

Zusia: The Saga Of Modern Judaism

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Or Shalom Jan 2022

Maskils and Hasids and Litvaks Oh My Part 1: Hasidut

The first principle of faith is that God exists. He was first, and He created all things, above and below—His creations are without end. All began with a single point—the point of Supernal Wisdom, Hokhmah. The power of the Creator is present in all His creations—God’s wisdom suffuses everything that exists. This is the meaning of the verse: “Wisdom gives life to those who possess it” (Ecclesiastes 7: 12). Believe with complete faith that God fills and surrounds all worlds, He is both within and beyond them all.

R. Menahem Nahum of Chernobyl, Hanhagot Yesharot

“For I know that God is great, our God above all others” (Psalms 135: 5). These are King David’s words. “I know” —I alone, for the vision of God’s greatness cannot be shared.

You may have a vision, but even with yourself you cannot share it. Today, you may be inspired and see a new light. But tomorrow, you will no longer be able to communicate it, even to yourself.

“I know” –I as I am now. For the vision cannot be brought back. The Rebbe said: Look at the next verse, “All that God wants, He does, in Heaven and on earth.” It is a different thought, speaking of something else entirely. King David says, “I know,” and can go no further, for words are no longer adequate. A perception of God cannot be communicated. It is so lofty, higher than high (Ecclesiastes 5: 7), that words cannot express it. It is written, “Her husband is known by the gates” (Proverbs 31: 23). The holy Zohar states that the husband is the vision of God which each man perceives through the gates that he makes in his own heart (Zohar I, 103b). The heart is hidden and the gates do not open to another.

-Rebbe Nachman of Breslov, Sichot HaRan

Rebbe Nachman of Breslov (1772-1810), quoted directly above, was a Rabbi in what is now the Ukraine. He spent his last years in Breslov, and was the grandson of a man known as the “Ba’al Shem Tov” (the master of the good Name, d. 1760, the “Besht”), himself the founder of the Hasidic movement. The Besht, after years as a *tzadik nistar* (hidden tzaddik) had suddenly appeared teaching a coherent system of experiential mysticism which we will look at below. As well as a teacher the Besht quickly became a legendary figure who was said to be able to travel long distances in an impossibly short time, appear in more than one place as once or in disguise, and to be able to work saving miracles. Three classic anecdotes about the Besht from Martin Buber’s masterpiece, *Tales of the Hasidim*:

They say that once, when all souls were gathered in Adam's soul, at the hour he stood beside the Tree of Knowledge, the soul of the Baal Shem Tov went away, and did not eat of the fruit of the tree.

It is told: Once when Rabbi Meir Margalioth, the author of the book "Illuminator of the Paths," was visiting the Baal Shem with his seven-year-old son, his host asked him to leave the boy for a time. Little Shaul remained in the house of the Baal Shem Tov. Soon after, the Baal Shem took him and his disciples on a journey. He had the carriage stop in front of a village inn and entered with his companions and the boy. Inside they were playing the fiddle and peasant men and women were dancing. "Your fiddler is no good," the Baal Shem said to the peasants. "Let my boy here sing you a dance song, and then you will be able to dance much better." The peasants were willing. The boy was stood on the table and in his silvery voice sang a hasidic dance song without words, that went straight to the feet of the villagers. In a reel of wild happiness they danced around the table. Then one of them, a young fellow, stepped forward from among them and asked the boy: "What is your name?" "Shaul," he said. "Go on singing," the peasant cried. The boy started another song and the peasant faced him and danced in time to the tune. But in the midst of his wild leaps and bounds, he repeated over and over in charmed tones: "You Shaul and I Ivan, you Shaul and I Ivan!" After the dance, the peasants treated the Baal Shem and his disciples to vodka, and they drank together. About thirty years later, Rabbi Shaul, who had become both a wealthy merchant and a Talmud scholar of sorts, was traveling through the country on business. Suddenly robbers attacked him, took his money and wanted to kill him.

When he begged them to have pity on him, they took him to their chieftain. He gave Rabbi Shaul a long penetrating look. Finally he asked: "What is your name?" "Shaul," said the other. "You Shaul and I Ivan," said the robber chief. He told his men to return Shaul's money and take him back to his carriage.

Once the spirit of the Baal Shem was so oppressed that it seemed to him he would have no part in the coming world [i.e. the afterlife- M]. Then he said to himself: "If I love God, what need have I of a coming world!"

Rebbe Nachman spent his life as a spiritual teacher fighting for a true expression of *Hasidut/Hasidus*, the legacy of his grandfather, which was quickly becoming a popular and transformative movement centred in what is now Poland, Russia and the Ukraine. Hasidism was about *experience* and *transformation* of the heart, as well as placing an emphasis on the Lurianic doctrines of refining the sparks and bringing the Messiah. In the above quote Rebbe Nachman emphasizes the personal nature of Hasidic experience, as opposed to the more communal or intellectual forms of Jewish experience.

By the time Rebbe Nachman lived there were three broad movements taking place in the Ashkenazi Jewish world. The first were the Maskilim, who we'll look at in third class of this semester. The Maskilim were looking to reform the Jewish community to introduce what they saw as positive developments from European society into it- science, technology, and

improvements in infrastructure, education, and opportunities. The Maskilim and the Traditionalists were often bitter rivals. The Maskils would produce a whole literature in Yiddish and other languages which was critical of what they saw as the faults of traditional Jewish life—poverty, superstition, religious authoritarianism, ignorance, injustice. From Maskil circles would ultimately come the two great secular Jewish movements of the 19th and early 20th centuries, Bundism (Jewish internationalist socialism) and Zionism.

Among the traditionalists, a split developed after the birth of the Hasidic movement in the 18th century, which we'll be focusing on in this and next week's classes. A number of things about the early Hasidic movement provoked anxiety and opposition from a number of prominent Rabbis, who eventually came to be known as Mitnagdim (Opponents). This stream was particularly associated with the great Rabbis of Lithuania, so that lineage was and is also known as Litvaks. From the Litvaks would eventually come the Mussar (ethical self-development) tradition and the great Yeshiva movement of the 19th century, which profoundly shaped both Modern and Ultra-Orthodox Judaism. We'll be looking at the rich world and spirituality of 18th, 19th and early 20th century Litvak Orthodoxy next class.

Tzava'at Harivash and Early Hasidut

In 1792 a book called Tzava'at Harivash was published, one of the earliest Hasidic texts.

The original title-page reads as follows: “Book of the Testament of Rabbi Israel Baal Shem and Hanhagot Yesharot (rules of upright conduct)_that was found in the valise of ... Rabbi Isaiah,

Head of the Rabbinic Court and Head of the Academy of the holy community of Yanov_ which consists of tzava'ot (instructions), rules of proper conduct, great and wondrous counsels for the service of the Creator relating to Torah and prayer and other traits, heard from the holy mouth of the Man of God, the Holy Light, our Master Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov, his memory is for a blessing, for the life of the world-to-come. To these were added Hanhagot Yeshtarot from the Man of God, the Holy Light, our Master Rabbi Dov Ber of the community of Mezhirech.”

The book is actually an anthology of practical teachings gleaned from several already circulating manuscripts, and its sayings occur in other places as well. The first Lubavitcher Rebbe commented that the book was reliable, but consists of Hebrew paraphrases of the Besht's actual teachings, which were originally given in Yiddish. The teachings in Tz”H are a good encapsulation in miniature of much of what the Hasidic movement was about.

The Way of Hasidut

Hasidut is a way, a path of discipline akin to Sufi, Buddhist, or Yogic paths. Let's look at the path of Hasidut as it took shape in its first decades, as reflected in the Tz”H:

Deveikut

The central theme in Tzava'at Harivash is deveikut, attachment or cleaving to God: a vivid and overwhelming consciousness of the Omnipresent as the sole true reality. This is not only a matter of prayer and Torah-study, but also daily life. It allows one to achieve equanimity (*hishtavut*) and

to transcend worldly thoughts and concerns. Apart from the community of serious Kabbalists, most devout Jews aimed to transform their character through Torah study, intellectual understanding, and personal discipline. Although Hasids kept those things, for them the route to understanding and transformation was through direct experience of God's presence. Their way was more contemplative and ecstatic.

Prayer

Hasidim continued to treasure deep Torah study, but they emphasized prayer as the way to God with a new intensity. For them, prayer is the most direct and most common way to *deveikut*. It is also universal, relating to the common folks no less than to the saint and scholar. "We are told that the Baal Shem Tov merited his unique attainment of spiritual perfection and his revelations of supernal matters by virtue of his prayers with great *kavanah* (devotion), and not by virtue of his extensive study of the Talmud and the codifiers," wrote Jacob Immanuel Schochet, a Toronto based scholar of Hasidut.

Prayer is union with the Shechinah. In, and through, prayer, one attains a *deveikut* that will then extend into the daily activity. One must pray with all one's strength so that "the words themselves become alight," and it should be "with joy and *hitlahavut* (fervor; ecstasy)". For many Hasids *kavanah* was attained with the aid of swaying and dancing, hand clapping, singing and loud, passionate prayer, as well as communally sung *niggunim*. Writes Schochet, "The ideal prayer, though, the prayer that is altogether from within, is inaudible and immobile."

Torah-Study

Torah-study remains of great importance, though for Hasidim the purpose of Torah study shifted. “God and the Torah are entirely one;” says the Tzavaat Harivash; the Torah is God’s “garment.” In Chabad Hasidut, founded by the Alter Rebbe (Shneur Zalman of Liadi [1814-1880]) who was a student of the Maggid of Mezritch, the Baal Shem Tov’s main disciple, when the mind unites with the Torah it is united to the intellect of God; Torah study itself is mystical union with God. As well as the mystical aspect for Hasidim the emphasis in Torah study was overcoming the *yetzer-ha-ra* (evil impulse) and becoming a *tzadik* (righteous person). The emphasis on *pilpul* (brilliant, hair-splitting analysis for its own sake) and scholarly genius was lessened in favor of a devotional emphasis more akin to the sages of the Zohar.

When studying Torah one must be aware that it is God’s Torah, and know “before Whom you are learning” and that God Himself is “concentrated, as it were, in the four cubits of Halachah.” Thus every so often one ought to interrupt the study to remind oneself of that and to attach oneself to God.

The early generation of Hasidus were known for avoiding excessive stringency in observing mitzvot as well as having a focus on intention over technical exactitude. This approach would later find its ultimate development in Martin Buber, the founder of Neo-Hasidut.

Joy

Chassidism is known for its emphasis on joy and a happy frame of mind, and its categorical rejection of sadness and melancholy. This, too, is a dominant theme in Tzava'at Harivash: Sadness is a barrier to the service of God. The Besht's grandson Rebbe Nachman would go so far as to say, famously, *mitzvah gedolah l'ihiyot b'simchah tamid* (it is a great mitzvah to be happy always).

Ethics in Daily Life

“Know and acknowledge God in all your ways,” says the Tzavaat Harivash. All things contain holy sparks, which are the very vitality sustaining them. The fact that certain things come your way is a providential indication that their sparks relate to your soul. Your proper use of these them, in the context of service of the divine, elevates the sparks within, actualizing their intended purpose. The sparks are liberated when things are used for the sake of the service of God.

Yeridah Tzorech Aliyah

The general advice for unwanted thoughts in Hasidut is *hessech hada'at*, diversion of attention. In Tzava'at Harivash, however, as well as in other early Chassidic works, we find another approach. This analyzes one's feelings or emotive traits into seven categories, corresponding to the Sefirot:

1) love of something, marked by attraction, and also manifesting itself in terms of kindness (hesed); 2) fear of something, marked by repulsion, and also manifesting itself in terms of severity or strictness (gevurah); 3) recognition of an inherent quality of status, such as beauty or some achievement, manifesting itself in praise or admiration (tiferet); 4) the trait to endure, prevail or conquer (nezach); 5) the trait of acknowledgment, or of a restraining splendor (hod); 6) the trait of bonding, of establishing a relationship (yesod); and 7) the trait of governance in the sense of applying the other traits (malchut). These seven traits are a reflection, worldly counter-parts rooted in the divine attributes.

When thought in these categories arises there is a momentary descent to the depth of the unwanted thought, but one can ascend through the thought by connecting it to its divine root in one of the sefirot, and thus back to God. Rebbe Nachman taught a version of this without the sefirot. In his version, one “falls” into a lower state of consciousness in order to integrate something one has not yet dealt with on oneself, and then rises to a higher state of being after the integration.

Opponents of Hasidut saw in this the “Sabbatean heresy” of engaging in forbidden activities to “elevate” the forbidden and impure. The evil and forbidden, too, contain holy sparks that enable them to exist, but in mainstream Hasidut these can be redeemed only by relating to those objects in light of the Torah, i.e., by rejecting them. The rejection of evil releases the sparks, thus depriving evil of its source of vitality, and that is how evil is subdued and removed.

The Baal Shem Tov states that the sublimation of thoughts requires *hachna'ah*, *havdalah* and *hamtakah*: subduing, separating, and sweetening. Hamtakah, the “sweetening” of the forbidden thoughts (i.e., their sublimation to holiness), can follow only after an initial *hachna'ah*, “subduing” with total divestment of any personal attachment, and *havdalah*, their complete separation from the *kelipot*, i.e., a separation from any link with the realm of evil.

R. Dov Ber, the Maggid of Mezeritch, traces the occurrence of unwanted thoughts to one of two sources: a) they may be a reflection of the person’s evil deeds in the past, which now offer an opportunity to be corrected; or b) they are rooted in the cosmic “breaking of the vessels,” independent of the individual. The latter, however, relates only to a *tzadik* who is to elevate them to their spiritual source. In either case, however, they entered the mind beyond the person’s control. One must never introduce them on his own: “If one will say, ‘I shall intentionally meditate to bring about [an alien thought of] love so that [I may] elevate it,’ of him it is said ‘That you awaken not, nor stir up, love, until it please.’ (Song 2: 7; 3: 5)

The above shows the importance of the state of the heart in Hasidut. As many Rebbes said, “what you think, there you are”. Thoughts and moods are far from harmless or irrelevant: they are the essence of divine service. This is an ancient teaching in Judaism, but one that differs from some who emphasized action above the state of the heart, a split that persists until this day.

Opposition to Hasidut

The Tzava'at Harivash became a primary target in the attacks by the opponents to Chassidism, who had public burnings of the book. Why?

Tzava'at Harivash is pamphlet-like and spread widely. The smallness of the book as a whole, and the brevity of its individual teachings, make it a very readable text for friend and foe alike, unlike earlier Hasidic texts that were harder to understand. Mitnagdim accused the Tzava'at Harivash of denigrating Torah and Torah-study and encouraging emotionality and self-indulgence. They said its criticisms of repentance, holy sadness, fasting, and weeping were wrong. They saw implications in it that legal observance was not the ultimate thing, maybe even just a means to an end instead of an embodiment of God's will to be done for its own sake. They said the following was crude imagery leading to licentiousness:

Prayer is sexual intercourse [zivug] with the Shekhinah. Just as there is motion at the beginning of sexual intercourse, so too must you sway at the beginning of prayer. Then, be still—at one with the Shekhinah. Your swaying will lead you to an intense spiritual arousal: This should cause you to ask: "Why am I moving my body?—it is because the Shekhinah is standing before me." This awareness will bring you to great rapture [hitlahavut].

-Tzava'at HaRivash, #68

They also claimed that saying the Divine life-force is vested in all beings, including animals, is blasphemy, and to say that everything happening to man is by Divine Providence is to justify all wrongdoing and to exempt all wrong-doers from punishment. Further, to say that in prayer one

becomes unified with God, some Mitnagdim said, is a “worthless illusion” and it is blasphemous to state that the Shechinah is vested in all human beings. Lastly, the book proves that “they are of the cult of Shabbatai Tzvi.”

Many of these criticisms also appear in the accusations before the Czarist regime made by Avigdor Chaimovitch of Pinsk against the Alter Rebbe, R. Schneur Zalman of Liadi, the founder of Chabad, who was arrested by the Russian police after being “informed on” by a him and other Mitnagdim. After being held for a while he was released, and the date of his release became an annual festival for Chabad Hasidim. According to the stories, when asked by an interrogator why he was not afraid, the Alter Rebbe said, “You believe in one world (i.e. no life after death) and many gods (i.e. worldly idols) but I believe in two worlds and only one God.”

Although mitnagdim tried book burnings, excommunications, and denunciations, the Hasidic movement continued to grow rapidly. The Maggid of Mezritch was the Besht’s most important disciple, and he in turn had many outstanding disciples. Within the first couple of generations the figure of the Hasidic Rebbe, or Tzadik, became very important. The Tzadik was a mediator between humans and God, a miracle- maker, a “physician of the soul.” As with *guryoga* in the Hindu and Buddhist traditions, it was believed that the Tzadik had special, supernatural knowledge, could solve worldly problems, and could elevate the spiritual conditions of those who became attached to him, even rescuing them from hell (A legend claims that Rebbe said that he would personally pull any disciple of his out of gehennom by his *peyos*).

Rebbe Nachman was one of a few major Rebbes in the third generation which fought against the beginnings of the corruption of the Hasidic movement in the form of reliance on the Rebbe instead of doing one's own practice, and the creation of lavish Hasidic courts presided over by authoritarian "Tzadiks". At first when a Rebbe died his top disciple would take over the community of disciples, but soon this developed into a kind of "royal succession" and often went from father to son or son-in-law, based on lineage, not merit.

People came from far and wide to ask for blessings, prayers, and advice. Some tried to use this situation for good, becoming compassionate leaders and working day and night to serve the community. Others became princelings, overseeing religious and financial empires. Territorial battles broke out between rival successors or between different Hasidic courts for control of towns or regions like rival gang bosses. Seeing this developing, Rebbe Nachman wryly commented, "Satan is too busy to do all the work himself, so he puts a "tzadik" here and a "tzadik" there."

Among those who rebelled against the degradation of Hasidism were the schools of Pshishk and Breslov. Pshisk, led by Simcha Bunim, emphasized the hard work of every disciple, downplayed the role of the Rebbe, and focused on honesty, humility, and integrity. Simcha Bunim was a disciple of the Yid HaKodesh, who had similar values, but Bunim went further. He did not dress like a typical Rebbe, wearing European clothes, and he even had a regular job, working as a chemist in a pharmacy. Among his disciples was the Kotzker Rebbe, a fierce and confrontational teacher who was known for the existentialist nature of his teachings and their focus on truthfulness of thought, word and deed. A famous story about the Kotzker relates that he once

asked his disciples where God is. “Everywhere,” a disciple answered, giving the typical Hasidic answer.

“No,” the Kotzker said. “God is where you let him in.”

Another disciple was the Izbica, or Mei Shiloah, who taught a radical theology, unique among Hasids for saying that God was the true doer of everything, and his work could even be seen in seemingly bad events and evil actions (the prophet Isaiah said as much, but Rabbinic tradition had shied away from this assertion). Another was Yitzhak Meir Alter of Ger, who founded the Gerrer Hasidim, who still exist to this day. Simcha Bunim was almost excommunicated for being too radical by a meeting of Hasidic Rebbes, who met and then decided against it. Rebbe Nachman and his disciples also came to face opposition from other Hasidic groups, although he had the support of most major Hasidic Rebbes during his lifetime.

Breslov: Rebbe Nachman, Likutey Moharan, and Sippurey Ma’asot

Much of Rebbe Nachman’s teaching was consistent with that of his grandfather’s, the Besht, yet he had his own areas of emphasis and innovations. He emphasized simplicity and sincerity in spiritual practice. He emphasized faith, prayer and the service of the heart over intellect, and taught that all Jews should try to read all the major important works of Jewish literature, but not emphasize intellectual mastery (he said this was like seeing all of one’s own country in one’s lifetime). He put a great emphasis on joy and gave a wealth of psychological and practical advice

on the spiritual life. Unlike Pshishk, he did emphasize the great importance of the Tzadik and advised everyone to find a Tzadik they could attach to. Unusually, he also told his disciples that each and every one of them could and should become a Tzadik themselves. He was deeply revered by his own disciples despite dying when young, at the age of 38.

Rebbe Nachman emphasized the attainment of “*mohin d’gadlut*” (expanded consciousness) and *d’vekut*, and said that one may have to act like a holy fool or transgress normal social expectations in one’s pursuit of the divine. He also advised his disciples to avoid stringency or excessive punctiliousness in observance of Jewish law but to simply follow what is in the *Shulchan Aruch*. Like many other Hasidic Rebbes, he also taught one should frequently immerse in mikvahs, get up to pray at midnight every night (the *tikkun chatzot*), and also awake early to pray before sunrise. Uniquely Rebbe Nachman also taught that his disciples should spend one hour a day in *hitbodedut*, spontaneous personal prayer with no liturgy, preferably alone in nature.

Another unique aspect of Rebbe Nachman’s teachings is the work he authored and the lessons he gave. His teachings were collected in many books, mostly by his disciple Nosson of Nemirov, without whom we would have very little if any of Nachman’s teachings. His main work is *Likutey Moharan* (Teachings of Our Teacher, Our Rabbi, Nachman). The lessons in it are somewhat like the jazz solos of John Coltrane: complex and dazzling flights of conceptual connections, poetic allusions, and mystical-moral insights and revelations.

Rebbe Nachman also wrote Sippurey Maasiyot, a collection of fairy-tale like parables totally unique in Hasidic literature, including such famous stories as the Rooster Prince, the Lost Princess, The Seven Beggars, and the Tainted Grain. He also left a record of some of his dreams.

After Rebbe Nachman's death Reb Nosson collected and published his teachings, and also hid a secret scroll of Nachman's predictions about the coming of the Messiah. The scroll was passed down secretly, its contents a mystery, among dedicated Breslovers for generations and was finally located and translated several years ago by scholar Mark Zvi. The scroll describes a pacifist Messiah who makes music and is a healer, and after conquering the world with prayer spends most of his time teaching non-Jews.

The Breslovers refused to elect another Rebbe after Nachman's death, and to this day consider him their Rebbe. This earned them the pejorative nickname the *toite hasidim* (dead Hasidim). In the generations following Nachman's death, the Breslovers were persecuted by the rest of the Jewish world. Nachman's teachings were considered radical and destabilizing to Jewish orthodoxy. Although many high level Rabbis both Hasidic and Mitnagdic studied Likutey Moharan, Nachman's teachings were considered somewhat eccentric and open to being misunderstood as encouraging a dangerous focus on personal mystical experience, frivolity, antinomianism and messianism. The real reason Breslovers were persecuted, however- they were even beaten and chased from villages with stones- was apparently because they were "anarchists" in the sense that they had no Rebbe or Hasidic court, and thus were perceived as a threat to the hasidic establishment, which were organized around courts and Rebbe lineages.

Breslovers were a small and quiet minority until after WW2, when they began to grow. Today they are one of the most influential Hasidic groups, and Nachman's teachings have become the most celebrated of any Hasidic master outside of the Orthodox world, as well as being of steadily growing popularity within the Orthodox world.

Chabad

Chabad Hasidut is grounded in the teachings of the Alter Rebbe, who taught in what is now Russia. Chabad (which stands for Chochmah, Binah, Da'at) was the most intellectual branch of Hasidut. The emphasis was on intellectual contemplation of God's being, the Torah, and Kabbalah, all with the purpose of d'vekut, or direct experience that "there is nothing but God."

The Rebbe's magnum opus was the Tanya. The Tanya emphasizes that only God really exists and the universe's appearance of separation from God is an illusion. It is saturated with Kabbalistic, Zoharic and Lurianic references and sets out the path to becoming a Tzadik. It also argues that the ultimate purpose of God's revelation is the doing of a mitzvah, where a human being expresses in action the will of God and thus becomes an agent of God's will to unite the cosmos and find a dwelling in the depths of apparent duality and separation (*deera b'tachtonim*).

On Saturday evening after Havdalah, a few moments before he gave his soul to eternal life, the Alter Rebbe took a pen and wrote the teaching "The Truly Humble Soul," a teaching of great depth [about acts of kindness as the ultimate expression of realization]. Afterward he asked one of his grandchildren, "Do you see the beam in the ceiling?" And his grandson was surprised and

didn't know how to respond. So R. Zalman said to his grandson, "Believe me that I do not see it either; all I see is the Divine Force, which enlivens everything material, and except for that, I do not see anything."

There were seven Chabad Rebbes, the final one being Menachem Mendel Schneerson (1902-1994). We'll return to his teachings and legacy and look at the rise of modern Chabad in a later class.

Hasidim and Litvaks Today: Fusion

By the end of the 19th century opposition to Hasidim had quieted significantly, and Hasidic teachings had influenced and been absorbed into non-Hasidic Judaism as well. After the Holocaust, although separate lineages still remain, Hasidic and non-Hasidic teachings became largely fused in the Ultra-Orthodox world. Hasidic style, stringencies and customs as well as reverence for Rabbis were taken over by non-Hasidic Jews. Although the customs and traditions of different lineages remain, there are broad similarities between the groups and now much collaboration and cross-fertilization. Most Hasidic groups are quite insular, attempting to separate themselves from the world, with the exception of Breslov and Chabad, which have both taken more outward facing directions.

The last thirty years has also seen the major rise of "Neo-Hasidism", which probably started with Buber's accessible interpretations of Hasidim for Jews and non-Jews in the 50s. Since the 1960s, however, spurred by Shlomo Carlebach and Zalman Shachter-Shalomi, among others

(like Arthur Green) and since taken over by many other leaders (like Hannah Tiferet and Daniel Siegel, Laura Kaplan and Hannah Dresner in our local and community), it has become a major force in the Jewish world, and influenced the worldview, liturgy, psychology and contemplative practices of every Jewish denomination.