

Bati le-Gani: A Comparison of Discourses by Rabbis Schneersohn and Hutner

By: BEZALEL NAOR

In the year 5710/1950, in honor of the tenth of Shevat, the *yahrzeit* of his paternal grandmother Rebbetzin Rivkah, Rabbi Yosef Yitshak Schneersohn, the Lubavitcher Rebbe, composed and distributed a *ma'amar* (discourse) to be studied on that day. As Divine Providence would have it, the tenth of Shevat (which fell on a Sabbath that year) became the Rebbe's own *yahrzeit*, for in the early hours of Shabbat morning he passed to his eternal reward.

Understandably, this discourse entitled *Bati le-Gani* ("I Came to My Garden"), after the verse in Song of Songs 5:1, was viewed thereafter as Rabbi Yosef Yitshak's last will and testament. When a year later on the tenth of Shevat, 5711/1951, the first *yahrzeit* of Rabbi Yosef Yitshak, his son-in-law Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson formally succeeded him as Rebbe of Lubavitch, his "inaugural address," so to speak, was this *Ma'amar Bati le-Gani*. The discourse became the "mission statement" of the movement, and in years to come, this *ma'amar* would be revisited and reexamined annually on *Yud Shevat*.

The text that serves as the basis for the Rebbe's discourse is the Midrash in *Song of Songs Rabbah* which describes how as each epoch sinned, the *Shekhinah* or divine presence became further removed from our mundane reality:

Adam sinned and the *Shekhinah* departed to the first heaven.

Cain sinned; it departed to the second heaven.

Enoch sinned; it departed to the third heaven.

The generation of the Flood sinned; it departed to the fourth heaven.

The generation of the Tower sinned; it departed to the fifth heaven.

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The inhabitants of Sodom sinned; it departed to the sixth heaven.
The Egyptians sinned in the days of Abraham; it departed to the seventh heaven.

It then took another seven generations, starting with Abraham and culminating with Moses, to bring the *Shekbinah* back down to earth, the final dwelling place or “garden” of the *Shekbinah* being the *Mishkan*, the Tabernacle in the Wilderness:

Opposite them stood seven *tsaddikim* (righteous) and brought her [back] to earth.
Abraham lowered her from the seventh to the sixth.
Isaac lowered her from the sixth to the fifth.
Jacob lowered her from the fifth to the fourth.
Levi lowered her from the fourth to the third.
Kehath lowered her from the third to the second.
Amram lowered her from the second to the first.
Moses lowered her to the earth.
And when did the *Shekbinah* rest on her?
On the day that the Tabernacle was erected!

Front and center in the Midrash is a statement essential to the philosophy of Ḥabad Ḥasidism: “The main [dwelling] of the *Shekbinah* is down below.” (“*Te'kar Shekbinah ba-tahtonim.*”) In the Midrash, it occurs as a rhetorical statement: “Was not the main [dwelling] of the *Shekbinah* down below?” This mirrors the statement at the core of *Tanya*, the primer of Ḥabad Ḥasidism: “The Holy One, blessed be He, desired to have a dwelling place down below.”¹ Unlike some other strands within Ḥasidism, Ḥabad is not starry-eyed. It is determined to transform this lowly plane of existence into a Godly abode.

The discourse *Bati le-Gani* is by now very famous. The heirs to Rabbi Yosef Yitshak, spiritual if not biological, understood its relevance to this generation. They viewed themselves as the seventh generation counting from the *Alter Rebbe*, Rabbi Shneur Zalman, author of *Tanya* and founder of Ḥabad Ḥasidism. And their leader, the seventh Rebbe of Ḥabad, Rabbi Menachem Schneerson, was Moses Redivivus.

¹ Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi, *Tanya*, chap. 36 (45b). The quote comes from *Midrash Tanhuma, Nasso* 16. That Midrash parallels the Midrash in *Song of Songs Rabbah*.

Unbeknown to many, there is another *ma'amar* that though untitled, might as well be titled “*Bati le-Gani*,” by a contemporary of Rabbi Menachem Schneerson. His name is Rabbi Isaac Hutner. It appears in the volume *Pahad Yitshak: Hanukkah*.²

It too is based on the verse in Song of Songs, “I came to My garden, my sister-bride,” and on the Midrash to that verse. In fact, where Rabbi Schneerson’s quotation from the Midrash ends, Rabbi Hutner’s quotation begins.

The thought occurred to this writer—wild though it appear—that by juxtaposing these two *ma'amarim* to one another, it might be possible to restart the conversation between two old friends, Rabbi Menachem Schneerson and Rabbi Isaac Hutner. We know for a fact that there was a time that the two of them studied together *be-havruta*. This was in the years before the son-in-law succeeded his father-in-law as Rebbe of Lubavitch. The two men would delve together into Hasidic texts.

How far back did their friendship go? Hard to say. Some have them acquainted with one another in their student days in Berlin before the War.

How long did their friendship persist? In the aftermath of the Six Day War in 1967, when the by then Lubavitcher Rebbe launched his *tefillin* campaign (“*Mintsat Tefillin*”), the two men exchanged letters in that regard.³ In September of 1970, when Rabbi Hutner (together with many other Jewish plane passengers) was hijacked to Jordan by Palestinian terrorists, Rabbi Schneerson remarked at a *farbrengen*, a public gathering, that one of the captives is an expert in the writings of the legendary Maharal of Prague, who was known to perform wonders. Over the years, many letters went back and forth. Rabbi Hutner requested of the Rebbe clarification of various passages in his ancestor’s magnum opus *Likkutei Torah* (often of a kabbalistic nature), and the Rebbe responded. (The responses are available in Rabbi Schneerson’s multivolume *Iggerot Kodesh*.)

There were recently made public the letters Rabbis Schneerson and Hutner traded in 1977. On Purim of that year, the Rebbe sent as a gift, a

² Rabbi Isaac Hutner, *Pahad Yitshak: Kuntres ve-Zot Hanukkah* (New York, NY: Noble Book, 1989), *ma'amar* 12 (pp. 106–117). As a rule, the *ma'amarim* in *Pahad Yitshak* are untitled. They are also undated. There is every indication that this particular *ma'amar* was delivered before 1961.

³ The halakhic correspondence between them concerning the Rebbe’s *Mintsat Tefillin* was published some years ago in a handsome volume entitled *Mi-Beit ha-Genazim*, ed. S.D. Levin (Brooklyn, 2009). Rabbi Hutner called into question the halakhic validity of wrapping phylacteries on a Jew who is totally oblivious to their significance. The Rebbe defended his initiative on halakhic grounds.

volume of Hasidic teachings collected from the writings of his ancestor (and namesake) Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneersohn (“*Tsemah Tsedek*”). Acknowledging receipt of the gift, Rabbi Hutner wrote that the word “*bit’anyenut*” or “interest” (which the Rebbe used in his cover letter) does not do justice to Rabbi Hutner’s connection to Habad Hasidism. “A good portion of my soul world is planted on springs of Habad. Were one to empty me of this nourishment, this would cause a change in my entire existence.”⁴

I shall not engage in historical revisionism. Along with abiding friendship, there was also deep revulsion on Rabbi Hutner’s part brought on by a Lubavitch Messianism that became increasingly pronounced with the passage of time.

I will, in the course of this presentation, invoke literary license to magnify the *ma’amar* in *Pahad Yitshak* from the local level of Hanukkah when it was first taught, to the global level, whereby—no less than the Lubavitch *Ma’amar Bati le-Gani*—it may be taken as a mission statement for an entire generation that has witnessed and lived through the birth of the modern State of Israel. Hopefully, by the end of our presentation, we will succeed in identifying the radical theology in these two discourses and discussing their relevance to our day.

Rabbi Hutner’s discourse begins with a *diyyuk*, an analysis of a curious phrase in Maimonides’ *Hilkebot Hanukkah*. (In fact, much of the *ma’amar* pivots on Maimonides’ *Mishneh Torah*.) Maimonides wrote:

The commandment of the candle of Hanukkah is a very beloved commandment.⁵

Rabbi Hutner questions why this commandment should be more beloved than all other commandments. Waxing romantic, he notes that there is something unique, something extraordinary about the love relation at its beginning. *Hanukkah*, which means “dedication,” launches a new love between the Holy One, blessed be He, and *Knesset Israel*. As such, it fits into a pattern of many such *hanukkot* in Jewish history: the dedication of the Tabernacle in the Wilderness; the dedications of First and Second Temples (the First by King Solomon, the Second by Ezra the Scribe), and finally, the future dedication of the long-awaited Third

⁴ Rabbi Isaac Hutner, writing from Brooklyn, “Monday, *Va-Yakbel-Pekudei*, 5737.” Published (complete with facsimiles) in *Heikhal ha-Besht*, Year 11, no. 35 (Tishri 5774/2014), pp. 75–77. See image at end of this article.

⁵ *MT, Hil. Hanukkah* 4:12.

Temple by King Messiah. All these dedications share a common denominator: an element of the extrajudicial. And that's where *Bati le-Gani* comes in.

The Midrash runs through a list of halakhic irregularities at the time of the dedication of the Tabernacle. Of that list, Rabbi Hutner singles out for mention the fact that the Princes offered *ketoret* (incense) as an individual offering, when in normative halakha it is strictly a communal offering.⁶ We are presented with Rashi's rendition of the Midrash which is both pointed and poetic:

I came to my garden—in the days of the dedication of the House...

It refers to the incense that the Princes offered as an individual incense upon the outer altar, and it was accepted—though it is something that is not the procedure for the generations [to come]. Therefore it says, "I ate my wood with my honey." There is a honey that grows in stalks... They suck out the sugar and throw away the wood.

"And I, out of great love, ate my wood with my honey. I ate the cane with the sugar; that which is unfit—the voluntary incense that the Princes offered—together with that which is fit. And I accepted them on that day."⁷

⁶ *B. Menahot* 50a.

⁷ Cf. *Numbers Rabbah* 13:2; *Midrash Tanhuma, Nasso* 20. Rabbi Shelomo Fisher offered the novel suggestion that though the incense of the Princes was not a communal offering (*korban tsibbur*) in the strict sense, it was the closest thing: *bi-kenufya* ('a la *b. Yoma* 51a). See Rabbi S.Y.Y. Fisher, *Beit Yishai: Derashot* (Jerusalem, 2003), chap. 2 (p. 29); chap. 54 (pp. 408-409).

Perhaps the Midrash concerning the desirability of individual incense at the time of the dedication of the Tabernacle can shed light on a curious comment of the *Torat Kobanim* (*Vayikera, Dibbura de-Hovav* 3:11) as spelled out by Rabad of Posqui`eres in his commentary thereto:

If [the incense altar] was dedicated with the incense of a private individual, then it is as if it was not dedicated, for he transgresses [the prohibition of]

"Do not bring up on it a strange incense" [Exodus 30:9].

Rabbi Yosef Dov Halevi Soloveitchik of Jerusalem found the Rabad's remarks inscrutable because the incense of an individual is not reckoned incense at all! Quoted in Rabbi Ze'ev Dov T'chetchik, *Torat Ze'ev: Zevahim* (Zikhron Moshe, 1985), chap. 21 (p. 89).

For lack of a better explanation, I would say that the *Torat Kobanim* sought to forewarn that the *ketoret yahid* (individual incense), however desirable it might have been as a *hora'at sha'ab*, cannot serve for posterity as a *hinnukh ba-mizbe'ah*, a normative dedication of the altar.

The exceptional love that God has for Israel at the time of the dedication of a new sanctuary calls for exceptional, extrajudicial offerings. Rabbi Hutner goes so far as to suggest that this overarching principle of “*Bati le-Gani*,” as developed in the Midrash, was the guiding light of Maimonides’ remarkable *tour de force* of Jewish history in *Hilkebot Ma’aseh ha-Korbanot*:

All the measures of the libations mentioned in the Book of Ezekiel, and the numbers of those sacrifices, and the sacrificial orders written there—are all *milu'im* (dedications), and do not obtain for generations, rather the Prophet commanded and elaborated exactly how they will sacrifice at the dedication of the altar in the days of King Messiah when the Third Temple will be built.

And just as the Princes offered, at the dedication of the altar, things whose likes do not continue for generations, and they sacrificed on the Sabbath, so the Prince [i.e., King Messiah] will offer his dedicatory sacrifice on the Sabbath in the future, as stated explicitly there [i.e., in the Book of Ezekiel].

And so the sacrifices offered in the days of Ezra by those returning from [Babylonian] captivity—were dedications, and do not obtain for generations.⁸ But the things that obtain for generations are the words of the Torah that we explained, as transcribed from the mouth of Moses our Teacher. They are not to be added to or detracted [from].⁹

⁸ Concerning irregularities (“*hora'ot sha'ab*”) in the Book of Ezra, see Rabbi Leib Ruta, *Reshimot Lev*, vol. 1 (Brooklyn, NY, 2000), Pesah 5730 (p. 3).

⁹ *MT, Hil. Ma'aseh ha-Korbanot* 2:14, 15. Rabbi Hutner believed that he thereby solved the problem posed by Rabbi Meir Simḥa Kohen (*'Or Same'ah* ad loc.): How is it possible for a prophet to legislate across eons of time, when in principle, the legislative power of the prophet is restricted to *ad hoc* measures (*hora'at sha'ab*)? (See earlier Rabbi Zvi Hirsch Chajes, *Torat Nevi'im* [Zolkiew, 1836], 10b-11a.)

Within the parameters of Maimonides’ system, which maintains strict separation of *Halakha* and *Nevu'ah*, there remain several unresolved issues. Some light was shed on the broad topic by Rabbi Zvi Hirsch Chajes (subject of Rabbi Hutner’s daughter, Bruria Hutner David’s doctoral dissertation, “The Dual Role of Rabbi Zvi Hirsch Chajes: Traditionalist and *Maskil*,” Columbia University 1971).

Yet there remains much to be clarified within Maimonides’ system. For example, several students of Rabbi Isaac Ze’ev Halevi Soloveitchik (“Brisker Rov”) recorded in his name that the commandment to annihilate Amalek cannot be executed without an “on site” command from a prophet. (See the recent *Reshimot Talmidim me-Rabbi Yitshak Ze'ev Ha-Levi Soloveitchik 'al Seder ha-Torah* [Rehovot; Da'at Sofrim, 2016], *Beshalah*, pp. 242-243.) This clearly flies in the face of what Maimonides wrote in his Introduction to the *Commentary to the Mishnah* that the

Rabbi Hutner fills out Maimonides' overview of history by including the eating on the fast of Yom Kippur at the time Solomon dedicated the Temple in Jerusalem.¹⁰

The same extraordinary love (*hibah* or *havivut*) came into play at the time of the Hasmonean dedication (or perhaps re-dedication) of the altar in the Second Temple era. That divine affection too was expressed in something that by normal standards would be "quasi-prohibited" ("me-*ein issur*"), namely the lighting of a *menorah* or candelabrum (albeit an eight-branched as opposed to seven-branched candelabrum)¹¹ outside the Temple precincts in commemoration of the miraculous occurrence in the Temple.

What comes out of the discourse is that the dedication of a new Temple consistently brings about an incursion of prophecy whose mandate is extralegal (*bora'at sha'ah*);¹² an exposure to the divine mystery that defies human logic and rational investigation.

prophet Samuel's command to Saul to wage war against Amalek comes under the rubric of "commands that are not in matters of religion, such as instructing to war against a certain city or a certain nation now" (Kafah ed. p. 4, s.v. *ve-ha-belek ba-sben*). This statement is insupportable if—as maintained by RIZ—the prophet plays an integral part in the religious observance. Maimonides is most emphatic that the role of Samuel on that occasion was restricted to the temporal aspect; to the practical execution and implementation of the commandment. Samuel played no part whatsoever in the halakhic legislation of the commandment.

In the opposite direction, Rabbi Aryeh Pomerantchik, a devoted disciple of the Brisker Rov, entertained the notion that the prophet and Urim and Thummim necessary for adding on to the city [of Jerusalem] or the Temple precincts, did not act in a consultatory capacity but were present purely as a formality. See *Yebegeh ba-Aryeh* (Jerusalem, 1999), *Shavu'ot* 14b (pp. 89-90). See further *Hiddushei ha-Gram ve-ha-Grid* [Soloveitchik]: *Inyanei Kodashim* (Jerusalem, 1993), *Hil. Beit ha-Behirah* 4:1 (pp. 16-17); Rabbi Yosef Dov Halevi Soloveitchik [of Boston], *Iggerot ha-Grid Halevi* (Jerusalem, 2001), beg. *Hil. Melakhim* (pp. 266-267, 269-270).

Inter alia, see the glosses of Rabbi Zvi Hirsch Chajes (*Shavu'ot* 15a) and Rabbi Samuel Strashun (*Shavu'ot* 16a); and the discussion in Rabbi Yehiel Mikhel Charlop, *Torat ha-Hof Yamim: Sefer ha-Zikaron* (New York, 1985), pp. 281–285.

¹⁰ *B. Mo'ed Katan* 9a. Gersonides wrote that eating on Yom Kippur on that occasion was a *bora'at sha'ah* on the part of the prophets present there. See Ralbag, 1 Kings 8:65; and Rabbi A.M. Alter, *Mikhtevei Torah me-Admor mi-Gur*, ed. Z.Y. Abramowitz and I.M. Alter (Tel Aviv, 1987), Letter 3 (p. 11).

¹¹ See Maimonides, *MT, Hil. Beit ha-Behirah* 7:10; Rabbi Abraham Isaac Hakohen Kook, *Mitsvat Re'iyah, Orat Hayyim* 670:1.

¹² Rabbi Hutner exerted much effort to bring Hanukkah into line, knowing only too well that the events of Hanukkah occurred after the cessation of prophecy.

Drawing an analogy between the construction of the Tabernacle and the creation of the world, Rabbi Hutner reasons that just as the onset of creation comes under the rubric of “the glory of God to conceal a matter” (“*Kevod Elokim haster davar*”), and the continuation of creation comes under the rubric of “the glory of kings to search out a matter” (“*kevod melakhim hakor davar*”)¹³—by the same token, the dedication of the House of the LORD must partake of the hidden, the inscrutable, the mysterious, as opposed to the continuation of the House, which must be legislated by normative, rational, logical Halakha.

This is a “rough and ready” summary of a lengthy disquisition with many ingenious twists and turns along the way. I think I am on safe ground when I say that it is one of the most scintillating discourses in *Pahad Yitshak*.

The reader of *Pahad Yitshak* is left wondering. Is this *ma’amar* restricted to *Hilkehot Hanukkah*? Is it but a highly imaginative *diyuk ba-Rambam*, nothing more than a resourceful commentary on Maimonides’ language? Or are there broader implications? Is Rabbi Hutner perhaps alluding to the mysterious events, the God-awful breakdown of Halakha that—painfully—accompanied the birth of the State of Israel (viewed by some as the “beginning of redemption”)¹⁴ This paradox continues to exercise

In Rabbi Hutner’s reading of Jewish History, the extralegal practices associated with the dedication of a new House, are commanded either by prophets, or after the cessation of prophecy, by sages.

In Rav Kook’s reading of the rebirth of Erets Yisrael, in lieu of prophecy, there is a *pirtsah* or breach of the law:

Only when prophecy rests on Israel is it possible to fix such a matter by a *hora’at sha’ab*; then it is done in a manner that is permissible and an express commandment. Because of the blocking of the light of prophecy, this fixing is accomplished by a long-term breach that pains the heart with its exterior, and gladdens the heart with its interior. (Rav Kook, *‘Arpilei Tohar*, Jerusalem 1914 = *Shemonah Kevatsim* 2:30)

This would be a fundamental difference between Rav Kook’s and Rabbi Hutner’s readings of history.

¹³ Proverbs 25:2; *Genesis Rabbah* 9:1; Rabbi Judah Löw (Maharal), *Genurot Hashem*, First Introduction.

¹⁴ The term “*athalta di-ge’ulab*” (“beginning of redemption”), contrary to what some assume, is not of modern coinage but appears in *b. Megillah* 17b. See the letter of Rav Kook to Moshe Seidel in *Iggerot ha-Rayah*, vol. 3 (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1965), p. 155 (Letter 871). The letter, datelined “19 Shevat, 5678, London,” was written in the aftermath of the Balfour Declaration.

Orthodox Jewish theologians to this day. Does this *ma'amar* of the mature thinker in some way—however circuitous—reflect the teaching of the controversial Chief Rabbi of Erets Israel, Rabbi Abraham Isaac Hakohen Kook, to which Isaac Hutner was exposed in his youth?¹⁵

When challenged concerning the legitimacy of the Zionist enterprise, Rav Kook quoted the famous halakhic principle: “We build [the Temple] with unconsecrated materials and afterwards sanctify.” (“*Bonim ba-hol ve-*

For positive attitudes of both Sephardic and Ashkenazic luminaries toward Zionism and the establishment of the State of Israel, see the two volumes of Rabbi Yitshak Dadon’s collection *Atbalta Hi* (Jerusalem, 2006, 2008).

As is public knowledge, Rabbi Hutner’s own attitude toward Zionism and the secular State of Israel became increasingly hostile with the years. See Rabbi Hutner’s famous anti-Zionist article, “‘Holocaust’—A study of the term and the epoch it is meant to describe,” *Jewish Observer* XII (8), 3–9 (October 1977). Recently, the article was analyzed by Rabbi Gamliel Shmalo, “*Radikalnyut filosofit be-’olam ha-yeshivot: Harav Yitshak Hutner ‘al ha-Sbo’ab*” (“Philosophical Radicalism in the World of the *Yeshivot*: Rabbi Isaac Hutner on the Holocaust”), *Hakirah*, vol. 19, pp. 35–56.

Steven Schwarzschild, an interpreter of Hutnerian thought, wrote:

I have notes of a long conversation with R. Hutner in Jerusalem in February 1975, which makes his extremely critical stance toward Zionism and the State of Israel very clear.

(Steven Schwarzschild, “Isaac Hutner” in *Interpreters of Judaism in the Late Twentieth Century*, ed. Steven T. Katz [Washington, D.C.: B’nai B’rith Books, 1993], p. 164, n. 12).

For Schwarzschild’s understanding of Rabbi Hutner’s nuanced approach to the State, see *ibid.* pp. 161–163.

¹⁵ There was a familial relation between Rav Kook and the young Isaac Hutner. They were “*mehutanim*” (related by marriage). Rav Kook’s daughter-in-law, married to his only son Tsevi Yehudah, was Hava Leah née Hutner. Her brother, Rabbi Yehoshua Hutner, later became the director of Yad Ha-Rav Herzog, which published the *Entsiklopedia Talmudit*. Rabbi Isaac Hutner and Rabbi Tsevi Yehudah Kook’s wife were cousins.

Rabbi Tsevi Yehudah Kook was immensely proud of his wife’s paternal grandparents, Rabbi Yosef Zundel Hutner, Rabbi of Eishishok, and his wife Hendel. On a few occasions Rabbi Tsevi Yehudah related original interpretations of the Rebbetsin of Eishishok, who was famed for her knowledge of Torah and her wisdom. See *Sifot Ha-Rav Tsevi Yehudah: Shemot*, ed. Rabbi Shelomo Aviner (Jerusalem, 5758/1997), p. 338; *Sifot Ha-Rav Tsevi Yehudah: Segulat Yisrael*, ed. Rabbi Shelomo Aviner (5775/2014), pp. 148–149. This writer (BN) once saw a copy of the halakhic work *Hevel Yosef—Ulam ha-Mishpat* by Rabbi Yosef Zundel Hutner with a handwritten “*hakdashah*” (inscription) by the author’s widow in the flyleaf.

apar kakb makdishim.”¹⁶ In a personal letter to his beloved disciple Moshe Seidel, Rav Kook penned a line that has since become a slogan: “The old will be renewed, and the new—made holy.” (*“Ha-Yashan yithadesh, ve-be-hadash—yitkadesh.”*)¹⁷

Perhaps Rav Kook’s optic on the renewal of the Land was refracted through Rabbi Hutner’s consciousness and contributed to this fascinating *ma’amar*.

Rav Kook envisioned a redemption that would unfold in two distinct phases: an earlier secular state that would be followed by a sacred state.¹⁸ In the first phase, the emphasis is upon renewal. Later, the emphasis shifts to sacralization or sanctification. To evoke Rashi’s graphic imagery, in the initial phase, the God of Israel ingests a lot of wood along with the honey.¹⁹

¹⁶ *B. Me’ilah* 14a; Maimonides, *MT, Hil. Me’ilah* 8:4. See further *Y. Sanbedrin* 1:3 (differing opinions of Rabbi Yohanan and Reish Lakish). By way of this halakhic principle Rabbi Tsevi Yehudah Kook interpreted the fact that Noah first dispatched the raven, an impure bird, and afterwards sent out the dove, a pure bird. “This is a divine instruction, to make use also of the impure raven.” See Rabbi Hayyim A. Schwartz, *Mi-Tokh ha-Torah ha-Go’elet*, vol. 2 (Jerusalem, 1989), *Parashat Noah* 5732, p. 14.

¹⁷ *Iggerot ha-Rayah*, vol. 1 (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1962), p. 214 (Letter 164).

¹⁸ In his famous eulogy for Theodor Herzl, “*Ha-Mispel bi-Yerushalayim*” (“The Lamentation in Jerusalem”), Rav Kook interpreted the legend of the two Messiahs—Messiah son of Joseph followed by Messiah son of David—as symbolic of the material and spiritual phases of the Redemption. See Bezalel Naor, *When God Becomes History: Historical Essays of Rabbi Abraham Isaac Hakohen Kook* (Spring Valley, NY: Orot, 2003), pp. 19–30. The writer is preparing for publication a new edition of that collection.

¹⁹ Recently a letter of Rav Kook’s eminent disciple (*talmid muvhak*) Rabbi Jacob Moses Harlap to Rabbi Hayyim Ya’akov Levene was published in which he reveals “the mystery of the abandonment by many of Torah and *mitsvot*.” Referring to the passage in the Talmud (*b. Niddah* 30b), whereby the fetus is taught the entire Torah, only to forget it at birth when an angel administers a slap on the baby’s mouth, Rabbi Harlap concludes: “They are the result of the slap.” He trails off on an optimistic note: “We must hope that soon all of our treasures will return to us and all Israel will grow.” See *Yesburun*, vol. 30 (Nissan, 5774/2014), p. 501 (facsimile).

Though I cannot say with any certainty that there existed a relation between Rabbis Harlap and Hutner, there are definite similarities between their respective *oeuvres Mei Marom* and *Pahad Yitshak*. Both works approximate the style and syntax of Maharal of Prague. Rabbis Harlap and Hutner were

Rabbi Yosef Yitshak drew attention to the fact that the Tabernacle was constructed of acacia wood (*'atsei shittim*). Etymologically, he linked *shittim* to *shetut*, folly or madness. He was rehashing the teaching of his illustrious father, Rabbi Shalom Dov Baer, who earlier, in his *Kuntres u-Ma'ayan mi-Beit Hashem*,²⁰ developed the theme of "*shetut di-kedusha*" or "holy madness."

Rabbi Yosef Yitshak retold the Talmudic anecdote concerning Rav Shmuel bar Rav Yitshak who at weddings would juggle three myrtle sprigs before the bride in order to gladden her heart. At the time, he was criticized by Rabbi Zeira who felt that such behavior was undignified for a Torah scholar. After Rav Shmuel bar Rav Yitshak's death, at his funeral procession a "pillar of fire" separated between the bier and the mourners—a heavenly honor reserved for only one or two in a generation. Thereupon, Rabbi Zeira was forced to recant his previous judgment: "His folly (*shetuteh*) earned him this honor."²¹

Rabbi Yosef Yitshak touched briefly on the term of derision by which the prophet was sometimes referred to in Tanakh: "*meshuga*" ("madman").²²

The Rebbe was calling upon the faithful to deviate from the dictates of polite, "sane" society, if need be. The spiritual power that had fearlessly stood up to the might of the Soviet empire would not be deterred by the *politesse* of Western civilization. For the divine presence to reside inside each and every one of us, our inner Temple must be constructed of *'atsei shittim*. We have to step outside of ourselves, outside of our "comfort zone." If need be, we must take leave of our senses, lapsing like the prophets of yore into "temporary insanity."

There is a dovetailing of the two *ma'amarim* based on *Bati le-Gani*, that of the Rebbe and that of the Rosh Yeshivah. Both men understood that

influenced by Maharal not only syntactically, but what's more significant, substantively. Their *Weltanschauung* was shaped by Maharal.

²⁰ Rabbi Shalom Dov Baer delivered the discourse in Lubavitch in 1903, in which year it was distributed in the handwriting of Rabbi Shmuel Sofer in a limited stencil edition of 300 copies. It was first printed forty years later in Brooklyn (1943). See *Kuntres u-Ma'ayan mi-Beit Hashem* (Brooklyn: Kehot, 1958), pp. 4, 56-57. The title *U-Ma'ayan mi-Beit Hashem* comes from the verse in Joel 4:18: "And a spring shall come forth out of the house of the LORD, and shall water the valley of Shittim."

²¹ *B. Ketubot* 17a. (Cf. *Genesis Rabbah* 59:4.)

²² 2 Kings 9:11. (See also Hosea 9:7.)

the generation of renewal will be confronted with unprecedented challenges that will require a suspension of the senses, of normal judgment.

Besides Rav Kook, there was another teacher with whom Rabbi Hutner studied and whose theology—or that inherited from his ancestor, the famed Izhbitser Rebbe—exerted a profound influence upon him, and that was Rabbi Yeruḥam Leiner, Rebbe of Radzyn (1888–1964).²³ One suspects that it was in the Beit Midrash of Izhbitsa-Radzyn that Rabbi Hutner learned the “mystery of the incense.”

Rabbi Ya‘akov Leiner of Izhbitsa-Radzyn contrasted the clear, pellucid olive oil of the Menorah to the cloud of incense.²⁴ By now, it should not come to us as a surprise that precisely through the murky, impenetrable smoke of the incense shines the love of the Holy One, blessed be He:

Oil alludes to clear, pure fear of the LORD. Oil is the light...by which man may understand what the LORD has spoken, whether

²³ Reports of Rabbi Hutner’s intellectual interface with Rabbi Yeruḥam Leiner, Radzyner Rebbe of Brooklyn, have come to the writer (BN) from both sides. First, the latter’s son and successor, Rabbi Mordechai Yosef Leiner, once confided that every time he publishes a *sefer* of his ancestors, the first copy must go to Rabbi Hutner, who has a “standing order.” Second, Rabbi Yitshak Alster, a disciple of Rabbi Hutner, revealed that he was the “*ba‘al agolob*” (chauffeur) who drove Rabbi Hutner to Rabbi Leiner’s home for their meetings. Rabbi Alster was not privy to the actual discussions as he remained outside in the car. Rabbi Leib Ruta, *Reshimot Lev* (Brooklyn, NY) recorded that on Pesah of 5732, Rabbi Hutner recounted a tradition concerning Rabbi Zadok Hakohen of Lublin and his master Rabbi Mordechai Joseph of Izhbitsa (author of *Mei ha-Shilo‘ab*) that Rabbi Hutner had heard from the Radzyner Rebbe, who received it from his father [Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel Leiner]. (The wording differs somewhat in the two editions of *Reshimot Lev*. In the softcover 1997 edition, p. 60, the text reads: “An anecdote that he heard from the Rav of Radzyn.” In the hardcover 2000 edition, vol. 1, p. 63, the text reads simply: “From the Rav of Radzyn.” A phone conversation with Rabbi Ruta clarified that the language of the first edition is a faithful rendition. The slightly different version of the second edition should be chalked up to stylistic rather than substantive change.) For other traditions concerning Rabbi Zadok Hakohen of Lublin transmitted by Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel Leiner, see Rabbi Yeruham Leiner, *Tiferet Yeruham* (Brooklyn, NY, 1967), pp. 156–164.

²⁴ One resists the temptation to juxtapose the Western term “cloud of unknowing.”

one should do an act or refrain from it. Oil represents intellect and wisdom that erects fences before man.

Incense alludes to the LORD's love for and cleaving to Israel. *Ketoret* (incense) is *kitura*, a bond.²⁵ Let man be certain that he is not disconnected from the LORD, even at the time of forgetting, of involuntary stumbling. Even then, he is stuck to the LORD...

The mystery of incense (*raza di-ketoret*) surpasses in greatness the mystery of the oil (*raza de-shemen*), which symbolizes intellect. Therefore it is said of the Menorah, "outside the curtain of the ark,"²⁶ and of the altar of incense, "before the curtain...before the ark"²⁷ (though the incense altar is also outside the curtain)...It is as if it stands all the way inside (*lifnai ve-lifnim*)...

If one does not believe that even at a time of distraction, when one is not in a settled state of mind (*yishuv ha-da'at*), there is a depth beyond his intellect, and that the LORD desires to teach him thereby new matters of Torah and ways of the LORD—then, in this regard, it is said, "He who loves wine and oil, shall not become rich."²⁸...Should man desire to avoid all doubt and conduct himself purely in the way of light—he will never become [spiritually] rich.

Who is to say that only when one is in a lucid, settled state of mind, one is connected to the LORD, and at a time of distraction, one is disconnected from the LORD? Are there not times that man cannot be in a settled state of mind? And this applies even to *gedolim* (great men).²⁹



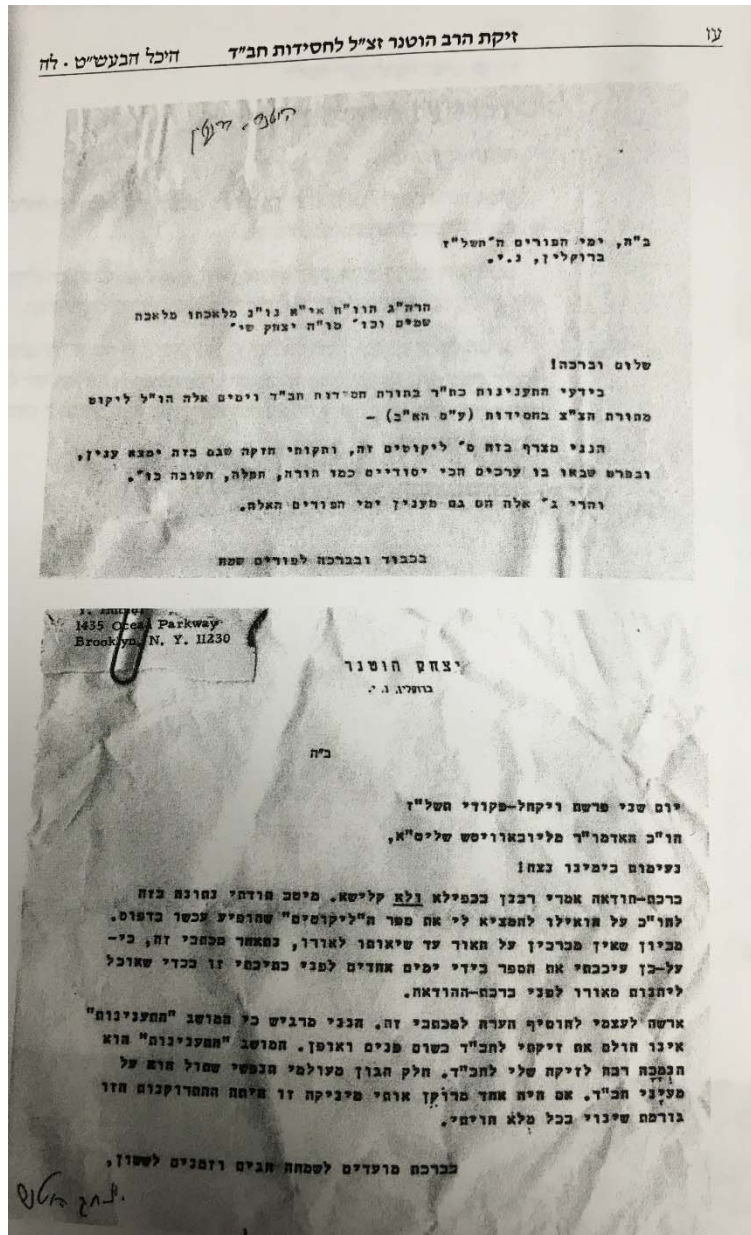
²⁵ *Zohar* III, 37b. (Cf. *Genesis Rabbah* 61:4 concerning Keturah.)

²⁶ Leviticus 24:3.

²⁷ Exodus 30:6.

²⁸ Proverbs 21:17.

²⁹ Rabbi Ya'akov Leiner, *Beit Ya'akov*, vol. 2 (Lublin, 1903), *Tetsaveh*, par. 6 (182c-d). See further Bezalel Naor, "Ascent and Descent in the Yom Kippur Rite: From the Hasidic Thought of Izbica-Radzyn," in idem, *From A Kabbalist's Diary* (Spring Valley, NY: Orot, 2005), pp. 92–96.



Top: Letter from Rabbi Schneerson accompanying the Purim gift of a recently published collection of *Tsemah Tsedek's* teachings.

Bottom: Rabbi Hutner's acknowledgment of the Lubavitcher Rebbe's gift with a description of Rabbi Hutner's deep connection to Habad Hasidism.