover Haggadah. He also edited many texts, and in the same period he began his wide correspondence with Jewish leaders throughout the world. His writings related to both secular and religious topics. He held steadfast to a fundamentalist philosophy "If you can accept that God Almighty created billions and billions of atoms, why can't you accept that the Almighty created a human being? "(Jewish Chronicle 16 April 1982). He was especially opposed to scientific notions concerning the age of the world: "The scientific speculation is actually a technological incongruity. The discovery of fossils is not conclusive evidence of the antiquity of the earth " (New York Times 2 March 1962).

Prior to his second stroke, the Rebbe resided in a large mock-Tudor house adjacent to the Lubavitcher synagogue in Crown Heights where he met regularly with his secretary and other important members of Lubavitch. He was seen regularly by his followers when he went into the synagogue for daily prayers.

Much of the everyday Lubavitcher discourse relates in some way to the Rebbe. A common activity is to tell "miracle stories" about him. He is frequently discussed in the synagogue, and at Sabbath meals stories are frequently told of his miraculous feats along with the feats of previous Rebbes. In line with this, a book has been written about his miraculous feats entitled '*Wonders and Miracles*' published by the Maareches Ufaratza in 1993. Though the Rebbe himself apparently discouraged such talk, his adherents have for decades circulated countless anecdotes of their leader's miraculous abilities. Sometimes senior Lubavitchers down play these stories but they do not deny their truthfulness. As I was told in 1992 by Rabbi Rabin:

"Yes he is truly a miraculous person. He can speak ten languages. He is ninety years of age but only sleeps for an hour a day. He can give Torah for hours on end without stopping. No one of his age can do this. He fasts for three days a week. On a weekly basis he visits the grave of the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe and communes with his soul (3). Rabbi Yosef Schneerson's grave is surrounded by a large marble structure open to the sky. Against the back wall is a wooden shelter built to shield the Rebbe from the elements. He faces the headstone and opens a small Hebrew prayer book of psalms and biblical verses. He recites prayers and after some time opens a large bag. This holds hundreds of recent letters and notes and the Rebbe reads them one by one. Each request from a Jew bears the author's Hebrew name and that of his mother. Chassidim believe that this demonstrates the soul's link with earthly existence. Many of the petitions

are written in Hebrew, but other languages are represented. They concern personal issues such as health, the family and livelihood. For instance, it may say "I Moshe, son of Leah, pray that my son Yitzi will recover quickly and fully from his illness", or "I, Ruth, daughter of Hannah pray that my husband and I will be blessed with a child". He has tremendous energy. Although he has never visited Israel, he is influential in Israeli peace talks. "

Crown Heights, a borough of Brooklyn, is the major centre for Lubavitch worldwide. There are a number of leafy roads with large houses. The roads are full of Lubavitchers rushing to and from the synagogue. Alongside the roads can be seen Mitzvah tanks with the inscription "The Mosiach is coming soon. Let's be ready." Many have a picture of the Rebbe on them. There are several shops displaying religious objects including his pictures. One shop, the Mosiach shop, displays messianic books, magazines, tee-shirts and tapes. There are loudspeakers outside and messianic songs are played most of the day time, including recent songs by Lubavitcher rock singers.

Until 1992 it was possible but very difficult to get a private audience with the Rebbe. Private audiences were reserved for celebrities. Other visitors could meet the Rebbe at a ceremony called "Dollars" when several thousand people would file past the Rebbe on a Sunday morning at his residence, '770', in Brooklyn (4). Each would ask the Rebbe for a blessing, usually for health, marriage, business or education. Each person would receive a dollar which

symbolised charity. Visitors came from all over the world and would often queue up for several hours before seeing the Rebbe. One week women would see him first and the next week men (5).

In 1990 I visited the Rebbe for Dollars. It was a wet Sunday morning in November. It was my first visit. I waited outside 770 for about four hours, and saw numerous people coming out clutching a dollar in their hands. In the road outside the synagogue were stalls selling paintings, engravings and pictures of the Rebbe sometimes for exorbitant prices, such as six dollars for a small photograph. There were also stalls specialising in encasing the dollar in plastic.

Numerous *shnoras* (Jewish Beggars) would approach people in the street asking for *tsedaka* (charity). The Rebbe would come out several times to go in the synagogue to pray.

My turn arrived. I was a little trepidatious. A non-Lubavitcher man stood by the Rebbe's door (I assumed a guard) to show people in. He told me to take my hands out of my pockets. When I first met the Rebbe I was struck by his long white beard and his rather staring eyes. He was wearing a long black coat and trilby hat and had a somewhat leaning posture. He smiled at me and asked if I spoke Yiddish. I answered no and he asked why I had come. I told him that I wanted a blessing for a *shidduch* with my girlfriend. He asked whether she was Jewish and I answered in the affirmative. He gave me a blessing and two

dollars, one for me and one for her. I then left feeling that for the short period that I was with him he had given me his undivided attention.

Numerous stories are told in Stamford Hill about these visits to the Rebbe (6). Mrs Rubin was keen to visit the Lubavitcher Rebbe for Dollars but she did not have the necessary finances to get there. Several days later her sister in Chicago went to visit the Rebbe. Rather unusually the Rebbe handed her two dollars, one for her and one for her sister. Mrs Rubin emphasised to me that the Rebbe knew nothing about her before the visit.

The Rebbe is attributed with an extraordinary memory and it is said by Lubavitchers that he knows every Jew in the world. "The Rebbe is the head of the Jewish body. As the head is jointed to the body so the Rebbe's soul is joined to all our souls" as one young Lubavitcher commented.

Mrs Alder recalled how she had visited the Rebbe twenty years ago when she was eighteen years old. While she was speaking to the Rebbe she dropped some books on the floor. When she visited him last year the first thing the Rebbe said to her was "Do not drop your books again." She emphasised that the Rebbe had seen several thousand people since her last visit.

Several Lubavitchers recounted how they felt that the Rebbe knew them even though he had never met them before and was able to tell them things about themselves which he could not possibly have known. According to Mr Zeitlin:

"The Rebbe knew the name of my grandfather. I was very surprised. This had not come up in conversation before. I don't know where he got the information from. He seemed to know me so well even though I had never met nor written to him before."

According to one story, quoted in the book *Wonders and Miracles* (p37)

"An Israeli journalist visited the United States in 1971. He decided to visit the Rebbe. When his turn came to enter the Rebbe's room, he handed the Rebbe a handwritten request. The Rebbe looked at this closely and remarked 'I recognise this writing, you must have written to me before'. The journalist was shocked. 'You must be mistaken,' he said. 'I have never written to the Rebbe in the past.' Again the Rebbe looked at the writing and said 'You have written to me in the past'. Still the journalist disagreed. The Rebbe took a folded piece of paper from his desk drawer and repeated the statement. He passed the paper to the journalist, who turned pale. The letter was in his handwriting but it was not his signature. Then he remembered. Four years earlier, in the Six Day War, one of his friends had suffered a hand injury and asked him to write a letter to the Rebbe on his behalf which his friend signed. Over the four year period, hundreds of thousands of letters had passed through the Rebbe's hands, but for some reason the Rebbe had kept this letter in his desk drawer."

Mr Suffrin went to visit the Rebbe in Brooklyn in order to receive a blessing for his disabled son for whom he wanted to arrange a Shidduch. The Rebbe gave him a blessing with two dollars, one for himself and one for Israel. His wife told him that the Rebbe meant him to take the dollar to Israel. This he did. While riding on a bus in Tel Aviv, he started to talk to the man sitting next to him. This man asked why he had come to Israel and as Mr Suffrin responded he fainted. When he came round Mr Suffrin asked him what had happened. The other man was in a state of shock. He himself had recently visited the Lubavitcher Rebbe to receive a blessing for his disabled daughter for whom he wanted to find a shidduch. The Rebbe had similarly given him two dollars, one for himself and one for Israel. The son and daughter met up and married.

Each week the Rebbe receives thousands of letters and faxes from people all over the world, including some from non-Jews, asking for practical help, advice or a blessing in relation to marriage, business, education, health or religious problems. Many people receive a letter back usually containing a biblical quote and advising that one should check one's religious artefacts such as a mezuzah or tefillin (7). One Lubavitcher described these letters as "prize possessions." Although not regarded as sacred in themselves, they are treated with great respect. Some people do not receive a letter but many Lubavitchers state that the Rebbe personally reads every letter and sends a blessing even if he did not send a letter in response. During my fieldwork there was not any obvious

pattern of response and it was unpredictable as to who would receive a letter in return. Sometimes a phone call is made or a fax sent to the Rebbe.

Since his stroke in 1992 the Rebbe has been unable to speak, and when presented with letters by his secretary he gesticulates. In Stamford Hill people vary as to when they will write to the Rebbe. Some will write about every major problem in their lives, whereas others write only very occasionally when the problem is deemed very serious.

It must, however, be pointed out that for many difficulties, purely pragmatic measures are adopted. For instance, Lubavitchers would not contact the Rebbe if a car was found to be faulty. A mechanic would be called and if the car was beyond repair a new one would be bought. Mr Levy, whom we have met, ran into problems with his business and was heavily in debt. He was at risk of losing his house. He asked various friends for loans. Finally he accumulated enough money to pay off his debts. At no time did he contact the Rebbe for help. Lubavitchers constantly emphasise how God acts through the material world. No Lubavitcher would expect to receive money without working or to pass an exam without studying. Mr Yudkin recounted how he found himself in a difficult financial position. He was stopped by the police for driving without insurance or road tax. In court he was fined six hundred pounds and lost five points on his licence. He blamed himself for this oversight and never considered contacting the Rebbe. At other times however, if the problem will

have serious consequences the Rebbe is contacted although there is much variation in the extent to which the Rebbe is contacted by different Lubavitchers.

Mr Joseph phoned the Rebbe's secretary about a serious tax problem. Facing the threat of possible bankruptcy due to high tax bills, he asked the Rebbe for a blessing to remove this enormous debt. The Rebbe's secretary responded to the telephone call by stating that his request was very strange and asked. "Do you expect the Rebbe to get him out of paying tax? However the secretary had a good idea. At the beginning of the school year a new kindergarten had opened to teach basic Jewish values to local children. The kindergarten was very expensive and the secretary was desperately looking for someone to provide money. He suggested that Mr Joseph should increase his donations towards charity and if he did he would ask the Rebbe for a blessing for his tax problem. The secretary read out the Rebbe's answer to Mr Joseph which was 'check the tefillen and mezuzot'. Mr Joseph went out and bought a new pair of tefillen. A second tax inspector visited Mr Joseph's shop and reduced the tax bill to one fifth of its previous value. From then on the Secretary received a monthly sum to finance the new kindergarten.

Mrs Potash was deeply concerned about the location of her lost brother Mordechai, a twenty-seven year old man whom she had not seen for several months. The police had been searching for him in connection with fraudulent activity in which he had allegedly been involved. She had heard from a friend

that he was living somewhere in New York but he was unaware of the exact location. She arrived in New York but had no idea where to begin looking. She visited a family friend, himself a Lubavitcher, who advised that she visit the Lubavitcher Rebbe. "This tzaddik" he explained "is a famous miracle worker. Many people come to his door to ask for his blessing. Go to him. God's salvation comes in the blink of an eye."

After waiting six hours at Dollars, she stood in front of the Rebbe looking very trepidatious. She burst into tears, and without her saying a word, the Rebbe said: "It's forbidden to give up hope", almost as though he understood what she was thinking. Distraught, she called a taxi to take her to her friend's house. The taxi driver asked her what was wrong and asked if he could be of any help. She started to talk about her brother. "What is he like?" asked the taxi driver. Mrs Potash took out a picture to show him. He went pale and started shaking. The brother in fact lived in the flat upstairs from his own !

Stories are frequently told about the Rebbe's powers of prophecy. Rabbi Rabin recounted how:

"The Rebbe has made a number of correct predictions. He accurately predicted the fall of the Communist regime in Russia. In the year 5751 (1989) the Rebbe explained that the numerical value of this year could be interpreted as an acronym for the phrase 'This will surely be a year of miracles.' This year was

highlighted by the collapse of regimes that had stifled Jewish expression. During this year these nations such as Russia began to allow freedom of religious practice. However I feel his greatest prophecies concerned the Gulf War of 1991. In January of this year he stated that 'There is no safer place in the world today than Israel. Heaven forbid that anyone living in Israel should think of leaving, whoever is planning to visit Israel should go without fear and should let others know of his trip as well, for this will raise the confidence of the Jewish people throughout the world.' Despite the concern over the safety of Israel, from Jews in the Diaspora, the Rebbe's predictions were in fact confirmed and only one person died in Tel Aviv from a Scud missile compared to several Arabs in Saudi Arabia.

"The Rebbe interpreted the Gulf War in apocalyptic terms. At the beginning of the Gulf crisis, he quoted from the *Yalkut Shimoni* (8). 'In the year that Masiach will be revealed, nations will challenge one another. The king of Paras will challenge an Arab king and the entire world will panic and will be stricken with consternation.... Israel will also panic and will be confounded'. He emphasised to his followers that the Gulf War would be over by Purim, to the disbelief of many. His predictions were validated. There is a commandment relating to prophecy. If a prophet makes a correct prediction we must believe that he is a prophet. The Rebbe is a true prophet. What he says will occur. Mosiach will come in our time."

CHAPTER 5

BODY AND SOUL

"Man can never be happy if he does not nourish his soul as he does his body"

(The Rebbe)

A major text of Lubavitch is the Tanya or the Likutei Amarim (1) written by the founder of Lubavitch, Rabbi Schneur Zalman. It is a synthesis of the Kabbalah and the Halacha, the mystical and the rational currents of Jewish thought. It is influenced by the scriptures, Talmud and Lurianic Kabbalah and the author draws abundantly from the Zohar. Tanya was originally written in Hebrew but has been translated into English. Lubavitchers generally read the Hebrew version. Other commonly used texts read by Lubavitchers are Wineberg (1991) *Lessons in Tanya: The Tanya of Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi* and Mindel (1974) *Philosophy of Chabad*.

In his 1974 introduction to the Tanya, Rabbi Nissan Mindel, himself a Lubavitcher, argues (pg 74-75):

"To Rabbi Schneur Zalman, as to Kabbalah in general, the Torah, the Jewish written and oral law embodied in the Bible and Talmud, was more than the divinely inspired guide to the *Summum Bonum*. It constituted the essential law

and order of the universe. The Kabbalah, in its interpretation, was nothing but the inner, esoteric dimension of the Torah, its very soul. Without this dimension, the Torah could not be fully understood. Consequently, when he looked for the 'inner' or esoteric meaning of biblical and Talmudic text it was not for the purpose of adding homoleptic poignancy to his exposition, but rather to reveal that inner dimension. In his system the esoteric and exoteric, the Kabbalah and Talmud, are thoroughly blended and unified, just as the physical and metaphysical body and soul emerge under his treatment as two aspects of the same thing. The polarity of things is but external, the underlying reality of everything is unity, reflecting the unity of the creator. To bring out this *unity of the microcosm and macrocosm*, as they merge within this mystic unity of the En Sof, is the ultimate aim of his system."

Lubavitchers are expected to acquire at least a good knowledge of Tanya and regular *shiurim* (teaching sessions) are held for this purpose. Men are expected to read a portion from Tanya every day so the whole text is read in a year. There is not a similar expectation for women although many Lubavitcher women do read Tanya on a daily basis. Although there is much variation in the extent of knowledge about Tanya, there are certain fundamental concepts known by most of the community: the unity of everything; the fact that the physical is a lower level of the spiritual and the notion that the physical and spiritual reflect each other.

For many Lubavitcher men, the highlight of the week is a Sunday morning Tanya Shiur. This is held in Lubavitch House and attended by often as many as 20 men. It is taught by Rabbi Sudak who is a renowned expert in Chassidus. Lubavitchers often state how difficult it is to understand the esoteric concepts of Tanya. I attended these Shiurim over twelve months but my understanding was somewhat hindered by Rabbi Sudak's broad Yiddish accent. I discussed various themes in Tanya regularly with various members of the community and the degree to which the ideas contained in it play a part in the Lubavitchers' everyday lives. One day whilst raising this issue with Rabbi Telsener, who himself seemed to have a profound knowledge of Tanya, he told me:

"We all study Tanya every day. It is part of our general education. Most people in this community have a knowledge of basic Kabbalistic ideas such as the Sefirot, the ten divine 'attributes', 'manifestations' or 'emanations' [see pages 1-7 this thesis]. At the beginning, it is difficult to understand these concepts and many new members of Lubavitch struggle to understand them. They are spiritual concepts not physical concepts and are difficult to conceptualise at the beginning. I cannot say how much the concepts in Tanya influence people's everyday lives. They influence some more than others. Certain concepts influence everyone. For instance, Tanya stresses love of God and one's fellow Jew, repentance and the giving of charity. I think these are influential ideas for most Lubavitchers. The two most important Sefirot are Chesed and Gevurah, kindness and severity. The right hand is considered good and giving and the

Serfira Chesed is associated with it. This is the hand with which one gives charity. The left hand is considered bad, 'the other side', the side of evil and is associated with withholding, concealment and is associated with the Sefira of Gevurah or severity. When you teach a child you must be kind but at the same time you cannot be too kind. You must withhold something from him. This is Gevurah.

"We think about these Sefirot when we are giving charity. Also, we consider them when we perform mitzvot such as when donning Tefillen. When we lay Tefillen on the left arm to elevate this side spiritually so that the concealed can be revealed. I am sure that knowledge of Chochma, Binah and Daat is common, after all we are Chabad, but I am not sure how many people understand them in detail. Perhaps I should say that members of the community have a working knowledge of the Sefirot. I cannot answer to what extent people conceptualise their world in terms of these concepts. We should try and see Godliness in everything. I think there are a few spiritually elevated people in this community who can do this. I am not yet at that level !"

Rabbi Rabin commented:

"I study a portion of Tanya every day. This is expected in our community. Knowledge of the concepts is widespread but of course some understand them more than others. I do not think that most people are spiritually elevated

enough to see Godliness in everything, most are stuck in the material world and think in terms of its laws. They cannot see beyond this. Some of the rabbis are so spiritually elevated that they can see this Godliness and are unified with God, they can undergo mystical transcendence. One Rabbi who lives near me is a Zaddik, he experiences the world as it really is but these experiences are few and far between."

Rabbi Rabin showed me an article he had written for the Jewish Chronicle (June 1997) which discussed the relation between Kabbalah and Tanya. The article is entitled "*Tanya's Challenge to 21st -Century Jews* "

"Is Tanya 'Kabbalah' ? No. According to its devotees, it gives access to those aspects of mysticism which every man and woman needs. We could compare Kabbalah to surgery :you have to study for many years before you can take out an appendix. Chassidic teachings are like basic knowledge of diet and hygiene, necessary for all.

"The Tanya discusses the inner spiritual challenge that each individual faces from moment to moment. It includes chapters on joy; meditation; love for one's fellow as the centre of Torah teaching; Torah study; the cosmic effects of observance of the mitzvot; the nature of the universe. It adds an important sequel to the biblical account of creation. Not only did God create the world at

the beginning of Genesis. He is continually keeping every particle of it in existence.

"From moment to moment, divine energy streams into the world, giving being to everything. Contemplation of this process can bring about a change in consciousness, so that one can truly declare the words of the Shema: God is one!

"Yet Tanya is not turned away from the world. The sequel to saying the Shema and the daily prayers is life. Here, there is the challenge to discover the Divine in the world."

"During a heated discussion with Rabbi Overmeyer over a Sabbath meal, I asked about the importance of these mystical concepts. Rabbi Overmeyer is a man whom I got to know very well while living in Stamford Hill. Although relatively young (thirty- two years of age), he was well respected in the community as a Torah scholar. He impressed me with his enthusiasm and energy. Not only was he a rabbi at a large university, he regularly taught at Project Return and held regular study groups in his house. I first met him as part of a group visit to the Rebbe in 1990 arranged by Lubavitch. Initially I found him difficult to communicate with but after some days felt more comfortable talking to him. He stated:

"Well it's difficult to say how much these concepts influence people. Generally we think in everyday terms like everyone else, the world is as you see it.

However Tanya teaches us that behind visible reality, there is another dimension, the dimension of godliness. This is what it means to be spiritual. We are aware that our behaviour has deep implications. For instance, most of us do not directly experience the 'higher worlds' as described in Tanya, but we are aware of the higher dimensions. If we do anything, it does not just affect this world but has repercussions in all the worlds. Everything is spiritually connected to everything else. When Mosiach comes we will see the Godliness in everything ."

Tanya consists of five sections. The first, *Likkutei Amarim* (collected discourses) develops the two fundamental principles of divine worship, love and awe and is devoted to the religious situation of the 'intermediate' man who experiences a conflict between the divine and human souls. In the second part, *Sha'ar Ha Yichud Veba Emunah* (Gate of Unity and Faith), the author expounds the doctrine of creation and is aimed at fostering the true belief in God and in divine providence. The third part, *Igaret Ha Teshuvah* (Epistle of Repentance) is devoted to Teshuvah (repentance). The last two, *Igaret Ha Kodesh* (Holy Epistle) and *Kuntress Acharon* (Final Treatise), enlighten the worshipper on various aspects of the divine commandments. Tanya focuses predominantly on Jewish ethics and is primarily concerned with the forces of good and evil in human nature and in the surrounding world. Rabbi Schneur Zalman holds that man possesses the fullest capacity for a perfectly moral life and that its realization is within the possibility of the average individual. His philosophical approach is

both empirical and philosophical and is based on the principle "from my flesh I seek God" (Job. 19:26). As Mindel writes "it is the reflected method of metaphysical introspection aiming at the development of immanent realities and values leading first from God to man and then from man to God" (1974:9). Knowledge of the self is antecedent to knowledge of the creator and the created world (2). In his text the author teaches that man is patterned after the Kabbalistic conception of God (3) in terms of the ten Sefirot (4), **sechel** (intellect) and **middot** (emotions).

"Man was created in the image of God" (Gen.1:27).

A basic problem which Rabbi Zalman attempts to resolve is how God communicates with his creation:

"starting with the premise that there is a creator and a transcendental and an ineffable deity, and on the further premise that unless a creator could establish a rapport with his creatures, a creation would be meaningless; and that rational man must be the vehicle of such a rapport - how are the finite and infinite to meet? How is this seemingly unbridgeable chasm to be bridged?" (Mindel 1974:10).

Rabbi Schneur Zalman answers in terms of the fact that the finite has been endowed with an infinite quality. Man has two souls, a divine one and an

animal one. He has a transcendental or infinite quality, although his infinite potential can only be actualised by the study and performance of mitzvot and the study of Torah. This mystical relationship is available not only to the mystic but is within the experience of every man. He emphasises the performance of ritual - "the vehicle of the highest degree of unity with infinite" - and that "Ritual enhances things of nature, which by being dedicated to God, are elevated and sublimated, thus transcending their physical limitations and re-establishing the unity of God which was apparently (not really) disruptive through the act of creation."(Mindel 1974:12).

He provides an elaborate psychological system, the basic elements of which are derived from Kabbalistic concepts of the human soul and ultimately from the Talmudic concepts of *yetser ha-tov* and *yetser ha-ra* (the good and bad inclinations). Humans possess both an animal and a divine soul. The former has all of the natural dispositions inherent in man as a 'creature of this world' and is a vital principle of the physical body. These are neutral forces which act as a vehicle for the divine soul which acts through them. The animal soul inclines towards evil. As long as the animal soul serves as a vehicle for the divine soul, there is complete unity and harmony. The moment the animal soul acts independently, this harmony is disturbed. It can challenge the authority of the divine soul, but only for the purpose of evoking the fullest resources of the latter to overcome and challenge and be strengthened in the process.

One day whilst at a Sabbath meal I discussed the notion of the soul with Rabbi Telsener. He told me to:

"consider the human body. It is made up of limbs or organs each with different functions but working in harmony. Take the eye for instance whose function is vision. There is the flesh of the eye which is physical. The eye is made to contain the power of vision but where does power to see come from? It is from some higher power or life force that we may call spiritual. The faculty of seeing much more real than the eye itself. The same could be said for the other organs and limbs. The life force is divided up between different limbs in different amounts. Each limb however does not work in isolation, the limbs are co-ordinated. The respective life forces are co-ordinated, this is the idea of the soul. The body is a reflection of the soul. The soul, however, is more real than the body. If the body dies the soul doesn't disappear.

"The physical world is like one big body with many limbs. Each part needs a certain energy or life force for functioning. The overall energy is combined and this is the creator. It states in *Avot De Rebbe Matan* that the world is a big body. The world has its forests, the body too has its forests the, hair on the head is like a forest. There are many springs in the world and the same can be said for the body, there are many flowing fluids in the body.

"Everything which occurs in the physical world occurs in the spiritual world of which there are many. The physical objects do not actually occur in these

worlds since they are spiritual. Cars, for instance, do not occur in these worlds but they are vessels for movement. Movement occurs between the spiritual levels. In Kabbalah it talks of the Merkabah mystics ascending to the spiritual heights in chariots. Perhaps these are the spiritual equivalent of cars!"

The two souls

The divine soul has both intellectual and emotional qualities and is endowed with an innate love of God. The two most important functions of the intellect are **Hitbonenut** -contemplation and **Hashaga**- intellectual comprehension of the nature of God. Lubavitch emphasise this aspect over and above emotional attachment (**Devkut**) as demonstrated in the name Chabad, an acronym of the faculties **Chochma**, **Binah** and **Daat**. Rabbi Schneur Zalman insisted on a proper balance between intellect and emotion (which significantly tempered the excessive religious emotionalism early on in the development of Chassidism). There are two types of intellect, the **Sechel Enoshi** (human intellect inherent in the animal soul) and **Seichel Elohi** (the divine intellect inherent in the divine soul). The former is enmeshed in the phenomenal world of the senses, unable to disengage itself from the material world of which it is a part. The **Sechel Elohi** recognises the unreality of matter perceived by the senses.

The human being is thus made up of a body and two minds, each soul has a mind of its own, with a will and reason. The animal vital soul is a source of the bodily instincts and from it the senses derive their perception. It is not only humans, but also animals and minerals which possess a vital soul. However, it is only in humans that the vital soul possesses intellectual and emotional attributes. The divine soul is completely independent from the body, existing prior to birth and surviving death. It acts in defiance of the natural disposition. There are, therefore, two sources of human activity, one natural and one supernatural. The animal soul and body are in unison, there is no possibility for freedom of will in the moral sense. A divine soul is other worldly, transcends a body and has freedom of choice. The body itself is an instrument which can be used for good or bad. The natural dispositions are innocent forces which can be debased or sublimated at will. The divine soul informs the animal soul and both together act to inform the body and act through the body.

The divine soul emanates from God. According to Rabbi Schneur Zalman, the relationship between God and man is more real than the blood relationship between a father and son in the physical world. Whereas in the physical world father and son constitutes two entities, the divine soul and God are not separate. "Those who are like Rabbi Schneur Zalman can see through the outer shell and perceive things in their true essence and reality, must be conscious of unity rather than separateness" (Mindel 1974:31).

The divine soul can be further divided into the **Nefesh, Ruach and Neshema**. These represent respectively the soul's intellectual powers, emotional powers and its outer garments, namely the faculty of thought, speech and action. The soul operates by means of its powers which are manifested through the body . These can be divided into two groups, general and specific. The general powers are delight and will. The particular powers are divided into two categories, intellectual and emotional. The intellect powers are said to reside in the brain where they extend to the heart. From the brain, the intellect powers extend to other bodily organs by means of the nervous system. The intellect has three facilities, **Chochma, Binah and Daat**, translated as wisdom, knowledge and understanding. **Chochma** is the power of conception, the facility where the idea is first conceived. **Binah** refers to the cognitive faculty where the idea is analyzed and **Daat** presents a final state in the mental process where the idea obtains its most definite comprehension, which in turn gives rise to corresponding emotions and feelings. **Chochma** is creative, **Binah** is developing and **Daat** is concluding.

In addition to the three intellectual powers, the divine soul possesses seven emotional qualities, the first three being the principal ones. These are **Chesed** (kindness), **Gevurah** (severity) and **Tiferet** (beauty). The next three, **Netzach** (victory), **Hod** (splendour) and **Yesod** (foundation), are secondary. The three intellect powers together with seven emotional qualities correspond to the ten **Sefirot** whereby God manifests himself in creation. Just as the human soul

descended from its divine origins, so its ten powers descended from the ten divine attributes. It is a basic principle in Chabad that all phenomena in the temporal world have their source and origin in the eternal order.

In addition to these ten powers, the soul is said to possess three auxiliary outlets: thought, speech and action. These are the garments of the soul. These garments are the only vehicles whereby the divine soul communes with its maker.

In a similar way, the animal soul comprises of ten powers, three intellect powers and seven emotion powers with the latter predominating. These powers derive from the 'Ten Crowns of Profanity' or *Sitra Achra*, the other side, not the side of holiness. Rabbi Schneur Zalman describes these evil forces in terms of separateness in contrast to those of holiness which are those of unity. He conceptualises the whole created order as a hierarchy of worlds that come into being, on various gradations by the created process emanating from God 'from my flesh I see God'. Creation is understood as descent from God giving rise to a series of worlds, from the most spiritual to the progressively more material recalling the neoplatonic philosophy of Plotinus and Porphyry.

Beings are created in a state of separateness from God. Those beings nearest to the source retain a higher degree of coalescence and unity, those further removed from their source receive the greatest degree of independence and separateness. At the lowest end of the process there is a state of almost complete

separateness from the Divine. This is inhabited by existences called **kelipot**. All evil is derived from the Kelipot and the Sitra Achara. Moral evil is thus characterised by separateness from God. The animal soul is derived from the **Kelipot Nogah**, which is on the borderline between the side of holiness and that of the other side. Although it possesses some good qualities, compassion and benevolence, it is predominantly concerned with itself and the needs of the body. It is embodied and resides in the left ventricle of the heart whence it extends to other parts of the body, including the brain.

A Yeshivah student explained what he understood by evil:

"There is an evil spirit in the world. We cannot always see it. Every time a person acts against God's will, evil comes into the world. Evil derives from the shells which come into existence at the moment of creation. Evil gets its life from holiness. It is the other side of holiness. The more holiness in the world, the less evil there is. The two are related. By performing mitzvot, evil can be diminished."

The Rebbe teaches that evil is the result of the pursuit of material interests. It has no legitimacy of its own. It is darkness without light. Just as darkness is the absence of light it is the absence of goodness. Just as darkness can be dispelled by a small amount of light, evil can be dispelled by introducing a small amount of goodness.

The animal soul although not evil in itself, is subject to temptation. It has a **yetser ha-ra** or evil inclination. To counter this, the divine soul is endowed with the **yetser ha-tov** or good inclination. In any conflict between desire and duty, the **yetser ha-ra** and **yetser ha-tov** are in the forefront of the struggle. Rabbi Schneur Zalman conceptualises the human the body as an 'embattled small city' for the conquest of which two kings are waging a war, a metaphor for the two forces of good and evil. The animal soul is concerned with the physical senses and emotions and with the gratification of the appetites. In contrast the divine soul seeks to capture the body to the exclusion of the animal soul, so that the individual's every thought, word and act be dedicated to God. The animal soul is not, however, an end in itself, for man was not created like an animal. Its ultimate function, apart from informing and animating the physical body is, by its very opposing nature, to serve as a instrument of the divine soul and serves as a challenge to bring out the best and utmost in the divine soul.

Rabbi Schneur Zalman describes five types of personality (5), each one dependent on the way in which the person deals with this conflict. First is the **zaddik gamur**, the perfectly righteous man who succeeds in overcoming temptation and transforms evil into good, darkness into light, bitterness into sweetness. Second is the **zaddik she eno gamur**, the imperfect Zaddik who has not achieved the complete abhorrence of evil and the natural passions have not been completely eradicated. At the other end of the spectrum are two types of

wicked men, **rasha gamur** and **she eno gamur**. The former is a completely wicked man overtaken totally by the animal soul. The latter, not the completely wicked man, is one who succumbs to temptations and moral relapses with intermittent regrets and repentance.

However, Rabbi Schneur Zalman pays most attention to the intermediate type of man, the **benoni**. He never consciously commits a sin or succumbs to temptation and is always in full control of his thoughts, words and actions. The animal soul never attains a position of control. He is always in a state of inner tension between the forces of good and evil, but the latter are not sublimated. Everyone can obtain this status for the benoni is required to do nothing except exercise self control.

I raised the issue of free will and determinism with Rabbi Telsner. He proposed:

"We ultimately have free will and can choose to do what we do. Of course we are to some extent driven by animal soul, that is obvious. We can choose to resist temptation. If there is nice food in front of you and you are very hungry, it is your choice whether you eat it or not. We especially have moral choice, whether to follow the mitzvot or not. God has foreknowledge of our choices but he does not in any way determine them. The main force is driving us to the love and fear of God, both of which derive from the divine soul, (6)."

Rabbi Schneur Zalman describes man, with his physical and spiritual powers as an image of the **Adam Kadmon**, the primeval man, the first manifestation of the divine image (7,8). Adam Kadmon is a spiritual archetype of the mystical organism emerging from the hidden God in the act of creation. The human soul is a reflection of the divine light of God which pervades Adam Kadmon and the whole cosmic order "constituting its true reality and unifying principle" (Mindel 1974:58). All of the powers of the human soul derive from their supernal prototypes. To know something about the ultimate reality of the world we live in, and how God manifests himself through this reality requires the study of the human being.

The soul pervades an entire human organism from head to foot, yet its principal habitation is in the brain from where influences all the organs of the physical body. It is embodied. Each organ receives from the soul its own particular vitality which is necessary for the exercise of its sense or function. The variety of senses and functions which derive from the soul does not imply an essential multiplicity of the soul itself which is a simple and indivisible spiritual being. It cannot be said that the soul is essential concentrated more in the brain than in the feet, but what can be said is that it manifests itself in one organ more than the other.

According to the Tanya, the whole created order is one entity. Just as the human personality has two dimensions, a natural and a supernatural, the

cosmic order partakes of two sources of being. In the phenomenal world everything has a two dimensional nature; for instance the distinction between matter and form, a thing and its properties, nature and the laws of nature. On a higher level the universe in its entirety is a single entity with a soul which constitutes its true reality and its self seeking fulfilment. At this level all dualisms are transcended.

Creation begins with the light of the En Sof going through various stages of transformation and condensation until in the final state, it is reduced to a finite in-dwelling force in nature, combined with an infinite force which transcends the universe. The universe partakes of two sources of being, *sovev* (surrounding) and *memalle* (filling), effectively transcendent and immanent. The phenomenal sensible world derives its reality from the divine emanation called *memalle*. The infinite light comes down in such a contracted and reduced form as to be capable of being confined in finite objects. It is so reduced so as to bear no comparison with the concealed light. The concealed light does not become incorporated in the finite worlds but surrounds them, being beyond their comprehension. "The combination of the two forces describes an act of clothing, the *sovev* is clothed in the *memalle*, the latter being the 'garment' which conceals the former" (Mindel 1974:64). Both are derived from the infinite light and each is responsible for the existence of the revealed and hidden aspects of all creation. The variety of things in the material world is due to this variegated manifestation of the immanent aspect of the finite light.

Rabbi Schneur Zalman provides a doctrine of the two dimensional creative force (Sovev and Memalle) which provides an explanation for the two dimension of physical things, i.e. matter and form, corresponding to the body and soul of a human being. Matter (deriving from sovev) and form (deriving from memalle) are inseparable in the sense experience, since both together, in union with each other, constitute everything in the sensible world. Behind the physical forces of nature there are spiritual forces which are the real source of their existence.

"Were the human eye permitted to see and perceive the full life force which is in every creative being which is continuously flowing into it from the utterance and breath of God's mouth, none of the greater properties would appear at all, for those would be nullified in the presence of the light force preserving the thing, which is true reality, since without this vitalizing and preserving force it would have no existence whatever, exactly as it was before creation" (Sha'ar Ha Yichud Vahaemuna chapter 3).

The creative forces interact in all things in an inverse ratio. The more primitive a thing is, the stronger the transcendent force that permeates it "that which is highest falls lowest." In organic matter, the lowest in the order of creation retains a spark in the primordial act of creation and has its origins in the highest spheres. The four kingdoms, mineral, vegetable, animal and human can be graded in opposite directions. On a rational level, it is a gradation on the ascent from inorganic matter to man, and on the mystical level (which is 'graded' on

descent), mineral organic matter downwards such that the divine spark and inert matter is in some respects of a higher order.

There is a divine spark which is the soul of all things and sustains all things and which yearns to unite with its original source. Through a continuous process of ascension, inorganic matter is transformed into vegetation, vegetation into blood, tissue and bone of animals, and animals into man. All things flow from the Creator, all things live by the will of the creator and all things strive to return to the creator. The mystical order of creation is a complete circle which starts and ends in God "thus fulfilling the mystic unity of creating with the Creator"(Mindel 1974:68). Man who is alone conscious of this process has a integral part in it, he is the link between heaven and earth. As Mindel (1974:69) puts it :

"Possessing a divine soul and an animal soul makes man an admirable intermediary between the material and spiritual and the force whereby the physical is transformed into spiritual. By subjugating his lower nature and by the performance of religious precepts he consecrates his entire being and therefore elevates his surrounding physical world. The ultimate and essential value of the commandments lies in them being a vehicle of attachment to God. Most of the 613 commandments are performed by means of material objects involving the animal, vegetable and animal products whereby the divine spark held captive in them is released through the performance of the religious act.

The material world is spiritualized and infinite light is diffused into the physical world and the material shell Kelipah is dissolved. The physical world constantly undergoes a process of subjugation, spiritualization and the screens that obscure the infinite light in our world of senses gradually falls off."

And he states (p70)

" With a redemption of the holy from the profane, separation of the good from evil, not only is the good elevated but evil is abolished."

The divine soul descends into the physical world to repair the animal soul and physical body. This soul obtains a higher degree of perception of God through its religious experience and fulfillment of Torah and mitzvot. The descent of the soul into the physical body bestows a marked benefit on it, providing it with an opportunity to observe God's commandments thus closing the gap between the soul and God.

Lubavitchers describe a number of 'worlds' created from divine light. According to one Lurianic creation myth taught to Lubavitchers (9), the creation of the universe is described in terms of a process of contractions, withdrawals, breakages and gaps with intermittent gradual descents and regressions. Before the universe was created, there was only the infinite one whose light filled all space including the space of the universe subsequently created. In this infinite

light there was no space for finite existence. The omnipotent creator withdrew his light into himself (**tzimtzum**) creating a void wherein finite existence could be created by means of a tiny streak of light which was projected into the void. The infinite light is so reduced abruptly and successively that finite beings can endure it. The post-tzimtzum light produced both a series of lights (**orot**) and vessels (**kelim**) to contain them. At the beginning of creation, the lights were too strong for the vessels and resulted in the shattering of the vessels (**shevirat ha kelim**), in the process of which the lights broke up into innumerable small sparks which scattered throughout the cosmos. The sublime sparks became embedded in the lowest forms of natural existence and are in a state of exile in them, waiting to be redeemed through the actions of man directly or indirectly relating to the object. This tzimtzum was followed by other tzimtzum with successive contractions and condensations. In this process an infinite number of emanations came into being, each lower than its predecessor in that it more effectively concealed the light from En Sof. Our world is the lowest world with a degree of the utmost concealment of the infinite light, where matter completely conceals its true reality.

The cosmic order which came into existence comprises of four worlds; **Atzilut** (emanation), **Beriah** (creation), **Yetzirah** (formation) and **Assayah** (action). The last is the archetype of our phenomenal world. Each world is an ordered universe of Sefirot. The process of creation extends from the light of En Sof to the other side or **Sitra Achra** the forces of evil, wherein the spark that constitutes

their true existence is so infinitely reduced as to be completely submerged and obscured by the outer shell. The cosmic order of the other side is an inverted order of the four worlds on the side of holiness. The `other side' is not an independent realm, it is only the extreme end of the same creative process. Holiness and badness have the same substratum but in the bad and unholy, the light of Ein Sof has almost vanished. The term evil refers to separation from God.

FROM EXILE TO REDEMPTION

The terms 'exile' and 'redemption' are commonly used by Lubavitcher Chassidim. Rabbi Telsener discussed with me the meaning of these terms:

"There have been two exiles. The first was the Babylonian exile which lasted 70 years and the second the Roman exile which still persists. The exile is both physical and spiritual. From the physical point of view the Jewish people are exiled from their homeland, Israel. They are dispersed over the four corners of the earth. There is a spiritual point to this. The divine sparks are scattered everywhere and the Jewish people are performing mitzvot all over the world helping to raise them. This is why the Rebbe sends representatives all over the world to spread Jewish teaching. Also many great books such as *Shulchan Aruch* were written outside Israel."

"Why are we in exile? Well I think has got to do with a basic hatred the Jews had in Roman times. They hated each other for no good reason. Now, however, things are changing. There is much more charity and caring for each other. We are nearly out of the period of exile. The period of suffering will soon stop. I believe this is demonstrated by historical events in the past ten years, such as the fall of communism. For the first time Russian Jews can freely go to Israel.

"People say we have been in exile for a long time and they do not believe it will end. I do not accept this. Great sages said that it will end and I believe them. Even though those who suffered in the camps and were believers before they went in ,they also believed when they came out. We must admire these people. If they believe the exile will soon end having been through such suffering, no one can argue that it is not true.

"In Tanya, Part 4, Chapter 4, exile is compared to alienation. A person is alienated from the true reality. He believes that true reality is the material world around him. To be redeemed one must regain one's inner self which are otherwise be captured in a world of materiality. There is a concept of the divine soul being imprisoned by an animal soul. In chapter 47 of Tanya it talks about going out of Egypt. This refers to the divine soul breaking free from the animal soul. The word for Egypt, *Mitzraim* is related to the word *Metzerim* meaning limitation. The coming out of Egypt has several meanings. First there is a historic going out of Egypt. Second is the message of freedom, breaking free

from bonds. The final meaning is leaving, **golus**, the ultimate freedom. At this time everyone will want to know Hashem.

"Not only is there self exile but the whole of existence is in exile. The divine dimension is exiled in this world. Divinity is therefore concealed. We cannot ordinarily see it. A miracle is the state of revealed godliness, something that does not normally happen such as a block of ice catching fire. In some cases godliness is so concealed we think there is no God in the present. The Holocaust is a good example. With the coming of Mosiach all godliness will be revealed. The redemption is imminent. I believe that the exile is finished although we cannot see it yet. Mosiach can come at anytime even when we least expect him " (10).

Godliness in everything

Chassidism teaches that Godliness is present in everything , both good and what we may consider as evil. Spirituality exists within the realm of the material and the Torah recognises the inseparability of the two. God works through the material world in which we live. According to a story told to me one Sabbath by Rabbi Rabin:

"A rabbi was in a burning building and could not escape. He prayed to God for help. A helicopter flew past the window but he did not get onto it. A rope was thrown in through the window but he did not grab it. The rabbi died and went

to Heaven. He asked God why he did not save him and God answered that he had provided the helicopter and rope for this purpose. It is not enough to pray, one must also be active in the world. Similarly a sick person should not expect to get better by prayer alone but must resort to medicine."

Because God acts in the material world, there is no problem reconciling science and religion. The Rebbe points out that for some people today there exists a rift between science and religion, as though some parts of life are controlled by God and others by the laws of science. Ultimately the scientific laws derive from God: "Everything God created in his world, He created to express his glory" (Ethics of the Fathers 6:11). The Rebbe teaches that God works through nature:

"This compartmentalised attitude, however is wrong. Since God created the universe and the natural laws which govern it, there can be no schism between the creator and his creation. The natural laws of the universe can hardly contradict the blueprint from which they were made! So science is ultimately the human study of God's mind, the search to understand the laws that God installed to run the physical universe" (Jacobson 1995:93)

It is not always possible to understand how God works, especially the problem of theodicy and suffering (see Leaman 1995). Prayers are not always answered in the way we would hope. Lubavitchers hold that God provides what we

need, not necessarily what we want. There is divine providence. Why are prayers not always answered ?

"Now the reason may be that God refuses to assent as a form of punishment or trial, or because the petitioner is not yet fully prepared or read. Then, again, there may be some other, external impediment.

"Another, and possibly most frequent reason, is that No may also be the answer, and in fact the best possible answer. The request may have not been assented to by divine providence for a good reason : Omniscient God knows that the favour requested is ultimately, not in the best interests of the practitioner. For many of man's prayers are inappropriate and unreasonable. They are more personal desires which we , thinking in terms of 'here and now', imagine to be needs or essential to our welfare and happiness" (Schochet 1990:89).

On several occasions I discussed the issue of suffering and how this can be accounted for. The answer which was given was that ultimately we do not understand God's ways and ultimately all suffering should be accepted although it is permitted to ask God to intervene. Chassidism provides a number of ways of understanding suffering. Man's limited perspective does not permit a full grasp of the interrelationship of divine **din** (justice) and **rahamim** (compassion), unless it is viewed in the context of God as the source of the

ultimate good. A Jew must accept everything with love (*kabalah be'ahavah*), inspired by *Bitahon* (trust) and *emunah* (faith) in God's benevolent relationship to man. These in turn lead to joy (*simcha*). The teachings of the Ba'al Shem Tov and his disciples focus upon man's duty to accept personal adversity and suffering within a framework of trust in God's ways and his will. Man is to discover the inherent goodness in misfortune and to accept it with love. Other Chassidic interpretations of suffering are offered, including the mutual suffering of God and man as part of the general interaction and interdependence of God and man. Man is to convert *hithapkhut* (his concern for himself) to a concern for the *tikkun* (restoration) of the Shekinah, (God's presence). In Tanya (*Igaret Hakodesh* p447) suffering and affliction are held to be illusory:

" It is the Eden which transcends the world to come, except that, because it is not apprehensible, one imagines to have sufferings or afflictions. In fact, however , no evil descends from above and everything is good, though it is not apprehended because of its immense and abundant goodness"

The Rebbe teaches that we are part of a larger picture. When a person is aware of this, a spiritual reality besides a physical one, pain is only one component. Whereas pain is ephemeral-whether it is physical, emotional or spiritual-life is eternal. It has a positive value and can lead us to reconsider the meaning of our existence and to enhance commitment to spiritual development. When he sees

beyond the one dimensional life and realise there is both a body and soul, he realises there is a higher purpose to life and a far deeper meaning to pain.

What one person may see as suffering, another may not see it in this way as the following story recounts:

"A perplexed man once visited a rabbi. 'The sages tell us to 'bless God for the bad just as one blesses Him for the good,' he said, 'but how is this humanly possible? 'That is a good question. For an answer you must visit a farmer I know,' the rabbi replied.

The man found the farmer. He had never before seen anyone who suffered such hardship. The farmer lived like a pauper. There was no food in the house, and his entire family was beset with illness. Yet he was cheerful, constantly expressing his gratitude to God.

"The man wanted to know the farmer's secret, and he finally asked him the same question he had asked the rabbi. 'That is a very good question,' said the farmer. 'But why did the rabbi send you to me? How would I know? He should have sent you to someone who has experienced suffering.'" (Jacobson 1995:130)

Depression (*atzvut*) is regarded negatively by Lubavitchers as an impediment to one's relationship with God. Tanya views depression as a product of the person's

animal nature and can distract from the joyful service of God. Chapter 26 of Tanya (Likutei Amarim) discusses the positive spiritual value of suffering: This idea is intended to lead the sufferer not to melancholy but to joy. Affliction is to be accepted with joy:

"Therefore the man who accepts affliction with joy, merits to see the sun going forth in its might -in the world to come i.e. the sun emerging from its sheath in which it is enclosed in this world."

and later

"As for the sadness which is connected with heavenly matters, one must seek ways and means of freeing oneself from it, to say nothing of the time of divine service, when one must serve God with gladness and a joyful heart. But even if he is a man of commerce and worldly affairs, should there enter into him any melancholy or anxiety about heavenly matters during the time of his business affairs, it is clearly a machination of evil impulse to lure him afterwards into lusts, God forbid as is known "(Likutei Amarim 113).

Mrs Rabin, a university lecturer, recounted how these values helped her to cope in her work.

"Two years ago I had been supervising an excellent student from India. I expected him to easily get his PhD. However to my utter dismay, one of the examiners failed him and I felt very responsible and spent nights not sleeping and becoming low in mood. I thought that the decision was unfair and wrote to the university. I prayed and had trust and faith in God that he would pass. I realised that it was bad to become depressed. Several months later, after slight corrections, he gained his PhD."

One topic which recurrently arose during fieldwork was the Holocaust and what part God played in this. Lubavitchers are very keen to disagree with the idea proposed by Rabbi Shach, the ninety-two year old leader of Degel Hatorah, that the Holocaust was a punishment for the sins of the forefathers. Rabbi Rabin explained:

"Ultimately, we cannot explain the Holocaust. The Rebbe disagrees strongly with Rabbi Shach that the Holocaust was a punishment for our sins. This is certainly not the case. Innocent children did not die for the sins of the forefathers. We cannot understand God's role in it. However, it gave people a chance to grow spiritually. Even in a situation where food was scarce, some people made the ultimate sacrifice and shared their food with others. Ultimately a lot of spiritual energy was produced during the Holocaust which will bring forth the redemption."

CHAPTER 6

WORDS, TEXTS AND CREATION

"The letters of the torah are not simply written according to agreed convention. Indeed, their form reflects the inner essence of their soul, for their shapes of these letters - the tiny extensions at their tips, their crowns and their component elements - indicate definite spiritual concepts and supernal sefirot. The spiritual concept of each and every letter contains a glorious light, derived from the essence of the sefirot, which devolves (to this world) by stages, in accordance with the developmental order of the sefirot. Each letter is like a splendid palace, containing and corresponding to its spiritual concept. When one of the letters is pronounced aloud, the corresponding spiritual force is necessarily evoked. Speaking Hebrew assumes holy forms which rise up and are sanctified at their root, which is the root of (the highest Cabalistic world known as Atzilut). These spiritual forces inhere not only in (the vocalised letters) but also in their written forms" (*Pardes Rimmonim, Shaar Ha Otiot, Chap.2*).

As opposed to non-Jewish forms of mysticism such as Christian mysticism (1) which see language as a barrier to mystical experience ("mystics do not say what they mean and do not mean what they say". Katz 1992:3), language plays a central role in Jewish mysticism. The Hebrew language was considered by Jewish mystics as playing a role much more important than the communicative one. It is the main

instrument by which God created the world and is the vessel that is prepared by man to contain the divine light. "In both cases, the letters do not serve, in any way as a channel of transmitting meaning; too powerful an instrument, the letters are conceived of as creative elements that enable different types of communication, a verbal one, that accomplishes more than conveying certain trivial information" (Idel 1992:43). Scholem (1965:36) argues:

"The secret world of the Godhead is a world of language, a world of divine names that unfold in accordance with a law of their own. Letters and names are not only conventional means of communication. They are far more. Each one of them represents a concentration of energy and expresses a wealth of meaning which cannot be translated, or not fully at least, into human language."

Language ensures an unbroken link between the lower and higher worlds, between the material and spiritual. As Idel (1992:43) states "The letters are understood to constitute a mesocosmos that enables operations that can bridge the gap between the human or the material and the divine." However at times, Jewish mysticism has also viewed language in a purely communicative way. This chapter looks at the ways in which Lubavitchers conceptualise the Hebrew language and emphasises the close relation between the language (the spiritual) and the physical world.

The Kabbalah is pre-eminently a technique of reading and interpretation of the Pentateuch. The Zohar is a commentary on the five books of Moses and is intended to reveal the hidden meaning of the biblical narratives and divine commandments and to decode the symbols relating to the divine structure. Idel (1992) refers to this approach as 'theosophical Kabbalah'. The Kabbalist uses the Torah as a symbolic instrument, beneath the letters of which there is a text which reveals a mystic and metaphysical reality. To uncover this reality the text must be read not only literally but in three other senses: allegorical, hermeneutic and mystic. In the interpretation of scripture the Zohar employs four methods which are known by the Hebrew word *pardes* (2) made up of their initial letters: *peshat* (literal interpretation), *remez* (allegorical), *derush* (hermeneutic) and *sod* (mystical). As Scholem (1954:14) states:

"The Torah is to [Jewish mystics] a living organism animated by a secret life which steams and pulsates below the crust of literal meaning; every one of the innumerable strata of the hidden region corresponds to a new and profound meaning of the torah." The absence of numerals, vowels or punctuation in the written Torah leaves it open to a large number of interpretations and some have argued that there are actually six hundred thousand possible interpretations of the Torah, corresponding to the six hundred thousand holy souls each of whom has a letter in the Torah."

Three fundamental techniques are used by Kabbalists to interpret the scripture: *notariquon*, *gematria* and *temurah*. *Notariquon* refers to the technique of using

acrostics to cipher and decipher a hidden message. The initial or final letters of a series of words generate new words, and Kabbalists typically used this technique to discover mystical relations (3).

Gematria is based on the fact that, in Hebrew, numbers are indicated by letters. Each Hebrew word can be given a numerical value calculated by summing the numbers represented by its letters. This allows mystical relations to be established between words having different meanings though identical numerical values (4).

Temurah is the art of anagrams. To the Kabbalist these anagrams were more than just a tool of interpretation; they were the very method by which God created the world. The letters do not merely serve as a channel of transmitting meaning, the letters are themselves conceived of as creative elements, a doctrine which was made explicit in the *Sefer Yezirah* (Book of creation). As God was able to create a world by means of letters, man is supposed to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem by his ritual use of language.

Idel (1992) distinguishes four views of language in Jewish mysticism; language as creative of reality (5); language as a technique to attain a mystical experience; language as a vessel to capture the Divine in the material world (talismanic theory); and language as reflecting the divine structure. In all but the third, language plays a role different from its usual communicative one. Language has an independent reality of its own. According to him, Chassidism placed great emphasis on the fact

that language is the spiritual underpinning of reality and bridges the gap between the human and divine planes.

First, language is regarded as instrumental in the process of creation of the world and as a natural component of reality. According to the fiat concept, divine speech called into being those entities whose names were pronounced at creation: "And God called the light day and the darkness he called night" (Gen. 1:5). However, the first act of creation is mentioned in Genesis before any speech act of God is mentioned. After creation, it is not evident whether speech acts innovate the particular thing it is related to ex nihilo or causes a distinction in the chaotic mass. Idel (1992) argues that much more than creating, speech imposes division and orderliness on chaos. In the Talmudic and Midrashic literature there are several ways of understanding this biblical account. One portrays God as consulting Torah and creating the world according to its pattern. Creation is an act of imposing the inner structure of the Torah on an undefined material.

Another notion is that heaven and earth were created by the combination of the divine names. God used the letters that form his name in order to create heaven and other letters in order to create earth. A third view argues that the actual pronunciation of the creational words mentioned in Genesis I explains creation. The authors of this view identify in Genesis I, ten creative words referred to as **ma'amarot**.

However, the most important formulation of the linguistic creation is found in the Kabbalistic text, the *Sefer Yezirah* (Book of Creation). According to this, the letters of the Hebrew alphabet were influential in the process of creation not only as creative forces but also as the elements of its material structure. Language is considered not only as the archetype of the world but its very essence. Language is immanent in the physical world. After completing the twenty-two letters, God combined them in all possible permutations of two letters as part of the creational process. According to this text the 'stones' out of which God created the world were the thirty-two ways of wisdom. These were formed by the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet and the ten Sefirot. The Book of Creation does not mention the Torah as the blueprint of creation. God himself is portrayed as immersed in the process of creating the letters and in arranging them in the specific permutations that are the source of each and every created entity.

Rabbi Schneur Zalman, the founder of Lubavitch writes in *Tanya (Sha'ar Ha Yichud Va Ha'Emunah)* that letters and words that were creative of a certain entity:

"Stand upright forever, within the firmament of the heaven and are clothed within all the firmaments forever, in order to enliven them . . . because should the letters disappear for a second, God forbend, and return to their source (then) all the heavens would become naught and nil indeed and become as if they never existed at all . . . And this is also (the case for) all the creatures that are in the worlds, higher and lower, even this corporeal earth, and even the aspect of mineral. Would the

letters of the ten *Logoi* disappear from it (the earth) for a second, God forbend, by means of which the earth was created . . . it would return to naught and nil indeed and the combination of letters that form the name *even* (stone) is the vitality of the stone, and this is the case of all the creatures in the world, [that] their names in the Holy language are the letters of speech that are emanated from one gradation to another from the ten *Logoi* in the Torah, by their substitutions and permutations of letters according to the two hundred and thirty -one gates, until they arrive and are en clothed within that creature."

In the Talmudic-Midrashic literature, letters are seen as the energy that may directly trigger the creation when they are announced by God or in their arrangement in the Torah they constitute the archetypes of creation. It is only in the book of creation that they are considered components of the created world.

Another view is that each letter, each atomic element, is a name in itself which already had a meaning of its own independent of the syntagma in which it occurred. Each letter was already a divine name and could be used for 'magical' purposes, a practice which came into prominence during the fifteenth century where Kabbalistic symbolism thus turned into, or perhaps returned to, a magical language of incantation. According to this monadic view of language whereby not only each and every letter is a divine name in itself, but also the whole divine universe and all future creations are present in each and every letter. Kabbalists held that Hebrew letters could be combined to effect changes in the material world.

The lore of the combination of letters has a long history: "Our sages, blessed be their memory, were experts in the combinations of letters" (*Sefer Ha Peliyah* probably written by Abraham Abulafia). Since the Hebrew letters emerge first, to be combined into words, it is possible for a zaddik to recombine the letters into a favourable word. For instance, the letters for a sore (**nega**) can be converted into a word meaning pleasure (**oneg**). The Baal Shem Tov speaks of **Hokhmat serufei ha otiyot**, knowledge of how to improve the fallen or to purify the impure by manipulating the letters of the entity to be changed. Changing the order of the letters that expresses a deleterious state in such a way that they form a noun can transform reality in a positive way and is a practice which is common in Chassidic thought. Sometimes a change in vocalisation or accent can convert a curse into a blessing.

Nigal (1994) in his book *Magic, Mysticism and Hasidism* presents a good descriptive overview of the topic of 'use of divine names' and the power of amulets in Chassidic literature. There are a number of accounts of the Bescht using the divine names and other linguistic techniques for healing purposes and Schlemo Maimon (1888) describes in his autobiography not only healing with the help of divine names, but also his clairvoyant activity achieved by looking into the letters of the Torah. This light which pervaded everything was the medium that enabled him to see events taking place at a distance.

According to the second view (Idel 1992), language is considered a technique to attain a mystical experience (6). The Kabbalah of Names (the ecstatic Kabbalah) concentrates on the practice of the recitation of the divine names hidden in the Torah, by combining the letters of the Hebrew alphabet, a method which was popularised by Abraham Abulafia. The vocal aspect of language is an essential component of the mystical technique cultivated in the Ecstatic Kabbalah. The divine names were pronounced to attain an acoustic experience, the hearing of "speech", in an attempt to strive for an auditive response from the Divine. Abulafia focuses on speech rather than experiences of light so central to the more common sefirotic Kabbalah.

As Idel (1992) points out, an important characteristic of the ecstatic Kabbalah and the eighteenth century conceptions of language is the emphasis placed on the emitting aspects of the letters, where "generating sounds is considered as important as hearing"(Idel 1992:54). Language does not represent the divine graphically but is seen as the locus of the encounter between humanity and the Divine. Unlike the negative view of language in Christian mysticism, whereby language must be surpassed to attain the mystical state (see for example Augustine's *Confessions*), generating Hebrew was understood by some Kabbalists and by Chassidim as a mode of *imatio Dei* and language is the main way to bridge the gap between man and God. In the ecstatic Kabbalah, language becomes part of a dialogue where the human throat plays the role of both human and divine speakers.

According to the talismanic conception, language was conceived not only as an instrument of creation but as a talismanic activity whereby the divine influx could be captured and used in a certain way. Elements of language functioned as containers for spiritual forces. Although similar to the Hermetic and Neoplatonic magic of late antiquity, language was envisioned by the fifteenth century Kabbalists as "a self sufficient instrument that could be influential even without adding the complementary rites and materials characteristic of pagan magic" (Idel 1992:57). Influenced by the theories of Hellenistic and medieval Arabic and Jewish astral magic, in the fifteenth century Kabbalah, the use of the Hebrew language to draw down the spiritual force became explicit in the influential compendium of Kabbalah, *Pardes Rimmomim* written by Moses Cordovero. Cordovero asserts that "the prayer using mystical intentions has to draw the spiritual force from the supernal level downwards into the letters he is pronouncing so as to be able to elevate those letters up to the supernal level, in order to fasten his request" (Gate 32, Chap 3). Letters are seen as vessels which can be suffused with supernal force. This conception was modified in Chassidism where letters were seen as 'palaces', places where the mystic who pronounces the holy sounds captures the divine essence. Rabbi Schneur Zalman in Tanya (*Shaar Ha Yichud Vehemunah*, Chap.1) writes:

"And the name by which the creature is called in the holy tongue is a vessel for the life force condensed into the letters of the name which has descended from the ten utterances recorded in the Torah, that have the power and vitality to create a being

ex nihilo and give it life together. For the Torah and the Holy one, blessed be He are one."

With the development of Chassidism, the magical implications of this view were attenuated although not completely obliterated. Language enabled the Chassid to experience union with the divine light present in the pronounced letters and to achieve a personal relationship with God. "The main purpose of the study of the Torah and of the prayer is to cleave to the innerness of the spiritual force of the light of the En Sof which is in the pronounced letters of the Torah " (*Toldot Ya'akov Yoseph*).

The above summarises the varying conceptualisations of language in Jewish mystical thought. But how do contemporary Lubavitchers themselves conceptualise language ? Whilst visiting the Yeshivah in Kingsley Way, Hendon, I spoke to Rabbi Gordon, a rather stern man in his mid thirties who originated from New York and who teaches Tanya to the Yeshivah students. He explained to me how the world had been created from language.

"You can think of speech as energy and structure. When a person speaks, the energy is converted into a structure. There are not just sounds but understandable words. These are produced by the organs of articulation: the tongue, throat, palate, teeth and lips. In a similar way the divine speech has both energy and structure. The energy gives rise to the real world, divine speech does not represent the world,

it actually creates it. Unlike other languages, there is not an arbitrary relationship between the words and objects (7). In English, if two people meet and call an animal a cat instead of a black walking thing, they continue to use the word cat to refer to the animal. The relation between the word cat and the animal is arbitrary. The Hebrew language is different. The words contain the energy of the thing they refer to. For instance the word for lion (ARYH) is spelt Aleph, Reh, Yud and Heh in Hebrew. This is not arbitrary but is because the lion is powerful. The same letters spelt in another way, Yud, Resh, Aleph and Heh mean fear, a lion is feared. After Hashem created the world he brought the animals before Adam to name them. Adam did this not on an arbitrary basis but he was able to see the divine energy contained in each letter and name objects appropriately. The Torah praises the brilliance of Adam on this count. He did not pick names out of the blue but recognised the life force in them. The world was created from the ten utterances which were a combination of the twenty two Hebrew letters. By various combinations of the letters the whole world was created. The letters of the Hebrew alphabet are very powerful. Only Hashem and some Zaddikim can create a world since they understand the divine energy associated with the letters. You can read about this in the second section of *Tanya Shaar He Yichud Vehaemunah*, Chapter 1. The ten utterances usher both animate and inanimate matter into existence in contrast to its former state of non being. The Hebrew letters are its soul and life force. The Holy tongue, the Hebrew of the Torah, was the language used in creation. All created things are directly affected by their Hebrew names as well as

by their component letters of their name. In this respect the Holy tongue is unlike any other tongue."

I spoke to Shalom Yudkin about this matter. He is a man in his late twenties whose personality can only be described as jovial. He resigned from his job as a rabbi in Catford for reasons unknown to the community, although several people in Stamford Hill suspected that he was disappointed by the low level of religious observance in South London. He was born in Melbourne into an Orthodox but non-Lubavitcher family and joined Lubavitch only after meeting the Rebbe. Shalom is well versed in Chassidus, having spent nearly ten years in various Yeshivot. He recently married his wife Bracha and has a young child of six months. I frequently bumped into him in Lubavitch House where we discussed various religious matters.

"In the Hebrew language there is a deep connection between words and objects. You have to differentiate, *loshen ha kodesh* (the holy tongue), from modern day *ivrit* (Hebrew). The modern day language is largely a secular language which uses the same words and letters as the holy tongue but contains many English words, as well such as Coca-Cola. The *loshen ha kodesh* is the language in which God gave the Torah to Moses and is the language in which the sacred texts are written. There are twenty-two letters through which God created the world and through which God connects himself with the world. The topic is discussed in *Tanya*, where the point is made that the process of creation is ongoing, the Hebrew language not only

creates the world but sustains it. The Hebrew letters are the life force of material objects. The Hebrew word for stone *even*, is the spiritual life force of the round hard object called a stone in English. The letters are pipelines for bringing life into the objects.

"There are many stories of how Kabbalists use the Holy language to perform miracles. I know of one where Baba Sali, an Israeli mystic who recently died, performed a miracle using a sacred text. During one celebration he attempted to pour liqueur from a bottle, only to find it was empty. He tied a handkerchief around it and recited mystical words. The liqueur started to flow and continued for several minutes. He used mystical words to perform miracles. Very few people have this power, only the zaddikim and certain Kabbalists."

I interjected and asked if anyone could learn to perform these feats. He smiled and explained:

"I think it is possible but it takes many, many years of intense study to understand the mystical significance of the letters. There is quite a lot written on this. There is a book called *Basi Legani*, Chassidic discourses of the last Chassidic Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Schneerson and the current Rebbe Rabi Menachem Schneerson. Both were prominent Kabbalists and understood the mystical meaning of Hebrew language. In this text they discuss how to transform 'evil' letters into good letters and how to meditate on the divine forms (8). There is a school in Safed where men can study

Kabbalah. Some years ago I met a man who had studied there. He had great mystical insights. He was able to read and describe someone's character by knowing their name and accurately predict their futures. If a person has these powers he must be very careful with them, since he has the power to create worlds, you are playing around with creation. You must be very holy."

Hebrew words also draw down spiritual energy. Yitzi baruch, a seventeen year old man from the Kingsley way Yeshivah told me :

"When we pray we change the world spiritually. The Bescht was able to change the world by combining the divine names. When we pray we do not draw down a special force but spiritualise the world generally. We do not know which specific combinations of names change specific aspects of the world. Only a Rebbe can know this (9). This is why we cannot perform miracles such as creating life (10) ."

I discussed the concept of **hamshakah**, the drawing down (of divine energy), with him:

" The divine influence is drawn down by the mitzvot. Words are only catalysts. They themselves do not draw down energy but are vehicles for it to occur. Prayer causes changes in the heart. It results in feelings of fear and love .Words change your psychological states. Words are like chariots. They get you from one place to the next. They move a person to higher spiritual levels."

He continued to explain how a person's name was not arbitrary:

"The Hebrew letters correspond to the way that God manifests himself in creation. Words are spiritual DNA. The name of a child is the vehicle by which it absorbs spiritual energy. The name of a child is not arbitrary. The Ariezel (Luria) speaks of a mini prophecy. The parents call the child by the name appropriate for its spiritual essence, this is a prophecy. It is not by luck that you choose a name. According to the book of Psalms, if a person is experiencing misfortune, changing his name can help."

"I heard about a man who was eighty-six years old. He needed a major operation to stop intestinal bleeding. Everyone thought he would die. He changed his name to Reuben. He recovered from the operation and he lived until the age of ninety-five years old. There is a close connection between the name of a person and his spiritual essence." (11,12).

CHAPTER 7

PRAGMATIC AND SYMBOLIC HEALING

"A sound and healthy body is dependent on a sound and healthy soul." (The Rebbe)

Medical anthropologists, when examining sickness in small scale societies, often refer to 'symbolic aspects' of healing and fail to consider that much of treatment occurs at a very 'pragmatic' level, not involving much conceptualisation of the practice. In many ethnographic texts involving sickness, there is little or nothing said concerning the purely pragmatic treatments. However in some ethnomedical studies, this distinction has been made (Ohnuki-Tierney 1984, Lewis 1975). For example, Lewis (1975:234-5) in his work among the Gnaou, differentiated unexplained illness from explained illness. In the former either "they did not know why it had occurred, or in which knowledge of any cause was denied or illness was accounted for solely by an observable directly connected sequence of ordinary events" (such as accidentally pouring boiling water on the skin). Treatments for the unexplained illnesses were purely pragmatic (such as lancing a boil) and little further consideration was given to them. However, in 'explained' illness, recourse was made to ideas deriving from their cosmology (their conceptualisations were more elaborate). These

included notions of spirits, magic, sorcery or breaking of a taboo. The treatment for these illnesses often involved long rituals. Lewis (1975) points out that explanation was more likely as the illness became more severe, but for an illness with an obvious cause or visible source, it was less likely.

There are now a number of detailed ethnographies in the medical anthropology literature relating to 'healing', ranging from the descriptive (Janzen 1978) to the experiential-performative (Laderman 1991, Roseman 1991, Desjerlais 1992, Csordas 1994). There is, however, little mention of the purely pragmatic aspects of healing and the reader is left with the impression that sickness is highly symbolised and healing highly ritualised. Although there is some literature examining the use of religious frameworks in sickness in secular groups (Dein and Stygal 1997), among Western monotheistic religious groups, there has been little work done concerning the extent to which religious frameworks, as opposed to pragmatic frameworks, are 'used' at times of sickness. This chapter examines this issue in the Lubavitch community, emphasising the close relationship between the words of religious texts and the physical body.

Understandings of sickness among Lubavitchers derive both from biomedicine (their interaction with GP's and the NHS generally) and from Orthodox Jewish attitudes to illness and death and Chassidic attitudes towards suffering. The Bible views illness either as a punishment for sin or as a trial of one who has not sinned. However, sometimes the relationship is confusing. Illness and death

are unavoidable aspects of human life since even the righteous die. Jacob (Genesis 48:1) and Elishah (2 Kings 13:14) became ill, but no sin could be attributed to them - which is contrary to Rav Ammi's pronouncement that there is no death or suffering without sin. The Book of Job is an eloquent rejection of the relation between illness and sin. God, however promises illness as a punishment for the violation of the covenant (Deuteronomy 28:59-61) and the removal of illness is a reward for obedience (Exodus 15:26, Deuteronomy 7:15). Although there is much written in Talmudic literature about how one should relate to the sick, especially the mitzvah of **bikkur holim** (visiting the sick), terminal illness, euthanasia and definitions of death, these issues will not be specifically examined (see Bleich 1981).

What do Lubavitchers of Stamford Hill do when they get ill (1)? Their first thoughts are about pain and bodily dysfunction. They then consult their family or friends for a practical remedy to alleviate it and it is within the family setting that the illness is first 'constructed'.

Mrs Levine remarked one day at the Sabbath dinner that her six year old son, Mordechai, looked pale. Her husband Elizer agreed and pointed out that he had been off his chicken soup for a couple of days. They asked their friend Janet, a local pharmacist, what she thought and she agreed and recommended that Mordechai take more vitamins and that they in fact urge him to drink more chicken soup.

Depending on the severity of the illness, a local physician (2) sympathetic to the community may be consulted. There are two orthodox but non-Chassidic GPs who practice locally. Their medical advice is generally accepted. There are no Chassidic medical practitioners in Stamford Hill. Non-Jewish doctors are also frequently consulted. Prayers are also said by the sick person and his family and if the illness is judged to be serious, Tehillim (psalms) are read. Prayer is always appropriate even if the person is terminally ill: "Even if a sword is raised over one's neck he must not refrain from asking for God's mercy" (B. Berakhot 10a). However there are times when it is permissible to pray for the patient's death as when he or she is in great pain and cannot go on living (B. Nedarim 40a). Orthodox Jewish teachings stress the importance of hope and expressing one's faith in God at times of misfortune. Lubavitchers reiterate the fact that even when stricken by suffering, Job exclaimed "I know that my father lives and cares". One man told me "If you are very ill, you should try to increase your optimism and you will find that you can develop a healthy attitude. Seek the Lord and you shall find him, if you seek him with all your heart and all your soul." One of the deepest fears confronting every Orthodox Jew with a serious illness is that they have sinned and will be charged on the Day of Judgement. A sick person should always repent for his or her sins.

However, it is not always possible to remain optimistic. Although depression (azvut) is viewed unfavourably in Tanya (See chapter 5), it does occur but

appears to be rare in the Stamford Hill community. I was told about Mrs Liebowicz, a lady of forty-three years of age. She had been born into a Lubavitch family in New York but had lived in Stamford Hill for twenty years. She was married but had never conceived despite full investigations and she had written to the Rebbe on several occasions. For about ten years she had a problem with her bladder which significantly interfered with her life. She became profoundly depressed, which led her to stay in bed all day and finally when she talked of ending her life was seen by a local psychiatrist. He wanted her to be admitted to the local psychiatric unit. Members of her family and other members of the community strongly opposed this and she was referred to a private psychotherapist. She was in no way stigmatised on account of her depression.

Several Lubavitchers stated that when a person becomes sick they should try to find a religious explanation for it. This usually means checking the religious artefacts such as the Mezuzah or Tefillin.

Yitzi Rubin is a twenty year old Yeshiva bocher who studies in the Kingsley Way Yeshiva. He has lived in Stamford Hill all his life and was born into a well-known Lubavitcher family. He woke one morning with pain in his right shoulder:

"Well, initially I wondered if I had pulled a muscle. Whenever a person gets ill he or she should think of a spiritual explanation. I usually check my tefillin and tallit if the pain does not go away quickly. On this occasion I took two paracetamols and slowly the pain went away. I did not worry any further about it, although probably I should have checked my tefillin and mezuzot. Often, when a person becomes ill, there is something wrong with these. Physical sickness can result from spiritual disorder and it is only when this is corrected that a person recovers."

According to Dr Adler, one of the two local Orthodox Jewish doctors, medical advice is generally accepted. Lubavitchers routinely use biomedical treatments, and when they require admission, they will become in-patients at local hospitals such as the Homerton Hospital (3). Women prefer to consult female doctors, especially for gynaecological purposes, although I met several women in the community whose children had been delivered by male obstetricians. Unless an illness is deemed life threatening, it is unacceptable to commence medication on the Sabbath or major festivals. For instance, if one has a headache, medication should not be taken on the Sabbath. However, it is permissible to continue antibiotics if they were started before the Sabbath. The justification for these prohibitions is that the preparation of medicines involves work which is prohibited on the Sabbath. On Pesach certain tablets are forbidden because the binder is made of chamatz. Certain illnesses may halachically warrant overlooking the chamatz ingredient if no alternative medicine can be found.

Each case must be assessed by a competent rabbi. Generally, drugs are acceptable, but some brands are not kosher and will not be accepted because they contain animal fats (an instance is Calpol syrup for children and Cupanol is used instead). Every pharmacy in Stamford Hill keeps a list of Kosher medicines and Lubavitchers frequently consult local rabbis to discuss whether or not a certain medicine is kosher.

An increasing number of Lubavitchers are turning to complimentary medical treatments such as homeopathy or osteopathy. There is one Lubavitcher osteopath living in the Stamford Hill community who is consulted by Lubavitchers, other Chassidim and non-Jews. At times, when recovery is slow or biomedical treatment has not helped alleviate symptoms, other healers will be consulted. Several Lubavitchers consult from time to time experts in practical Kabbalah. One well known Kabbalist in the community is Rabbi Maimon, an ex-Israeli taxi driver, who is well versed in Kabbalah and resides in Hendon. He deals with misfortune in its wider sense and apart from sickness may be consulted about marital problems, financial problems and an inability to find a partner. One single Lubavitcher lady of thirty-two years of age recounted to me:

"I went to visit Rabbi Maimon last week. I had to take along my parents' ketubah [wedding contract] which he read. Without knowing me he told me that I would soon marry and described the type of man I would marry. He

discussed a number of personal problems, but I cannot discuss these with you. He claims that he uses the Kabbalah but I don't understand how he does it. One lady went to see him with her husband and recounted how he was able to set a piece of paper alight by touching it but I did not see this. He does not ask for a specific amount of money. It is up to you. If you do not give enough, he will tell you. I've yet to wait and see if what he said is correct."

If the illness is judged to be severe by the patient or doctor, if it lasts longer than expected or does not improve with biomedical help, a letter or fax is often sent to the Rebbe asking for a blessing and sometimes for advice about treatment. For instance, Mrs Goldstein explained that she wrote to the Rebbe only because her doctor's advice had been too "simplistic."

It is said by the community that the Rebbe personally reads every letter and sends a blessing to every sender, but not everyone receives a written reply. The response of the Rebbe does not appear to depend on the type of illness. On some occasions, a fax is sent to 770 or a person phones the Rebbe's secretary for advice, who in turn would consult the Rebbe about it. Not infrequently he advises against surgical interventions, "for they make their living by cutting, I make my living by not cutting" (Rabbi Schneerson cited by Weiner 1969).

More often than not the reply is written in Hebrew but depending on the sender it could be written in English or Yiddish. Rabbi Rabin explained:

"The Rebbe writes in whatever language he thinks the sender will understand, although more often than not it is written in Hebrew. I have heard of cases where the Rebbe writes in Hebrew, although he knows that the sender does not speak Hebrew. The receiver then takes the letter to someone to translate it. Hebrew is the sacred language. The process of translation may be spiritually uplifting, for instance the receiver may understand new concepts and be spiritually elevated by them."

In his letters, the Rebbe frequently mentions the importance of faith in God and optimism:

"The Rebbe often spoke of how optimism, reinforced by a trust in God, is just as important to the healing process as medicine. In 1977 the Rebbe suffered a serious heart attack. One day later, he insisted on giving a talk, as he had done on that particular day for the previous thirty-eight years. A few days later, the doctors asked the Rebbe how he was feeling. 'Physically, thank God, I feel fine,' he replied, 'but mentally, not so well.' This, he explained, was probably because he had not been able to visit the grave site of his father-in-law, as he was accustomed to doing several times a month. "You must take care of your health, 'the doctor insisted. If not, there is a twenty-five percent chance of a relapse. The doctor asked if the Rebbe understood what he had said.

Oh, yes, said the Rebbe with a smile. 'You said that even if I don't take care of my health - which, I assure you, I will - there is a seventy-five percent chance that there won't be a relapse'. (Jacobson 1995: 85)

The following letter from the Rebbe emphasises the idea of trust in God:

"I duly received the telephone message as well as the letter in regard to your health, and I remembered you in prayer at the holy resting place of my father-in-law of saintly memory in accordance with this request."

"From what I have been informed about your advancement in matters of yiddishkeit, it is surely unnecessary to emphasise to you the importance of bitachon-complete trust in God, not just as an abstract belief, but in a way that truly permeates one's whole being. For, in addition to this being one of the very fundamentals of our faith and way of life, this is also a channel to receive God's blessings, especially for the success of the medical treatment, which has to be undertaken in the natural order, inasmuch as our holy Torah itself gives authority and power to doctors to heal and cure."

"You surely also know, that the daily life in accordance with the will of God is the channel whereby Jews receive God's blessings in all needs, and additional efforts in this direction brings additional divine blessings." (*Letters From The Rebbe* p103 published by Otsar Sifrei Lubavitch Inc)

Rabbi Rabin explained that when a person writes to the Rebbe about sickness, they usually hope for and sometimes expect cure (Ahern's strong illocutionary acts):

"When someone who is ill writes to him, they hope, and sometimes expect a recovery, not just to feel better but to cure the underlying problem. When I wrote about sickness, I expected to get better, to alleviate the underlying problem. Of course I cannot know what everyone's expectations are but I think most Lubavitchers want this. There are some people who have tried many other forms of healing and try the Rebbe as a last resort. I am not sure that they really believe the Rebbe can help."

"The Rebbe is unlike a magician. When he offers advice he tells the petitioner to perform mitzvot. Even if they do not improve, they have still performed a good deed which is important spiritually. The reward for performing this mitzvah may not occur in this world. When one consults a magician, he or she expects to see effects in this world. However, I think that many Lubavitchers do expect to see something tangible after writing to the Rebbe, although this is not always the case. It says in the Talmud that if a man gives charity (a mitzvah) so that his son should get better, he is still being righteous. Why is he righteous? Because of his deed even if his intention was to obtain a cure for his son. When we perform mitzvot, we are rewarded, but the reward may not occur in this world.

When people write to the Rebbe and perform a mitzvah, they hope and even expect that their reward will occur in this world."

Discussion of the Rebbe's role in sickness is a common occurrence in the Stamford Hill community, with almost everyone having their own 'illness stories' which relate to the Rebbe (4). The public accounts given by Lubavitchers to others about their healing retain a normative 'top-down' textual quality (akin to the structuralist accounts of Levi-Strauss and Dow). Individuals suffer physically here below, and then through some contact with the transcendent world, are healed. It was initially difficult in fieldwork to look through these narratives to see how individual healing experiences and social relations might simultaneously engender the mythic structure (5).

Samuel Drazin is a thirty-five year old married man who was interviewed on several occasions in Lubavitch House. He had just written to the Rebbe about a persistent toothache which he had experienced for some months. He had visited two dentists but no obvious cause had been found. The first dentist told him that he could not see anything immediately wrong with his teeth - "in fact, for someone of your age, your teeth are in very good condition." He could certainly not account for the pain. The second dentist asked if Mr. Drazin was under a lot of stress and he left with the impression that the dentist thought it was in his mind. "I've never had much faith in dentists," he says. "They cannot do a lot of you."

The pain became so bad that he could not sleep. It affected his concentration at work. He tried several types of proprietary painkillers without much effect. His wife suggested that he visited a homeopath which he thought was a good idea, although he knew very little about it. Homeopathic remedies did not alleviate the pain although he felt more relaxed.

Born in East London in 195, Mr. Drazin had grown up in Stoke Newington on the borders of Stamford Hill. His father, who died three years ago, had worked as a baker for most of his life; a calm gentle man, in contrast to his mother who was "very anxious" and fussed over his childhood ailments (she died suddenly two years ago). He is an only child but he recalls his childhood as generally happy. After leaving school at seventeen with a few qualifications, he completed a two year catering course at a local college. Although he had a non-Orthodox Jewish upbringing (indeed he completely rejected religious ritual and only fitfully observed the Sabbath), he had met several Lubavitchers as an adolescent, but had not paid much attention to them.

After leaving college at the age of twenty, he was unemployed for two years. "There was not much work about and I wasn't very interested in doing catering jobs." Having a lot of free time and "lacking in direction" he started to visit the Lubavitch centre in Stamford Hill "in order to learn more about my own religion." Over several months his participation in Jewish ritual increased. Starting with daily laying of tefillin, he soon began to attend thrice daily

religious services. He brought several mezuzot and put them up on his doors in his flat. His nights were now spent at shiurim (study sessions) where he learnt Tanya. After a year, Samuel Drazin moved in with a Lubavitcher family who introduced him to his future wife Rachel, who also came from a non-Orthodox background. They now have eight children, aged from six months to ten years. Mr. Drazin works as an administrator in Lubavitch House, the administrative centre of the community.

A friendly and charming man, always immaculately dressed in a white shirt and tie and wearing a Homburg hat, with a long flowing grey beard, he speaks openly about his health, emphasising that he is certainly not one to be preoccupied with minor aches and pains, but this toothache was very bad. He had never been really ill before. Mr. Drazin had written to the Rebbe on several occasions in the past, for in his early days as a Lubavitcher he had some doubts about becoming Orthodox. The Rebbe reassured him that this was the right thing to do and encouraged him to perform further mitzvot. He met the Rebbe three years ago for Dollars and recounts how his "heart was filled with joy." Now quite despondent, he sent a kvitl to the Rebbe asking about his toothache. The Rebbe responded by offering a blessing and emphasising that one should check one's tallit. Mr. Drazin examined his prayer shawl to find that one of the strands was distinctly worn. Here indeed was the explanation of his toothache, for the thirty-two strands on the tallit correspond to the thirty-two teeth. A worn strand may cause pain in a tooth. He triumphantly emphasised again how

the physical and spiritual worlds were closely associated, for after replacing his tallit his toothache had disappeared in a few days. For him the episode of illness and the Rebbe's response evoked his original 'spiritual healing' on joining the group.

The second instance provides a formal correspondence between the words of a text and the physical state of the body.

Earlier this year Mrs Halpern, aged 41, asked her daughter in Brooklyn to contact the Rebbe about the "unbearable and unrelenting" back pain she had experienced since the birth of her eleventh child. Although the pain had started late in her pregnancy "probably due to the baby pressing on my spine", it got much worse following the delivery. It was so bad that she could not sit still for longer than a few minutes. Lying down did not help either. She consulted the family doctor who "after a very brief examination" recommended bed rest and analgesics. Mrs Halpern was not happy with this advice: for one thing, it prevented her giving her newborn son, Isaac, the care and attention a newborn baby required. Over the next couple of weeks the pain got worse. "My legs felt weak and my feet were tingling." She recounted that "although it was the Shabbat, the pain was so bad that I asked my husband to phone for an ambulance" (it is permitted to use a phone on the Sabbath in the case of an emergency). She was seen in the local hospital casualty department by an orthopaedic surgeon who told her she needed to be admitted for absolute bed

rest and, if the pain did not settle in a few days, she would have an operation to remove a slipped disc. She reluctantly agreed to go into hospital but was perturbed by the thought of an operation. "I had heard of someone having a similar operation who was permanently paralysed. I knew that these operations were not always successful." As soon as the Sabbath had gone out, her husband phoned their daughter Sarah and asked her to see the Rebbe's secretary and get a blessing for her mother.

Mrs Halpern is a short plump lady with a large blonde sheitl who looks somewhat older than her forty-one years. She is very approachable and her personality may be described as "motherly". She was born locally, her parents being Orthodox Jews who had contact with Lubavitch. An only child (unusually for an Orthodox family), she attended a Lubavitcher school in Stamford Hill where she did well and at the age of eighteen went to a seminary in France for two years. "Although I could have gone to 'Sem' in Israel or America, my parents told me to ask the Rebbe's advice first. Whatever he says, you must do." Following her return to England she was introduced to her husband Shmuel, himself a Lubavitcher who works as a printer. Mrs Halpern now works in a local group providing religious activities for children.

The Rebbe responded to her daughter's request by faxing a reply in a few hours (she was particularly keen to impress on me that "he receives several hundred letters each day, yet he responded to mine so quickly because he knew it was

important. Surely no ordinary man could do this"). The Rebbe suggested in his reply that all the household mezuzot were checked. (He underlined the word all). This was done by a local scribe who found a crack across the words "When you sit in your house." (Deuteronomy 6:7). Mrs Halpern pointed out that she had the greatest difficulty sitting for any length of time. The scroll was replaced and after a week in hospital she was almost pain free and did not require an operation. How did the Rebbe know about the posul (unkosher) mezuzah?

"The Rebbe has a connection with Hashem [God] . He has a feeling for holiness because his soul is more spiritual than that of other men and the power of his prayer is greater. Because of this he can know these things."

Sometimes the Rebbe's explanation is not validated so immediately.

Rabbi Nifield is now sixty years old. He recently wrote to the Rebbe after suffering a small stroke which left him paralysed in his left arm (although it did not impair his walking or speech). He had suffered from hypertension for some years but admitted that he had not taken it as seriously as he should have, although he had been in hospital on several occasions with angina. Following the stroke, he spent a week in his local hospital where he was given physiotherapy which only slowly helped his weakness. Being a rather impatient man, as he put it, he wrote to the Rebbe.

Jacob Nifield was born in Poland but came to Britain in 1936 at the age of four. He is the third of ten children, his father a Rabbi, "a very learned man who spent all his time studying" and an ideal Jewish mother, a very quiet woman. Both parents died several years ago. Jacob grew up in an ultra orthodox environment and carried out the prescribed rituals from a very young age. He spent a year in a Jewish seminary in Northern England and became a Rabbi at the age of twenty -six, and since then has been teaching in Lubavitcher schools. He is married with ten children ranging from eleven to thirty-two years old. His wife is reputedly a distant relative of the Rebbe, whom they have visited in America on a number of occasions.

He is a rather austere sixty-year old man, dressed like many older Lubavitchers in a long black coat and a broad rimmed Homburg. He has a particularly long beard, is serious in manner and appears impatient. "When do you think I will get better?" he asked me repeatedly. Rabbi Nifield has written to the Rebbe in the past about the education of his children, especially as to whether his sons should proceed to rabbinical training. He was impressed by the Rebbe's wisdom in this matter. Several of his friends have been helped after writing about health and financial problems. He proudly recalled that he had visited the Rebbe on three occasions for Dollars. "Every day you hear more stories about his miraculous power."

The Rebbe responded to Rabbi Nifield's letter by offering a blessing and suggesting that he check his mezuzot. His wife took all the mezuzot to a scribe who thoroughly checked the scrolls and casing, only to find that they were ritually pure. He could not understand this. Could the Rebbe be wrong? "No, the Rebbe is never wrong; if he says the mezuzot are not kosher they really are not kosher." He sent a second letter to the Rebbe telling him of the first scribe but the Rebbe responded by suggesting that the mezuzot were checked again. A second scribe was found but he too found them to be kosher. A third letter to the Rebbe resulted in the same reply. The third scribe spent a long day examining the mezuzot, working until the early hours of the following morning. It was only then that, holding one scroll up to the light, he found that there was a problem. A small beam of light shone through a hole in one of the letters of the word lev (heart) in the Shema. The hole rendered the mezuzah unkosher. Rabbi Nifield had the scroll replaced and almost immediately he regained full movement of his left side and his angina (heart pain) was much improved. Three months after his stroke, he showed only some slight weakness in his left arm. He emphasised the relationship between the physical (his heart) and the spiritual worlds (the word heart in the religious text).

I asked several Lubavitchers about this healing. How did the Rebbe know that there was a problem with the Mezuzah? Rabbi Nifield himself responded: "The Rebbe's soul represents the soul of the whole Jewish nation. He is aware of the life of every Jew. Every Jew's actions are known to him." When asked if it

could possibly be a coincidence, he objected, "of course coincidences occur but I have heard too many accounts of the Rebbe's healing for my healing to be a coincidence." He likened the mezuzah to a suit of armour in the spiritual realm.

"It protects a person from influences which can cause illness. An unkosher mezuzah simply makes a person more vulnerable." Again Rabbi Nifield took the opportunity to point out that the physical and spiritual realms were interrelated: a woman who fails to take the prescribed monthly bath (mikvah) after her menstruation may bear a defective child.

Several Lubavitchers commented on hearing this story that we cannot understand the working of the Rebbe "his ways cannot be understood by ordinary men" and one pointed out that we should not try to understand why miracles occur, it's beyond our comprehension .

Mr. Bright wrote to the Rebbe, not about himself, but about his two month old son Daniel. Shortly after his birth, Daniel had developed "rattling breathing" about which his parents were very worried. The baby's breathing sounded much worse at night, like "an old man with bronchitis." A visit to their family doctor did not prove helpful - "I cannot find much wrong with the baby, it's just his throat. I'm sure he will grow out of it." The family were not happy with this reply and they discussed whether or not to take Daniel to a private hospital. Mrs Bright suggested to her husband that perhaps the Rebbe's advice should first be sought.

Chaim Bright was born in Manchester and moved to Stamford Hill in 1980. He is now in his late forties. Brought up in an Orthodox household, he always had close links with Lubavitch for, although his parents were not Chassidim, they attended a Lubavitch synagogue. After doing well at school he went to Leeds University to study computing and now works as a computer analyst for an insurance company. He also teaches Talmud part-time in the local boy's school where his wife Leah also teaches. As well as Daniel, the couple have six other children from two to nineteen. Mr. Bright proudly said that Isaac, the eldest son, was in a seminary in Brooklyn, the home of the Rebbe.

The family had experienced much illness in the past. One child had died several years ago in a cot death: "I suppose that's why we were so concerned about Daniel." Two children suffered with asthma and were hospitalised on a number of occasions. In 1986 their daughter Hannah, then aged seven, had a mysterious illness and was dangerously ill in hospital. "First the doctors said it was a virus, then they said it was a kidney infection. We did not know what to believe. I wrote to the Rebbe on this occasion who suggested I got a second opinion from a well known Jewish paediatrician. He found that she had an abnormal kidney. The Rebbe always gives good advice."

In reply to the kvitl about Daniel, the Rebbe wrote offering a blessing and suggesting that Mr. Bright checked his mezuzot. He did this but all were found

to be kosher. He discussed the matter with a Rabbi, who noticed that the mezuzah in Daniel's room, although kosher, was much older than the others. He suggested it should be replaced. Mr. Bright did this, and after several weeks Mrs Bright commented on how much better Daniel's breathing had become.

However, in many instances a purely pragmatic "this worldly" approach is adopted. Yitzi is now one year old. When he was nine months old he developed an episode of high fever, coughing and rapid breathing. He was urgently taken along to the accident and emergency department of the local children's hospital, where he was diagnosed as having a viral chest infection and prescribed antibiotics. Prior to this event he had been ill for about four days with cold-like symptoms.

Yitzi is the fifth child of Mr. and Mrs Maurice Levy whom we have met before. They are a well known Lubavitcher family who have been living in Stamford Hill for eleven years. Maurice is a forty-five year old bal teshuvah who converted to Orthodox Judaism after first encountering the Lubavitcher Rebbe at the age of twenty-five when he had a private yehidus. He works in Tottenham as a physiotherapist and has a large clientele amongst the Stamford Hill Lubavitchers. He teaches on Wednesday night at 'Project Return' and is described by other members of the community as a very friendly, helpful man who is always there to give advice if needed.

His wife Hannah is in her late thirties. She works as a teaching assistant at a local Lubavitcher school and has an interest in 'healthy living', especially various diets. She comes across as a very warm, motherly woman who is also very keen to help at times of need. She herself is a **bal tshuvah** and became orthodox at the age of twenty, also after attending meetings at Lubavitch House.

The couple were introduced at a Sabbath meal and married six months afterwards. Mr. Levy stated:

"It was not just our interest in yiddishkeit that brought us together. We both have an interest in health and healthy living. This is why we are vegetarians. Although we are both interested in complimentary medicine, we both use orthodox medicine when necessary especially when there is a serious problem. Unfortunately there have been several health related problems within the family in the past few years. Three years ago we lost a young baby at six weeks of age with cot death. No one could ever explain what the cause of this was, our baby Seti was well one morning and dead the same night. Of course we wrote a letter to the Rebbe after this and he responded by explaining that we cannot always understand the thoughts of Hashem and he sent a blessing that there should be health in the rest of the family."

"Our son Menachem, now aged nine, has had severe asthma when he was younger. It was so bad that he was ventilated on two occasions. He is much better now and has largely grown out of it. When he was really ill we thought

of writing to the Rebbe, but he recovered quickly and we never wrote in the end. I know the Rebbe is a great man and can perform miraculous feats, but Jews should use doctors for healing not just prayer. Of course one should appreciate that they do their work with God's help. The Rebbe does not expect us to write for every illness. He accepts that we should use medicine."

"There are some Lubavitchers in Stamford Hill who write to the Rebbe about every illness, but we do not do this. Some of my friends would write as soon as they got ill. For instance, Rabbi Telsner's wife developed a sore throat. Even before approaching a doctor he faxed through to the Rebbe's secretary for a blessing. However, he still went to see the local GP who prescribed penicillin for her and she made a rapid recovery."

"When Yitzi became ill we took him straight to the hospital. Only if the doctors had thought he was seriously ill or not improving on treatment would we have written to the Rebbe. Thank Hashem that he got better very quickly."

He proceeded to explain how illness is related to divine providence:

"As Jews we should accept that everything is divine providence. God directs us in his footsteps. Everything has a purpose although we cannot always understand this purpose let alone accept it. There is a tendency to say it is divine providence if something goes well, but when it does not, we often seek

other explanations. Chassidism emphasises joy or Simcha. We are taught to be joyful even in the face of adversity. It is 'taboo' to be sad, even grief is not looked upon too kindly. When you are grieving, other people will listen to you briefly and then they will expect you to be happy again. The expression of sadness indicates a mistrust in God. If you trust in God, you should not become depressed. Of course, in practice this is very difficult."

The Rebbe is consulted on a number of health-related issues apart from immediate sickness. A serious concern in the community is infertility, which is considered disastrous given the emphasis on large families and it is considered sufficient grounds for divorce (6). Mr Rubin wrote to the Rebbe about his wife Leah who had not become pregnant after five years of trying. All the hospital tests had proven negative. About a week later when (rather unexpectedly on a business trip) he was able to visit the Rebbe in person, the Rebbe told him "Your fears are irrelevant". He was surprised to hear this and asked what the Rebbe meant, to be told "your wife is already pregnant". He telephoned home to learn that his wife was indeed pregnant.

During my fieldwork, I was rarely told of instances where appeal to the Rebbe did not result in successful "healing". Mr. Zeitlin (whom we have met) however was keen to impress upon me that his wife Helen remained ill after writing to the Rebbe about her "deep depression and postpartum blues."

Helen Zeitlin is a forty- two year old woman living in Stamford Hill. She has three children, Aeron (9), Esther (14) and Mordechai (16). She was born in San Francisco to non-orthodox parents and encountered Lubavitchers while at university. Her childhood was traditional and she rarely went to shul, although she did celebrate some festivals such as Chunakah. After studying for a degree in English, her attendance at Lubavitch increased and after two years she described herself as a Lubavitcher. She has lived in England for eighteen years and been married to her husband Samuel, a teacher, for seventeen years. As a child she was always rather "sickly", missing a lot of school, and ever since her adolescence was always concerned about her weight: "I've always been thin and had little energy. I remember at school I could not do sports like other children". About twelve years ago, Helen developed a number of symptoms which persist up till now. These include: extreme fatigue, weakness, difficulty sleeping at night, swallowing difficulties and recurrent abdominal pain. The intensity of the symptoms is so severe that she does very little around the house and her husband does most of the housework and looks after their children. Helen persistently complains that she cannot enjoy the festivals like other Jewish women of her age: "I can't even dance at Purim." She has consulted a number of doctors and psychologists about her symptoms, largely to no avail. "I once was admitted for behaviour therapy at St. Lukes hospital. All I did was sit on the ward. The doctor told me it was a behavioural disorder. What use is that!"

In despair, her husband wrote to the Lubavitcher Rebbe outlining her problem and asking for advice. He wrote back suggesting she consult a physician who had a good knowledge of Yiddishkeit but did not actually recommend anyone. "I must say I felt rather disappointed at his response but, I did follow his advice." Helen consulted an orthodox physician, who said her problem was "psychosomatic" and he thought she was depressed (7,8). He recommended antidepressants, which only gave her side effects but did not help. Her husband sought the advice of an Orthodox but non-Chassidic psychotherapist who said "stop running after her, she is capable of doing things for herself."

I myself was asked to see Helen in my capacity as a psychiatrist. Helen presents as a tall thin lady, dressed in a dressing gown. She wears a long brown Sheitl. She is unable to talk for very long without coughing and spluttering and this is obviously far worse when she eats or drinks. I am impressed by the fact that whenever I speak to her, she tells me about a full catalogue of disappointments and how no one in the past could help her. From a biomedical point of view I wonder if she has myalgic encephalomyelitis. I have prescribed a high dose of paroxetine (an antidepressant) and she has made a small amount of progress over the past few months. Overall she and her husband both thought that the Rebbe had played little part in helping her and the couple have never written again to the Rebbe for advice.

A book has been written about the Rebbe's healing entitled, *Rofuah Shlema* ("Completed healing" published by Or Yakov Orzorua). This is a collection of letters from him in response to people who have written about health and sickness. One chapter entitled "Body and Soul" contains a number of letters linking spiritual and physical disorder. In one letter, the Rebbe emphasises how keeping mitzvot results in better health, although it is not necessary to understand the mitzvot before doing it, practice precedes understanding. Also, the Rebbe appeals to the idea that the Hebrew language can act as a vessel which draws down spirituality, resulting in healing in the physical world.

"I received your letter in which you inform me re Mr. X and his family, may they live long, who has various pains and also his spouse is not in very good physical health and you ask for a blessing on their behalf. You have to explain to them that the King of Kings, the Holy One, Blessed be He, is the owner of the world and everything in it. He himself may be blessed with goodness, grace and mercy and all we have to do is to prepare suitable vessels to draw down and receive the blessings of heaven above. The vessels of every Jewish man and woman are those matters contained in Torah and mitzvot.

"Just like in physical life, eating bread when one is hungry and drinking when one is thirsty, the understanding of how bread satisfies hunger or water quenches thirst is not relevant, so similarly in spiritual life when the soul is hungry and thirsty for the bread and water of Torah and mitzvot, the main

thing is the act - to fill this hunger and this thirst with Torah and mitzvot. When through this one becomes healthier and stronger, automatically one has the opportunity to understand more easily and quickly matters of Torah and mitzvot even with one's limited human intellect. But one should not reverse this order and announce `let us understand then we will do.

"All these things are relevant for Mr. X, may he live long, for whom Hashem will send him a healing. But he for his part should not manipulate the condition that he should recover then only in his free time will try to understand the necessity for keeping Torah and mitzvot and then once he has understood he will learn more Torah.

"This is like a sick person who says that he is not going to take medicine for his illness until he has finished his study of medicine and then he can understand with his intellect how these medicines work to alleviate his sickness and heal him. On the contrary, through taking medicine his intellect will be strengthened so that he will be able to understand more easily and readily when he begins to learn. When Mr. X, may he live long, through keeping mitzvot and particularly putting on tefillin and eating kosher and his wife, may she be careful in the running of the home and lighting candles on the Sabbath and Erev Yom Tov (the eve of Yom Tov) and before lighting candles gives tzedakah, then Hashem will merit them to be able to announce speedily the good news about improvement of their health."

In another letter, the Rebbe emphasises the relation between Torah study, the performance of mitzvot and physical health:

"I received your request for a blessing, to request that you get a blessing to arouse great mercy that you should have correct health and when I will be at the monument of my father-in-law I will read out this request to Hashem that he should fulfil this request in the best way for what you need. It is known that in order to receive blessings of heaven above, man below needs to prepare suitable vessels and that the vessels to receive all blessings in Torah. I suggest therefore that you take upon yourself to keep the three lessons which are equal for all in our community, and my father-in-law has decreed that is: saying sections of Tehillim (psalms) everyday in the mornings and after prayers, as the psalms are divided into days of the month, learning sections of the **Homesh** (Pentateuch) every day from the sedra of the week and also lessons from Tanya as it was divided up into days of the year. Certainly there will be good vessels for drawing down and receiving blessings.

The Rebbe points out the one-to-one relationship between the Torah as a text and the parts of the physical body:

"That which you write that on account of your preparation for your wedding, which should be a good and successful hour, you have been forced to interrupt

some of your fixed time for learning Torah. This does not appear to be right at all. On the contrary, if in normal periods one has to strengthen and grasp Torah, because this is the channel for drawing down and receiving blessings and success, how much more so that one needs this thing when one is preparing to get married. And even if it is true that one has many preoccupations when one is preparing to get married and one might have to shorten and to abbreviate these periods for learning, one must not completely abandon them. Because we do not know which branch of Torah one needs at such and such a time or in such and such a place and with this one can share the sayings of the **Chochanim** [scholars] in Eruvin 54a 'someone who has a headache should learn Torah and someone who has a sore throat should learn Torah etc. and there will be a healing.' So the question is obvious, that we see someone who has a headache and learns Torah. Even so he is not immediately healed. There are many solutions to this question. One of them is that the Torah is a whole entity, the Torah is called man, therefore there are parts of it which are relevant to the head and parts of it which are relevant to the throat etc. When one has a headache and engages in Torah, Hashem will merit him that he will be able to find that part of Torah relevant to the head and then he will be healed."

Rabbi Gordon was keen to teach me about language and healing and how certain words represent states of sickness and health. Using the idea of

gematria, the homiletical rule which associates words or phrases whose letters add up to the same numerical value, he explained :

"Light is the most basic metaphor used in the Torah to describe Godliness. The English word heal is pronounced as in the Hebrew word **hela** which means shining. Healing means restoring a person to a state in which his godly life force shines forth as it should, a state in which he can receive and emit the effulgence of the divine light. The word for sickness in Hebrew is pronounced **choli**, and is related to the word **cholal** which means hollow or empty space, and also to **chol** which means secular or profane. Sickness is a state in which a person becomes void of light and spiritual content. Sickness reflects both a spiritual and physical blockage. This has a negative effect on his physical well being."

"The root **chola** means to be sick and it occurs five times in the Torah. The number five is important in several concepts having to do with the annulment of sickness. Health depends on achieving a proper balance between body and soul, between material and form. The body is the raw material, while the soul which is connected with the divine is the form which must mould and shape the physical. The combined numerical value of these two Hebrew words for material and form is 555. The number five represents completion or perfection."

"The Hebrew root meaning to heal is **rofua**. From the letters of rofua derives the word **for**, meaning resplendence, the shining beauty resulting from balance and harmony. Health is a state in which all the necessary elements are in balance, resulting in radiant beauty. The Hebrew word for can be analyzed through its component parts which mean opening and light. The balanced state creates an opening for light resulting in health. If one wishes to be healed, let him fill his mouth with Godly light. The numerical value of the Hebrew word for 'healing' is 287. The number 287 is also the sum total of the numerical value for the two Hebrew words for 'good' (17) and 'bad' (270). This shows that healing makes constructive use of man's good and evil inclinations, combining them together but with good in the dominant position."

"The healing power of Torah and mitzvot stems from the fact that the mitzvot constitute man's spiritual body. According to Rabbi Chaim Vital, the 365 negative commandments correspond to the 365 sinews of the physical body while the 248 positive commandments correspond to the 248 organs. Thus it is written "From my flesh I see God" (Job 19:26). Through the 613 parts of the physical body, one can see the spiritual body that was created in the image of God.

"The power of the mitzvot to bring about unity between body and soul, and between man and God, is revealed in the number 613, the number of commandments in the Torah. This is the total numerical value of the two words

'connection' (600) and 'one' (13). Moreover, when we add together the digits of 613 the total is ten standing for completion and perfection. Through the performance of mitzvot, a person connects himself with his soul and his creator on all ten dimensions of existence. On the level of Torah study, the Jew's most basic obligation is to recite the Shema twice daily. The full form of the Shema consists of three paragraphs from the Torah. Their 248 words correspond to the 248 organs of the human body. Each word of the Shema gives life to a particular limb. There is an important connection between the body and the soul. Man's spiritual body corresponds to his physical body on the level of the mitzvot, on the level of the Shema and it can also be shown of the five Books of Moses. In several Kabbalistic texts this relationship is emphasised."

"In the Sefer Yitzirah, an ancient work of Kabbalah, there is a system of correspondences that connects man's physical body with his spiritual body, but also with the other basic features of creation. For example, it states that each month of the year is associated with a particular letter of the Hebrew alphabet and a part of the body. In the Zohar there is a link between the physical and spiritual body and the passage of time. According to this, each of the 365 negative commandments is connected to a particular day of the year and an organ of the body. Someone who violates that commandment causes damage to that day of the year and that organ. For example, the ninth of Av (Tisha Ba Av) is connected with the sciatic nerve (9)."

CHAPTER 8

MESSIANIC EXPECTATIONS IN STAMFORD HILL

"The final redemption is no longer a dream of a distant future, but an imminent reality." (the Rebbe)

"I believe with complete faith in the coming of the Messiah, even though he should tarry, nevertheless, I shall wait for his coming every day." (Maimonides Twelfth *Principle of Faith*)

Maimonides, in his commentary (1180 CE) on the Mishnah, compiled what he referred to as the *Shlosh Asar Ikkarim*, the thirteen principles of faith. Number twelve relates to the belief in the arrival of the Messiah and the messianic era. These thirteen principles are recited after the prayers after meals, during the wedding ceremony, and again on festivals and fast days. Not only is there an obligation to believe in the advent of the Messiah, there is also an obligation to actively prepare for his arrival.

"We shall believe and affirm that he will come, and we shall not think that he will be late. If he should tarry, wait for him." (Habakkuk 2:3). Nor should one attempt to derive the date of his coming from scriptural verses. The sages had said "May the

souls expire of those who calculate the date of the coming of the Messiah" (Sanhedrin 79b).

The Hebrew word for Messiah is *Mosiach* ('anointed one') and was applied to various individuals in the Bible, kings, priests, prophets who were regarded as being divinely commissioned for a sacred task (1). The term is not used in its later eschatological sense. This is a post-biblical development in which there was to be a future king descended from King David who would usher in the redemption. These events also include various other actors apart from the Messiah of the house of David : Elijah redivivus, the 'son of man', a Moses like prophet, a 'True Priest', and a warrior Messiah of the house of Joseph. Events which would occur include: the ingathering of the exiles, the rebuilding of the Temple, the conversion of the gentiles, the successful war of the forces of light against the forces of darkness under their kings Gog and Magog, the reign of the messiah king, the day of judgement, the resurrection of the dead, and the world to come (2). As Sharot (1982:47) points out, this "dualistic conception of two worlds, in which the future hope would be realised in transcendental as well as terrestrial realms" was a post-exilic development. Cohn (1993) argues that this idea of a radical and final transformation of the cosmos originally derived from Zoroasterian culture (3).

These ideas were accepted by the Pharisees and rabbis, and during the subsequent centuries Jewish messianic expectancy fluctuated, growing in intensity at times of persecution and suffering. The history of Judaism is replete with examples of

messianic claimants, with messianic expectations being higher during certain historical epochs, particularly so during the period of the Crusades and following the exile from Spain in 1492. The Shabbatean movement has been discussed in detail above. For Jews in the medieval and early modern periods, to hope for the advent of the Messiah was an important article of faith, formulated by Maimonides in his *Mishneh Torah* (1180):

"And all those who do not believe in the Messiah or do not wait his coming, not only do they deny the truth of the words of the prophets, but they reject the truth of the entire Torah and our master Moses."

Maimonides adopted a rather 'this worldly' position on the messianic age: "the only difference between this world and the days of the messiah is the subjection of Israel to the nations." Although the kingdom of David was to be restored, the Temple rebuilt, the ancient laws and sacrifices reinstated, and the Jews gathered in from the exile, there would be no miracles, no changes in nature and no end to history. This position must be contrasted with the position of many Jewish scholars such as Nachmanides, for whom the revival of the kingdom of David was to be accompanied by changes in nature, indeed in the whole cosmos, and in man's moral character. Nachmanides argues that the messianic era will be associated with radical changes in the world.

Maimonides' *Mishne Torah* (Laws of Kings) is the authoritative codification of Jewish law concerning Mosiach. Belief in the coming of Mosiach and messianic redemption is one of the fundamentals of Jewish faith. Maimonides, wrote that "Every Jew must believe the Mosiach will arise and restore the kingdom of David to its original state; rebuild the **Bet Hamikdosh** [holy temple in Jerusalem] and gather the dispersed of Israel."

Some authorities view this belief as an integral part of the first, and most fundamental of the ten commandments. The belief in Mosiach is again expressed in the daily silent devotion, the *Amidah* : "for all your salvation we hope all day."

The messianic era will also mark: the end of evil and sin (Ezekiel 37, Zephaniah 3); bring universal awareness; perception and knowledge of God (Isaiah 11:9); bring all mankind to worship God in unity (Zephaniah 3:9, Isaiah 2:2); bring universal peace and harmony (Isaiah 2:4, Mica 4:3); initiate the resurrection of the dead (Isaiah 26:19) and eradicate illness and death (Isaiah 25:8). Mosiach will be a human person, a descendent of King David (Isaiah 11:1), born in normal fashion of human parents (Zohar) who has achieved the status of a Zaddik, being completely righteous (4).

Throughout the centuries men have attempted to bring forward the coming of the millennium and 'force the end' to use Buber's phrase. Both militaristic and non militaristic methods were used. In the latter, men believed that their religious actions such as repentance, would bring the millennium closer as exemplified by the

Essenes who lived at Qumran (150 BCE to 68 CE). Even if it was not possible to hasten the millennium, its date might be calculated by some by numerical interpretations of biblical passages such as the *Book of Daniel*, the numerical logic in the periods of previous exiles, gematria, the numerical value of letters and astrology. This practice was strongly opposed by those who maintained that the date could not be known to man and that to claim to calculate it would result in the raising of false hopes. The Jewish literature is full of warnings not to calculate the messianic era and not to be easily swayed by false messiahs. The Talmud tells that Joshua Ben Levi met the Messiah sitting among the lepers at the gates of Rome. When the rabbi asked him when he was coming he answered, 'today'. Later it was explained to the rabbi that the Messiah had not told him a lie but was simply quoting the verse from Psalm 95: "Today, if you harken to his voice." Any day might be the time of the coming of the Messiah if men only listened to God's voice.

Although as Sholem (1971) argues, early Chassidism may have been associated with a neutralisation of messianism, among certain contemporary Chassidic groups a strong interest in messianism is prominent which extends so far as stating that their own Rebbe is Mosiach. Examples of such groups include Lubavitch and Bratslav Chassidism.

Messianic teachings have always been important among Lubavitchers which look forward to both the advent of Mosiach and the future redemption. Among Stamford Hill Lubavitcher Chassidim there has been an escalation of messianic

fervour in the past few years. Among the numerous Lubavitcher campaigns the "Mosiach campaign" is considered to be the most important, with much time and money being devoted to propagating information about the Messiah and ultimately to hasten his arrival. This chapter presents a number of interviews with Lubavitchers about the topic of Mosiach and describes the increase in messianic activity following the Rebbe's first (1992) and second (1994) illnesses. The term messianic will be used as opposed to the term millennial. Much of the activity centred around propagating the idea that the Rebbe was Mosiach and whether or not he would die. There was relatively little discussion of the redemption and no one gave up their job or sold their house in anticipation of the imminent redemption.

The Messiah Campaign in Stamford Hill

In the early 1980's Lubavitch began a "We want Mosiach" campaign to popularise the certainty that the arrival of the Messiah was imminent. This campaign increased in momentum over the next few years with frequent advertisements appearing in Jewish newspapers about the topic of Mosiach. One popular advert, entitled "Draw your own conclusion," stated:

"These are amazing times. The Iron Curtain has crumbled. Iraq is humbled. The people of Israel emerge whole from under a rainstorm of murderous missiles.... An entire beleaguered population is air lifted to safety overnight.... A tidal wave of

Russian Jews reaches Israel... Nations around the world turn to democracy.... Plus countless other amazing developments that are taking place in front of our eyes. Any of these phenomena by itself is enough to boggle the mind. Connect them all together and a pattern emerges that cannot be ignored.... The Lubavitcher Rebbe emphasises that these remarkable events are merely a prelude to the final redemption. The era of Mosiach is upon us. Learn about it. Be part of it. All you have to do is open your eyes. Inevitably, you will draw your own conclusion."

Although the Rebbe never openly encouraged messianic expectation, he did little to condemn it. A number of public statements were made by the Rebbe in relation to Mosiach. Although Mosiach was always a favourite topic of discourse for the Rebbe, on April 11, 1991, the contents of his discourse changed from his usual *sicha* (discourse) to an injunction:

"What more can I do to motivate the entire Jewish people to.... actually bring about the coming of Mosiach? All that I can possibly do is to give the matter over to you now, immediately.... I have done whatever I can; from now on you must do whatever you can...."

Lubavitchers were stunned by this injunction and started organising teachings and directives about the messianic redemption. The Rebbe's talks on Mosiach were published and classes were organised to teach messianic topics. Mosiach became a

major topic of discussion and soon Lubavitchers talked of the Rebbe himself being the Mosiach.

Shortly afterwards the Rebbe not only spoke about yearning for the coming of Mosiach but also about his imminent arrival. "Mosiach's coming is no longer a dream of a distant future, but an imminent reality which will very shortly become manifest" (Rebbe's Sichah, April 1991).

In September that year, the Rebbe stated that only if Jews believed with absolute certainty that the Messiah would come as redeemer, would such an event occur. When the Jewish New Year was approaching he said, "When the divine service of the Jewish people over the centuries is considered as a whole, everything that is necessary to bring about the redemption has been accomplished. There is no valid explanation for the continuance of the exile" (Rebbe's Sichah September 1991).

The Rebbe's statements had a profound effect on the Stamford Hill Lubavitchers. Mosiach became a major topic of conversation, as did life after the redemption. Issues such as the types of food permitted after the redemption were commonplace. One discussion centred around whether people would still have bodies at this time. After a short time Lubavitchers discussed not just the imminent arrival of Mosiach but that the Rebbe *was* the Mosiach. A Mosiach campaign was launched. Rabbi Gordon, the head of the boy's yeshivah in Hendon, explained:

"What is the Mosiach campaign ? Well I shall tell you. A few years ago the Rebbe began speaking about the fact that we are closer to the coming of Mosiach and that he is literally on our doorstep. We should learn about Mosiach and what will occur when he comes. There has been an onslaught to get as many people as possible to understand what the concept of Mosiach is and its importance."

"In the past, people have got uptight about Mosiach and disregarded the subject because it was esoteric. People were uneasy about it because it was not as tangible as other Jewish topics. Every other Jewish topic can be easily situated in the Jewish literature. A good example is the law relating to the conduct of business. We don't know that much about the Mosiach, there is some mystery about him. Although the Rambam [Maimonides] wrote about it in his thirteen Principles of Faith, there are many questions that remain which cannot be answered until he arrives. The raw materials are here. To set up a building is not so easy.

"Jews have been reluctant to discuss Mosiach. In 1492 after the Spanish exile people thought that the Mosiach would come but he did not. After Sabbatei Szevi people were afraid of false messiahs. Szevi caused a major problem. When he converted to Islam it was like a cataclysm for the Jewish people. However in every generation there is a potential Mosiach. Now we know the Mosiach will imminently come, since the Rebbe said so. Redemption is a cumulative process. We have done more than enough for him to arrive. The Rebbe said `Do a Mitzvah and bring Mosiach closer.

"As part of the campaign to bring Mesiach we make use of books, seminar lectures. There was a time when the tefillin was a forgotten thing by many Jews. In the 1960s Lubavitch started a campaign to reintroduce these into Jewish life. The campaign revolutionised their use. Similarly the Mesiach campaign is part of Jewish education. At the end of the day this is the major part of Jewish theology. There is nothing wrong with using modern day technology to propagate the idea of Mesiach.

"Today only one person fulfils the criteria for Mesiach. This is the Lubavitcher Rebbe. If pressed, all Lubavitchers will say he is Mesiach. There is no other candidate. We are nearly out of our predicament now. Many miraculous things are happening such as the fall of Communism. The redemption is not here yet but we are in the beginnings of it.

"There is some debate amongst Lubavitchers concerning the Mesiach campaign. What is the best way to conduct it? Some say that we should not say the Rebbe is Mesiach. I disagree with this. I feel that Lubavitchers must say that the Rebbe is Mesiach. I personally feel one cannot talk about one without the other. If you are serious minded there is nothing wrong with saying the Rebbe is Mesiach. It will not turn people off."

The Mosiach campaign included: an explosion of books about Mosiach in Hebrew and English; lectures and seminars in the community on messianic topics; posters placed in houses and shops, and stickers in cars stating "Mosiach is coming soon, let's be ready." Perhaps the most effective way of propagating these ideas involved a number of public meetings where messianic ideas were discussed. In April 1993 there was a "Mosiach awareness" caravan tour. A motorcade of three specially prepared motor caravans otherwise known as 'Mitzvah Tanks' embarked on a tour around Britain to provide information about the concept of Mosiach and its significance for Jewish life and belief. It was launched by the non-Jewish mayor of Hackney while a Chassidic band offered musical entertainment. A public discussion was held in the grounds of Lubavitch House which focused on a number of messianic issues including one talk entitled 'Taking the first steps towards miracle making'. This nationwide 'Mosiach awareness caravan' was one of a series of educational projects undertaken by the Lubavitch Foundation UK as part of the worldwide campaign initiated by the Lubavitcher Rebbe. These mobile units carry books, brochures, tapes, educational material as well as religious articles such as tefillin, mezuzot and shabbat candlesticks.

I spoke to Aaron Abrahams, a twenty-year old yeshivah student who himself was involved in running this campaign in April 1993:

"On their current assignment, the mitzvah mobile staff will endeavour to communicate the idea that belief in Mosiach is a central theme within Judaism and

that anticipation for Mosiach has always been integral to Jewish belief, life and observance. The Lubavitcher Rebbe has asked that the Jewish people should study what the Torah teaches about Mosiach and, further to prepare ourselves for the imminent arrival of Mosiach. This will signify the commencement of a new historical epoch, when the world will change for the better on every level. The signs on the caravans will announce 'Mosiach is about to change the world for good' and 'Your Mitzvah can make a world of difference.'

"There has been a great deal of media attention on the Jewish idea of Mosiach, much of it is inaccurate. Although observant Jews repeatedly mention this concept in their daily prayers, for many people it is highly enigmatic and is relegated to the theological closet. This project will give people the opportunity to ask questions and get answers from traditional Jewish sources on this most crucial topic.

Although many Lubavitchers privately admitted that the Rebbe was Mosiach, the 'official' response of Lubavitcher Chassidim, when asked whether the Rebbe was Mosiach was to carefully stop short of claiming outright that the Rebbe was or will be revealed as Mosiach. Their invariable line when questioned by outsiders is that all Jews are required to believe in the coming of the Messiah, that the Talmudic sources say that the Messiah will arise from amongst the people and, "Do you know of anyone alive today who fits the bill better than the Rebbe?"

The messianic fervour caused some degree of split within the movement into two camps: those who thought it was important to publicly state the Rebbe was Mosiach and those who disagreed with this. The topics of Mosiach and the redemption have always been considered an important part of Lubavitch public thinking, and the organisation running Lubavitch from Crown Heights called **Aggudut Chassidei Chabad** encouraged publication of literature about Mosiach but not that the Rebbe was Mosiach. When posters appeared in Jerusalem stating that the Rebbe was Mosiach, there was some condemnation of this from Lubavitch and in 1990 a newspaper article appeared in an Israeli newspaper decrying this idea as extreme. In Stamford Hill there was an outreach movement run by Lubavitch devoted specifically to propagating messianic ideas, yet not explicitly stating the Rebbe was Mosiach although privately some members of this committee argued this to be the case. In both Crown Heights and in Stamford Hill an influential movement arose which was not part of mainstream Lubavitch. This called itself **Mutteh Mosiach**, meaning the Staff of Mosiach. They publicly spoke and advertised that the Rebbe was Mosiach and would lead the Jewish people into the coming redemption. Those members of Lubavitch who disagreed with them labelled them as 'fanatics' and one Lubavitcher even referred to them as insane. (5)

Between October 1992 and September 1993 much of my time was taken up discussing messianic expectations. During this period the Rebbe continued to be ill following his stroke in March 1992.

Rabbi Rabin sat with me one afternoon and started to speak about the Messiah. He is actively involved in the Mosiach campaign and gives a weekly Shiur entitled 'From Exile to Redemption,' which examines ideas about the Messiah deriving from the Talmud and Tanya:

"The messianic campaign tries to achieve a change in consciousness. There are no Lubavitchers who do not believe the Rebbe is the Mosiach. We do not disagree on this. What is at issue is how to propagate information about the Mosiach. We can see the beginnings of the messianic age. There was the first ever bloodless revolution in Communist Russia, not one single shot was fired. This was a miracle. We now have the technology to change suffering. Things which we have only had for the past fifty years such as telephones can aid communication and stop suffering (6).

"I know there is still suffering and poverty but now businesses are beginning to give small amounts of money to the Third World. This is significant. This change in consciousness must involve a change in trust. We need to develop a system of mutual trust in business. For instance if a person sells something for ten pounds and states that he bought it for five pounds but it would cost you five pounds to go and get it; and you have trust in what he says, this is mutual trust."

"The Rebbe Schlita (Menachem Schneerson) said two years ago that the process of Tikkun is complete. It may be however some time between this process and the

messianic arrival. There is still evil but this in time will disappear. The completion of the Tikkun represents the beginning of the messianic era."

Another instance:

Yitzhuk Friedlander, a 25 year old man originally from Buffalo, New York, has lived in London for 10 years, and works as a rabbi. He was born into a non-orthodox family and only became religious at the age of 13 when he met the Rebbe. He has spent several years on a yeshiva in New York and has recently come to the UK. Yitzhuk is married and has a son of six months. According to him:

"Maimonides wrote in his Twelfth Article of Faith that not only should we believe in the coming of the Messiah but we should actively look forward to his coming. We have to believe in his coming every day. Most people say the thirteen principles of faith every day. We ask for peace, freedom from starvation, jealousy, and suffering. In the modern world there is so much suffering, so much bloodshed. How can any normal human even think that the messiah will not come for another day? As a person with a heart it should be unthinkable to be able to sleep at night without the messiah. What happens if a Jew is taken to a concentration camp in Siberia and his tefillin are taken away? How would he react? A Jew fights for his tefillin. There are 613 mitzvot in the Torah. How many can we do with the Temple destroyed? Only half. If a person in Siberia cannot sleep without his tefillin [one

mitzvah] how can anyone sleep because we are without so many mitzvot ? These will occur once the Temple is rebuilt. It is one thing that Mosiach will do.

"It is within our hands to enhance this process. The coming of the Messiah is the ultimate purpose of the creation. Every mitzvah works towards this goal. Its not like waiting for a bus, we have no control over the bus but can bring Mosiach by the performance of **tzedakah**. We must learn the laws of the Messiah. The Rebbe says we pray and demand the Mosiach. In the *Shmonei Esrei* we ask for many things such as health and sustenance and there are 9 blessings about the Mosiach. This is the ultimate purpose of creation.

"There were many generations more holy than us. They could not bring Mosiach. It is a cumulative process. They brought him much closer. Perhaps we are doing the final things and are 'midgets on the shoulder of a giant'. Mosiach will be the man who rebuilds the temple, gathers in the exiles and brings world peace. Maimonides in his *Book of Kings*, chapters 11-12, states that the Messiah will be a descendent of King David, someone dedicated to the Torah. I believe the Rebbe is the Mosiach. He has all the qualities needed for Mosiach. The Rebbe is the Mosiach but the redemption has not yet come.

"Say the Rebbe would not be ill. Would this make his life easier? He has much more to do, bringing in the exiles and rebuilding the temple. His job is equally difficult whether he is healthy or not. God directs the world. I cannot say why he

has become ill. There are many prophecies about the Messiah being sick. Isaiah talks of the suffering servant. The servant suffers for our sins. The messiah who suffers for our sins is a Jewish idea. But in Judaism the Messiah does not atone for our sins. Even if the Rebbe suffers it does not mean we do not have to atone. We have to get ourselves off the hook. In the Sanhedrin Talmud the Mosiach is someone called a leper. The Rebbe is getting better. Last Pessach he could not swallow matzah but this year he swallowed some matzah.

"In the past we have thought that a person was the Mosiach, but it turned out not to be so. For example Bar Kochba and Isaac Luria were said to be the Mosiach. They however died. The Arizel [Isaac Luria] failed not because he was a false messiah but because the generation did not merit it. Now many world leaders say it is the time for the redemption. The previous Rebbe also said this. All the leaders say that the exile is over and the redemption is coming now. There have been many miracles recently such as the brevity of the Gulf war, the ingathering of people into Israel, the fall of Communism. Swords are really turning into ploughshares. The Rebbe says that the Mosiach is coming. We take this as a fact. What the Rebbe says we believe. The Rebbe is always right." (7)

However, not everyone in the community was so certain that the Rebbe was Mosiach.

Mr Zeitlin, whom we have met stated:

"I suppose I am a heretic ! Of course the Rebbe Schlita may be the Mosiach but so may another Rebbe. In every generation there is a potential Mosiach, the Rebbe Shlita is the most likely candidate, he's done a lot for Judaism, bringing people back etc. I think people want to be convinced about the Rebbe Shilita. Ten percent are convinced, eighty percent want to be convinced and ten percent are not sure. People go around with the group and follow whatever is said. They are like automatons. I prefer to have my own ideas. The Rebbe may be Mosiach but I am unsure. I hope he is. Although people say that he is better, I don't feel that he is. He is not really communicating with anyone."

Similarly, other Lubavitchers were quite sceptical about the Rebbe being Mosiach although were very reluctant to discuss the matter and I had to reassure them that what they said was confidential.

Sarah Levine is a thirty-eight year old married lady working as a librarian at Lubavitch House. She is married to another Lubavitcher librarian whom we have already met and the couple have four children. Her parents were not religious and she herself became an Orthodox Jewess at the age of 16 after attending several Lubavitch meetings in Manchester. She is a short plump lady who comes across as being very gentle, unlike her husband who is known for his fiery temper. She had the following to say:

"I cannot come to terms with the fact that the Rebbe is the Messiah. If Mosiach comes will he be the Lubavitcher Rebbe? I think he will be a Jew. I think a lot of this messianic behaviour is strange. They were even talking about making a crown to crown the Rebbe as Mosiach on his anniversary. This would have cost thousands of dollars. My son is embarrassed to go to 770. He does not think it is the right thing to do with all this fuss about Mosiach. Hashem dictates when the time is right, he must give some sign that the time is right. The people cannot force the Mosiach to reveal himself. I think Lubavitchers have been enforcing this role on the Rebbe. Because of this stress the Rebbe has become ill. I don't feel that this is a stage that he must go through before his revelation, although people say this is the case. It seems to me like a retrospective interpretation. There is an analogy between the Rebbe and Moshe Revenu [Moses]. Moshe could not speak before the Exodus. Aaron was his speaker. Like Moshe so the Rebbe cannot speak. Recently the Rebbe tried to speak but we could not understand. People read something into this.

"I feel I should be a believer. I don't want to do the wrong thing. If, God forbid, I was wrong what could be my position? I do not feel that the Rebbe can be wrong ever. People do not entertain the thought that the Rebbe could die. Outsiders ask who will follow him? Lubavitchers believe the Mosiach will not die. I believe the Rebbe is only human and will die. I don't know what will happen then. It frightens me. Where would people be and what would they say? Would they say that they were wrong? Would they say that he is coming back?

"We have not had a lot of personal experience of the Rebbe. My husband wrote to the Rebbe asking for a bracha for my infertility. The Rebbe said 'Ask the advice of a specialist'. I had already done this when I had a problem with infertility. By the time I received the letter I was already pregnant. I could not work out what this advice about seeing a specialist meant. At thirty-eight weeks pregnant a specialist came to see me and told me I had pre-eclampsia and needed an urgent Caesarian section which I had. Perhaps this was the specialist which he had referred to? I have no other personal experience of miracle stories. Perhaps if I did, I would feel different. I have not received a personal letter from the Rebbe. Not that I doubt the Rebbe's greatness. Perhaps I am not a worthy person. It worries me that I disbelieve.

"A petition came round a week ago drawn up by women in America saying they wanted the Rebbe to reveal himself. I refused to sign it. It is not right to sign this petition, it accepted that the Rebbe was Mosiach. I don't know where my views came from. Perhaps they started when I read a book about Shabbatai Szevi. People tell me that Szevi sinned against all the mitzvot.

"Although the Messiah campaign is important there are many other problems to worry about in the community. I've personally had problems in this community. My child was thrown out of school for being disruptive, the teachers could not cope. The Lubavitcher school was not very understanding. Some people are so concerned with Mosiach that they do not consider everyday problems. The

financial situation is very bad here, many of us are not being paid. If you ask questions you are given the cold shoulder. Lubavitch does not have money for paying its employees. I ask for money and am told that a letter has been written to me about it. If they don't have the money they should write and tell me. With all this talk about Mosiach they can't even behave well man to man.

"If someone does not believe in all of this, can they call themselves a Lubavitcher ? Rabbi Ruskin says that anyone who is affected by the Rebbe is called a Lubavitcher. I should not really be saying all of this. It may be a sin. Perhaps the Rebbe knows that I'm criticising him. Something may happen to me. In the book *Wonders and Miracles* there are stories about people who have gone against the Rebbe's advice and been harmed. He has divine intuition. Someone was told to close their shop on Shabbat which they refused to do and the shop burnt down. There is another story about Kappel Rosen, the founder of Carmel College. He unfortunately had leukaemia. Someone gave him a copy of Tanya. As soon as he started to read it he got better. He went to the Rebbe and told everyone this story about the Tanya. The Rebbe said you should not have made a big noise about all this. Shortly afterwards he relapsed."

"Messiah Arouses Rival Rabbi's Wrath"

As the Messiah campaign grew in intensity, other ultra-Orthodox groups publicly criticised Lubavitch (Beeston 1992). In February 1992 an article appeared in the

Times newspaper describing the response of Rabbi Shach to Lubavitchers' claims that their leader was the Messiah. The ninety-two year old spiritual leader of *Degel Hatorah*, the newest of Israel's ultra-Orthodox Jewish parties, referred to the Lubavitcher Rebbe a heretic who harboured messianic pretensions. He claimed his disagreement was specifically with the Lubavitcher Rebbe, not with Chassidism in general (8). His supporters justified their attacks on the Lubavitcher Rebbe by arguing that they were intended to avert a potential tragedy, akin to that of Sabbatai Zevi (9) and to prevent the dangerous wave of disillusionment when the Rebbe eventually died without fulfilling the messianic promise.

Rabbi Shach's party newspaper *Yatred Ne'Eman* compiled a collection of Chabad writings and statements over recent years in which his followers venerated him as Mosiach. Among the counts on the charge sheet were, "Contrary to the traditional formulation of Jewish yearning for the coming of the Messiah, today's Lubavitch speaks of the *Revelation* of the Messiah for obvious reasons.... "

"A 1983 Israeli Chabad publication described the scene in New York at the inauguration of the Lubavitch youth movement *Tsivot Hashem* (the Armies of the Lord): "Tsivot Hashem is the army of redemption, the army of King Messiah. At its inauguration we all witnessed a heavenly sight when... the pure souled Jewish children encircled the tzaddik of our generation.... and this holy flock, crouching at the feet of the shepherd and leader of Israel, all pointed at him with their fingers

and, in voices both beseeching and demanding, called out, "We want Mosiach now. We are not prepared to wait any longer."

"In a discourse one Shabbat in 1984, the Rebbe stressed that every single Jew has the power and duty to help bring about the coming of the Messiah, "and not just tomorrow or some time in the future, but right here and now.... as though you could open your eyes and see that the Messiah is here with us in this synagogue, flesh and blood, body and spirit... "

The article in *Yatred* concluded:

"Anyone determined to be disingenuous can claim that the Rebbe was merely seeking to strengthen their faith in the principle that the Messiah can appear imminently. But anyone familiar with the special messianic fervour and tension of Lubavitch must understand that the words 'here with us in this synagogue, flesh and blood.... ' had a very particular significance."

The Rebbe's Illness

In March 1992 the Rebbe suffered a stroke which rendered him speechless and paralysed on the right hand side. Despite this profound incapacity to look after himself, his followers described the stroke as 'mild'. Following this he was unable to give dollars but his followers continued to write to him asking for blessings. His

secretary would read the letters to him and he would gesticulate an answer by moving his head up or down. In Brooklyn, he would be seen frequently although unpredictably at prayer service sometimes twice a day and sometimes less than once a week. In order to ensure that his followers would be present when he came out, they carried *Mosiach* beepers. When he came onto the platform of the Synagogue in '770' a message would be flashed on the beeper "MHM is on the platform" (meaning *Melech ha Mosiach*, "king *Mosiach* is on the platform "). The beepers were supposedly programmed to flash the number 7-7-0 the moment the Rebbe revealed himself as *Mosiach*. When the beeper sounded, hundreds of Lubavitchers could be seen running towards '770' to see the Rebbe. One Lubavitcher said "Mosiach could come any day, we hope today he will reveal himself". Other followers waited patiently in the synagogue in the hope that he would come out. Sometimes they would wait all day but to no avail.

At the times when he was seen, the curtains would suddenly be pulled back and the Rebbe would be seen sitting on a chair surrounded by his secretaries. Immediately there would be a chorus of **Yechi Adoneinu Moreinu Rabenu Melech Ha Mosiach Leolam Vaed** (Long live our master, our teacher and our Rebbe, King *Mosiach*, forever and ever). As this was sung, the Rebbe smiled and moved his left arm about.

On a daily basis a message was faxed to Lubavitch House in Stamford Hill informing his followers about what went on that day. For example on the 5th July,

1993, it stated "Monday, the Rebbe's *Minchah* [afternoon prayer] was about 2.15 pm and *ma'ariv* [evening prayer] was about 9.40 pm. After mincha, the Rebbe was on the porch about three minutes and after about two minutes. `Yechi Hamelech *Hamisiach*' was sung. The Rebbe participated by moving his lips, nodding his head and drumming his fingers."

The Rebbe's illness was frequently discussed in Stamford Hill. Publicly Lubavitchers stated that he would recover and his stroke was the significant event which would usher in the messianic era. Talk of Mosiach increased and the fact that the Rebbe could not talk did nothing to detract Lubavitchers from messianic pronouncements. There was increased discourse about Mosiach, more meetings, adverts and books about messianic topics. Assertion that the Rebbe was Mosiach intensified.

A number of explanations were given for the Rebbe's illness often based on biblical and Talmudic sources. They deployed the writings of Maimonides to argue that the Rebbe himself had chosen to become ill and had taken on the suffering of the Jewish people. It was a process he had to go through before revealing himself. He was as Maimonides had described "a man of pains and acquainted with sickness.... indeed he has borne our sickness and endured our pains " (Isaiah 52-53). Rabbi Rabin explained how he could be healed:

"The soul of the Rebbe represents the group soul of the Jewish people. His suffering represents the suffering of every Jew. It is like a body and a head, the Rebbe being

the head of the Jewish body. The two cannot exist independently. If the body is sick it can give rise to a headache. If the brain does not work, how can the body function? If every Jew does not perform good deeds the Jewish body will become sick and in turn the Rebbe. If more Jews perform these deeds the Rebbe will recover."

Lubavitchers attempted to restore the health of the Rebbe by the recitation of psalms. Every day Lubavitchers were encouraged to say extra psalms. Shortly after his first stroke a **Sefer Torah** (scroll containing the text of the Torah) was written in New York, and every Lubavitcher was asked to donate a pound towards each of its letters. The aim of writing this was to perfect the Rebbe's soul and in turn his body. Rabbi Rabin was enthusiastic to me about this:

"All Jewish souls are tied to the Rebbe's soul. In the Torah there are six hundred thousand words (three hundred and twenty-eight thousand complete words and two hundred and seventy-two thousand incomplete words). In the world there are six hundred thousand general souls (each divides up into many more souls). These general souls are linked to the Rebbe's soul. By writing a perfect Torah, the Rebbe's souls becomes perfect again and this will affect his body. The Rebbe must first undergo a descent into the realm of evil to redeem the souls of sinners. This descent on the spiritual plane is associated with physical sickness."

The Rebbe had another stroke in 1994, almost two years after his first stroke. This time he was comatose. From the time of his stroke on March 10th, until his death on June 12th, 1994, he was on a ventilator and never regained consciousness. There was consternation in the Stamford Hill community and the Rebbe's sickness was the sole talking point. Despite various secular newspaper reports alleging that the Rebbe was "brain dead" or "without brain function", his followers continued declaring him as Mosiach. When questioned about the meaning of the Rebbe's second stroke, the answers given were categorically "Mosiach" and that "We are on the threshold of a Messianic era". Messianic propoganda now increased in ever greater intensity. Extra meetings were held where psalms were said. Thousands of his followers slept in the hospital where the Rebbe lay, reciting psalms in the hope that he would arise.

During this period I interviewed several Lubavitchers in London about his illness. Although no one publicly discussed the possibility that he could die and who his successor would be (The Rebbe had no children to succeed him), in private several people admitted their concerns about his death. One person said, "I know the Rebbe is a great man, but he is human after all and is about ninety-three years of age. I think he could die. I hope for the sake of Lubavitch that he does not but we must face this possibility. If he died how will Lubavitchers account for his death and what will happen to their messianic beliefs?"

Publicly, however, the official line was that his illness signified the imminent arrival of the messianic era and forthcoming redemption. As Rabbi Rabin now put it:

"The Rebbe is now in a state of concealment. The Jews could not see Moses on Mount Sinai and thought he was dead. They built the golden calf and had a vision of him lying dead on a bier whereas he was in fact alive but was in a state of concealment. He [the Rebbe] is in a state of **Chinoplet**, a trance like state where the soul leaves the body. The Soul of the Rebbe has to go down to the lower realms to drag up the souls of the sinners. He must do this before he declares himself as Mosiach. The spiritual energy required to bring Mosiach is very great and his body is depleted of energy. It is only now that we have the medical technology to keep him alive. We should not be sad. The attitude to adopt is one of **simcha** [joy]. We are of course sad that the Rebbe is suffering but must be joyful that he is undergoing a process of transformation to reveal himself as Mosiach."

Even though Chassidism emphasises joy in the face of adversity, during the three months leading up to his death, people were very subdued. A notice was distributed in Lubavitch House relating to how people should act at this time. It emphasised that Lubavitchers should learn the Rebbe's teachings, perform mitzvot, give charity, support one's neighbours and recite psalms. Even as the Rebbe was comatose and attached to a ventilator, his followers continued to write for blessings. His secretary would stand over his sick bed and read them to him. New miracle stories appeared such as the one below which was circulated around the community shortly before the Rebbe's death.

Dr Fink, one of the Rebbe's physicians in the hospital, was travelling up a hill in New York. The car in front of him had a trailer attached. Suddenly the trailer came loose and started to roll backwards. Dr Fink saw a vision of the Rebbe standing in front of his car holding the trailer up giving the physician enough time to escape. It was reported that Dr Fink had never met the Rebbe before he went into a coma.

Everyday, faxes were received from Beth Israel Hospital in New York, where the Rebbe lay, documenting the Rebbe's medical condition. Slight improvements were taken as signs of his imminent recovery and ascension to the messianic role. Over the last month of his life his medical condition deteriorated considerably. In May 1994 he had pneumonia from which he recovered and several days before his death he had a cardiac arrest and was resuscitated. Still his followers did not give up hope and claimed he would get up from his sick bed and proclaim he was the Messiah.

This was not to be. The Rebbe died on June 12th, 1994. His death was reported in the major tabloids, on the radio and television. *The Times* newspaper (June 13 1994) reported the event as follows:

“The death of the Rebbe Menachem Schneerson, seventh leader of the Lubavitcher rabbinic dynasty, brings to a close a remarkable career which had culminated in his followers' claim that he was about to be revealed as the messiah. His face, with its piercing blue eyes and black fedora, was familiar throughout the world with

photographs in thousands of shops, offices and homes in the Jewish world. During his fifty-five year stewardship, the Lubavitch movement was transformed from a practically moribund branch of Chassidism to a powerful and international movement, deploying all the resources of modern communication technology to spread its message."

A message was faxed from '770' to the Stamford Hill community at the time of the Rebbe's death: "Blessed be the divine Judge", meaning that God had ordained that the Rebbe should die.

I arrived at the Lubavitch House several hours after the Rebbe had died, having heard the news on a local radio station. The atmosphere was subdued. I was struck by the small number of people there and was told that most of the community had at very short notice flown to New York for the funeral. Some were praying, others saying *tehillim* (psalms) while other Lubavitchers stood in groups talking. I could see no one crying. After an hour, more and more people assembled in the synagogue and I was able to discuss with them what had happened. There was a distinct lack of leadership, no one knew exactly how to proceed. "Do we sit *shivah*?" (the seven days of mourning) asked one man, "the Rebbe is not our immediate family."

Some answered that it was necessary to sit *shivah* for several hours only, others suggested a day and others said one week. Everyone agreed that at the time of the

funeral they would carry out **keriah** (rending garments) and someone was appointed to perform this task. As the day proceeded, more and more people assembled in the synagogue and attempts were made to link the Lubavitch House by satellite with NBC, the American news channel, which was due to broadcast the funeral live.

Right up to his funeral there was still a feeling of hope expressed by those present.

"The Rebbe could still arise and proclaim himself as Mosiach " said one student to me. With this hope in mind a group of Lubavitchers read **tehillim** (psalms) loudly. About an hour before the funeral, a commentary on Genesis 49 was distributed describing how, just as Judah is being buried, he will arise implying the same thing would occur with the Rebbe:

"Jacob says the time will come when the kingship of the house of David will appear at its lowest, deepest end and Judah no longer strong as a lion, but femininely weak, and one will think it has reached its final stage where Judah's virility will almost have disappeared, and then - just then - when the undertakers of world history will already have ordered the coffin for Judah's body apparently coming to its end, it will manfully arise and to it all the weak of the nations will come."

With the room full to the brim with Lubavitchers, some stood reciting psalms, some observed the funeral procession on satellite and others tore their clothes. On

satellite, a group of Lubavitchers could be seen dancing and singing, in the anticipation of his resurrection and the imminent redemption. Suddenly one man shouted out that he could hear the *shofar* (ram's horn) which announced the arrival of Mosiach. After the burial some Lubavitchers left the room, others continued to say *tehillim*.

The following morning everyone was asking why he had died and what it meant for the arrival of Mosiach and the future of Lubavitch. Two days after his death a statement was made by Rabbi Yehuda Krinsky, a spokesman for the worldwide Lubavitch movement. This emphasised how much good work had been done by the Rebbe and how Lubavitchers now had the job of bringing forth the coming of the redemption. In it he stated, "By sharing with us his vision, his hopes and his promise, and by making us active participants in the perfection of God's world, the Rebbe has empowered us in a way that every parent can hope to empower his and her children. Handicapped as we are now by the loss of his physical presence... we rededicate ourselves to continue to accomplish that which our beloved Rebbe taught us through his life's work for a humanity uplifted by good, and world sanctified and redeemed by God."

It was advised that everyone should sit *shivah* for one week in their own homes, read Psalm 93 (equivalent to the Rebbe's age) and read the section from *Tanya* called *Igaret Hakodesh* where it states "the spiritual presence of a Zaddik is greater than his physical presence."

I discussed his death with many people in the community. Several themes emerged from these discussions. Many expressed the hope that he would be resurrected. Most emphasised that he still had a major presence in the world, and that without the hindrance of his physical body his spiritual presence was even greater. Some admitted that they were wrong about him being Mosiach. Everyone expressed the feeling that they must continue to hope and pray for the messianic arrival and redemption.

"The Rebbe was higher spiritually than any other man. He must be resurrected although we do not know when. It could come at any time. We must carry on hoping for Mosiach to come" (a 40 year old Lubavitcher).

"All Lubavitchers believe that the Rebbe is Mosiach. We should still believe this. It is not impossible that the Rebbe will be resurrected. The Rebbe himself said that the great Zaddikim would come back before the redemption. When he returns he will have the same body of a 93 year old man. The Rebbe has greater power now. His spiritual presence is greater now in all the worlds. People still write to him asking for a blessing although of course they do not get a reply but there is a response. Things are happening" (an 18 year old Lubavitcher).

And even:

"The fact that the Rebbe has died is important for non-Jews. They believe in the resurrection. They could not understand the concept that Mosiach could be a dying

man. (Jesus had to die prior to resurrection). For them the Messiah is resurrected. Since the Rebbe has died and will be resurrected they will believe us" (65 year old rabbi).

Mr Zeitlin had this to say to me privately:

"I've always been sceptical about the Rebbe being Mosiach. He was a great man. Now he is dead, I feel he has greater power. People do not know what to say at the moment here. There are no guidelines. Also there is a political problem about who will lead Lubavitch. I have several thoughts about the topic of the Rebbe and Mosiach. First possibly God misled the Rebbe into saying Mosiach is imminent. I don't really believe this. Second, the Rebbe misled his followers, again I do not believe this. Third, the Rebbe misread the situation, I do not believe this. Why would he say Mosiach is imminent if it was not true? His death is a matter of cosmic significance. It means something. There is an air of expectancy in Stamford Hill. We don't know what will happen. Some people are still mourning, eg lighting candles. I feel the mourning must be channelled into following the Rebbe's teachings. There is some dissension about the ideas of resurrection. According to Jewish teachings, resurrection of the dead will only occur once the Mosiach has come and we are in the period of redemption. It is not accepted that it will occur in the reverse order. I think people are wrong about this aspect."

Over the next couple of weeks a number of public meetings in London were held for men and for women, and a number of leaflets were distributed. At one meeting on 3rd July 1994, forty eminent rabbis attended but according to one man who went (I could not), no satisfactory answers were given. "We felt cheated by the rabbis. All we got was information about Mosiach. Now there is silence. No one can answer why the Rebbe died."

In the Lubavitcher junior girls school, the week after the Rebbe's death was devoted to discussing why it occurred and what to do now. During an assembly one of the teachers stated:

"Concerning Mosiach: up to now we thought that we knew the script, the series of events which were going to happen in the process of the revelation of Mosiach. The Rebbe never actually told us a script, but we thought we should make it up. Now we realise we do not know the script. We should try to understand that this is not surprising. The coming of Mosiach is the drawing of the infinite into the finite, this is very difficult. It is quite beyond ordinary reason. It is understandable that we do not know the steps which lead to this."

In response to the question why did God do this? he replied, "We cannot understand God and His ways. This is not surprising, since we are limited and God is infinite. Some things are very painful, but we trust in God that they are for the best. When the redemption comes, we will thank God for all the difficulties he gave

us now, for then we will realise their positive effect. God loves us and only does things for our good."

A few weeks after the death, the organisation running Lubavitch *Aggudat Chassedei Chabad* sent a letter to every Lubavitcher community. It stated that Lubavitchers were not to publicise that the Rebbe is Mosiach and any behaviour to this effect such as public dancing in anticipation of the coming redemption was not permissible. Talk of resurrection now decreased although privately many Lubavitchers continue to believe that the Rebbe was Mosiach and would arise out of his grave and redeem his people. Four years after his death, the Rebbe is still an important topic of discourse, people are talking about how much they miss him. Lubavitchers however are getting on with their everyday lives. One rabbi told me:

"Things have changed. We thought we knew the agenda but now we know we do not. Only God knows this. The head of our community has publicly stated that we must not publicise that the Rebbe is Mosiach and we should no longer sing *Yechi Adenenu*. However, in this community most people still believe that the Rebbe is Mosiach. We believe but we do not publicise."

The following statement was published in Lubavitch magazine in August 1994:

"Some antagonists had initially predicted a diminishing of Lubavitch activity after the Rebbe's passing, or even a complete breakdown and collapse of Lubavitch.

Thank God, the doomsayers were proven false, and their bad predictions did not materialise. On the contrary ,we are witnessing a worldwide spur of new activities, projects and institutions established in the Rebbe's honour."(10)

Since his death, London Lubavitchers are flying out to the **Ohel**, (the Rebbe's tomb).

Queues of people wait in line to deposit small pieces of paper with the requests for a blessing written on them (Paul 1996). Others write to the Rebbe's secretary with their requests. He takes them to the tomb and reads them to the Rebbe. There is a growing number of miracle stories about people who have visited his grave:

Mr Gatof was in great financial despair recently having gone bankrupt. He went to the ohel and left a request for a blessing to save his business. Shortly after he returned home he unexpectedly received a letter from a distant relative informing him that they were willing to give him money to save his business.

Since the Rebbe can no longer respond to letters, chance occurrences are taken as signs of the Rebbe's intervention. Shmeuli Yudkin was concerned about heavy debts he had incurred in starting up a business. In despair he wrote to the Rebbe asking for a blessing. Several weeks later while sitting in his house, a book fell onto the floor. It was open at the page discussing the importance of giving charity. He donated a small sum to the Lubavitch foundation and shortly after this business started to prosper. He related the success of his business to the Rebbe's intervention.

CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSION

Having completed four years of fieldwork among the Stamford Hill Lubavitchers, a number of points emerge. However, before discussing these it is important to point out the inadequacies of this study. Many of my interviews were carried out with rabbis who are seen by members of the community as experts and to be more articulate than other members of the community. About twenty-five percent of the male Lubavitcher community are rabbis. Their view does not necessarily represent the views of those who have not studied as much or been in the movement for a short period of time. Apart from their having more knowledge, Lewis (1998) makes the point that expert statements may be more coherent and complete than those of other members. When non-rabbis were questioned, especially about the interpretation of texts, the usual response was to consult someone who was more knowledgeable and point me in the direction of a specific rabbi. Also, it was difficult to elicit the views of various females in the community on account of gender segregation. Women were reluctant to disclose information to me on account of the fact I was male.

Second, during my fieldwork interviews were conducted in English. On account of this I may have missed the subtleties of translation which Lewis (1998:577) refers to as the "connectives" including words such as "as" "and," "either" and the grammatical forms which indicate reference, negation, quantity, tense, mood and

timing, which occur in Hebrew or Yiddish . At times I may have taken metaphorical statements literally because of this.

Third, members of the community often were aware of the fact that I was a practising doctor and to this extent may have presented more biomedical data to me. However during the study I was careful to emphasise that my role was not to offer biomedical advice and I refrained from telling informants that I worked part time as a psychiatrist

Fourth, there are problems analysing some of the narratives presented in the thesis. Conventional fieldwork with conversionist groups is distinctive in that they continue to give presentationalist statements of norms and normative actions. The narratives offered here have a formal pattern-physical problem: appeal to the Rebbe, Rebbe's response, resolution of the problem-recalling the exemplary legends of past zaddikim. They may be taken as standardised edifying testimonials, emblematic self presentations for other Chassidim and for the potential convert and are hence considerably more systematised than they are likely to be for sick individuals.

The above criticisms aside, what can we conclude from the ethnography? The first point is that much of the time, Lubavitchers live in the pragmatic world of cause and effect. They do not invoke mystical concepts for every problem or misfortune. If their car breaks down they do not write to the Rebbe, they call a mechanic and if

there is an irreparable thought they replace the car. Only if the problem is a serious one relating to health or money or a major decision needs to be made about education, marriage or a religious matter do they write to the Rebbe for a blessing and may invoke a mystical explanation. They continuously make the point that God acts through the material world. They would not expect money to come to them unless they worked and similarly they would not expect to recover from illness solely by prayer. They consult a doctor. One is reminded of Evans-Pritchard's statement (1937:475) in relation to Zande medicines that a man would not dream of making beer by medicines alone, he would use empirical methods. If pragmatic actions fail, then the Rebbe may be approached. The importance of trust in God was constantly emphasised as was the "danger" of feeling sad. Through their reading of Tanya, the importance of joy, even in the face of adversity was often mentioned. More specifically in relation to sickness, how does the ethnographic data allow us to answer the questions posed in the introduction?

1. To what extent do Lubavitchers ideas about the body, sickness and cosmos derive from their religious texts ?

Lubavitchers do not live in an eighteenth century enclave. If we are justified in talking of the Kabbalah as a folk model then it is one with a close reflexive engagement with wider Western knowledge including biomedicine. They are continuously exposed to secular ideas about sickness and the body through their interactions with GP's, the NHS and their own schooling. Before being exposed to

mystical teachings about the body their only model was biomedical. They hold both naturalistic and mystical notions of the body. From Tanya, they derive the idea that the physical body corresponds closely to the divine body. The Lubavitch speak of the Sefirot as immanent in bodily experience: "We were formed after the supernal pattern, each limb corresponding to something in the scheme of wisdom" (Zohar ii 2/2). One young Rabbi described how the Torah figured thus in the Zohar as the blueprint with which God provided himself for the physical creation. The Torah comprises 248 positive and 365 negative injunctions and these "upper roots" have their respective manifestations in the 248 'limbs' and 365 'sinews' (blood vessels) of the male body. Each limb of the body embodies one of the commandments. In this way every breach or observance of the Torah directly produces, through its counterparts in the human body, a reaction in the corresponding position of the world of Sefirot. In his Tanya, Rabbi Schneur Zalman associated specific parts of the body with other psychological and moral attributes: "the evil spirit is in the left ventricle of the heart and the love of God flames in the right ventricle." However, the ethnographic data presented here suggests that although this mystical model of the body deriving from Tanya is well known, in everyday life Lubavitchers think in a naturalistic way about the body. When asked about the body they talk in terms of arms and legs, not in terms of the sefirot unless specifically questioned.

The close connection between the physical and spiritual is constantly emphasised by Lubavitchers, a notion that is a central focus in Tanya. Ultimately everything is

interconnected. They do not merely *believe* in this close connection, they *feel* it. Several Lubavitchers commented on feelings of love and fear associated with the performance of mitzvot and associated feelings of holiness similar to Otto's (1917) *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*. Religious beliefs are not simply linguistic: they are associated with feelings and Otto even goes as far as to argue in *The Idea of the Holy* the basis of religion is the experience of the holy or numinous. One Lubavitcher stated to me: "When we perform mitzvot we are overcome by a sense of holiness, we feel both the love and fear of God." For Lubavitchers the spiritual is embodied through practice. Corporeal practices mediate social meanings and change them. Religious acts are at the same time inscribing practices (Connerton 1989). As Thomas Kasulis has argued, religious beliefs are embodied through religious practices. Mitchell (1997) points out how religious indoctrination involves the creation of powerful feelings which in turn gives meaning to religious beliefs. Laying Tefillin is associated with powerful feelings which are interpreted by Lubavitchers as spiritual. These feelings act as a reference point for subsequent similar experiences.

"On the other hand, Rabbi Schneur Zalman points out that the performance of the ritual is invested with mystical aspects, which in certain respects, surpass even the excellence of intellectual activity. The performance of the ritual, involving physical action and in most cases, also some physical object, contributes to the spiritualisation of the animal soul and the physical body, as well as nature in general." (Tanya chap 35). It is through practice that the body is spiritualised.

The idea of the unity in Tanya, with everything partaking of everything else, is akin to what Levy-Bruhl refers to participation, the language of solidarity in space and time. According to Tambiah (1993), participation can be represented as occurring when persons, groups, animals, places and natural phenomena are in a relation of contiguity, and translate that relation into one of existential immediacy and contact with shared affinities. There is an intimate relationship between what we may call the physical and spiritual worlds, each not only reciprocally influencing but actively participating in the other as prefigurings and memories (Bloom 1984). Rather than just representing matters as two qualitatively distinct registers, the Divine and the Physical, the concentric spheres of the Zohar allow participation in either the divine or the physical directions - a stereomorphic cosmos but one in which any event or entity is located simultaneously at the centre and the periphery. All is symbolic in that everything represents everything else. It is the Rebbe who mediates between the physical and spiritual worlds. If we need a figuring, the notion of a fractal (in which each part of a whole replicates the whole - Mandelbrot 1977) is perhaps more apposite than that of a single spiritual - physical dyad or dimension : linguistically the trope of synecdoche or Pribrams hologram.

In relation to sickness, Lubavitchers hold both religious and naturalistic ideas about sickness deriving from both Chassidic teachings and biomedicine (eg sin and viruses). Even though they hold strong religious models of sickness, in practice they may appeal to biomedical treatments. Notions of sickness are closely tied up with those of sin, itself based on the idea of separation from the Divine. The Jewish

scriptures offer many accounts of physical healing through divine intervention, but close textual reading merely exemplifies the complex interparticipation of the sacred and the profane, whether glossed by our own notions of 'sickness ' or something closer to 'ritual pollution '(Lewis 1987, Eilberg -Schwartz 1992). Spero (1980) points out that the sin-as-illness analogy-sin conceptualised as a spiritual sickness needing some sort of healing as corrective-is readily established in the biblical literature. Consider "Who forgives all thy crookedness; who heals all thy sicknesses? (Psalm 103:3) or "And he shall repent, and I will heal him" (Isaiah 6:10). All western cosmological systems, Christian or otherwise, argue for sickness being contingent in disharmony within the ultimate order, closely allied to their notions of evil (Parkin 1985). All we can say is that local ideas recalling our distinctions between 'physical healing', 'social healing' and 'spiritual healing' may have a close or not so close, relationship within a particular community (Ellenberger 1970, Pressel 1973, Parkin 1985).

The interesting point is not that they hold different explanatory models of sickness but at times they hold both models which may articulate in different ways (see Malinowski 1965, Luhrman 1992). As Luhrman (1992) points out, people may hold simultaneously inconsistent models of reality and argues against the "new ethic " of cognitive consistency which, as Gellner (1974) argues, dominates modern discourse and development. However, for Lubavitchers, we may argue that science and religion are not different ways of seeing the world (see Watts 1998 for a general discussion of the relation between religious and scientific thought). Science is a

manifestation of God's mind: "So science is ultimately the human study of God's mind, the search to understand the laws that God installed to run the physical universe" (Jacobson 1995:193). In accordance with the "argument from design" so much discussed by philosophers of religion, the universe runs as it does because of God's influence on it.

Sickness of any degree of seriousness can only be understood in its moral context. Notions of sickness are closely allied to those of sin and ultimately separation from the Divine which they refer to as exile. In fact the Hebrew word for sickness **choli** is related to the word **cholal** meaning hollow and the word **chol** meaning secular. Sickness is a state characterised by lack of Godliness. Similarly, the Hebrew word for healing **rofuah** is related to the word **for**, meaning resplendence, illuminated by divine light. Exile and redemption are core metaphors used by Lubavitchers. They move beyond the purely naturalistic explanations of sickness, the *how* explanations. They address the *why* explanations, Evans Pritchard's "second spear". Religion provides a framework for doing this. With the "secularisation of medicine" (McGuire 1985), biomedicine can only provide the *how* of sickness (proximal causes), the *why* answers (ultimate causes) are only addressed by the religious framework. This is in accordance with other ethnographic studies of "traditional healing" (Janzen 1978, Rivers 1924) who point out that in medically pluralistic societies, biomedicine is not competent to deal with the social and moral aspects of sickness. Similarly Good (1994:85) argues that "Medical practice can never fully contain the moral and the soteriological" Among Lubavitchers, the sacred is a

domain in which any experience of suffering or misfortune is expressed. There is no misfortune in which God is not involved. As Dansforth (1989:55) argues:

"Much of the power of religious healing lies in the ability of the sacred symbols they employ to serve as both models *of* and models *for* a sick person's social, psychological and physiological condition. They have the power to change the course of a person's illness by influencing his symptoms or even changing his behaviour."

2. How do they conceptualise the relation between words and objects and between religious texts and the body?

For Judaism, God is to be found in the words of the Mosaic books. Judaism begins not with the power or presence of God but with the *words* of God. Judaism is foremost a textual tradition. According to the Zohar " God, Israel and the Torah are one." According to Tanya words participate in the world, words do not just arbitrarily represent objects, they are the very spiritual essence of these objects without which the objects themselves could not exist. Within Chassidism there is a strong "natural theory" (Idel 1995) : the correspondence between a word and thing or between the signifier and signified is not a matter of convention. There is an essentialism in language, words are an integral component of the things they purport to represent. Idel (1995) goes on to argue that the created entity is an exteriorisation of a linguistic core. The term affinity is more apt than representation:

"Chassidism brought to an extreme Kabbalistic assumptions concerning language as the spiritual underpinning of reality. This emphasis was consonant with the emergence of its magical universe and with the paramount role of liturgical texts and the study of Torah as producing talismanic entities." (Idel 1995:219). It is through language that the negotiation between the physical and spiritual occurs. Language is at the same time both spiritual and physical and ensures an unbroken link between the lower and higher worlds. Language is not an obstruction, nor even the path to ultimate reality, but rather its actual nature.

Lubavitchers describe the relation between the Hebrew language and the physical world, not in terms of representation but in terms of an *affinity*, a notion deriving from Tanya. It however must be stressed that Lubavitchers spend much of their time in a pragmatic world where words and objects are arbitrarily related, there is no essential relationship between the signifier and the signified (Stamford Hill Lubavitchers generally spoke English at home). These esoteric expertises were only invoked at times of sickness and did not seem to come into play in relation to other life difficulties such as financial and educational problems. No one resorted to these ideas when their business went bankrupt or they were in need of money.

There are a number of parallels between these views of language and those held by Renaissance magi such as Marsilio Ficino, Lodovico Lazarelli, Cornelius Agrippa and Paracelsus who all emphasised the common assumption that an identity exists between the word and the thing it signifies. This idea was a basic presupposition of

their magical views of the universe and as Foucault (1973) argues in *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, had a constructive role in the making of knowledge in sixteenth-century Europe. He discusses the 'doctrine of signatures', formal aspects of material things that recall certain features (properties or powers) of the corresponding heavenly bodies, where "God himself has rendered the sympathies between microcosm and macrocosm perceptible by stamping a mark, a sort of seal onto each each object of this world" (Eco 1995:118). The doctrine of signatures embodied a theory about language, especially how the name of things had an integral affinity with the things they labelled. The resemblance comprised an interlacing of both the verbal and the non-verbal and implicated a world in which language had a critical role in magic and the occult arts. However, for Renaissance thinkers mythical language was only one factor in their magical picture of the universe. In Chassidism mythical language was pivotal. Also 'the magi' were highly individualistic in their magical orientations, magic was not integrated into a social framework. This is unlike the 'warm' cosmology (Idel 1992) of Chassidism which emphasised not only theological immanence but also care for the community and attempts by the Zaddikim to improve its wellbeing.

3. Under what circumstances do they resort to symbolic healing?

Medical anthropologists have largely concentrated on the symbolic aspects of sickness, ignoring the fact that many episodes of sickness are treated pragmatically (Ohnuki-Tierney 1984, Lewis 1985). Lewis (1998) points out that we often neglect

everyday reasoning involving common sense, appealing too excessively to notions of magic, witchcraft and religion. At times of misfortune, Lubavitchers do not always appeal to their religious ideas. In illness not judged to be severe, purely pragmatic measures are adopted such as taking analgesics. Representational models are not always operational models (Caws 1974), and there is little relation between myth and praxis. In many instances the religious framework is better conceptualised as an 'ought' model, describing the ideal state of affairs. Lubavitchers frequently report what they should "ideally do" at times of sickness such as checking their tefillin but will only do it if the illness does not improve.

This thesis provides a good test of the Malinowskian hypothesis, that appeal is made to magic or religion when technology fails:

"Magic flourishes whenever man cannot control hazard by means of science. It flourishes in hunting and fishing, in times of war and in seasons of love, in the control of wind, rain and sun, in regulating all dangerous enterprises, above all, in disease and in the shadow of death" (Malinowski 1963:261).

The ethnography suggests that at times of sickness, religious ideas and practices come into play when the sickness is serious or does not respond to conventional treatments, for instance, not just influenza but influenza with complications. At other times, purely pragmatic measures are taken. To some extent the Malinowski thesis is confirmed in this thesis. Lubavitchers will use both treatments from their

family doctors and religious treatments concurrently. They emphasise that when one is ill, one should seek medical attention and not just religious healing for "God works through doctors."

Mr Rabin spoke to me one day while I was visiting him at home .He had recently burnt his hand on the cooker and had bandaged it up "to protect it from germs." I asked him if he did anything else to help it recover. He stated that the accident was completely his fault and it was not necessary to say Psalms or write to the Rebbe about such a trivial matter, since he felt that it would recover spontaneously. If however things got worse, for instance if it got infected, he might consider writing to the Rebbe for a blessing.

Marcel Mauss emphasises the distinction between magical and religious rites: "Magical and religious rites often have different agents; in other words, they are not performed by one and the same person." However this is not the case in Chassidism where "magical" acts and religious duties are performed by the Zaddik. However, unlike the magician described by Durkheim, who has a clientele rather than a church, the Zaddik has a fully fledged community. Martin Buber (1988:135) has characterised Chassidism as a retreat from magic. Although he declared that the manipulation of letters and divine names was indeed adopted by Chassidism "but this magic ingredient never touched the centre of Chassidic teaching." However as this ethnography suggests, the use of words in healing (a form of 'magic') is central to Lubavitch medical praxis.

Luhmann (1989:14) refers to the sophisticated critique of fieldwork in recent years, pointing out that it "does not grant a blanket awareness of the hearts and minds of the fieldworkers chosen society as if he were a woolly sponge". Fieldwork consists of flexible, idiosyncratic and tendentious conversations between individuals and it is difficult to glean knowledge about what really occurs in the mind of any one individual from these conversations. During interviews, subjects state varied, incomplete and heterogenous things about ritual. The anthropologist distorts and simplifies the complexity of daily life into a plot. In her own work on ritual magic in contemporary England, she points out that her subjects seemed less coherent and theory conscious and fuzzier than we assume and often their theories are not clearly formulated and presented as justifications of their actions.

How do the informants themselves conceptualise their acts of writing to the Rebbe and manipulating their religious artefacts (which often involves the the correction of language). From an outsider's point of view we may attribute a belief in magic to them "the look of magic," as Lewis (1986) argues, but is this how they conceptualise things? During my fieldwork I never heard anyone use the term magic to describe the actions of the Rebbe. When asked how the manipulation of artefacts "works", they often postulate the reciprocal relation between the physical and spiritual worlds and many point out how the mezuzah acts like a "suit of armour" to protect the person from malign influences. In many instances Lubavitchers do not hold clearly articulated notions as to how their actions are "effective" and few gave an elaborate description as to how words and objects relate to each other. Some

pointed out that they had no understanding as to how their actions influenced the world. Lewis (1998) points out that in many cases, the actors in rituals provide few or no explicit statements of the reasons for their actions. From the Lubavitcher point of view, when they checked the mezuzah or replaced a worn tefillin, they were performing a mitzvah, a religious act. What the analyst may see as "magic", the informants see as religious.

4. How do Lubavitchers understand healing?

For Lubavitchers, healing refers to healing of the self, the physical body, the social body and ultimately the whole cosmos. By the performance of the mitzvot the divine sparks are returned to the Godhead, there is a **tikkun**. The original cosmic catastrophe undergoes a process of repair. Ultimately all religious activity results in healing. Even the process of conversion to a religious group can usefully be understood as 'therapeutic' in the observer's analysis (Heelas and Haglund Heelas 1988, Witzum and Greenberg 1990, Littlewood 1993). For Lubavitchers, the ultimate elision of sin and sickness, and their removal through some higher power are particularly powerful, whether in the experience of salvation or in subsequent dilemmas and illness. So, how do words heal? Much of the language used by the Rebbe in his letters consists of Austinian performative utterances and is rhetorical in nature:

"I suggest that you take upon yourself to keep the three lessons which are equal for all in our community, and my father-in-law has decreed that is: saying sections of tehillim every day in the mornings and after prayers, as the psalms are divided into days of the month, learning sections of the Homesh every day from the sedra of the week and also lessons from Tanya as it was divided up into days of the year. Certainly there will be good vessels for drawing down and receiving blessings."

In another letter, "When Mr X, may he live long, through keeping mitzvot and particularly putting on tefillin and eating kosher and his wife, may she be careful in the running of the home and lighting candles on the Sabbath and erev (night of) Yom Tov and before lighting candles gives tzedakah, then Hashem will merit them to be able to announce speedily the good news about improvement of their health."

We have a return to Ogden and Richards' (1923) idea of words being part of objects, a direct even causal relation between the word and the thing it referred to. According to Lubavitch, words heal because words are part of objects, their spiritual core. The body is *relegated to language*. The model of healing is semiotic, deriving from the Jewish emphasis on textuality. Lubavitch emphasises the intellectual above the emotional and this is consonant with the emphasis on semiotics above phenomenology.

Lupton (1994) points out how the social sciences have experienced a heightened interest in language with an increasing preoccupation with recognising the role of

language in constituting and maintaining the social order and notions of reality.

There is an emphasis on discourse which itself is expressed in texts. In line with this, there is a current logocentric trend in medical anthropology to reduce the body and its sickness to language, a reaction against the reductionist materialism of the biomedical model.

Discursive writers have themselves become disillusioned with the emphasis on sociocultural aspects of illness and its relegation of the body to a passive subsidiary role (Fox 1993, Turner 1992). The physical dimension of health and illness is absent from many discursive explorations of the personal and social meaning of symptoms and the discourse and medical practices associated with illness. One way of reintroducing the body into medical anthropology has been through phenomenology (Leder 1990, Jackson 1996) whereby lived experience is emphasised and healing relates to changes of bodily experience as opposed to biomedical cure. Lubavitch takes the relation of the body and language to an extreme. Language does not just describe the body, ultimately the body and the Hebrew language *are the same thing*.

The above relates to the contemporary textual emphasis in social anthropology, the fact that the world and everything in it (culture, the body and the self) is literally a text to be read. Clifford (1986:12) argues that anthropologists "read a given reality." Marcus similarly characterises textualisation as the "heart of the ethnographic enterprise" (1986:264). For Geertz there is no essential embodied experience,

experience is text (1986:380). It is a theoretical current which transverses anthropological thought across structuralist, modernist, and post-modernist paradigms. Narrative has been seen as the route to experience. In medical anthropology there has been an emphasis on "illness narratives" to describe the experience of being sick. Kleinman points out how:

"The illness narratives told stories of sickness much as they had been told to me. I felt a deep compulsion to retell these accounts, most of which came from my clinical experience in North America..."(1995:14).

Similarly Good (1994:79) remarks on the connection between the body (experience) and talking about the body (narrative). Actual lived experience has been read literally as narrative (see Hastrup 1995:82). However narrative is not experience although it is often *conflated* with it. A distinction must be made between actual *lived* experience and its *representation*. Both Kirmayer (1992:324) and Becker (1997:29) have asked what the connection is between bodily experience and talking about the body. Good (1994:138) asks what the relation between story and experience is:

"What is the relationship between story and experience? To what extent do stories report or depict events as they actually occurred? Conversely, to what extent do typical cultural narratives actually construct events, give events or experience their sense, produce what we mean by an event or history of experience? Does a good

history mirror events and experience, or does it select events and organise them in a culturally conventional fashion based on an underlying view of what significant? To what extent is social life itself organised in narrative terms?"

Illness narratives are interpretations of illness experience (Fish 1980). Just as physicians reduce illness to bio/pscho/physical disorders, anthropologists reduce the complexity of illness experience from something lived to something interpreted, given structure and meaning by the anthropologist.

5. Are rituals intended to effect change in the world or one's own dispositions?

When Lubavitchers write to the Rebbe, many point out that they do expect some change in the world, not just to feel better (as the phenomenologists may argue) but biomedical cure. They are "strong illocutionary acts", the actor's intent is to instrumentally effect the world. In the accounts cited in the thesis, the petitioners argue that they anticipate, through the Rebbe, to effect some definite change in the natural world. However, although offered retrospectively as "successes," it is possible that at the time some were "weak," simply performed as immediately appropriate or little more than wishes, Wittgenstein's "actions of instinct" (Tambiah 1990:56). The data goes against those theories which suggest that rituals are purely about phenomenological experience or are purely symbolic (Leach).

The ethnographic data can be interpreted in a more sociological way. The Lubavitch movement centres around the Rebbe who holds the power. Throughout the history of Lubavitch, the power has resided in one family. The Rebbe is the third cousin (and son-in-law of the previous Rebbe). Many of the activities of Lubavitchers can be seen as ways of maintaining the power at the centre in the hands of the Rebbe. The distribution of Dollars (a good publicity campaign), the spreading of "miracle stories," the messiah campaign, the distribution of books, pamphlets and pictures of the Rebbe all enhance the image of the Rebbe and enhance his power. Miracles play a large part in the construction of meaning of experience and the workings of power. Much of the time Lubavitchers live in an enchanted world. It is a world pervaded by miracles. Associations between events are never purely arbitrary but are either divinely ordained or mediated by the Rebbe. Chance events are interpreted as caused by the Rebbe's interventions and this has been more so the case since the Rebbe's death. Becoming a Lubavitcher involves what Lührman (1989) calls an interpretative drift, a new way of seeing the world whereby mundane coincidences are seen as meaningful. The Rebbe becomes a lens through which the members see and is a scheme of interpretation by means of which they explain and apprehend the multiple misfortunes occurring in their lives. They frequently write to the Rebbe for help in relation to their everyday problems. Established members through their distribution of books and pamphlets about the Rebbe focus the attention of newcomers and sensitise him or her to the Rebbe's miracles. Gilenan (1982: 77) points out how the powerful who claim to be divine seek to monopolise the miraculous and guard it as an attribute of their unique

position and use it to legitimate their own dominance. In a similar way his letters which are held as "prize possessions" and the stories associated with them function in a similar way to maintain the power structure. Lubavitch takes great care not to expose children to books about magic and witchcraft covertly expressing the view that "only our miracles are genuine."

The Messiah campaign focuses on the fact that the Rebbe is the Messiah, a powerful figure in all religions, and similarly works to bolster the power with the Rebbe. During my fieldwork there was little discussion of the world to come or the redemption. The major issue discussed was that the Rebbe would continue to live despite his illness and continue to exert his power over his followers. If a group is to be successful, recruit members and develop its organisation there is a need for these "miracles" to continue after the leaders death. This is very much the case with Lubavitch. Not only do these "miracles" legitimise the Rebbe, they also legitimise his followers although they do not see it in this way. They can be seen as the consequence rather than the cause of their following of the Rebbe.

This thesis raises a number of questions as to the relation between physical and spiritual healing? While the monotheisms of the West make this clear distinction between the sensible physical world and ultrahuman reality, the explicit image of 'healing' is common to both the healing of a bodily sickness and the healing of a 'wounded spirit' or indeed a whole community. Founders of new religious dispensations engage in, or are recorded by later followers as having employed

miracles of healing: curing physical illnesses when the conventional everyday practices have failed, restoring the near dead (sometimes the dead) to full vigour and health, being aware of sickness at a distance, predicting illness and plague. While they assert a double register, sometimes enhancing the very separation, at the same time they show that it may be transcended at certain moments by certain individuals. Indeed the very authority of Western prophets and religious innovators appears in part to be justified through their tapping higher powers to miraculously heal sickness and insanity, as well as to predict or avert other misfortunes, evil forces or disasters to the community, to increase or transform foodstuffs, be aware of other's thoughts and motivations : in short to be in close contact with the ultrahuman realm, and be able to call on its aid. The expectations of a prophet to reconcile or transcend the two levels of reality through healing -and his occasional resistance to these - are well demonstrated for Jesus in the Christian Gospels (Matthew 4:32,8:16,9:32,12:22,Mark 5:25), together with his use of the idiom of 'healing' for an increased turning to the divine, through confession and absolution, with conversion of the 'sick soul' to a radically new perspective. Christianity, while always maintaining an absolute distinction between the body and the spiritual, has offered clear passages between them which are not typical of rabbinical Judaism: the incarnation and the assumption; the Roman Catholic healing pilgrimages, the validation by a Vatican panel of doctors of the miracles which continue to justify sainthood; religious nursing orders; the elision of conversion and 'spiritual healing' of physical illness in contemporary evangelical crusades.

Do prophets actually derive their claim to authority from their ability to heal bodily sickness, which then serves as a conscious analogy for salvation or spiritual healing?; or are the two idioms locally inseparable as anthropologists conventionally argue for small scale communities (Tambiah 1990), or as with the Roman *Salvus* (health, salvation)?; or indeed does physical healing itself derive explicitly from an altogether ultrahuman idiom? Without close knowledge of the local etymologies of the available terms, or of the sequence of actions of the prophet given later interpretation, appropriation and hagiography, it is difficult to give historical or conceptual precedence to either.

Why does a community living two generations after Auschwitz need to 'reenchant' their world? As in all religious systems, the question of suffering is a fundamental one. Why do the innocent suffer? How can a good, omniscient and omnipotent God allow evil in the world? The issue of divine providence, the assertion that God provides what we need has frequently been addressed by Jewish philosophers (See Leaman 1995). For Jews who have a special covenant with God, this question is particularly acute. Israel made a covenant with God and to this extent may expect preferential treatment. Throughout the history of Judaism, there have been few periods when the Jews have not been persecuted. The Book of Job makes the point that the religious essence of reality lies in its mystery and God has a different perspective on the world to mankind. From a purely functionalist point of view, reenchantment of the world, the resurgence of 'miracles' acts to deal with this

problem of suffering and unpredictability. Lubavitch can be seen as a 'new religious movement' which itself is associated with an enchanted world .

Sociologists of religion argue for a process of secularisation whereby the social institutions of modern societies are considerably less religious than the formations which preceded them. They appeal to the Weberian notion of rationalisation to explain this, the process whereby life has become organised in terms of instrumental considerations: the concern with technical efficiency, the maximization of calculability and predictability and the subordination of nature to human purposes. Associated with this is a 'disenchantment of the world' : a loss of sense of magic, mystery, prophecy and the sacred. Sacks (1992) has argued for a secularising process in Judaism beginning with the Enlightenment. Meanings once held to be eternal truths came to be seen as internal subjective constructs and any concept of a single overarching reality was gradually replaced by a pluralism of lifestyles and meanings. Following the first Jewish theoretician of the enlightenment, Moses Mendelssohn, the foundational truths of God and morality were discoverable by reason and applied to everyone everywhere. Revelation merely disclosed the local legislation by which Jews were bound to live out these truths in their individual way. Judaism became fragmented into a number of diverse sects; Conservative, Reform, Orthodox and Liberal. For many Jews identity was based on birth rather than religious practice. As Sacks states (p2):

"For 1800 years they had defined their existence in terms of religion. Today Jews as a group are measurably more secular than Catholics and Protestants. Throughout

their history they had organised their lives by the edicts of Jewish law. Today perhaps as many as four Jews in five see themselves as Jews without reference to the commands and constraints of Jewish law."

A number of authors have argued for the growth of the new religious movements as deriving from this process of secularisation (Stark and Bainbridge 1985) while others have argued for explanations based on political disenchantment (Richardson 1985) or as a response to rapid social change (Bellah 1976). These new religious movements are part of what is called the "New Age." Bruce (1996) suggests that several themes pervade the New Age: tolerance, eclecticism, holism, and an emphasis on interrelatedness. These in turn lead to a new concept of "science" which eschews observation, empirical testing and positivism and instead knowledge derives from revelation, metaphor and textual synthesis of a number of archaic conditions. These new religious movements are closely associated with healing and McGuire argues that the new therapies are in effect new religions on the American scene. Many provide cosmologies, rituals, a language for the interpretation of believer's worlds, social contexts for belief and practice and a group of fellow believers. There are parallels between Lubavitch and these new religious movements (the focus on the growth of the self, the emphasis on interconnectedness, charismatic leadership around which the group focuses and to whom they appeal for healing). Beckford (1985) argues that the new religious movements emphasise the growth of the self and all propulgate not only distinctive models of the self and therapeutic practices but also images of a wider context in

which it makes sense to believe that well being and relief from illness are attainable. They re-enchanted the world, reintroducing 'magic', "the longing for the fairy tale", for the magic wand that will charm away the difficulties of life, the suffering, the limitations and the uncertainties of our human condition (Tournier 1960:118-120). But what social factors are associated with this re-enchancement?

Lubavitchers envisage a time when there will be no more suffering, sickness will cease and the universe will be healed. Apocalyptic eschatology is central to Lubavitch teaching. Over the past ten years there has been a rise in millennial expectations and practice. This millennialism is not unique to contemporary Lubavitch and is part of the increasing millennial expectation, "the apocalyptic and millennial ferment" in America and perhaps worldwide (Aho 1997). Lamy (1996) points out that a "millennial myth" of biblical origin is deeply ingrained in American culture and is a major cultural resource for the interpretation of unsettling events. Robbins (1997:2) argues "In recent decades the millennial impetus to apocalyptic imagination has been reinforced by various 'earth shaking' developments". "Messianism is always associated with the presence of signs" (Rappoport 1988: 200). These signs include the collapse of the former Soviet Union, the AIDS epidemic, warnings of imminent climatic and ecological disaster, genocidal horrors in countries such as Cambodia, the threat of nuclear holocaust, the breakdown of the family and the growth of violent crime.

More specific to contemporary Jewish messianism are the Nazi Holocaust and the founding, expansion and continuing peril of the secular state of Zionist Israel. The Holocaust presented the most profound crisis in the history of Judaism and raised in its most acute form the question of human suffering. The topics of evil and suffering received renewed impetus after this event. Was God responsible for the suffering of so many Jews? Where was God when the Holocaust occurred? Should Jews continue to have faith in God after the Holocaust? What is the status now of God's covenant with Israel? For many Jews the Holocaust is taken to represent a break in history, a unique event requiring very different solutions to preceding disasters. Richard Rubenstein (1966) in *After Auschwitz: Radical Theology and Contemporary Judaism* states:

"If I believed in God as the omnipotent author of the historical drama and Israel as his chosen people, I had to accept that it was God's will that Hitler committed six million Jews to slaughter. I could not possibly believe in such a God, nor could I believe in Israel as the chosen people of God after Auswitz "(p6).

Greenberg (1981:16) talks of "a period of silence in theology " to refer to the fact that following the Holocaust, God has become more hidden. Any attempt to use traditional categories like divine providence or punishment in understanding the Holocaust is a blasphemy against the innocent victims. There has been a move towards a greater human responsibility.

The foundation of the state of Israel raised a number of questions relating to the interpretation of redemption. Biblical expectations have not been fulfilled. The state of Israel has not been accompanied by an era of universal peace and justice nor have Jews returned to their religious vocation. Not all Jews have returned to Israel. A majority continue to live in the Diaspora and there are more Jews in the United States than in Israel itself. The Jewish state was brought into being politically and defended militarily. Are acts of man acts of God? Sacks (1992) argues that Israel raises in an acute and inescapable form one of the classical dilemmas of Judaism - the question of the relationship between divine providence and human history. The foundation of the State of Israel has been viewed by prophecy writers as a sign of the approaching apocalypse on account of the fact that a pre-apocalyptic gathering of the Jews is alleged to have been prophesied in Jeremiah 29:14.

Both the Holocaust and the state of Israel raise profound issues of interpretation for Jews and question the nature of divine providence. How can God provide us with what we need if this has happened?

Apocalyptic prophecy is continuously refuelled by contemporary news events such as the Gulf war. The Middle East, the site of vital oil supplies is also the site of original biblical prophecies eg the final battle of Armageddon will transpire on the actual battleground of Megiddo. Saddam Hussein has contributed to the messianic expectations by his identification with King Nebuchad-nezzar. The latter's invasion of Kuwait was interpreted by the Lubavitcher Rebbe as a sign of the incipient

fulfillment of a prophecy from the *Book of Isaiah* predicting the coming of Mesiach after a battle between Persians and Arabs (Nadler 1992).

Today, Lubavitchers are still awaiting the coming of Mesiach. There will be no more evil or suffering. Godliness will be revealed. All will be spiritual, all will be language.

NOTES

A KABBALISTIC PRIMER

1. Isaac Luria (1536-1572) also called Ari, the Lion, was a sixteenth century Kabbalist in Safed, Israel. The term Kabbalah has come to be used since the eleventh century for that type of Jewish mystical thought which claims to have been received from the remote past. It was first communicated as esoteric doctrine to a privileged few, but by the eleventh century it was the manifest pursuit of the many. Like all mystical systems, Jewish mysticism speaks of a supernatural world order to which man is linked and on which he can call to obtain power. During Luria's lifetime he wrote little of his mystical system. All we know of his system is based on conversations with his disciples, the most important being Hayim Vital (1543-1620) who wrote several versions of Luria's system, the most elaborate being *Ets Hayim* (Tree of Life). The most important extant Kabbalistic text is the Zohar, written by Moses De Leon (d1305), a text written partly in Hebrew and partly in Aramaic. It consists of anecdotes, sermons and commentaries on various biblical texts, supposedly by a second century mystic, Simeon Ben Yochai, who had recorded the teachings he learnt from Elijah during the years Ben Yochai spent hiding in a cave. According to Epstein (1959), after the Talmud, it is the written work which has the profoundest influence in Judaism. Isaac Luria elaborated the themes of the Zohar in what is generally called the Lurianic Kabbalah. The central themes in the Zohar are the nature of the deity, the way he made himself known to the universe, the mysteries of the divine names, the soul of man, the nature of good and evil, the Messiah and redemption.

2. En Sof, a Hebrew term used by Kabbalists to refer to the infinite, endless, absolute God.

3. Adam Kadmon (Primordial Man) was the being formed at the beginning of the process of emanation. He is a transcendent manifestation of God himself, a structure made out of the Sefirot. The earthly Adam was created in God's image (Gen 1: 26-7) and was actually made in the likeness of Adam Kadmon. All worlds are reflected both in the primordial man and in his human counterpart, who may use Adam Kadmon as a focus of contemplation for his own spiritual nature. The mystic as microcosm can look into himself and see the cosmos. A common Kabbalistic idea is that man can learn about the structure of the universe by studying his own nature. In the words of the Zohar, both the upper and lower worlds are united in human beings. Beyond the microcosm idea is the teaching that Adam Kadmon, the supernal form of man, was actually an integral structure of the creation.

4. Since the divine scheme of things involved the creation of finite beings and forms, each with its allotted place in the ideal hierarchy, it was necessary that the isolated lights coming from En Sof should be caught in special vessels or "bowls" created for this particular purpose. The breaking of the vessels is the decisive turning point in the cosmological process. Taken as a whole it is the cause of that

inner estrangement which is inherent in everything that exists, and which persists as long as the separation is not mended.

5. In his original paradisaical state, man had a direct relation to God. Man was originally a purely spiritual being. The ethereal shape which enclosed him and which was later transformed into the organs of his body stood in an entirely different relation to his nature than his body does now. He owes his corporeal existence to sin. When Adam sinned, the order of things was turned into disorder and the heavenly channels were broken.

6. According to Lutzky (1989), evil and exile are underlying themes in Kabbalistic writings. Evil means disintegration and death and ultimately means separation from God and is identified with natural waste products of organic processes, compared to bad blood, foul waters (Scholem 1971). Evil in religion refers to the disintegrative forces inherent in the human condition, the forces of chaos and the terror they inspire. Death is the most disintegrative and terrifying of all experiences and reveals the fragility of the structures of human life (Berger 1967). The question of evil is at the heart of the Kabbalah (Bloom 1975). Mystical rites strove to overcome the power of evil (Scholem 1960). The result of fragmentation in the Kabbalah is loss of an aspect of God, with the exile of the Shekhinah.. It is interesting to note Parkin's point (1985), that in many cultures evil has the connotation of incompleteness or unwholesomeness.

A major question in the Zohar is Unde Malum. The Zohar proposes several different solutions to this problem. They all assume the reality of evil. Moral evil, according to the Zohar, is always something which becomes separated and isolated, or something which enters into a relation for which it is not made. Sin always destroys a union and a destructive separation of this kind was also present in the original sin when the fruit was separated from the tree.

7. The word Tikkun means restoration, restitution and reparation. The catastrophe of the breaking of the vessels transformed the process of creation into one of recreation. Tikkun means freeing the sparks and raising them to their correct spiritual level, repairing the broken vessels, unifying God through the return of the shekhinah, and unifying man's soul as well. In the Kabbalistic myth of Tikkun, it is the self, the other, the world and God which are healed.

CHAPTER 1

1. Over the past fifty years, anthropologists have debated the relevance of history for fully understanding a contemporary cultural pattern. Both Radcliffe-Brown and Malinowski asserted the relative irrelevance of the past for understanding the present. Reacting against the "conjectural history" of the evolutionists and diffusionists, Radcliffe-Brown considered that the present was to be understood in terms of its own contemporary structure. According to Jarvie

(1967:199) "the rejection of the past as having any relevance has stirred up the most prolonged and intensive controversy between anthropologists". Both Evans-Pritchard and Worsley have been major proponents of an historical approach in social anthropology, the former stating that to throw out history was a mistake. He suggests that: "The claim that one can understand the functioning of institutions at a certain point of time without knowing how they have come to be what they are, or what they were later to become, as well as a person who, in addition to having studied their constitution at a particular point in time, has also studied their past and future, seems to me an absurdity" (Evans-Pritchard 1950:121). Jarvie (1967:205) adopts a more modest view: "everything turns on the ambiguous use of the word 'understand'" (see Weber's *verstehen* debate). If 'understanding' involves full knowledge of the past, present and future of an institution, then a knowledge of history is required. But if all that is meant is "can give a satisfactory explanation of the effect of this institution on some other" then to drag in history is incorrect. Jarvie agrees with Evans-Pritchard that historical explanation is sometimes useful in anthropology.

Similarly, I M Lewis (1968) favors an historical approach in anthropology. All anthropologists encounter the temporal dimension during their fieldwork, even if it lasts only one year. Even in this limited historical perspective "history affords the social anthropologist a much neglected laboratory for testing the validity of structural assumptions and social mechanisms" (Lewis 1968). Synchronic analyses

in the ethnographic present are likely to distort fundamentally the perspective of interpretation.

Second, historical data are important in evaluating a given society's own view of its past. A people's views of its time and its history are important data collected by anthropologists. The elucidation of what actually happened in the past is crucial. Events which did not occur in actuality may be classed as myths (although myths may state important historical truths). Genealogies are an exemplary instance: Bohannan (1952) provides evidence of the telescoping and manipulation of oral genealogies. Even in the same social system, different portions of genealogies may convey different messages, some recording actual events historically, and others validating the existing situations (see Lewis 1962).

2. The term Chassid (pious one) was previously used to refer to Zealots in the days of persecution by Antiochus Ephphanes, in the second century BCE, also the German Ashkenazai Chassidim of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries AD. Jacobs (1990) points out that although the term Chassid is most commonly associated with the Chassidic movement founded in the eighteenth century, the term itself has much earlier origins and is more technically used to refer to what may be described as the saint or saintly Personality. Throughout the history of Judaism these can be discerned that specific quality of extraordinary piety known as Chassidut, roughly corresponding to the term Saintliness. The term Chassid is related to the Hebrew term *hesed* meaning mercy, loving kindness, loyalty, fidelity, grace or charm and

the practice of hesed is a frequently occurring theme in the biblical books, eg. Joel (2:13) and Jonah (4:2). God is described as "abundant in hesed".

3. In his work *Sabbatai Tsevi* (1973) he discusses how developments within the Kabbalah resulted in the Shabbatean movement, which in turn prepared the ground for Chassidism and the Haskalah (enlightenment). The influence of events from outside Judaism are rarely discussed in Scholem's work.

4. Anthropologists have debated the meanings of the terms 'magic', 'religion', 'miracles' and 'science' producing a wealth of literature but often confusion. Neusner, Frerichs and Flesher (1989) in their book *Religion, Science and Magic* have examined the use of these terms throughout the history of Judaism. In Judaism, 'magic' and 'religious' elements are difficult to differentiate (see Idel 1995). I shall discuss this matter later in my thesis.

5. See later chapters for an examination of ecstasy and magic in modern day Lubavitch.

6. The opponents of Chassidism (who came to be known as **mittnaggedim**) perceived it to be a threat to organised Jewish life and its rabbinical discipline. They particularly objected to the cult of zaddikism in which the religious leader (the zaddik), by virtue of his personality and rather than to his knowledge, came to be considered as authoritative a source of inspiration as the Torah itself.

7. The Cossack insurrection of 1648-1658 in Poland, led by Bogdan Khmelnitiski brought ruin to the Jews in the greater part of the Ukraine and after 1648, there began a large scale Jewish migration from the East to Germany and Western countries.

8. The Shabbatean crisis has been described as one of the most profound crises affecting Judaism before the Holocaust (Sharot 1982). Shabbatai Tsevi (1626-1676) was a Jewish messianic pretender and the founder of the movement known to us as Shabbateism, the largest "false" messianic movement in the history of Judaism. Much of our knowledge of Tsevi is obtained from Scholem's scholarly account of the movement (Scholem 1973). Born in Smyrna, he was educated in Kabbalah and Talmud. According to Scholem (1954) his personality was characterised by eccentric behaviour and because of this he had to leave his home and move to Jerusalem, where he became an emissary to Egypt. It seems from contemporary accounts that he suffered from what would now be termed manic depressive illness and had periodic mood swings every six months (Tsevi's opponents characterised him as mad but his supporters refuted this, see Scholem 1973). During his states of excitation, Tsevi had strong suggestive powers, and it was at these times that he attempted to convince people that he was the Messiah. His followers interpreted his manic phases as communion with God while they saw the depressive phase as part of a fight with evil. When in the manic phase, he would transgress Jewish law and ritual. Tsevi's ideas were spread by his follower, Nathan of Gaza , himself a

prominent Kabbalist. Shabbateism was characterised by miracles, prophecies, mass visions, possession states, confessions and penance, fasts to death and self burial. He encouraged free love, nudity and incest to initiate the messianic age (one interpretation of Kabbalah was that the law had to be contravened to prompt the messianic arrival).

Jewish communities differed in the proportion of believers in Tsevi. The Shabbatean movement was particularly influential in the Ottoman empire. Scholem (1973) writes that in Poland little was known of Tsevi. Weinryb (1972), a historian of Polish Jewry, concludes that out of 100,000 Jews in Poland in 1666, perhaps only about two dozen were highly committed Shabbatians. The role of the Lurianic Kabbalah in the spread of the movement remains controversial (see Sharot 1982)

In the late 1660's Tsevi returned to Smyrna, where he upset the Sultan because of his successful following. He was imprisoned in Gallipoli and given the choice of apostasy or death. He chose the former and converted to Islam, was finally exiled to Albania, the Sultan becoming enraged because of his continuing game, a Muslim to the Turks and a Messiah to the Jews, and he died there in 1676. Jewish theologians of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were forced to develop a theology that would explain the paradox of the messiah committing the worst possible transgression against orthodox Judaism, i.e. his apostasy. Various theologies were developed, some of which emphasised conversion to Islam or the creation of a coalition between Judaism and Islam against Christianity. Others

held that apostasy was part of the mystery of the Messiah's unique mission and hence should not be imitated. Of the groups which followed the Shabbatean apostasy, the best known were the Donmeh in Turkey and the Frankist movement in Poland led by Joseph Frank (1726-1791). The relationship between Chassidism and Shabbateism is controversial.

9. Social anthropologists have varied in their attitudes to psychological explanations of social phenomena (see Durkheim 1901, Rivers 1924, Malinowski 1927, Gluckman 1962, Douglas 1970, Sperber 1985, Boyer 1994). Lewis (1977) is critical of the cognitive emphasis on symbols which neglects the powerful emotional charge they carry. He calls for the reintroduction of psychology and indeed psychoanalysis into social anthropology.

A perspective commonly adopted in sociological studies of religious movements is the social-psychological "compensation" perspective. This emphasises the subjective experience of oppression, disaster, relative deprivation and social disorganisation which religion seems to ameliorate by offering salvation, if not in this world, then in the next. Beckford (1975:126) citing Lofland (1966) writes: "It would seem that no model of human conduct entirely escapes some concept of tension, strain, frustration, deprivation or the like, as a factor in accounting for action." The concept of "relative deprivation" is commonly utilised by sociologists (see Glock 1964, Whitworth 1975, Littlewood 1993, Heelas and Hagland- Heelas 1988). A person experiences relative deprivation when they compare their situation unfavourably

with that of another, and this results in dissatisfaction, resentment, injustice, and a desire for compensation and revenge. A number of anthropologists and (considerably more sociologists) have questioned the relation between deprivation and religious conversion: Douglas (1970:83) writes of "the emotionally distracting principle of deprivation." According to her, "the argument (of deprivation) is unable to deal with the many cases of people who are obviously and consciously deprived, and yet do not react in the predicted way". Another criticism is that of Wallis (1979) who claims that deprivation theorists have engaged in 'speculative psychology.' He argues that to demonstrate relative deprivation, one must provide evidence that the deprivation was actually felt by participants, as opposed to providing accounts of objective circumstances which are presumed to have affected the participants. He emphasises the importance of obtaining the participants' accounts of the situation. Similarly, caution must be exercised against using the ideology of the movement to demonstrate that there was deprivation prior to joining.

Many scholars have indeed attempted to understand Chassidism through its "emotional appeal" (Dubnow 1932, Epstein 1959, Sharot 1982). Epstein (1959:271) argues that Chassidism stressed the Talmudic principle that "The Holy One, blessed be He, requires the heart" and directed its appeal to the emotions rather than the intellect and offered a way of escape from the degeneracy and despair they had succumbed to", again appealing to some form of deprivation. Although a number of historical events preceded the foundation of the Chassidic movement, we have

little historical evidence relating to how the Polish Jews perceived these events, and their reactions to them. Collingwood (1939) is critical of the traditional approach to history whereby the historian remains on the outside of events as a natural scientist records experimental data and suggests that history involves getting at the intentions, thoughts, meanings and motivations of actors, an attempt to understand human action rather than events (see Sahlins 1981 for an historical instance which exemplifies this). This information is not available from the historical evidence and without it, social-psychological theories must remain highly speculative.

10. The need to be in the right frame of mind for prayer, to clear the mind of unworldly thoughts and the body of impurities, was considered so important that the Halachic rules for the special times of prayer were sometimes overlooked. As an aid to concentration, Chassidim indulged in swaying movements during prayer (likened to a flame rising to its source).

11. In their book *Life is with People*, Zborowski and Herzog (1952:314) discuss the beliefs in demons and the evil eye in the Eastern European shtetl. The evil eye is discussed especially in relation to childbirth: "There was no secret about labour, but some women were afraid to let anyone know because of evil eye". Apart from a few Jewish scholars in southern Europe, everyone held the existence of demons to be a reality. Only a few demons had distinguishing characteristics. Some remained from Talmudic times but demons were adopted from the non-Jewish environment in the Middle Ages. Satan (known as Samael) was not as prominent as he was in

Christianity but Lilith, the chief female demon was important in Jewish demonology. She was known as a child killer and a seducer of men. Ideas about *dibbukim* - demonic spirits or doomed souls who entered the body of a living person - were commonly held among Eastern European Jews. The dibbuk reputedly could take over the body and talk through the person's mouth and cause symptoms of mental illness. Ideas about witches, their pact with the devil and their ability to change form were adopted from the Christians.

12. Tambiah (1993) discusses the historical roots of the demarcation between magic, science and religion and asserts that most anthropologists who attempt to demarcate these cross-cultural categories are unaware of this rich historical legacy. Skorupski (1976) questions the assertion that magic is a universal classificatory term. Jahoda (1982) argues strongly against the assertion that there is a discrete form of thought that can be called magical.

13. Trachtenberg (1977) recounts how in the medieval period they were placed on a baby who had been awakened from his sleep by demons.

14. Trachtenberg (1977) describes how water was considered potent as a cleansing agent and was believed to have protective qualities. Running waters neutralised a magical act, and destroyed the magical properties of things, and drove off demons. The sputum of a fasting man was considered especially powerful and was used to

protect haunted places (by spitting three times, even the evil thoughts which are the work of demons, may be dispelled in the same way).

15. An example of a scholarly Baal Shem was Samuel Falk, "the Baal Shem of London" who was sought after by the English aristocracy for his knowledge of alchemy and his ability to protect buildings from fire. Jacobs (1990) points out that the identification of saintliness with lack of intellectual ability or at least with a preference for religious emotion over intellectual thought, overlooks the fact that many of the Jewish saints were very learned men.

16. Apart from dealing with problems of childbirth and sickness, they performed protective functions. Joel Baal Shem Heilprin saved a ship from sinking by writing a divine name on the ship's bottom .

17. About forty percent of the Gospel texts deal with healing and it is the dominant theme. Did Jesus actually perform recognised "miracles" or was this just part of the image of the prophet conferred posthumously? A number of examples are given in the Gospels relating to the healings of Jesus (Matthew 4:23, 8, 16, 9, 32, 12, 22, Mark 5.25, Luke 5.18). In these accounts little distinction is made between physical and spiritual healing. Is physical healing a metaphor for spiritual healing or vice versa, or are the two locally inseparable?

18. Dov Baer was an ascetic prior to his contact with the Baal Shem Tov. Chassidic legend tells that he became a disciple of the Baal Shem Tov after the latter recited a passage from a Kabbalistic work with such fervour that the whole room was filled with light and angels appeared.

19. As spiritual leader he is involved in all aspects of his followers' lives: health, education, marriage and business.

20. For an examination of the history of the concept of the zaddik see Scholem (1991) who links the concept to the seventh and ninth sefirot.

21. The concept of charisma has been criticised by sociologists on a number of grounds. Gerth and Mills (1948:53-55) accuse Weber of presenting a "great man" theory of history. Stark (1970:31-36) in his *Sociology Of Religion* claims that his understanding of authority is too psychological. I conclude that the term 'charisma' is useful as a type of authority relationship but lacks explanatory value. Similarly Littlewood (1993:31) concludes

"the notion of charisma is not unhelpful as a typological category for certain social institutions: as a general explanation it explains nothing. An adequate sociology of the genesis of new formations must demonstrate the relationship of the existing social order and its symbolic representations to the individual experiences through which are generated both customary understandings on the part of the visionary,

and how these experiences are taken up and revised, employed by others and structured through active social appropriation and transformation.”

22. The distinction between charisma and charismatic leadership is significant. There can be different types of charismatic leaders who display a wide range of possible actions, but charisma is limited to a particular relationship of authority between the leader and his followers. Wilner (1965) provides a definition of charisma which captures this distinction. He states that charisma can be defined without departing from Weber's intrinsic definition; as a leader's capacity to elicit from a following deference, devotion and awe towards himself as the source of authority. A leader who can have this effect on the group is charismatic for the group. Similarly Storr (1995) emphasises this quality of charisma among founders not just of new religious groups but also various schools of psychotherapy.

23. The phrase 'routinisation of charisma' has been seen as illogical by Tucker (1968). Something which has been defined as anti routine and personal cannot be routinised and personalised. According to him it is better to refer to the 'transformation' of charismatic authority into other types of authority.

24. Royal healing also included the use of cramp rings, the King's touch endowing rings of gold or silver with a protective power against epilepsy and other conditions associated with spasms. Littlewood (1996:1) reports on the healing by the late

Princess Diana, whereby patients describe not only their sense of privilege and gratitude but the experience of power coming from her to them .

25. Rabbi Dov Baer commented that "every heavenly gate requires the proper key to open it" (Newman 1975). He prescribed specific mediational techniques to help annihilate the ego.

CHAPTER 2

1. There is much dabate about the use of the term ritual in anthropology (see Lewis 1980, Bell 1992, Grimes 1990). The term has often been equated with magico-religious activity (Goody 1961: 158). I use the term ritual in the sense defined by Leach (1966). Leach (1966) distinguished three forms of behaviour which are not genetically determined:

a) Rational, Technical behaviour which is directed towards specific ends and judged by our standards of verification produces observable results in a strictly mechanical way.

b) Communicative behaviour which serves to communicate information because of the existence of a culturally determined communication code.

c) Magical behaviour which is potent in itself in terms of the cultural conventions of the actors but not potent in itself.

Leach used the term ritual to embrace both categories b and c and argues that the distinction between b and c is illusory or trivial

2. However in his 1973 paper *Form and Meaning in Magical Acts :a Point of View* , he moves to a more instrumental position, arguing that rites are often "geared to achieving practical results such as cure of disease or production of a fine crop" (1973:226). Ritual is intended to instrumentally affect the world.

3. For example in Buddhism, Sakyamuni Buddha is seen as a great healer in the *Pali Canon* who `healed' through his teachings on impermanence: liberation from worldly desires is `healing'. The Buddha's healing provided all concerned with a new insight into the nature of things (Birnbaum 1979). In Zoroastrianism, men are taught to use the techniques of divine cure to overcome evil in the form of sickness thus restoring the world to complete perfection. The goal of the entire process of creation, fall and salvation is *Frashokerati* which can be glossed both as healing and renovation. In Islam, `healing' is a central part of the revelation given to the prophet Muhammad and the *Qur'an* refers to itself as a `cure' for the mind or heart.

4. A number of biblical Hebrew terms can be glossed as sickness. These include *hala* (to be sick) and *dabar* (evil matter). Sickness was intimately tied up with evil and sin and later with the person of Satan: "There is no health in my bones because of sin" (Psalm 38). Sickness always had a spiritual component and three terms could be glossed as healing: *rupa* (to heal), *haya* (to revive) and *sub* (to restore). In

the Old Testament, the notions recalling healing refer to revival or restoration to a proper place. Although the Old Testament gives examples of physical healings through divine intervention (Ex. 422-26, Kings 17, Elijah 1), there is a complex cross cutting of the sacred and profane levels. It is impossible to argue that physical healing is a metaphor for spiritual healing or vice versa. All we can argue is that in the Hebrew Bible the two were locally inseparable.

Descriptions of supernatural healing are unusual in the Jewish scriptures in sharp contrast to the New Testament. Suffering is only discussed at length in the book of Job where it is seen as an educational theodicy (Eliade 1987). God was seen as both a healer and as bringing disease: "for he wounds, but he binds up, he smites, but his hands heal" (Job 5:18). The cases of healing clustered around two critical periods of the Exodus and the ministry of Elijah and Elishah. The Old Testament primarily concerns man's covenant with God. It had little interest in the immediate aspects of sickness and its causes. The focus instead was on the religious meaning of sickness and of healing in the greater plan of salvation.

"Instead of any detailed or specific instruction in the treatment of illness, what it has to say directly about sickness and health is cast in a stark mould of command to do right according to the teaching of the law; and if not God's mercy to the righteous then there is affliction, according to the justice of God who will punish the iniquitous and will smite his enemies" (Lewis 1987:609).

The Talmud has little to say on the meaning of healing. The primary sources of rabbinic discussions and decisions on medical matters in the ancient world were in the Mishneh and the Palestinian and Babylonian Talmuds. Other sources of medical information include the *Mishneh Torah*, the *Shulkan Aruch* along with the Responsa literature. Generally three aspects of medical practice are examined. First there is a discussion of specific diseases (and their cures). These include excessive bleeding (which recalls to us the bleeding disorder haemophilia), rabies, gout, sunstroke and kordiakos (an alcohol induced confusional state). The second aspect discusses the relation between physician and patient and the role of the physician. Thirdly there is a discussion of various ethical topics such as abortion and contraception.

5. As McNutt (1974:60) states "everywhere we look in the Gospels, Jesus is either performing a healing or has just returned from doing them "and he went about Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and infirmity among the people" (Matthew 4,23). Developing from the 'miraculous' healings of Jesus, the Christian church has always had a tradition of individual healing (Frost 1949). Although Christianity has always maintained a distinction between the physical and the spiritual, it has offered clear passages between them not typical of rabbinic Judaism.

6. The concept of 'meaning' in anthropology presents a number of problems. Hobart (1982) points out that 'to mean' can be synonymous with: intend, signify,

show, have value (or significance), refer to, stand for. The main difficulty with 'meaning' relates to the fact that different schools are in disagreement on what meaning is and how far it can be known (or indeed meant) at all. Both Bultmann (1957) and Gadamer (1965) argue that the observer cannot escape the historical, or social circumstances in which he believes and which limit understanding. Meaning cannot be known from an objective position. Sperber (1975) vehemently argues against the notion that symbols mean. The fundamental question is no longer how symbols mean rather 'how do symbols work?'. He points out that Western culture is preoccupied with the notion of meaning with semiology being part of our basic ideology. He is favourable to Lévi-Strauss who, although he expressed himself in the language of semiotics was one of the first to propose a form of analysis of symbolism that did not concern itself with the idea that symbols mean. Holy and Stuchlik (1983) suggest that cultural phenomena are meaningful because the people ascribe meaning to them and perceive meaning in them. Meaning is not something which a phenomenon or relation possesses itself, but something which is attributed to it by people. Meaning refers to a multitude of types of understanding.

7. B Turner (1986) uses the term 'embodied personhood' to describe the relationship of cultural beliefs in connection with health and illness to the sentient human body. Insofar as medical anthropology fails to consider the way that the human body is itself culturally constructed, it is destined to fall prey to certain assumptions characteristic of biomedicine. The most important of these is the Cartesian dualism

that separates mind from body, spirit from matter and real from unreal. This epistemology is itself a cultural and historical construct.

8. As Bourdieu (1977:124) says "This principle is nothing more than the socially informed body with its tastes and distastes, compulsions and repressions, which is in a word all its senses. Not just the five senses which never escape the structuring of social determinism, but also the sense of duty, sense of direction and of reality, common sense and sense of the sacred, tactical sense, business sense, sense of responsibility, sense of propriety, sense of humour, sense of absurdity, moral sense and sense of probability, etc".

9. In a similar way it could be argued that psychotherapy has undergone a process of interiorization, shifting from an emphasis on alleviation of symptoms to the attainment of 'insight'.

10. We may ask to what extent the emphasis on meaning reflects the explicit concerns of those involved as sick individuals. Does the sick person generally look for meaning in his or her illness or merely seek alleviation of symptoms? While with chronic afflictions (Kleinman and Sung 1979, Good 1994) the person may be driven to a search for significance and justification, in many cases the sick person is more concerned with practical amelioration (Ellen 1977, Feinberg 1990, Littlewood 1993).

11. Students of Cuna society have criticised Lévi -Strauss's paper on a number of grounds. He analyses the incantation as a text divorced from its social setting and ignores the roles and statuses of the participants. The form of the ritual language would present difficulties to a non adept. Students of Cuna society, writing in the 1970's argued that a woman's hearing of the incantation, addressed to a set of dolls resting beneath the hammock rather than to the woman herself could not evoke particular physiological reactions since it was couched in a language unknown to the patient, who may be asleep or in so much pain she could not concentrate on the chant (Chapin 1976). However, in defence of Lévi-Strauss, an examination of Cuna ethnographies (Nordenshiold 1938) does indicate that there is some overlap between everyday and ritual language: "the linguistic characteristics of the ceremonial varieties overlap the colloquial phonologically, syntactically, and semantically, sometimes involving prefixes or suffixes, vowel elisions and elongations, syncopation or and consonantal change". A major criticism however is that ultimately we do not know how the incantation enhanced the physiological process of childbirth.

12. Kirmayer (1992) argues that metaphor "offers a remedy for the drought of passion in semantics ... metaphor theory shows how our purest, most abstract ideas are products of bodily action and emotion and "metaphor retains its grounding in the body, while at the same time providing the ability to extend into the social world" (Kirmayer 1988). According to Lakoff (1987), metaphor is grounded in the body and emerges from it producing categories of thought and experience. It also

derives from the social body, the presence of others and the forces we feel with them. Social relationships and patterns of interaction can be mined continuously for new metaphors. Ortony (1993) even argues that they may be constitutive of all our thoughts.

13. Still interested in how notions of healing are symbolically constructed, Beckford (1985), in his analysis of new religious movements, looks at notions of 'healing' in these groups. For him healing is closely associated with the restoration of holism (an etic view), whether we see Chassidism as a new religious movement or not, his analytical framework is useful in examining the construction of healing among Chassidic Jews. He proposes that underlying the different ideologies of the various new religious movements, there is an underlying concern with the restoration of holism. According to him, term holistic is "the best all purpose designation for the prevalent concern for restoring a sense of wholeness to a person who feels that all is not as well as it could be with the mental, physical and spiritual aspects of life". The sense of holism extends to the social body and to the entire cosmos. The sense of personal wholeness is frequently induced by means of symbols and practices designed to accentuate the individual's independence with others and with the forces of nature in an indivisible universe. The Hebrew word for healing *shub* refers to restoration to its proper place ie to make whole again . Among Lubavitchers, the idiom of 'healing' refers to the physical body, the social body and the whole cosmos.

14. Leach (1968) and Beattie (1970) argue that practitioners of magic distinguish between magic and practical work. According to them, they have different goals. The former is intended to say something, ie is expressive. The latter does something instrumental. Beattie (1984) makes the point that practitioners of rituals may think they are instrumental but, because they are not based on hypothesis testing like science, purported claims are not claims in the ordinary sense. Similarly, Firth (1951) argues that magic is marked by its expressive and symbolic aspects. For a discussion of theories of magic see Skorupski (1976). Brown (1986) makes the important point that theories of magic privilege language and its symbolic aspects. However rituals may have empirical effects on the world and this point is often overlooked. He argues for magic being seen as a sensibility on a spectrum ranging from the purely instrumental to the purely expressive instead of being conceptualised as a discrete set of beliefs .

CHAPTER 3

1. Reasons for joining Lubavitich vary a great deal but many members reported to me the psychological benefits of belonging, such as the sense of community ensuing and 'finding meaning, purpose and direction in their lives', hence expounding a native functional folk psychology. Attention has recently been paid to the function of religion in conferring identity on individuals and groups or in reinforcing the sense of identity derived from other associations or affiliations (Mol 1976). Wilson (1992) points out that individuals and groups may seek reinforcement of their self

conceptions from religious sources. The core of the Jewish identity is established by reference to a sequence of historical events. Both the Old Testament and the Jewish prayer book narrate and celebrate this sequence (see Connerton 1992).

A problem for Lubavitchers is the maintenance of their 'ethnic group boundaries' (see Barthes 1969). To some extent the fact that their customs and dress differ from other groups help maintain these boundaries. By distinguishing themselves from the gentiles and non-religious Jews, the Chassidim believe that they can best preserve their identity, keep their children from becoming acculturated and prevent possible infractions of the religious law. This need to maintain their boundaries is a recurrent theme in Chassidic tradition (Mintz 1968). Lubavitchers appeal to other forms of boundary maintenance. One important way is by organising various institutions so as to minimise the potentially harmful impact of the surrounding cultural influences. Lubavitch is set apart from other Chassidic groups by its emphasis on proselytisation. Although this activity may appear to weaken group identity by virtue of interaction with the secular world, Shaffir (1978) argues that there may be a process of 'witnessing' whereby "if more and more people can be persuaded that the system of belief is correct, then it clearly must, after all, be correct (Festinger 1956:28). It could be argued that Lubavitchers' contacts with non-religious Jews serve, in fact to reinforce the sect's distinctive identity and fortify members self identification. Mol (1976:238) observes "every act of witnessing anchors the belief system deeply in the motions of the believer, since faith has to be

proclaimed against the non-believer. The boundaries around the belief system are thus firmly drawn.”

2. Lubavitch is distinguished from other Chassidic groups by their attempt to bring non-orthodox Jews back to orthodoxy. Other Chassidic groups in Stamford Hill include Satmar, Gur, Belzer, Klausenburg, Vishnitz and Bobov and Spinka each with their own Rebbe, style of dress and practices and each worships in their own synagogue. They are all ultra-orthodox Jews. The Gur live mainly in Israel, as do the Belzers. The Bratzlav are unusual in having no living Rebbe (and of interest are unfavourable to the use of biomedicine). The Satmar arose in Transylvania in the decades immediately preceding the Holocaust and rose to prominence primarily in the post-war years. The movement is identified with the personality of Yoel Teitelbaum (1888-1979). They generally settled in Williamsburg and do not recognise the state of Israel, arguing that the Hebrew nation cannot be restored before the advent of the Messiah. The Satmar Rebbe was known for his unswerving and increasingly bitter opposition to Zionism, the state of Israel and all forms of Judaism which differed from his own ultra-orthodox way of life. When the Satmar Rebbe died in 1979 some of the mourners compared the event to the Holocaust. The current Satmar Rebbe, Moshe Teitelbaum, still expresses dismay at the willingness of Lubavitchers to interact with secular Jews and there have been some recent tensions between the two groups. In 1989 there was a large public spectacle in Hendon as several thousand Chassidim came to greet the Satmar Rebbe, Rabbi Moshe. For a good description of British Chassidism, see Rabinowicz (1997).

3. In his provocative book *Jewish History, Jewish Religion*, Shahak (1994) asserts that Tanya refers to non-Jews as totally satanic creatures "in whom there is absolutely nothing good". Even a Jewish embryo is different from a non-Jewish one. Creation was specifically for the sake of Jews. He refers to the Lubavitcher Rebbe as the Fuhrer of Chabad who publishes the most bloodthirsty rabid statements about Arabs. I was unable to find these comments in Tanya.

4. Becoming a Lubavitcher involves gradual detachment from significant others outside the group with increasing interaction with established members, approximating to the general model of conversion proposed by Lofland and Stark (1965).

5. The Talmud (Hebrew for 'study') is the most important work of the oral Torah and is the authoritative corpus of Jewish law and tradition. It comprises the teaching of the Mishnah (oral law set down in writing and codified around 200 CE) and 'repetition' or completion of this in the Gemara (commentaries on the Mishnaic canon recorded during the 3rd-6th centuries CE). The traditions of the Mishnah written in Hebrew derive from early sages, while explanatory material of Gemara, written largely in Aramaic, derives from later sages. There are two Talmuds: the Palestinian or Jerusalem and the Babylonian. The former version was completed in the 5th century CE and the latter around the 6th century CE. The Palestinian Talmud consists largely of Halakhah (purely legal material). Although essentially a

record of scholarly discussions covering the Mishnah, it embraces every aspect of life from jurisprudence, religious observance, ethics and theology to aesthetics, etiquette, folklore, popular science, astrology and numerology (*gematria*). There are a large number of commentaries on the Talmud from the Gaonic (ninth century CE) period to the present day.

6. Douglas (1966), in a similar way to Leach (1964), examines the "hoary old puzzle" of the dietary laws set forth in Leviticus. Her main explanation focuses on classificatory 'anomalies'. Morris (1990) however concludes that few of the mammals and birds named are anomalous according to the classification she outlines, and that her analysis of the abominations of Leviticus provides inconclusive evidence to support her thesis.

7. The two main foundations of the services are the *Shema* and the *Amidah* prayers. The *Shema* is recited during the morning and evening services and consists of three paragraphs from Deuteronomy and Numbers. The first paragraph starting 'Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one' is the declaration of Jewish faith. The *Amidah* or *Shmoneh Esreh* consists of eighteen benedictions. The first three and the last three benedictions of the *Amidah* are recited at every service. The thirteen intermediary prayers recited only on weekdays, are replaced on Sabbaths and festivals by prayers dealing with aspects of the holy day.

After the Amidah is read, prayers of supplication in which God is asked to pardon his people are recited. This is followed on Mondays and Thursdays by the reading of the Law. The service is concluded by reading the *Aleinu* which proclaims God as king of Israel and looks forward to a time when idolatry will disappear. On Mondays and Thursdays and on Sabbaths and festivals, there are regular readings of the Law in fifty-four sections, each section is called a *sidra* or *parsha*. After reading the Law, the holy scrolls, the *sefer torah*, are lifted up for all to see. Male members of the congregation are called up to read a portion of the Law. The reading of the Law is concluded with the *haptorah*, a passage from Prophets.

8. The Jewish calendar is reckoned according to the time which the moon takes to complete one revolution around the earth. The Jewish months consist of either 29 or 30 days making a total of 354 days a year. To ensure that the festivals are celebrated in their proper seasons an additional month, *adar rishon*, is inserted into the calendar 7 times in 19 years, adjusting the lunar year more closely to the solar year. According to Orthodox Jewish teachings the world was "created with an age". Lubavitchers assert that the chronological findings of archaeology are wrong and many Lubavitchers point out how the Torah's view of time differs markedly from the view of time held by non-Jews. The current Jewish year is 5759 (1999).

9. A number of special prayers are said on the Sabbath. These include the *kiddush*, the prayer of "sanctification of the day" and the *Havdalah* (division or separation) when the Sabbath departs. This consists of blessing over wine, spices, and light and

the fourth blessing concludes with the praise of God who "makes a distinction between holy and profane". An essential part of the morning service is the reading of the weekly *sidra*, a portion of the Torah followed by the **Hap Torah**, a passage from Prophets.

10. The principle of male dominance has been applied throughout Jewish history. Jewish women are excluded from religious duties such as the donning of tefillin, the leading of prayers etc. Lubavitcher women themselves often justify their role by asserting that their household tasks are considered sacred and one woman stated that a well prepared meal is itself a form of prayer. The Jewish woman has few rights. Although she can sue for divorce, only the husband has the right to grant a divorce (*get*). In spite of jural inequality and the general belittlement of women (women are "temperamentally light headed" says the Talmud), women are to be loved, respected, placed on a pedestal and revered. Violence towards women is strictly prohibited ("if a man makes his wife cry, all the angels weep" says the Talmud). Women are afforded respect if not recognition as fully equal members of society. Although the principle of male dominance has applied through the history of Judaism, the use of physical violence on women has never been condoned.

11. Douglas (1966) seeks to show how ideas about the body have a symbolic dimension. The preoccupations of the Hebrews with the boundaries of the body "expresses danger to community boundaries". She asserts in the final chapter of *Purity and Danger* that the body provides a basic scheme for all symbolism. "There is

hardly a pollution which does not have some primary physiological reference". She writes (1966:148) that "when rituals express anxiety about the body's orifices the sociological counterpart of this anxiety is a care to protect the political and cultural unity of a minority group." The Israelites were always subject to persecution. All the bodily issues were held to be polluting; blood, pus, excreta, semen. The threatened boundaries of their body politic would be reflected in their care for the integrity, unity and purity of the physical body.

The menstruating woman is, as among all orthodox groups, considered polluting and sexual relations between her and her husband are strictly forbidden. A Chassidic male is required ideally to avert his gaze from a woman. The purity laws are not experienced by Lubavitcher women as "degrading" but are rationalised as an aid to prolonging the "mystique" of marriage. It is held that by keeping the mitzah of Taharas Hamishpacha (laws relating to sexual abstention in marriage), the woman corrects that which occurred in the Garden of Eden ie eating from the tree of knowledge.

12. Another custom connected with the birth of a boy is the **pidyon ha ben**. This takes place on the thirty-first day after the birth. This is the "redemption" of the first born son. The custom relates to the period spent by the Jews in Egypt. By delivering the Jewish people from slavery, more specifically in return for his slaying all the first born of the Egyptians, God has sanctified the first born of Israel and consigned them to his service. During the ceremony the father brings the child to a

table while holding five coins in his hand and declares to a cohen (member of priestly origin), "This is my first born, the one who opened the womb of his mother and he is to be redeemed for five Shekels." After receiving the child, the Cohen asks the father "Which do you prefer: to give me your first born or to redeem him for five silver coins?" The father replies "I prefer to redeem my son and here is his redemption money as I am obliged to do according to the law of Torah.

CHAPTER 4

1. Whether or not an event is interpreted as a miracle is dependent on the perceived probability of the event occurring by chance. Hume in his *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* defined a miracle as a violation of the laws of nature. The event must be unexpected. For him, a miracle could only be accepted as such only if it would be a greater miracle for all the evidence to be shown to be mistaken. Either a natural process has been speeded up or slowed down or a natural event is perceived as a miracle because of its timing ie it happens just at the right moment. For Hume, if a miracle is simply the violation of a law of nature, there can never be sufficient evidence to command its acceptance. Aquinas distinguished those things that are called miracles because they are thought to be impossible in terms of nature alone and those which are unlikely to happen in this particular way and with this particular timing. To call something a miracle is an interpretation which is partly dependent on the event having some positive significance ie there is a value judgement. This

requires a selective consideration of the facts. Neusner, Frerichs and Flesher (1989) point out that the difference between magic and miracle in Jewish history is dependent on the perspective one adopts. Using as examples the actions of Moses and the magicians of the Pharaoh, they assert that the former are miracles and the latter magic. Insiders perform miracles, outsiders perform magic .

2. The performance of miracles is characteristic of the leaders of both traditional and new religious movements. Nickell (1993) discusses this issue in relation to saints and Hindu gurus. As discussed in chapter one it remains uncertain to what extent followers join the movement because of the personality of the leader (charisma) or because of the performance of miracles .

3. Until his death, Lubavitchers would regularly write to the Rebbe's secretary who in turn would give the Kvitl to the Rebbe. He would take some of these to his father-in-law's grave. Now he is dead Lubavitchers write, fax or E-mail directly to the Rebbe's grave.

4. Until his first stroke in 1992, it was possible to get a private audience with the Rebbe but this was relatively uncommon unless the person was a dignitary. Several of my informants had received a private audience from him and all reported how he seemed to know them well even though he had never met them before. Generally, for the majority they could only communicate with the

Rebbe at 'Dollars' sometimes waiting up to six hours to speak to him for a couple of minutes.

5. In his book *Mystics and Medics*, Bulka (1979) compares similarities and differences between the encounter with the Rebbe and psychotherapy (see especially Spero 1979,1980,Woocher 1979, Ansel 1982). He points out parallels between the Yehidus and Frankl's logotherapy to the extent that both Chassidism and logotherapy reorient distorted thinking. Weiner (1975:18) argues how the Chassidic Rebbes understood that "Psychotherapy is the vehicle for pursuing goals of symptom relief and positive personality change consists of helping the patient understand himself better." The Chassid-rebbe relationship has been compared with general psychotherapy, psychoanalysis, and the I-thou relationship so well described by Buber. A number of authors eg Safier, Woocher, Applebaum and Metzger have provided evidence that the Rebbe is aware of such interpersonal factors as genuineness, warmth, unconditional self regard and empathy, all of which are important for personal change.

6. Interestingly, very few Lubavitchers told me about occasions when the Rebbe was wrong. One Lubavitcher recounted how he had been given a blessing for a business which subsequently went bankrupt. He admitted that this occurred because he had not performed certain Mitzvot. It was not because the Rebbe had been at fault. If there is not a positive result after contacting the

Rebbe, it is because his followers do not have enough faith in the Rebbe. As in many systems of 'magic' the participants cannot see outside the system. If some action is not effective the fault lies in themselves. Even if the desired result is not obtained, they may interpret any change as deriving from the influence of the Rebbe. As Luhrmann (1989:132) argues "Magicians are not blind, believing fools: that they conclude that magic is effective speaks more to the ambiguity of interpretation, than to their gullability or the truth of their ideas."

7. For Lubavitchers these letters become very important personal possessions for them. During my fieldwork some Lubavitchers were quite reluctant to allow me to see the letters.

8. The Yalkut Shim'oni (The Collection of Simeon) was written in the Middle Ages by an unknown author and is a comprehensive anthology. It is classified by Jewish scholars as a midrashic text, an exposition of the scripture consisting of commentaries and interpretations of biblical verses

CHAPTER 5

1. Tanya is based on a neoplatonic philosophy, a version of Platonic philosophy inaugurated by Plotinus who developed a mystical interpretation of Plato's teaching. For Plato the real, stable permanent part of the world is the world of

ideas or forms. The world of ordinary experience is an illusory, transitory, unimportant sequence of events which take place in the physical world, the realm of appearance rather than reality. The physical world is held to be merely a flawed reflection of the perfect world of archetypes.

Scholem (1974:20) argues that the esoteric doctrine of creation has always formed one of the major preoccupations of Kabbalism "It is here that Kabbalism comes nearest to Neoplatonic thought, of which it has been said with truth that 'procession and reversion together constitute a single movement, the diastole - systole, which is the life of the universe', precisely this is also the belief of the Kabbalist". However Scholem takes great care to mention that the sefirot are not intermediary spheres interposed between God and the universe-comparable to the middle states of the neoplatonists which have their place between the absolute one and the world of the sense. In the neoplatonic system these emanations are 'outside' the One, whereas in the Zohar the sefirot are regarded not as steps of a ladder between God and the world but as various phases of the Divinity which proceed from and succeed each other and mutually influence each other.

Mindel (1974) points out that in neo-platonism the human soul must strive to get away from matter. There is nothing that the spirit can derive from matter: "The inferior cannot act upon the superior". This is not the case in Chabad where matter is primarily viewed as neutral. Man can make matter a powerful

instrument of the spirit. It is only when he uses matter as a vehicle for the spirit that he can realise his full capacities and fulfil his destinies.

A common representation of the sefirot in the Zohar is that of concentric circles where everything is part of everything else, a stereomorphic cosmos in which any event or entity is simultaneously in the centre and the periphery with its various parts all acting on one another so as to form one organism. If we need a figuring, the notion of a fractal (Mandelbrot 1977) in which each part replicates the whole is more apposite than of a single spiritual physical dyad: perhaps Pribram's hologram or Wagner's (1986) holograph, the linguistic trope of synecdoche or the participatory symbols of Levy-Bruhl.

2. There is debate among Old Testament scholars as to whether the biblical authors made a distinction between the body and soul as distinct entities. In the second creation narrative (Genesis 2:7) the formation of Adam is described: "and the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul". The original Hebrew, *nefesh hayyah* translated as "living soul", has no reference to the soul as a separate entity. Jewish ideas on body and soul were transformed under the influence of Greek thought. There was a distinction made between the body and soul and a conflict emerged between the two especially in the Greek speaking community of Alexandria, the foremost representative of which is Philo. The Rabbinic views are discussed in the Mishnah (edited around the year CE 200); the Jerusalem Talmud (edited around CE 400); and the Babylonian

Talmud (edited around CE 500). In the Talmudic and Rabbinic literature there is a dichotomy between the body and the soul (see Bolinger 1980, Rubin 1988, Gilman 1992).

3. The idioms of both the Kabbalah and Tanya are highly anthropomorphic. Human ideas and attributes are projected onto God (See Schochet 1989). This is on account of the fact that these are the only types of words that man can use in a meaningful way. In the Talmud it is stated 'Had they limited themselves to abstract terms and concepts appropriate to God, we would have understood neither the terms nor the concepts. All and any anthropomorphic notions and concepts are non-inscribable to the divinity, as it stated in Isaiah 40 (18,25) 'To whom will you liken me that I should be equal, says the Holy One'. At the same time, however, it should be noted that the anthropomorphic terminology used in scripture, by the mystics and by others, is not arbitrary, rather these terms are carefully chosen and possess a profound meaning.

4. Knowledge of the sefirot derives not only from the Tanya but also from the daily prayers. The introduction to the evening service for the sabbath consists of passages from the *Tikkunei Zohar* where the relation between parts of the body and sefirot is described.

"You have made for them a number of bodies which are called 'bodies' in comparison with the garments which cover them: and they are described

(anthropomorphically) in the following manner: Chesed (kindness) - the right arm: Gevurah (severity) - the left arm: Tiferet (beauty) - the torso: Netzah (victory) and Hod (splendour) - the two thighs: Malchut (kingship) - the mouth, which we call the oral Torah: Chochmah (wisdom) - the brain, that is the thought within: Binah (understanding) - the heart by means of which the heart understands and concerning the latter two sefirot is written 'The secrets belong to the Lord our God; supernal Keter (crown) is the crown of kingship, concerning which it is said 'He declares the end from the beginning' and it is the skull upon which the Tefillin are placed. Within them is the name (whose numerical value) is forty-five which is the path of Atzilut (emanation); and the watering of the tree (of the sefirot) with its arms and branches just as water irrigates a tree and it grows by that irrigation. Master of the worlds, you are the cause of causes and producer of effects, who waters the tree through that fountain; and that fountain is as the soul to the body, which is the after life of the body (Tikkunei Zohar)

5. The above is reminiscent of the 'humoral' processes of medieval European medicine and of Ayurvedic, Unani and Chinese medicine today. These all emphasise the importance of a harmonious balance for mental and physical health. Like other systems which approach pantheism, the sefirot are as much a psychology as a cosmology. The two souls of Chabad resemble the multiple souls found in African religions. In the appendix to Oedipus and Job in West African Religion, Horton (1983) compares a set of concepts found in differing

forms in four West African people. These notions constitute indigenous `social psychologies (see Heelas and Lock 1981, Morris 1994), that is a means of explaining, predicting and attempting to control the relationship between the individual and his or her society. He is concerned like Fortes to relate such social psychologies to the life predicaments of the people who hold them. The souls described in Tanya may be conceptualised as a social psychology.

6. The rabbinic literature is a rich treasury of moral reflection. The Christian doctrine of original sin - the idea that man is naturally sinful and can only be saved by divine grace - has no place in Jewish literature.

7. Judaism prohibits any visual representation of God. In Biblical times there was unease about anthropomorphism. Moses, warning the Jews against making images of God said "The Lord addressed you from the midst of the flame. You heard the sound of the words, but saw no appearance, only a voice "(Deut 4:12).

Deutero-Isaiah proclaimed "To whom will you compare God; or what likeness will you compare with him "(Isa 40:18). The most detailed description of God is given in the Book of Ezekiel (1: 26-28). Ezekiel sees "a semblance in human form "from what appeared as his loins up, I saw what looked like fire. There was a radiance all about him....That was the appearance of the semblance of the Presence of the Lord" (Ezek 1:26-28). Similarly Exodus (33:32) it states "And the Lord said [to Moses] `see, there is a place near me. Station yourself on the rock and as my presence passes by, I will put you in a cleft of the rock and

shield you with my hand until I have passed by. Then I will take my hand away and you will see my back; but my face must not be seen!" (Exod. 33:23). Seeing God is considered dangerous and is the privilege of certain leaders. Eilberg-Schwarz (1992) argues that this circumspection about describing God's body - about describing and representing it - was also evident in the Israelite literature who avoided certain kinds of anthropomorphisms. God does not perform baser human functions such as eating, urinating, defecating or digesting (see Dein 1994 for a fuller discussion of God's sexuality).

8. Boyer (1996) argues that anthropomorphic thinking is universal on account of the fact it is counterintuitive and therefore "attention grabbing". Guthrie (1993) posits that religion is anthropomorphism. Both anthropomorphism and religion stem from the same strategy of perception which interprets the world's ambiguities first as those possibilities which matter most. Such possibilities usually include living things and especially humans.

9. Another version of this myth was proposed by Chaim Vital, the Palestinian Kabbalist and principal disciple of Isaac Luria, in *Etz Chayyim*:

"Know that before the emanations were emanated, and the creatures created, there was a simple supernal light filling up with reality, and there was no vacant space whatever And when it arose in his simple desire to create the worlds and to bring forth the emanated beings, in order to reveal the perfection

of his acts, his names, and his attributes, this being the reason for the creation of the worlds ..."

"The En Sof contracted (tzimtzum) himself in the central point within him, in the very centre of his light, contracting that light and withdrawing himself towards the periphery around the central point, thus leaving a vacant place and sphere, and empty void, within the very centre. The nature of this tzimtzum is to reveal the root of judgement, in order subsequently to introduce the attribute of judgement into the worlds. After the Tzimtzum, when there remained an empty space and vacant and empty sphere, within the centre of the light of the En Sof, as stated above, a place was provided for the emanated, created, formed and made beings to exist therein. There upon he extended one straight line from his peripheral light downward toward the centre of that space, the uppermost tip of which issuing from En Sof itself and touching it ... and in that space he caused all the worlds to be emanated, created, formed and made ... This tzimtzum was followed by other Tzimtzumin in the process of which a cosmic order came into being, comprising the four worlds."

10. In the book *From Exile To Redemption: Chassidic Teachings of The Lubavitcher Rebbe* (published by Kehot Publication Society) there are many teachings about exile and redemption. In one passage (p181) entitled "Thinking and Doing" the Rebbe states:

"We are now in the last moments before the coming of Mosiach. The fact that he has not yet arrived is not (God forbid) that the time is not yet ripe, but because we are still lacking one single deed that will tip the scales, and make the world worthy of being granted the redemption. The demand of the hour is therefore that every Jew, great and small, think about the ultimate redemption to be brought about through Mosiach, and then do something to actualise it, both in his own life and in his encouragement of others".

At times he argues that the exile may have positive advantages (p44):

"A man is not near so thirsty when in a populated area as he is when in a dry desert. It is likewise in the time of Exile, when God's presence is obscured, and when materiality is at its coarsest, that a man longs most intently to serve his creator. As David Ha Melech (King David) writes 'My soul thirsts for you, my flesh yearns for you, in a parched and weary land without water'"

CHAPTER 6

1. There is disagreement among Christian theologians as to whether the experience of God that the mystic can attain is ever truly direct and immediate and ineffable, or whether it always involves the mediation of concepts and ideas using language. In contrast to Jewish mysticism, some Christian mystics eg St Augustine argue that language must be surpassed to reach the mystical state." If I have spoken of it, I

have not spoken " said Meister Eckhart, the great thirteenth century German Christian mystic. He was prohibited from writing by the Catholic church and excommunicated a few days after his death. The anonymous fourteenth century treatise *The Cloud of Unknowing* held that God could not be known by unaided reason. God is always quite unable to be comprehended by the faculty of intelligence, but he is totally and perfectly intelligible by the power of love.

2. For a discussion of the use of the term *pardes* see Scholem's (1969) *On the Kabbalah and its Symbolism* where he argues that the earliest reference to the four levels is to be found in the *Midrash Ha Ne `Elam*, one of the earliest works of the author of the *Zohar* who likens the words of the Torah to a nut. Just as a nut has an outer shell and a kernel, each word of the Torah contains outward fact and other levels of meaning, each of which is deeper than the preceding.

3. Kabbalists typically used acrostics to discover mystical relations. Moses De Leon took the initial letters of the four senses of scripture (*peshat, remez, derash and sod*) and formed out of them *prds*. Since Hebrew is not vocalised, it was possible to read this as *pardes* (paradise). The final letters of *MVH* (brain) and *LB* (heart) recall the initial letters of two sefirot *hokmah* (wisdom) and *binah* (intelligence).

4. The serpent of Moses, for example, is a prefiguration of the Messiah because the value of both words is 358. Adding up the letters of *Yhwh* (the name of God) we

get 72 and Kabbalistic tradition constantly searched for the seventy-two names of God (Crump 1990 gives a good description of gematria)

5. There is a recent trend in the philosophy of language to see language as intersubjective and constitutive of lifeworlds. Taylor (1985:286) argues for the invocative function of language as being more primary than the describing or depictive functions of language. He uses as an example religious or mythical language in which "the words are true/right because they have power, they invoke the deity, they really connect with what he is". Words are a way of invoking and formulating reality and are creative.

6. The central feature of Sufi ritual is *dhikr* or remembrance. Repetition of the divine names, an essential part of the ceremony, results in knowledge of God through contemplation. The religious activity is similar to that found in the 'Jesus prayers' of Eastern Christianity and in Buddhism. The divine names are repeated and are often linked to the *tahlil* formula "There is no Deity but God ". It is accompanied by controlled breathing giving rise to a state of ecstasy. The dominant purpose is the 'saturation' of the self in Allah. This resembles the ecstatic Kabbalah of Abraham Abulafia.

7. The discovery of a language which directly embodied or later accurately represented reality was a recurring Renaissance preoccupation (Eco 1993, 1995). In his book *The Search for the Perfect Language*, Eco argues that the idea that there once

existed a language which perfectly and unambiguously expressed the essence of all possible things has occupied the minds of philosophers, theologians, mystics and others for the past two millennia. From the early Dark Ages till the Renaissance it was widely believed that the language spoken in the Garden of Eden was the perfect language and all current languages were its descendants from the catastrophes of the fall at Babel, an idea which Eco refers to as the monogenetic hypothesis. From Origen to Augustine, almost all of the church fathers assumed that before the confusion at Babel that this primordial language was Biblical Hebrew. For Kabbalists, Hebrew was not just a language in which Adam spoke in the Garden of Eden but the language from which the universe was created. However, the book describes other views such as that of the Swedes who presented God talking to Adam in Swedish.

8. Abraham Abulafia (1240-91) was a Spanish mystic and Kabbalist who travelled in search of the ten lost tribes. Having failed in his search, he studied the *Sefer Yetzirah* and had religious visions. He aimed to achieve prophecy through meditation on the letter combinations of the Hebrew alphabet and mystical names of God. He held that he was the messiah and went to Rome in 1280 to convert Pope Nicholas III to Judaism. Having been saved from burning at the stake, he went to Sicily to proclaim himself as Messiah. He believed the messianic age would come in the year 1290.

9. Trachtenberg (1977) describes the use of the divine names for magical purposes. First among the names was the four lettered Hebrew name YHVH, the original name of God; the Tetragrammaton alone is considered a true name, the other names being descriptions. The name was deployed in the Temple times during the priestly blessings and by the High Priest at Yom Kippur. Rabbis supposedly taught it to their students only once in seven years and threatened those who made public use of it with the loss of their portion of the world to come. According to Kabbalistic teachings, God gives life to the whole world through the Tetragrammaton. It was carved on the rod of Aaron with which the Red Sea was divided and is written on amulets. David Alroy in the twelfth century is reputed to have travelled long distances in a very short time by means of its power. Other names consisted of various combinations of few or many letters such as the name *Anaktam Pastam Paspasim Dionsim* of twenty-two Hebrew letters.

10. There are many stories of a human being animated using divine names. The term **golem** refers to an artificial man made through Kabbalistic magic. Once the Golem arose it was animated by writing the Tetragrammaton on a piece of paper which was placed under its tongue or by engraving the Hebrew word on the forehead. One story relates how a Kabbalistic sage sent a golem to a colleague. When the latter discovered that it could not speak and realised it was a golem, he told it to return to dust. Elijah Bel Shem of Chelm had to remove the divine name from his golem when it threatened to destroy the world. Israel Baal Shem Tov had

a golem who acted as his servant. Many stories are told about the golem created by Judah Leow Ben Bezalel of Prague.

11. The fourth conception of language which Idel (1992) examines is that language reflects the divine structure by way of symbolism and by virtue of an organic link between the symbol and the object it symbolises, a view which was not expressed by my informants. On account of this, the mystic is able to affect the divine structure by the proper use of language.

12. For a good overview of mystical aspects of the Hebrew letters see Glazerson (1991) and Ginsburgh (1990).

CHAPTER 7

1. Janzen (1979) uses the term 'hierarchies of resort' to refer to the sequence of decisions leading to diagnosis and treatment. This includes not only the patient and principal therapist but the network of people engaged in the decision making process, the therapy management group which in many cases is represented by the family. It is within the family setting that the illness is generally first constructed. The lay therapy management group consists of kinsmen and friends and is mobilised when an individual becomes ill and acts to define the situation and the search for a remedy. He describes the medical

pluralism in Lower Zaire and makes the point that western medicine is considered competent to deal with serious physical illness, acute and chronic . It is not considered competent to deal with the interpersonal and social aspects of sickness, nor to offer an inclusive aetiology. It is to traditional healing that resort is made for this. Anxiety, anger, social conflict, witchcraft and magic are seen to be within its province. Western medicine deals with the 'natural' afflictions sent by God.

2. The attitude of Talmudic teachers to medicine is ambivalent. On the one hand, doctors are permitted to heal (Baba Kama 85a), on the other hand King Hezekiah is praised for having hidden a book of cures so that the sick would pray to God as opposed to relying on doctors. The justification for doctors being able to heal derives from Exodus 21:19 whereby one who has committed an assault must pay for the forced idleness from work and his cure (*ve rappo yerappe*). Some rabbis felt that their Chassidim should rely on God alone whereas others prescribed medication themselves. Nahman of Bratzlav urged his followers not to consult doctors, regarding them as types of sorcerers . According to him "the angel of death found it hard to fulfil his role by himself so he hired some helpers - the doctors." Rather hypocritically, he himself consulted doctors. The courts of the Rebbes were frequently full with sick followers. Nervous diseases were attributed to demonic possession and exorcism was prescribed, especially in the Ukranian courts of the nineteenth

century. For circulatory diseases cupping and bleeding were prescribed (see Rabinowicz 1996:91).

3. Admission to hospital presents a number of problems for Chassidic Jews. Apart from the difficulty of men and women mixing freely, it may be difficult to perform rituals. The greatest problems arise in psychiatric wards where women may be approached or even touched by men. A male physician may examine a married woman if her husband is in the city or if the examination room door is not locked even if her husband does not know where she is. It is preferable to have a female nurse or member of the patient's family in the room.

4. In the past decade there has been a growing literature on the narrative dimensions of illness, care seeking and therapeutic processes (see for instance Sacks 1973, 1986, Mischler 1986, Early 1988, Kleinman 1988, Couser 1997). Cross-cultural analyses of illness narratives are few (Early 1985). Studies of narrative anthropology have largely been structuralist studies of folklore and mythology and sociolinguistic studies of narrative performance. Good (1994:134) points out that a great many anthropological studies of illness have shown that sickness is universally experienced as a moral event :

"A rupture in the moral order that invokes such 'moralising judgements' and efforts to bring meanings to such events requires not only resort to theodicy, in Weber's terms, that is to answer 'why me?' but to yet more fundamental

soteriological issues. What is the nature of this suffering? What is the moral order which makes sense of it? What are the sources for hope to go forward in this context?"

One way of making sense of illness is through illness narratives -"the imaginative linking of experiences and events into a meaningful story or plot." Good conceptualises the narratives as interpretive practices which place illness in relation to other events or experiences in life. "Narrative is a form in which experience is represented and recounted, in which events are presented as having a meaningful and coherent order, in which activities and events are described along with the experience associated with them and the significance that lends them their sense for the persons involved" (Good 1994:139). He emphasises that these narratives not only recount experiences but project experiences into the future and direct them towards meaningful ends. He uses the term 'subjectivising' to point out that they endorse alternative perspectives providing a possibility of cure and alleviation.

5. Conventional fieldwork with conversionist groups is distinctive in that members continue to give presentationalist statements of norms and normative actions (Littlewood 1993). The narratives presented here have a formal pattern - a physical problem, appeal to the Rebbe, Rebbe's resolution of the problem - which recalls the exemplary legends Chassidim recount of past zaddikim. They may be taken as edifying testimonials, emblematic self presentations for other

chassidim and for the potential convert and hence considerably more systematised than they are likely to be for sick individuals.

6. According to Jewish law, divorce can only occur after getting a *get*. The writing and transmission of the *get* is governed by specific rules and a woman may not remarry if this is not granted by her husband.

7. Cooper (1996) provides a good historical overview of mental illness in Judaism. Although the conventional view in the Bible is that madness is a punishment for disobeying God (Deut 28), or an evil spirit from the Lord as in the case of Saul (Samuel 16:14), it seems that what the Bible calls madness is an uncontrollable despair caused by loss. In the Talmud, mention of madness is usually in a legal context and describes the *shoteh* "one who goes out at night, sleeps in the cemetery, tears their clothes." The *shoteh* was not responsible for the damage he caused. In medieval Judaism, Maimonides argued that it was violation of moral principles that caused illness alongside with abuse of passions such as hatred and anger.

8. Bilu (1990) describe a form of symbolic healing used in psychological distress. It incorporates elements derived from both psychotherapy and Jewish mysticism. Using hypnosis, guided imagery and conventional psychotherapy they treated a religious psychotic patient by working within his mythic world. Under hypnosis he confronted a black demon and symbolically led him through

a desert and finally found peace in an oasis - the Garden of Eden. His 'cure' was related to wider cultural themes of exile and redemption .

9. It is forbidden by Jewish law to eat the sciatic vein

CHAPTER 8

1. Cohn (1995) points out that the designation 'messiah' - which in Hebrew and Aramaic means anointed one - figures only rarely in the Hebrew Bible, and when it does appear, it is simply a title given to the king or, when the monarchy no longer existed, to the high priest. The expected future king of David's line is never referred to as 'messiah' nor is the future king ever portrayed as a supernatural figure. He will be at most, a great military leader and a wise and just ruler, guided by Yahweh and appointed by him to rule over his people in Judah. The notion of a transcendental saviour in human form, so central to Zoroastrians and to Christians is totally unknown to the Hebrew Bible.

2. In exilic and post-exilic prophecy the future Davidic king plays a minor part since Yahweh is the real ruler over the coming age of bliss.

3. In his book *Cosmos, Chaos and the World to Come*, Norman Cohn (1993) argues that the view now held in the major western religions, i.e. that a time will come when forces of chaos and evil will disappear and order will reign throughout the cosmos,

is relatively recent. He argues for a Zoroastrian influence from about 1500 BC. He examines a number of Egyptian cultures including Sumerian, Babylonian, Indo-Iranian, Canaanite and pre-Exilic Israelite which he claims were united in the view that there was a divine order in the world which was constantly threatened by the forces of chaos and evil. It was only with the advent of Zoroastrianism that there was a radical change to eschatology. According to this new view the forces of evil would be completely eradicated in a final battle and the divinely appointed order would reign.

4. It is stated in the Midrash (Agadut Bereishit) "the very day that the Beit Hamikdosh [Holy Temple] was destroyed, a person was born who by his righteousness is fit to be Mesiach. Likewise in every generation there is someone who is designed by God to be Mesiach if it is time for him to come".

Because we are obliged to believe that Mesiach can come any day there must be someone in every generation worthy to accept this role. In the *Mishne Torah* it is stated:

"a man will arise from the house of David who is devoted to the study of Torah and the observance of the mitzvot like David his ancestor, in accordance with the written and oral Torah. If he will prevail upon all of Israel to walk in the way of the Torah and repair the breaches in its observances and if he will fight the wars of God, he is presumed to be the Mesiach. If he succeeds in the above, builds the Beit

Hamikdosh on its site, and gathers in the dispersed remnants of Israel, he is definitely Mosiach”.

Maimonides states that we may presume someone is Mosiach if he fulfils the following criteria: a descendent of King David who is preoccupied with the study of Torah and observances of Mitzvot, engaged in bringing Jews back to Torah, and devoted to reaching out to the nations of the world to recognise God. However, only after he has been completely successful in accomplishing this agenda and then builds the temple and gathers in the exiles is he definitely Mosiach.

5. Theories of millennialism emphasise variously deprivation or oppression (see Aberle 1962, Engels 1965, Hobsbawm 1971, Worsley 1970) ; psychological instability (Cohn 1970); prestige and self esteem (Burrige 1960,1969); violence (Barkun 1996) and ritual (Bloch 1992). However these theories fail to account for the specificity of millennial groups. Jews experienced severe deprivation and loss of self esteem during the Holocaust but there was no millennial activity

6. Some insight into the messianic enthusiasm among Lubavitchers can perhaps be obtained by placing it in a wider social context and by examining messianic and millennial prophecy in Western culture in the twentieth century (see Boyer 1992 and Thompson 1997).

7. Another case was that of Mordechai Greenblatt, a twenty-five year old rabbi recently married with a six month old baby. He was born in Melbourne and recently moved to the United Kingdom to take up a position as a rabbi. He was brought up in an Orthodox family "keeping torah mitzvot." Although his parents were not Lubavitchers, they helped at a local Lubavitch school in Melbourne. He himself attended a Lubavitcher school which had a "lively outlook on yiddishkeit"

"Lubavitch brings out the depth in yiddishkeit, its where you can grow spiritually. Before I met the Rebbe I had received letters from him. I remember one important letter on my Barmitzvah which contained a blessing and said, 'you should grow from strength to strength'. My first meeting with the Rebbe was seven years ago when I went with a group of boys to see him on the High Holy Day. The Rebbe gave Torah. Even before this we had hookups in Australia where we would see him and feel a sense of security with the Rebbe. On Rosh Hashanah, the Rebbe gave out honey cake for a sweet year. When I first met him I thought he really cared about me. He answered all my questions. One question he discussed was whether Hashem had foreknowledge of every choice a person will make. It's a question which has concerned me for some time and the Rebbe answered it personally."

"The way I see the Rebbe is as a superhuman being. He is human, in some limits, body and flesh. He, however, has superhuman powers like some zaddikim. He is the embodiment of the divine will. Through great effort in youth he was able to refine himself to the state he is in. He is part and parcel of the teachings of the

Torah. He has both a physical and a spiritual side and has refined himself in such a way as to connect with God. He frequently performs miracles, even still, although he is ill and answers by nodding his head. He is involved in life and death decisions. He recently forecast a large hurricane. In Miami he forecasted the extent of the hurricane. People asked whether they should stay or go, he answered by nodding his head, "Stay in your place". They stayed and they were okay. The hurricane hit another place. He has **Ruach Hakodesh** [divine providence] and is connected to certain divine lights which look above the world. I have no personal miracle stories. There are many of them. I don't think its coincidence. You just have to look at the Rebbe's track record. He has been right hundreds of times."

8. His concern was to allay anxiety when the Rebbe died.

9. See Chapter 1.

10. The Rebbe's death provides a good test case for Festinger's (1956) theory of cognitive dissonance, which argues that prophetic failure will be followed by increased conviction and vigorous proselytising by some. Following his death, the belief in his messianic status increased in the Stamford Hill community, as did proselytisation. Dein (1997) has reported on this matter. Balch (1977) has described a similar phenomenon among the Bahai sect.

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TALMUDIC TRACTATES MENTIONED

The Talmud is divided into sixty three tractates. These are described in Steinsalz A 1989 The Talmud : The Steinsalz Edition. New York: Random House .

The following are mentioned in the text

Avot (Fathers)

Berakot (Blessings)

Eruvin (Mergings)

Habakuk

Kiddushin (Holy Things)

Megillah (Scroll)

Sanhedrin

Glossary

All of the words in the glossary are Hebrew and Yiddish. Spellings of Yiddish words (and of Hebrew words found commonly in Yiddish) use as a guide the YIVO transcription rules for spoken Yiddish; however, there are frequent exceptions to the YIVO rules since the most commonly used words already have established and recognizable forms. The transcription rules are described in Uriel Weinreich's 1968 *Modern English-Yiddish Yiddish-English Dictionary* (New York: YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, McGraw-Hill Book Company). Hebrew words generally follow a simplified form of standard Hebrew orthography as described in the 1971 *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, vol. I (New York: Macmillan).

aaron he kodesh (Heb): Holy Ark

Adam Kadmon(Heb): primeval man

adar rishon (Heb): additional month added to the calendar seven times in nineteen years.

afikoman (Heb): last piece of matzah eaten at the Pesach Seder

aggadah (Heb): lore

ain hara: evil eye

aliyah (Heb): calling up -the word used to describe the ascent to the land of Israel

alter: elder, older

anholo (Heb): governing body

aninut(Heb): period of mourning from death until completion of burial

Assayah(Heb): action

atorah (Heb): crowning (naming the Rebbe)

Atzilut(Heb): emanation

atzvut: depression

aveirah (Heb): transgression

baltshuve, baltshuves (Heb. *Ba'al teshuvah, ba'alei teshuvah*): repentant sinner; returnee to Orthodox faith and practice

bar mitzvah (Heb): confirmation for boys at age thirteen

benoni (Heb): intermediate man

Beriah (Heb): creation

besmedresh (Heb. *Bet ha-midrash*): house of study; synagogue

bet din (Heb): rabbinical court; the judges who conduct the hearing

bikkur holim (Heb) : visiting the sick

binah (Heb): understanding

bitahon (Heb): trust

bris, brisn (Heb. Brit): religious ceremony of circumcision

Chabad (Habad): acronym of *hokhmah* (wisdom) *binah* (understanding), *da'at* (knowledge); the Lubavitcher movement founded by Rabbi Shneur Zalman

challah (Heb. *Hallah*): festive Sabbath loaf

chamatz(Heb): leavened bread

Chanukkah (Heb): festival celebrating the re-dedication of the Temple following the victory of the Maccabees

chaya (Heb): soul

cheder (lit a room) Heb: a traditional Jewish school

chesed (Heb): kindness

chochanim (Heb) : scholars

chochma(Heb): wisdom

chol (Heb): profane

cholal (Heb): empty

choli (Heb): sickness

chuppah (Heb): wedding canopy

da'at (Heb): knowledge

daven: to pray, usually with a slight rocking motion

dayyan (Heb): judge in a rabbinical court

devekut adhesion

didan notzakh (Aramaic): we are victorious

din (Heb): justice

dintoyre (Heb. *din Torah*):the trial or hearing in a rabbinical court

dybbuk (Heb): soul of a dead person that returns to inhabit the body of a living person

emunah (Heb): faith

en sof (Heb): infinite

erev (Heb.): evening, the eve of

Eretz Yisroel (Heb.): the Land of Israel

etrog (Heb): citron

farbrengen: Lubavitcher gathering (*farbreng*: to spend time, to enjoy)

feltsher: medical attendant

gabbai, gabbaim (Heb.): Rebbe's secretary

Gan Eden (Heb): Heaven

gartl: a silk belt which serves to separate the upper (higher) body (heart and brains) from the lower (profane) half where the excretory and sexual organs are located

Gehimom (Heb): purgatory

Gemara (Heb.): the portion of the Talmud which discusses the laws in the Mishnah

gemilut hasidim (Heb.): acts of loving kindness

get (Aramaic): legal document .Usually refers to divorce document

gevurah(Heb): severity

gezunt: health

glat kosher (Heb): unquestionably kosher, the most extreme standards of kashrut

golus (Heb *Galut*): exile diaspora

goy, goyim (Heb.): gentile

halakhah, halakhot (Heb): the law, the portion of the Talmud concerned with the Law; a rabbinic legal decision

hamantashen (Heb): cakes eaten on Purim

Hanukkah (Heb.): festival of eight days celebrating the victory of the Macca-bees in the year 161 B.C.E.

hashaga (Heb): comprehension

Hashem (Heb.): God, the Lord, the Name

hasides (Heb. *Hasidut*): Hasidic teachings, philosophical exposition

hasidische (Heb. *Hasidi*): Hasidic

Haskalah (Heb.): "Enlightenment"; the movement promoting secularism and modern European culture among the Jews in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries

hatzufah (Heb.): an impudent woman

havdalah (Heb.): the ceremony marking the close of the holy Shabbes and the beginning of the secular week

hazan (Heb): cantor, leader of prayers

hekhsher, hekhsheyrim (Heb. *Hekhsherim*): permit of ritual fitness issued by a rabbi

hela (Heb): shining

herem (Heb.): ban

hitbonenut (Heb): contemplation

Hod (Heb): splendour

hoklmah (Heb): wisdom

houf, hoyfn: the dynastic court of the Rebbes; the courtyard in the European shtetl where the community's major institutions (the besmedresh, yeshivah, bet din, and mikvah) and the Rebbe's house were located

hutzpah (Heb): impudence, nerve, gall

illuy (Heb): Torah prodigy

kabbalah (Heb.): corpus of mystical writings; Jewish mystical tradition

kaddish (Heb): prayer for mourning

kaftan (Polish): long coat

kashrut (Heb.) : the dietary laws

kavvanah (Heb):intention

kehillah (Heb): community, the community council

kelim(Heb): vessels

keri'ah (Heb.): to tear one's clothing as a sign of mourning

ketubbah(Heb): marriage certificate

kiddush (Heb.): benediction over wine

kittel (Heb): robe for burial

kolel (Heb.): yeshivah for married men to continue their Torah studies

kosher (Heb. *Kasher*): food ritually permissible to eat

ktav hiskashrut (Heb): a letter binding together Hasidim and new Rebbe, signed by the Hasidim and sent to the Rebbe

kvitl, kvitlekh: pension presented to Rebbe containing the request, the names to be blessed, and the name of the petitioner's mother

Lag ba-Omer(Heb): thirty third day of the Omer

l'chaim (Heb. *Lehaim*): a toast to your health, to life

loshon horah (Heb. *lashon harah*): gossip, evil speech

lulav (Heb): palm branch used to celebrate the holiday of Sukkot

ma'amar (Heb) : esoteric discourse at a farbrengen; the most mystical portion of the Rebbe's discourse

ma'ariv (Heb; Yid. *Mayrev*): evening prayer

maggid, maggidim (Heb): itinerant preacher

maror (Heb): bitter herbs eaten on Passover

mashgiah (Heb): overseer in the preparation of kosher food

mashiah (Heb.) (also *moshiach*): messiah, the anointed one

mashke: vodka

maspiach(Heb): advisor

matzah, matzot (Heb.): unleavened bread eaten particularly during Passover

mazl tov (Heb. *mazal tov*): congratulations, good luck

mechinah (Heb): religious school

mechitza (Heb): screen separating men and women

me kamokha (Heb.): Who is like unto Thee [O Lord]?

melave-malke (Heb. *Malkah*) : literally, "escorting the Queen," the meal which takes place after the Shabbes is ended; it is a time treasured for storytelling

Melek Olam (Heb): King of the Universe

memalle (Heb): filling

menorah (Heb): seven-branched candelabra used in antiquity, Hanukkah menorah: eight-branched candelabra lit during the holiday of Hanukkah

menshlekhtkayt: humaneness, being civilised and considerate of others

merkavah(Heb): chariot

mezuzah, mezuzot (Heb.): small scroll with written inscriptions from Deut. 6: 4-9; 11: 13-21 placed in container and attached to doorpost

Midrash (Heb) : an interpretation of scripture using legal discussion, stories, and homiletics; a collection of such interpretations

mikvah, mikvot: ritual bath

minhah (Heb.) : afternoon prayer

minyán, minyanim (Heb) : quorum of ten Jewish men (over age thirteen) required for public prayer

Mishnah (Heb.): codex of laws compiled by Rabbi Yehuda ha-Nasi about 200 C.E.

Misnagid, Misnagdim (Heb. *mitnaged, mitnagdim*): opponents of the Chassidim

mitzvah, mitzvot (Heb.; Yid. *mitzve, mitzves*) : commandment, good deed

mitzvot kalot (Heb.): the lighter, lesser commandments

mohel (Heb.): circumcise

mosaf (Heb): additional service

muansah (Heb): illegitimate

nefesh(Heb): soul

nes(Heb): miracle

neshama (Heb): soul

netzach (Heb): victory

niddah (Heb): laws of ritual purity

nigun (Heb): song, melody

nissuin (Heb): nuptials

ohel (Heb): tomb

omer (Heb) : season

or (Heb): light

parnase (Heb. *Parnasah*) : livelihood

Pesach (Heb. *Pesah*): Passover

peyes (Heb. *Pe'ot*): earlocks

pidyén (Heb. *Pidyon*): gift of money attached to the kvitl and presented to the Rebbe at the time of a visit; literally, “redemption”

posul: non-kosher

Purim (Heb): feast of lots

pushke (Heb. *Pahit*): tin can used to collect coins for charity

rabbi, rabbis (Heb. *rav rabbanim*): title for one qualified to render decisions on matters of Jewish law; leader of a congregation; Chief Rabbi of a community; a teacher; literally, my teacher

rahamim (Heb): compassion

Rebbe, rabbeim (Heb. *Rabbi*): the leader of a Hasidic court; tsaddik; my teacher and master

rebbetsin: Rebbe's wife

rofua (Heb): to heal

Rosh Hashanah (Heb.): Jewish New Year

Rosh Hodesh (Heb.): the new moon; the beginning of the Jewish month

rosh yeshivah, rashe yeshivot (Heb.): head (or dean) of a yeshivah; master teacher

rov, robbonim (Heb. *rav, rabbanim*) : rabbi, chief rabbinical authority of a community

ruach(Heb): soul

schapp : brandy

seder (Heb): Passover meal

sehel elohi (Heb): divine intellect in divine soul

sehel enoshi(Heb) : human intellect in animal soul

Sefer Torah (Heb.) : Torah scroll

sefirot (Heb) : divine emanations

Shabbes, Shabbosim (Heb. *Shabbat*) : Sabbath

Shabbes goy : non-Jew who can perform prohibited functions on the Sabbath

Shabbes zeiger. Sabbath timer

shadkhan, shadkhanim (Heb.): matchmaker

shaharit (Heb.): morning prayer

shaleshudes (Heb. *se'udah shelishit*) : the third meal of the Shabbes and the setting for the Rebbe's mystical discourse

shalosh regalim (Heb): pilgrimage festivals

shames (Heb. *Shammash*): beadle

Shavuot (Heb): feast of weeks

shechitah (Heb): laws relating to slaughter

shekhinah (Heb): indwelling

sheloshim (Heb): thirty days of mourning following the shiva

sheva bracha (Heb): ceremony of newly married couples visiting a different family for seven nights

shevirat ha kelim (Heb): the breaking of the vessels during the process of creation

sheygetz (Heb. *sheketz, shekatzim*) : pejorative reference to a gentile man; a hooligan; also used pejoratively to characterise an errant Jew, an extremist, an impudent prankster

sheytl: wig worn by women after marriage

shidukh (Heb.): matrimonial match

shikkah: drunk

shirayim (Heb): the remains of the Rebbe's meal, which are shared by his followers

shi'ur (Heb): learning

shivah (Heb): the seven days of mourning

shikhim (Heb : emissaries

shnora: beggar

shohet, shohatim (Heb): ritual slaughterer

sholom aleykhem (Heb. *shalom aleikhem*): hello, peace be with you

shtetl: town

shtibl, shtiblekh: small house of prayer of Hasidim, usually consisting of one room

shtrayml, shtraymlen: fur cap worn on the Shabbes, holidays, and at weddings of relatives

shul, shuln: synagogue

Shulhan Arukh (Heb.): code of Jewish law; compendium of Jewish law prepared by Joseph Caro in the sixteenth century

sicha, sichot (Heb): discourse, talk, lecture

siddur, sidurim (Heb) : prayer book

simcha (Heb) : joyful function

Simhat Torah (Heb) : Festival of the Law; the day when the yearly cycle of reading the Torah is completed

sitra achra (Heb): the other side, the side of unholiness

smicha (Heb): ordination

sovev(Heb): surround

streimel (Heb): fur hat

sukkah (Heb.): booth; wooden hut covered with branches in which all meals are taken during the holiday of Sukkot

Sukkot (Heb.) : Feast of Tabernacles which begin four days after Yom Kippur

tallis (Heb) : four cornered garment worn constantly by males

talmid khokhem, talmidim khakhomin (heb. *hakham*): scholar, learned man

Tabnud (Heb.): the oral law; it includes the Mishnah (in Hebrew) and the Gemara (in Aramaic), commentaries on the Mishnah

Tabnud Torah (Heb): a traditional Jewish public school

Tanya (Aramaic): the first word (*It has been taught*) of Shneur Zalman's work *Lukkutei Amarim*, by which the book is known

tashlich (Heb) : ceremony on Yom Kippur of throwing sins into water

tefillin (Heb.): phylacteries; leather cases that are bound to the forehead and the left arm during morning prayer, containing parchment on which are written the following lines from the Hebrew Bible: Exod. 3:1-10, 11-16; Deut. 6: 4-9, 9: 13).

tehilim (Heb.): psalms

terefah (Heb): ritually impure

teshuvah (Heb.): return, repentance

teva (Heb): nature

Tiferet (Heb): beauty

tikkun (Heb): restoration

tish, tishun: table; a communal meal at the Rebbe's table

Tishah Be-Av (Heb.) : the ninth day of the Jewish month of Av; day of mourning of the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem in 586 B.C.E. and 70 C.E.

Torah: the Pentateuch

Torah Vadaat: an Orthodox yeshivah once located in Williamsburg and now in Flatbush

toyre (Heb, *torah*): Rebbe's teachings, usually given at a Shabbes meal

treyf (Heb. *Taref*): food considered impure (unkosher); not permissible to eat; not prepared according to the ritual law or found to contain some defect

tzaddik, tzaddilim (Heb): a righteous man; the leader of a Hasidic court; synonymous with Rebbe

tzaddikism: a period of the Hasidic movement which saw the proliferation of Hasidic courts; at that time major emphasis was placed on the miraculous powers of the tzaddilim

tzedakah (Heb) charity

tzigayner: gipsy

tzimtzum (Heb): contraction

tzitzit (Heb.) : fringes sewn at the four corners of the prayer shawl and the *talit katan* (Yid. *talis koten*, fringed undershirt) as reminders of God's commandment (Deut. 22:12; Num. 15: 37-41)

Tzivos HaShem (Heb.) : army of God, the organisation of the younger students of Lubavitch

yarmulke: skull cap

yehidut: interview between Rebbe and Chassid

yeshivah, yeshivot (Heb. *yeshive, yeshives*): school for advanced talmudic and rabbinic studies

yeshivah bocher: Yeshivah student

Yesod(Heb): foundation

Yetser ha-Ra(Heb): the evil inclination, the evil urge

Yetser ha-Tov (Heb): the good intentions in man

Yetzirah(Heb): formation

Yiddishkayt: the essence of Orthodox life - the observance of mitzvot and the furtherance of Torah learning

yikhes (Heb. *Yihus*): lineage; status based on lineage

Yom Kippur (Heb): Day of Atonement

yortsayt, yortsaytn: anniversary of a death

zaddik gamur(Heb): perfectly righteous man

zimzum (Heb): contraction.



“The Time for Your Redemption has Arrived!”

WHAT IS THE MESSIANIC ERA?

The Era of the Redemption is the age foretold in the Bible by the prophets of Israel, in which there will be neither famine nor war, neither envy nor strife. G-d's presence will be revealed, and all negative energies will be sublimated to His service, “for the world will be filled with the knowledge of G-d as the waters cover the ocean bed” (*Isaiah* 11:9). In this Era, *Mashiach* will help all of mankind to become aware of the Divine Presence in this material world.

WHAT DOES “MASHIACH” MEAN?

Mashiach (the Messiah; literally, “the anointed one”) is the Jewish leader chosen by G-d to inaugurate the Redemption. He is both saintly and scholarly, and is descended from the royal House of King David. His revelation comes in two stages: Initially, he reaches out to Jews everywhere in an effort to bring them back to their heritage, the Torah. Moreover, he is a tireless champion of G-dly causes. Once he is successful in the above, rebuilds the Holy Temple in Jerusalem and returns the Jewish people to their homeland, his identity as the *Mashiach* is certain. The Messianic Age will have begun.

WHY IS NOW AN “ERA OF MIRACLES”?

We are living them now. Consider:

- * The unforeseen collapse of the Iron Curtain and its satellite regimes.
- * The epoch-making ingathering of hundreds of thousands of suppressed and stricken exiles, converging on the Holy Land from undreamed-of directions.
- * In the Persian Gulf this year, the rumblings of a military volcano of unprecedented power fell dormant, as the world witnessed a lightning-quick victory and the Divine protection of Israel. Indeed, the Gulf War was prophetically described in all its detail by the

ancient Sages of Israel (*Midrash Yalkut Shimoni*, Vol. II, sec. 499, on *Isaiah* 60:1): “Seized by consternation, the Jewish people will ask, ‘Where shall we go?’” And the same passage proceeds: “The Almighty will answer them: ‘My children, have no fear.... Why are you afraid?’.... *Mashiach* will stand on the roof of the Holy Temple and proclaim, ‘Humble ones: The time for your redemption has arrived!’”

WHAT CAN I DO?

The Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson *Shlita*, has appealed to every individual:

1. Let us learn to recognize and appreciate a miracle when it happens right in front of us. (Indeed, the Rebbe has pointed out that the Hebrew letters that comprise this year's date indicate the words, “This will surely be a year in which ‘[G-d] will show you wonders.’”)
2. Let us wait for *Mashiach* actively:
 - (a) by studying the classical Rabbinic sources, on both the revealed and the mystical levels of the Torah, that can give one an insight into what is meant by the coming of *Mashiach* and the ultimate Redemption. (Many of these texts are now available in English translation.) Such study is no mere academic exercise: in itself it hastens the appearance of *Mashiach*.
 - (b) by broadening and deepening one's study of other areas in the Torah, such as the Mishnaic tractate entitled *Pirkei Avos* (“Ethics of the Fathers”).
 - (c) by undertaking the practical observance of *mitzvos* (commandments of the Torah) such as *tefillin*, *mezuzos*, lighting the Sabbath candles before sunset on Friday, and so on.
 - (d) by increasing one's daily contributions to charitable causes. As the Sages of the *Talmud* have taught (*Bava Basra* 10a), “Charity is great, for it brings the Redemption near.”

For further information, contact your regional Chabad House.

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