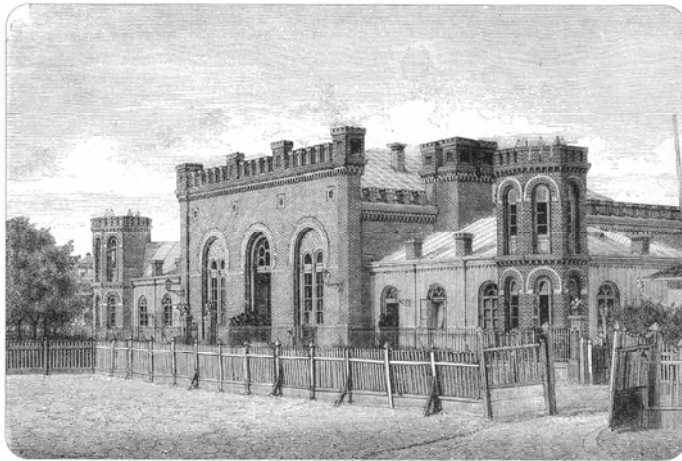


**HASIDISM: Historical Overview.** Hasidism is a movement of religious revival with a distinctive social profile. Originating in the second quarter of the eighteenth century, it has continued to exist without interruption up to the present day. Its ideological and historical origins are generally associated with the figure and unique teachings of Yisra'el ben Eli'ezer (1698/1700–1760), known as the Ba'al Shem Tov (Master of the Good Name; abbreviated Besht), his self-awareness as a leader of his people, and his activities as the purveyor of a new religious message. The emergence and rapid expansion of



Hasidism, coupled with the feelings of identification it continues to arouse, have helped it to withstand persistent opposition and become a central phenomenon of Jewish history in the modern era—one of the most prominent features in the religious, social, and experiential world of East European Jewry.

The sumptuous court established at Sadagora by Yisra'el Friedman of Ruzhin (1796–1850), great-grandson of the Magid of Mezritsh. (Courtesy David Assaf)

The beginnings of Hasidism may be traced to spontaneously formed, elitist groups of Torah scholars and kabbalists in the southeastern region of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, particularly in the province of Podolia. In the generation following the death of the Besht, his admirers called themselves Hasidim—a highly charged term applied previously to individuals recognized in the community as exceptionally pious or as kabbalists, who were as such allowed to adopt certain distinctive ritual practices. Members of the Besht's circle of Hasidim and their disciples became charismatic leaders in numerous communities in the regions of Ukraine, Subcarpathian Rus', and Belorussia, attracting admirers and curious individuals, particularly young Torah scholars unable to satisfy their spiritual needs by traditional methods of scholarship.

Poland experienced dramatic political changes during the 1700s, culminating in the last quarter of the century with that country's partition among the surrounding absolutist states; at the same time, the autonomous Jewish community began to weaken, making way for new sources of religious inspiration and authority. Hasidism prospered and spread against the background of the collapse of the old social order, a collapse that saw the abolition of the Council of Four Lands in 1764; the loss of faith in traditional institutions of community leadership, including the rabbinate, which were

increasingly identified with the interests of the Polish nobility; and many manifestations of social and interclass tensions. These were further compounded by a religious–ethical crisis due to the remnants of Sabbatian messianism and Frankism, as well as the weakened position of the rabbis, many of whom were suspected of owing their posts largely to their wealth and contacts with authorities.

Despite attempts by *misnagdim* (opponents) to vilify Hasidism and describe its leaders as ignorant and corrupt, most ordinary people rejected these charges and considered Hasidic leaders, the *tsadikim* (lit., “righteous ones”), to be superior spiritual figures. The weakening of the authority of communal institutions provided an opportunity for the leaders of Hasidism, thanks to their personal prestige and moral position. While originally they had intended not to replace the old institutions but only to reinforce and become part of them, they essentially appropriated powers that had previously been held by the community.

Beginning in the late eighteenth century, Hasidism experienced processes of transformation and institutionalization that changed its historical character. As it penetrated all corners of Eastern Europe and split into numerous subdivisions, it grew into a popular movement that appealed to the masses and not only to the elite. It garnered supporters in all classes of traditional society, whatever their education or socioeconomic positions. Each such group was headed by a *tsadik* (also known as rebbe or *admor* [Hebrew acronym for “our master, our teacher, and our rabbi”]), who represented a new type of religious leadership. They enjoyed a status, prestige, and authority different from those of the rabbis or elders who had been the traditional leaders of the community. The *tsadik* was not formally appointed or elected to his post; nor was he expected to prove his mettle in Torah scholarship. He was accepted as leader by his followers (including those not living in his own community) by virtue of his charismatic personality or spiritual eminence, and, from the nineteenth century, by dint of his descent from a dynasty of previous *tsadikim*. Membership in a Hasidic community was voluntary and informal, depending on experience; one joined by merely expressing one’s allegiance to the *tsadik*. The literature of Hasidism, which elaborated the special mystical and social status of the *tsadik* as divinely elected to his post, also ultimately upheld the dynastic principle as the sole basis of legitimacy in Hasidic leadership once this custom had taken hold near the end of the eighteenth century. The leadership of the dynastic *tsadik* is still the salient characteristic of all Hasidic groups and communities (with the exception of Bratslav Hasidism).

Hasidism has never been a “movement” in the modern sense of having a centralized organization. *Hasidism* is essentially a collective term for a great variety of groups and subgroups that took shape over the centuries, whether owing to different approaches or ideological and social emphases, or because of personal conflict within the leadership. Since the nineteenth

century, Hasidic groups have been identified with the dynasties to which their leaders belong, and are generally designated by the names of the East European towns and villages where the “courts” of those dynasties were established or first became known.

The organized struggle against Hasidism, beginning in Vilna in 1772 when Hasidim in the community were excommunicated, reflected the perception of the movement as a threat to traditional structure and order partly because it proclaimed new sources of authority and leadership. The struggle of the *misnagdim* against Hasidism, whatever its motives, failed utterly after only one stormy generation, but it left its mark on the general social and spiritual features of the traditional Jewish community, namely, the persisting distinction between the two main groups comprising ultra-Orthodox society: Hasidim and *misnagdim* or, as the latter are often called today, Litvaks (Heb., Lita'im; Lithuanians).

Since the first quarter of the nineteenth century, hostility has given way to coexistence. Nonetheless, Hasidism soon found itself facing a new, far more determined and sophisticated enemy—the Haskalah. The clash between Hasidim and *maskilim* (followers of the Haskalah or Jewish Enlightenment) was not just a dispute between different groups in Jewish society over the correct way to worship God. Nor was it motivated by competition over economic interests and positions of influence. It also represented a peak in the basic tension that has characterized Jewish history throughout the modern era: this ill feeling results from the conflicting views of “innovators” and “conservatives” with respect to the religious and cultural identity of Jewish society, as well as from the significance of “modern times” and their spirit in shaping the future of the Jewish people. [*See Haskalah.*]

Hasidism’s followers generally led the conservative front and waged a determined, uncompromising struggle against the Haskalah, as well as against secularization, nationalism, and Zionism. In its early days, Hasidism played a radical, innovative role in Jewish society but remained confined within the bounds of traditional norms (*halakhah*). When the movement found itself confronting modernity and a dichotomized Jewish society, conservative tendencies came to the fore. Hasidism was thus not only a religious and social movement but also a rival and competitor to other religious and social currents that shook East European Jewry in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. These currents, Hasidism included, sought to shape the identity of Jewish society in the present and the future, not only through innovation and inner creation, but also through delegitimizing the opposing camp and posing an unyielding struggle against its influence.

**Emergence and Growth (1700–1760).** Hasidism was rooted in the milieu of the “old” world of Polish Jewry. When the movement emerged at the time of the Besht, it rose on the one hand from a coherent, traditional society with an ancient tradition of communal organization, a well-defined economic

and legal profile, a characteristic spoken and written language (Yiddish), and a lifestyle shaped by *halakhah* and its authoritative interpreters. On the other hand, it was bred by a popular ethos that was reflected in a literature of customs, ethics, and homiletics, profoundly shaped by kabbalistic ideas.

The social and ideological substrata from which the leaders of both Hasidism and its opposition emerged were circles of pietists and kabbalists known as Hasidim. They were active in the southeastern districts of Poland (now Ukraine) as individuals and as *havurot* (Heb., groups), but they lacked unifying links. They operated in a variety of ways. Some individuals, reputed to be privy to the “holy spirit,” devoted themselves to religious and mystical activities of an ascetic, reclusive nature; others studied Torah and Kabbalah, engaging in prayer and religious observance with an emphasis on such values as ecstasy, joy, and religious devotion.

The main scene of the Besht’s activities was the province of Podolia. After a period of “concealment” and religious preparation, he revealed himself to the public (probably in 1733) as a *ba’al shem* (professional healer), proficient in the use of “holy names,” and as a mystic possessing magical powers and bearing a new religious message.

The Besht directed his first efforts at members of the aforementioned pietist elites, hoping they would recognize both his exceptional spiritual powers (which were particularly obvious in his ecstatic prayer) and the legitimacy of his charismatic leadership. After achieving some recognition, he began to propound his unique teachings in these circles. Admirers were attracted to him mainly in the last 20 years of his life (1740–1760), when he lived in the town of Mezhibizh (Pol., Międzyboż; often spelled Medzhibozh or variants) and was recognized and respected by the whole community.

The Besht and his group formed an elitist nucleus that followed the distinctive religious lifestyle and customs of similar groups of kabbalists and mystics in the eighteenth century. For example, they adopted the Sephardic version of the prayer book with added kabbalistic *kavanot* (intentions) attributed to Yitshak Luria and his disciples, purified themselves regularly by immersion in a *mikveh* (ritual bath), and used highly polished knives for ritual slaughter.

The Besht’s disciples and colleagues, some of whom were associated with other pietist groups, included community rabbis and Torah scholars (such as Ya’akov Yosef of Polnoye or Me’ir Margoliot of Ostróg), preachers (itinerant and otherwise, such as Menahem Mendel of Bar, Dov Ber of Mezritsh, or Aryeh Leib of Polnoye), ritual slaughterers, cantors, and teachers of young children. While the Besht was also active among the lower classes and was heedful of their troubles and needs, they were not members of his closest circle and his new religious doctrines were not meant for them.

Despite the concurrent activities of undercover Sabbatians in the region, there is no convincing evidence of a link between them and the Besht’s circle, or of their ideological influence. In any case, Hasidism

vehemently denied this accusation by its opponents, though it has been accepted by some scholars of the history of Hasidism. In addition, there is no proof of a relationship between early Hasidism and non-Jewish pietist groups that were then active in Eastern Europe.

The Besht's associates were not content merely to share their religious values and ideas, but also tried to exert spiritual and scholarly influence on their communities and leaders. Criticizing existing priorities in the area of religious worship, they proposed new directions of religious revival and innovation, and advocated ecstatic fervor in religious observance, especially in prayer. They expanded the concept of Torah study to other areas of knowledge, such as kabbalistic ethical literature, and favored a new mode of religious leadership that was committed to the community in which it was operating. At this stage, opposition to Hasidism was not organized and systematic but was confined to sporadic criticism of a local nature. This chapter in the history of Hasidism ends with the Besht's death in 1760.

**Consolidation and Dissemination (1760–1815).** At the center of the second period—the transitional stage from an intimate circle of Hasidim to a mass movement—stood Dov Ber of Mezritsh (d. 1772), known as the Magid, and his disciples, who were active mainly in Volhynia and Belorussia. Many of the Magid's followers became leaders of Hasidic communities while he was still alive (including Aharon ha-Gadol [“the Great”] in Karlin and Menahem Mendel [of Vitebsk] in Minsk) and to an even greater extent after his death. The Magid was not seen as the Besht's formal successor, but only as one of his major disciples. Other leaders who were active around the same time, such as Ya'akov Yosef of Polnoye (d. 1783) and Pinhas Shapiro of Korets (d. 1790), also considered the Besht as their spiritual mentor, but did not accept the Magid's leadership and were in fact critical of his ideas.

The partitions of Poland (in 1772, 1793, and 1795) and the collapse of the kingdom that had hitherto combined all of East European Jewry into one political unit provided the backdrop to the first formation of Hasidic “courts” on a permanent basis—a phenomenon that became particularly widespread in the nineteenth century. Emissaries and propagandists representing the *tsadikim* (or operating on their own), spread Hasidism and its doctrines beyond its original homelands, enabling it to reach communities in western Galicia, central Poland, Belorussia, and Lithuania.

The new Hasidic communities, thanks to their predominantly young membership and pioneering fervor, adopted patterns of activity appropriate to a vibrant youth culture, and achieved coherence on the basis of unique shared religious, social, and economic experiences. Young men began to travel to their rebbe's court and to stay with him on Sabbaths and festivals. These visits frequently led to their becoming Hasidim. Some, in fact, remained for long periods and were known as *yoshevim* (Heb., residents). The “court” became the main unifying center for the devotees. It was filled not only with Hasidim coming there to bask in the rebbe's teaching and guidance,

but also with outsiders motivated by curiosity or a hope of finding solace for their troubles.

With the consolidation of the Hasidic community and an ensuing demand for the teachings of the *tsadikim*, Hasidism developed a dynastic style of leadership, regular institutions, and organized channels of dissemination. Different types of leaders emerged. Among its heads were “theoretical” *tsadikim* devoted mostly to spiritual matters and worship; these contrasted with “practical” leaders whose major activity was to give advice and help to all seekers. Separate prayer groups in communities distant from the “mother” courts were established. Demand arose for Hasidim to ensure the economic welfare of the *tsadik*, his family, and his court. The *tsadik* and his followers were increasingly involved in the community at large, attempting to gain power in the corridors of community government by influencing the dismissals and appointments of communal officials and clergy.

As devotees gathered around different charismatic *tsadikim* and established themselves around their courts, theoretical schools also began to emerge, interpreting the principles of the Hasidic system of worship and stressing the new, unique role of the *tsadik* as religious leader. The 1780s saw the publication of the first Hasidic books. In particular, three classic works on Hasidic doctrine were issued: *Toledot Ya‘akov Yosef* by Ya‘akov Yosef of Polnoye (first published in Korets, 1780); *Magid devarav le-Ya‘akov*, by Dov Ber of Mezritsh (Korets, 1781); and *No‘am Elimelekh* by Elimelekh of Lizensk (Lwów, 1788).

A systematic, organized campaign against Hasidism began in 1772 in several communities, notably Shklov, Vilna, and Brody. It was inspired and driven by the outspoken opposition to Hasidism of Eliyahu ben Shelomoh Zalman, the Gaon of Vilna, then considered a supreme religious authority and a venerated figure. The struggle itself was waged by rabbis, preachers, community officials, and lay leaders. Moreover, communal authorities used the sanctions at their disposal to enforce their opposition. These opponents objected to the popularization of the Hasidic mode of worship and other practices and doctrines. Opponents feared these would undermine the existing religious and social order in which only a few exceptional personalities (that is, Hasidim in the old sense of the term) were entitled to adopt uniquely pietistic modes of behavior. These elite included groups of pietists and kabbalists (such as the group in the *kloyz* of Brody). Opponents of Hasidism were also anxious to avert a new outbreak of heresy and quasi-Sabbatian inclinations.

Anti-Hasidic bans and agitation continued even after the Gaon’s death in 1797, but they gradually diminished, whether because of ineffectiveness, the lack of a central authority to oversee the struggle and arouse popular zeal, or the growing realization that Hasidic doctrines were not so heretical after all. The death of the preachers Yisra’el Leibel of Slutsk (ca. 1800) and

David of Makeve (Maków; d. 1814), who had considered themselves to be the Gaon's personal emissaries in their vigorous anti-Hasidic activities, also added to the decline of the campaign.

An important turning point in the history of Hasidism occurred when the authorities agreed to allow the Hasidim to establish separate *minyanim* (prayer groups) and elect their own spiritual leadership. Such *minyanim* had already been recognized in Galicia, then a part of the Austrian Empire, by the Toleranzpatent of 1789, but in Russia recognition came later, with the Jewish Statute of 1804. This official recognition of the legitimacy of the religious dichotomy in Jewish society dealt a further blow to the traditional community, ultimately enabling not only Hasidism but also other groups (such as *maskilim*) to break free of their previously enforced affiliation with the traditional community. During this period, some of the most important Hasidic dynasties took shape, and new types of *tsadikim* (representing the many faces of the phenomenon) appeared in various areas of Eastern Europe.

***Southwestern Provinces of Russia (Kiev, Podolia, Volhynia).*** Though several disciples of the Magid of Mezritsh did not themselves lead large groups of devotees, they still had considerable spiritual impact. Among these were the preachers Menahem-Nahum of Chernobil (ca. 1730–1797), who founded the Twersky (or Chernobil) dynasty, and Ze'ev Volf of Zhitomir (d. 1798), whose book *Or ha-Me'ir* is considered a basic work of Hasidic literature. Another remarkable figure from this region was Levi Yitshak of Berdichev (ca. 1740–1809), a rabbi and Torah scholar of Pinsk who was expelled from his town through pressure from the *misnagdim* and from 1785 to his death was active in Berdichev as a venerated Hasidic rabbi and leader. Also noteworthy were the Besht's grandsons—the brothers Moshe Hayim Efrayim of Sudilkov (ca. 1740–1800) and Barukh ben Yehi'el of Mezhibizh (ca. 1756–1811); and the Besht's great-grandson Nahman of Bratslav (1772–1810), whose unique spiritual approach shook the Hasidic world. Descendants of the Magid were notable as well; among them were his only son, Avraham, known as the “Angel” (ca. 1740–1776), who never served as a Hasidic leader; and his grandson Shalom Shakhnah of Pohorbishch (1769–1802), father of Yisra'el of Ruzhin and one of the first *tsadikim* to adopt the “regal way,” which rejected asceticism in favor of a display of wealth.

***Northern Provinces of Russia.*** Farther north, in Grodno and Minsk provinces, Aharon “the Great” of Karlin (1736–1772) and his disciples were so active and prominent that *misnagdim* referred to Hasidim in general as *Karliners*. He was succeeded by his disciple Shelomoh of Karlin (1738–1792), who was exiled from his hometown in 1786 to Ludmir, Volhynia (mod. Ukr., Volodymyr-Volyns'kyi). The next *admor* was Asher Perlov of Stolin, son of Aharon (1765–1826), under whom Karlin-Stolin Hasidism prospered until it became the largest dynasty in Polesye. Other important groups formed under Hayim Haykl of Amdur (d. 1787) and Mordekhai of Lachovits (1742–1810).

In the northeast provinces of Vitebsk and Mohilev, the most prominent Hasidic leaders were disciples of the Magid of Mezritsh: Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk (1730–1788), who moved to Vitebsk from Minsk; Avraham of Kalisk (1741–1810); and, after the latter two had immigrated to the Land of Israel (1777), Shneur Zalman (1745–1813), who founded the intellectually leaning Habad (an acronym for Hebrew words meaning wisdom, understanding, and knowledge), known as Lubavitch Hasidism, first in Liozno and later (from 1804) in Liady.

**Central Poland.** Several small groups of Hasidim associated with the Magid of Mezritsh and his disciples were active in central Poland, mainly in small communities. Up until the 1780s, there was a Hasidic presence in Ritshvol (Ryczywół), Ostrevtse (Ostrowiec), Apt (Opatów), Zhelikhov (Żelechów), and Novidvor (Nowy Dwór), as well as Kraków and the Praga suburb of Warsaw. From 1754 to 1776, a yeshiva of Hasidic character in Ritshvol was headed by Shemu'el Shmelke Horovitz (later of Nikolsburg; 1726–1778); among his disciples were Levi Yitshak (later of Berdichev), Uzi'el Meisels (1744–1785), Yisra'el Hopstein (later of Kozhnits; 1737–1814), Eli'ezer of Tarnograd (d. 1806), and others. These were not fully developed Hasidic centers, but early nuclei that foreshadowed the great expansion of Hasidism in nineteenth-century Poland.

**Western Galicia.** The largest and most important court in this region, at that time a part of the Austrian Empire, formed around the figure of Elimelekh of Lizhensk (1717–1787), brother of Zusya of Hanipoli and disciple of the Magid. Elimelekh is considered the archetypal “practical” tsadik, who saw himself (and was seen by his Hasidim) as a kind of “channel” through which divine abundance could be brought down from the supernal worlds to our own. As such, he devoted most of his time and spiritual activity to the material welfare of his followers (in Hasidic parlance, helping their quest for *bane haye u-mezone* [descendants, health, and livelihood]; at the same time, however, he expected them to support him, his family, and his court with monetary contributions.

Even before Elimelekh's death, some of his disciples founded new centers. The most prominent of these was Ya'akov Yitshak Horowitz of Lantset (Łańcut; ca. 1745–1815), known as the Seer of Lublin. He was a charismatic personality who explored mystical Hasidism and also had the qualities necessary for leading a large community. His study house in Lublin was the first Hasidic court located in an urban milieu (rather than a small village or town). Nearly all leaders of Hasidism in Poland and Galicia, in his generation and later, considered themselves to be his disciples. Other important followers of Elimelekh of Lizhensk who headed large communities were the *magid* Yisra'el Hopstein of Kozhnits in Poland; Menahem-Mendel of Rimanov in Galicia (d. 1815), whose court, which attracted many scholars, had previously been in Prishtik (Przytyk); and Avraham Yehoshu'a Heshel of

Apt (1748–1825), who after much wandering finally settled in Mezhibzh, and was considered in the last decade of his life to be the oldest living *tsadik*.

A unique and later highly influential figure in Polish Hasidism was a disciple of the Seer, Ya'akov Yitshak of Pshiskhe (Przysucha; 1766–1813), generally known as Ha-Yehudi ha-Kadosh (the Holy Jew). His relationship with his teacher, who had from the start singled him out as a successor, was marred by tension and jealousy. An elite group of admirers gathered around Ya'akov Yitshak and challenged the Seer's leadership. The new trail blazed by Ya'akov Yitshak's followers—who combined Hasidic and scholarly values with intense criticism of “practical” Hasidism, which they saw as a vulgarization—as well as their custom to begin prayers at a late hour, aroused considerable opposition. One of these opponents was Me'ir ha-Levi of Apt (d. 1827), author of the work *Or la-shamayim*, who had considered himself a worthy successor of the Seer. After the Holy Jew's death, many of his devotees flocked to his disciple Simhah Bunem of Pshishke, who organized them as a distinct Hasidic community and defied the leaders of Lublin's Hasidic center.

**Eastern Galicia.** Known especially for its centers at Lizhensk and Rimanov, eastern Galicia was home to other Hasidic leaders as well. The most important *tsadik* of the region was Yehi'el Mikhl of Zlotshev (now Ukr., Zolochiv; 1726–1781), a disciple of the Besht and the Magid. Considered the teacher of many future *tsadikim*, his descendants established a ramified dynasty in Galicia and Volhynia (Zvil [Ukr., Novohrad Volyns'kyi], Stepin, Brezna). Another important figure in Galicia was Meshulam Feivush Heller of Zbarezh (ca. 1740–1794), disciple of the Magid of Zlotshev and author of major literary works, including *Derekh emet* and *Yosher divre emet*). Finally, Mosheh Leib of Sasov (ca. 1745–1807) was famed for his religious ecstasy and intense devotion to charitable acts and the ransoming of prisoners.

By the end of the eighteenth century, a small Hasidic presence existed within the borders of the main areas of Jewish settlement in Eastern Europe including Bessarabia (Russia), Moldavia, and Bucovina (Austria). While various *tsadikim* visited these districts, none of them settled for any length of time, and local disciples affiliated themselves with far-off Hasidic centers in Ukraine, Galicia, or Poland. One influential figure who helped to spread Hasidism in these parts was Hayim Tyrer (d. 1818), a rabbi in Czernowitz and Kishinev who later immigrated to the Land of Israel, and an important Hasidic thinker (author of *Be'er mayim hayim* and *Siduro shel Shabat*).

**Hungary.** Hasidic influence was confined to the rural northeastern districts (referred to by the Jews as *Unterland*), bordering on Galicia and Bucovina where the Jewish presence was sparse. In the 1780s, Yitshak Isaak Taub (d. 1821) established a Hasidic center in Nagykovács, and small groups of Hasidim were active mainly in the Máramaros (now Rom., Maramureş) district. Here, too, Hasidism gained strength only in the mid-nineteenth century.

*Land of Israel.* Hasidism was bent on preserving traditional Jewish life in the Diaspora and on finding solutions for the difficulties of everyday life among the Jewish masses of “old” Eastern Europe. Despite the centrality of the Holy Land in religious consciousness and Diaspora Jews’ recognition of the need to extend material help to those who lived there, the Land of Israel occupied a marginal place in the world of most *tsadikim* and Hasidim.

As had been the custom for generations, individual Jews including Hasidim immigrated to the Land of Israel—it was said that even the Besht had made an abortive attempt to do so. In 1777, a large group of Hasidim—not just a few individuals—led by Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk and Avraham of Kalisk, immigrated to Palestine. This wave of immigration, motivated, according to some, by messianic expectations, created a sizable Hasidic presence in the Holy Land, mainly in Tiberias and Safed, and laid the organizational foundation for the collection of funds in the Diaspora for members of the Hasidic community in the Holy Land. While Hasidic immigration never actually ceased, most leaders of the movement preferred to preserve Jewish life in Eastern Europe, rather than settle either in Palestine or in Western countries.

*The Problem of Succession.* Toward the end of the eighteenth century, the established Hasidic communities in Ukraine, Eastern Galicia, and Belorussia began to face the problem of succession (the problem arose somewhat later in other areas such as Poland). The belief that the *tsadik* could bequeath his religious charisma to his offspring eventually became the guiding principle behind leadership of the movement, but not without difficulty.

Lubavitch Hasidism, for example, experienced a bitter struggle after the death of its founder, Shneur Zalman of Liady in 1812. The rivals were his son, Dov Ber, known later as the Middle Rebbe (1773–1827) and a disciple, Aharon ha-Levi Horowitz of Starosielce (1766–1828). Their struggle, which was both personal and theoretical, centered over who was authorized to interpret the founder’s teachings and what ways represented the proper mode of worship. The dispute ended in the victory of the genetic heir, but the movement split, and from that point on, “outsiders” not descended from previous *tsadikim* (or married into their families) had very little chance of assuming Hasidic leadership.

The years 1810–1815 witnessed the deaths not only of Hasidism’s most vehement opponents, but also of many founding figures of Hasidic leadership. Their places were now taken by a new generation of *tsadikim*, members of dynasties or disciples who had reached maturity and earned fame on their own merits.

The year 1815 was also of literary significance. Two of the most important works of Hasidic narrative were published then in Hebrew and Yiddish: *Shivhe ha-Besht* (In Praise of the Ba’al Shem Tov)—an anthology of hagiographic stories about the lives of the Besht and his disciples, compiled

and edited by Dov Ber of Linitz, whose father-in-law, Aleksander, had been one of the Besht's close companions; and *Sipure ma'asiyot* (Tales)—a collection of 13 stories, replete with a profound symbolism, that Nahman of Bratslav had told to his followers. Reacting to these books, a prominent *maskil*, Yosef Perl, published a brilliant satire titled *Megaleh temirin* (Revealer of Secrets; written in 1816, with publication delayed by censorship until 1819). These three books, each of which also had a Yiddish version, were highly influential in shaping the ethos of Hasidism and the Haskalah and helped to sharpen the messages and positions of the warring factions; to this day, they provide an invaluable key to the historical and ideological worlds of Hasidim and their opponents.

**Expansion and Atomization (1815–1880).** Following the Congress of Vienna (1815), Jews in “Congress” Poland and in the Russian Pale of Settlement again were under the rule of the same government, despite differences in legal status that still effectively separated the two communities.

The acceptance of Hasidism in most East European Jewish communities, and its new status as a multigenerational mass movement, led to the formation of institutionalized social mechanisms. One was not just a “Hasid,” with no further affiliation; one had to be associated with a specific *tsadik* or Hasidic court. As a result, the *tsadik*, his family, and the attendant court establishment became a major focus of identification and social cohesion. The fact that all parts of the traditional Jewish community, including *misnagdim*, accepted the existence of Hasidism and recognized it as a religious movement, reflecting legitimate, though different, norms of behavior and religious lifestyle, contributed to the continuing spread of Hasidism. Hostility gave way to coexistence, generally enabling the two groups to live harmoniously, each cultivating its own specific culture. Still, the increase in the strength of the “Lithuanian” yeshiva world, as well as the rise of the Musar movement, were spiritual phenomena that must be understood not only in terms of their inner logic, but also as responses to the Hasidic challenge.

During this period—the last in which major new dynasties were established—Hasidism spread rapidly into the provinces of Congress Poland, and was generally accepted there without particular friction. In spite of many communal tensions in that region and period—some of them so acute that they reached the ears of government authorities—issues mainly concerned economic or personal conflict rather than ideology. Hasidism also expanded its influence in the southern provinces of the Russian Empire (New Russia, Moldavia, and Bessarabia) and the eastern parts of the Austrian Empire (Bucovina, western Galicia, and northeastern Hungary). In fact, Hasidism's reach almost completely matched the distribution of Yiddish as a living, spoken language, and was blocked only where Jews had adopted the local

language—Hungarian in Budapest, German or Czech in Prague, and German in Poznań.

The expansion of the number of Hasidic courts in this period and their increasing diversity arose partly as a result of significant improvements in communication networks, particularly due to the railroad, beginning in the 1860s. This facilitated mobility, which resulted in considerable change in everyday life, making the courts more accessible as well.

**Ukraine.** Hasidism became exceptionally popular in Ukraine, where it appealed to the majority of the traditional Jewish community. In the first two decades of the nineteenth century, the best-known courts were those of Mordekhai Twersky of Chernobil (1770–1837), Mosheh Tsevi of Savran (d. 1838), and Yisra'el Friedman of Ruzhin (1796–1850), great-grandson of the Magid of Mezritsh. The young and popular *tsadik* Friedman began his “reign” in 1815, ostentatiously displaying his wealth like a Polish magnate. Accused of complicity in the murder of two Jewish informers, he was imprisoned and interrogated, subsequently (in the early 1840s) escaping from Russia to Austria. Eventually, he reestablished his sumptuous court at Sadagora in Bucovina, attracting thousands of Hasidim from both sides of the border.

Almost all the descendants of these dynasties set up courts of their own: Mordekhai of Czernobyl's eight sons were active in Ukraine, the best known of them being David of Talnoye (the “Talner Rebbe”; 1808–1882) and Yitshak of Skvira (1812–1885). The most renowned of Yisra'el of Ruzhin's six sons, active in Galicia, Moldavia, and Bessarabia, were Avraham Ya'akov of Sadagora (1819–1883) and David Mosheh of Chortkiv (Pol., Czortków; 1827–1903). These two dynasties and their offshoots were the dominant Hasidic groups of their respective districts.

Despite attempts by Russian authorities, in the 1860s, to restrain the activities of the *tsadikim* in Ukraine and curtail their freedom of movement, these restrictions could not stem the expansion of Hasidism. Another well-known Hasidic group was made up of Bratslav Hasidism, whose devotees were led after the death of Nahman by his faithful disciple and scribe, Natan Sternhartz of Nemirov (1780–1845). This small, lively, and restless Hasidic community attracted considerable attention—but also sharp opposition, and was constantly persecuted by other Hasidim.

**Belorussia and Lithuania.** The most prominent Hasidic community in Belorussia was that of the Lubavitch Hasidim. From 1813 its center was in Lubavitch, but it had many distant offshoots in Ukraine, New Russia, and Bessarabia. After the death of Menahem Mendel Schneersohn (1789–1866), known as the Tsemah Tsedek, there was a dispute over the inheritance of leadership among his five sons, and a dissenting court was established in Kopust.

In Lithuanian Polesia Karlin-Stolin Hasidism had become an important group under Aharon Perlov (the Second) of Karlin (1802–1872), grandson of the founder. Because of a dispute with members of a powerful

Pinsk family, Aharon and his court were expelled from Karlin (probably in 1864) and resettled in Stolin. Karlin-Stolin Hasidism had four main offshoots that developed into independent dynasties. These were headed by Noah of Lachovits (1774–1832), Mosheh Polier of Kobrin (1784–1858), Shelomoh Hayim Perlov of Koidonov (1797–1862), and Avraham Weinberg of Slonim (1804–1883).

***Galicja.*** In Austrian-ruled Galicia, Hasidism spread rapidly, establishing large centers that attracted thousands of devotees. Most of the dynasties originated in the generation of the Seer of Lublin, the Magid of Kozhnits, and Menahem-Mendel of Rimanov, and some of their disciples. Naftali Horowitz of Ropshits (Ropczyce; 1760–1827), known for his acerbic tongue, founded a dynasty whose most famous offshoots were in Dzikew (Tarnobrzeg-Dzików) and Rozvedev (Rozwadów). Shalom Rokeah (1783–1855) founded the Belz dynasty, later a major branch of Hasidism whose leaders were deeply involved in Jewish public life, especially in the time of his son Yehoshu'a (1825–1894).

Members of the Eichenstein family headed dynasties representing a special aspect of kabbalistic Hasidism; the most prominent *tsadikim* in this dynasty were Tsevi Hirsh of Zhidachov (1763–1831) and his nephew Yitshak Yehudah Yehi'el Safrin of Komarno (1806–1874). Both were prolific authors, profound mystics, and venerated leaders.

The most important Galician *tsadik* was Hayim Halberstam (1797–1876), who lived from 1830 on in Sandz (often Zanz or Tsanz; Pol., Nowy Sącz), where he served as rabbi and gained recognition as a distinguished halakhic authority, whose rulings were also accepted by non-Hasidic circles. His best known book is the collection of his responsa, *Divre Hayim*. Thousands of Hasidim flocked to his court, which he ruled with a conservative, zealous hand, exemplified in his excommunication in 1869 of the Sadagora dynasty and their followers. His descendants established courts in Shinyeve (Sieniawa), Gorlits (Gorlice), Tsheshenev (Cieszanów), and Bobov (Bobowa).

Other important figures in Galician Hasidism were Kalonymos Kalman Epstein of Kraków (ca. 1751–1823), whose work *Ma'or va-shemesh* is one of the fundamental works of Hasidism, and his son Yosef Barukh (1792–1867), a renowned miracle worker known as the Giter Yid (*tsadik*) of Neustadt (Nowe Miasto). Uri ben Pinhas of Strelisk (1757–1826), known as the Seraph because of his ecstatic style of prayer, headed a group known for their poverty and asceticism. His disciple and successor was Yehudah Tsevi Brandwein of Stratin (1780–1844), who had been a ritual slaughterer before he became a *tsadik*. Tsevi Elimelekh of Dinov (1785–1841) was a rabbi and kabbalist, a prolific author (among his texts were *Bene Yisakhar* and *Derekh pikudekha*), and a fanatical foe of Haskalah. His descendants headed the Munkatsh dynasty (Hun., Munkács; now Ukr., Mukacheve).

Other leaders included Me'ir of Premishlan (Peremysh'lany; 1780–1850), known as a miracle worker whose court attracted admirers seeking his blessing for welfare and livelihood. His descendants headed the dynasties of Nadworne and Kretshniv (Rom., Crăciunești). Tsevi Hirsh of Rimanov (1778–1846), nicknamed Mesharet (Attendant), was recognized as a *tsadik* by his own mentor, Menahem-Mendel of Rimanov, but began to lead his flock only after the death of Naftali of Ropshits (1827). Famed for his religious fervor, Tsevi Hirsh was not known for his scholarship, and for that reason, as well as his “lowly” social origins (he had been a tailor’s apprentice in his youth), other *tsadikim* were critical of him.

**Congress Poland.** After 1815 the dynamic center of Polish Hasidism shifted from Lublin to Pshiskhe and its environs. A circle of scholarly Hasidim around Simhah Bunem of Pshiskhe (1765–1827), a disciple of the Holy Jew and a licensed apothecary, shook the Hasidic world with its radically critical, anarchistic doctrines and scholarly tendencies, and produced some of the most important leaders of Polish Hasidism. After Simhah Bunem’s death, some of his Hasidim pledged allegiance to his charismatic disciple Menahem Mendel Morgenstern of Kotsk (1787–1859), who further reinforced the scholarly trend and set radical standards of ethical perfection and self-denial for himself and his followers.

Toward the end of 1839, a kind of rebellion shook the Kotsk court: Mordekhai Yosef Leiner (1801–1854), one of Morgenstern’s favorite pupils, left him, taking with him a group of leading Hasidim. Following and perhaps even before these events, the Rebbe of Kotsk began to exhibit strange behavior, effectively becoming a recluse in his own house. This self-imposed seclusion lasted some 20 years until his death; over those years, the inner cohesion of his Hasidim was undermined.

Mordekhai Yosef Leiner founded a dynasty in Izhbits (Izbica) and adopted a doctrine of radical determinism with distinct antinomian overtones, as reflected in his book *Me ha-shiloah*. He was succeeded by his son Ya'akov (d. 1878), who moved the court shortly before his own death to Radzin (Radzyn), and then by his grandson Gershon Henikh (1839–1891), an imperious, stormy, innovative personality. Gershon Henikh was known for writing a “New Talmud” to the order *Tohorot* of the Mishnah (to which there is no real Talmud), and even more for his claim to have rediscovered the secret of producing the blue dye (Heb., *tekhelet*) for the *tsitsit* (fringes of the prayer shawl)—his Hasidim zealously observed this commandment but most others did not accept his claim.

Another important dissenting disciple of the Kotsk court who moved to Izhbits was Yehudah Leib Eger of Lublin (1816–1888), scion of a well-known rabbinic family of Poznań, who had been attracted to Hasidism in his youth. In 1854, after the death of his mentor Mordekhai Yosef, he returned to Lublin, where he headed a Hasidic community committed to the Izhbits school of Hasidism.

Some disciples of the rebbe of Kotsk kept faith with him during his years of seclusion. Among these were his brother-in-law, Yitshak [Itche] Me'ir Alter of Warsaw (1799–1866), an astute Torah scholar and halakhist (author of *Hidushe ha-Rim*), and Ze'ev Volf Landau of Strikov (1807–1891). In 1859, after the rebbe's death, Yitshak Me'ir led a large group of Hasidim and settled in the town of Góra Kalwaria, near Warsaw, where he founded the Ger school of Hasidism, which grew into the largest Hasidic dynasty in pre-Holocaust Poland. David, son of Menahem Mendel of Kotsk (1809–1873), continued to lead Hasidim in Kotsk, and his descendants established small courts in Pileve (Piława) and Sokelove (Sokołów).

Other branches of Pshishke Hasidism are represented by the Vurke and Aleksander schools. Vurke-Amshinow (Mszczonów) Hasidism was established by Yitshak Kalish of Vurke (1779–1848), disciple of Simhah Bunem of Pshishke, a close friend of the rebbe of Kotsk, as well as a well-known intercessor for the interests of Polish Jewry. Aleksander Hasidism, an offshoot of Vurke, was established after Yitshak's death by his disciple Shraga Feivel Danziger of Gritsa (Grójec), who officiated as *tsadik* for a very brief period (he died in 1848). He was succeeded by his son Yehi'el (1828–1894), who established a court at Aleksander (Aleksandrów, near Łódź), ultimately making it the second largest Hasidic dynasty in Poland (after Ger).

Among other *tsadikim* identified with Pshishke-Kotsk were David Biederman of Lelov (1746–1814) and his son Mosheh (1777–1850), who immigrated to Palestine in his last years. Yehezkel Taub of Kuzmir (Kazimierz Dolny; 1772–1856), known for his musical talent, was a forerunner of Modzitz Hasidism, celebrated for its melodies. Hanokh Henikh Levin of Aleksander (1798–1870) was considered the major disciple of Yitshak-Me'ir of Ger. After the latter's death in 1866, many of his disciples went to Hanokh Henikh's court in Aleksander, but returned after his death to the courts of Ger and Sokhachev (Sochaczew). Ya'akov Aryeh Guterman of Radzymin (1792–1874) was a disciple of Yitshak of Vurke; after the latter's death, Guterman led thousands of Hasidim and was famed for writing amulets and working miracles. Some descendants of the Holy Jew who rejected the doctrines of Simhah Bunem of Pshishke headed Hasidic courts at Purisev (Parysów), Bekhev (Bychawa), Shidlovtse (Szydłowiec), and Kaleshin (Kałuszyn).

Confronting the Pshishke school of Hasidism was another school of the Seer's disciples, which placed emphasis on material well-being as a basis for religious life. This school considered the *tsadik* a major channel for reception of divine abundance and responsible for the subsistence of his Hasidim. Among its most prominent advocates were Me'ir of Apt, who assumed the leadership of opponents to Pshishke; Yesha'yah of Pshedborzh (Przedbórz; 1758–1831); Yisakhar Ber of Radeshits (Radoszyce; 1765–1843), famed for working miracles and known as Ha-Saba' ha-Kadosh (Holy Old Man);

Shelomoh Rabinovich of Radomsk (1803–1866), leader of an important dynasty of *tsadikim* that attracted many followers; and Avraham Landau of Chekhanov (1784–1875), father of Ze'ev Volf of Strikov, the only *tsadik* in the history of Hasidism who insisted on using the traditional Ashkenazic prayer rite. The descendants of the Magid Yisra'el of Kozhnits, who headed courts in that town, Moglnitse (Mogielnica), Blendev (Błędów), and Grodzisk, formed another distinct group that rejected the doctrines of Pshishke.

***Bessarabia and Hungary.*** Two small Hasidic dynasties were active in Bessarabia. One was headed by Aryeh Leib Wertheim of Bendery (d. 1854), the other by Yosef of Rashkov (died ca. 1837).

The first to spread Hasidism in Hungary was Mosheh Teitelbaum (1759–1841), a disciple of the Seer of Lublin and a scholar and kabbalist also known for his amulets. In 1808, he left Sieniawa in Galicia and settled in Uyhel (Sátoraljaujhely), Hungary. Hasidism gained strength in those regions, especially in Transylvania and Subcarpathian Rus', only in the 1850s, especially in Munkács, Máramarossziget (Sighet Marmăției), and Satu Mare (Satmar).

The influence of the Sadagora and Sandz dynasties and their offshoots in these parts was considerable, but even more so was that of the *tsadikim* of Vizhnits (Rom., Vijnița; Ukr., Vyzhnyts'a) in Bucovina. The leader of the Vizhnits Hasidim was Menahem-Mendel Hager (1830–1885), younger son of the Galician *tsadik* Hayim of Kosov (ca. 1795–1844) and son-in-law of Yisra'el of Ruzhin.

***Land of Israel.*** The small Hasidic community in Palestine was defined by affiliation with *kolelim*, reflecting their geographical association with, and economic dependence on, the “mother” courts in Eastern Europe: Hasidim from Volhynia and Galicia congregated in Safed under the leadership of Avraham Dov of Ovruch (ca. 1765–1840), who had come to the Holy Land in 1833; while Hasidim hailing from Belorussia settled mainly in Tiberias. In 1819, a small Hasidic community had been established in Hebron, later becoming a center for Lubavitch Hasidim. An organized Hasidic community in Jerusalem was established in the early 1840s on the initiative of two printers, Yisra'el Bak of Berdichev and his son Nisan, who were Sadagora Hasidim.

***Splinters and Controversies.*** In the history of Hasidism, the period from 1815 to 1880 saw a transition from a single movement with numerous communities, each representing its own spiritual tendencies, to extreme atomization, with communities splintering into tiny subcommunities. Almost every son of a *tsadik* (and sometimes grandsons and sons-in-law) saw fit to set up his own court. Atomization led to disintegrative, unstable trends: bitter disputes between *tsadikim*, competition for loyalty, and the formation of an internal, popular hierarchy of prestige that measured the merits of the numerous *tsadikim*, whether as individuals or relative to their rivals.

These splintering processes also reflected contradictory spiritual and social currents, contributing to the extreme diversification of the Hasidic mosaic. Flanking innovative trends, sometimes approaching the radical and even the anarchic, one also finds a nostalgic longing for the pre-Hasidic values of pietism and asceticism, an emphasis on the value of traditional Torah study, and a preference for halakhic stringency. Numerous personal power struggles, often presented as ideological arguments, also reflected elements of decline and decay. Attempts to excommunicate Pshishke Hasidism (between 1815 and 1825); the persecution of Bratslav Hasidim in the 1830s by Savran Hasidim and in the 1860s by Talnoye and Skvira Hasidim; and the stormy controversy in 1869 between the *tsadik* Hayim of Tzanz and the Sadagora dynasty are just examples of the internal friction that agitated and split Hasidic communities for several decades.

**Stagnation and Struggle (1880–1918).** The period of pogroms and the waves of emigration in the last decades of the nineteenth century had their effects on Hasidism, but the secularizing trends in Jewish society were its greatest enemy. Dozens of *tsadikim*, major and minor alike, were active at the time in hundreds of Hasidic communities all over Eastern Europe, but the history of Hasidism at the turn of the twentieth century has received little if any scholarly attention. Nevertheless, there is little doubt that the Hasidic court was severely shaken by the storms pounding its walls from without. It was generally felt that modern life and the secular-revolutionary atmosphere sweeping over the Jews of Eastern Europe would do much more damage to Hasidism than the distribution of satires and polemical tracts or attempts to enlist the help of the authorities.

Secularization derived its strength not only from modern Jewish ideologies of nationalism and socialism, but also from increasing acculturation, decline of the shtetl (life in which was identified with the stagnation of the tradition), changes in traditional economic patterns, accelerated industrialization and urbanization, crowded living conditions, the tremendous increase in the Jewish population of the Pale of Settlement, and numbing poverty—all of which created an entirely new spiritual and social climate. Though new forms of literature and journalism, in Hebrew and in Yiddish, became major factors in Jewish public discourse, there was almost no representation of Orthodoxy, including Hasidism, in that medium. The Orthodox struggle against these new currents only heightened their inclination to close ranks in defense, painting their leaders with a conservative, even fanatical color.

Hasidism gradually lost its attractiveness. Wealthy courts found themselves in financial straits; the old, traditional educational system, incapable of giving its graduates a general education or vocational training, was undermined; and Torah scholarship and piety lost their primacy in the internal hierarchy of the Jewish community. Hasidic leaders, not blind to this

unprecedented spiritual crisis, took various steps in an attempt to halt the erosion.

As early as 1878, several Galician *admorim*, headed by Yehoshu‘a Rokeah of Belz, established Mahazike ha-Dat (Defenders of Faith), to oppose the *maskilim* of Lwów and promote the interests of Hasidic Orthodoxy using modern, political tools. They published a newspaper and participated in Austrian parliamentary elections. The most significant turning point, however, came at the end of the period. Building on contacts that had already begun in 1909, in 1916 a group of German rabbis joined forces with the *tsadikim* of the Ger dynasty to establish, in Warsaw, the political arm of Agudas Yisroel. While the movement considered itself to be the guardian of ultra-Orthodox Jewry as a whole (seeking to unite Polish Hasidim, Lithuanian *misnagdim*, and German Neo-Orthodox), it was largely dominated by the Polish Hasidic element, and its leadership generally reflected this domination.

Another innovation of this period was the foundation of Hasidic yeshivas. Until then, yeshivas had been identified with the *misnagdim* or the Musar movement in Lithuania; their adoption by Hasidic courts may be attributed not only to a return to the conservative values of classic Torah study, but also to the realization that the yeshiva study method was a fitting response to the threat and seductive power of secularization. The first Hasidic yeshivas were founded in the early 1880s, in Vishnitsa, Galicia (Pol., Wiśnicz), by Shelomoh Halberstam (1847–1905), grandson of Hayim of Sandz and founder of the Bobov dynasty; and in Sokhachev, Congress Poland, by the rebbe of Kotsk’s son-in-law Avraham Bornstein (1839–1910), known as a Torah scholar whose books (*Avne nezer; Egle ta’*) were also studied in the non-Hasidic yeshiva world.

Subsequently, yeshivas, large or small, were established in almost every Hasidic court. Among the best known is Tomekhe Temimim, founded in Lubavitch (1897) on the initiative of the fifth *admor* Shalom Dov Schneersohn (1860–1920). The emergence of the Hasidic yeshiva exemplified the processes of orthodoxization that gradually blurred religious differences between Hasidim, non-Hasidim, and *misnagdim*, combining them into what would later be known as *haredi* society—a loose coalition of diverse, sometimes conflicting groups that waged a common war against all manifestations of Haskalah, modernization, and secularization.

At this time, the *admorim* of the three major Polish dynasties—Ger, Sokhachev, and Aleksander—emphasized the traditional values of Torah scholarship and halakhic stringency, thus giving Polish Hasidim a more scholarly coloring. The leaders of the Ger Hasidim were the second *admor* Yehudah Leib Alter (1847–1905), grandson of the founder of the dynasty, and known for his multivolume work *Sefat emet*, and his son and successor, Avraham Mordekhai Alter (1866–1948), one of the founders of Agudas Yisroel and its driving force. Sokhachev Hasidism, founded in 1870, was led by

Avraham Bornstein and, after his death in 1910, by his son Shemu'el (1855–1926). The leader of the Aleksander dynasty from 1894 was Yerahmi'el Yisra'el Yitshak Dantziger (1854–1910), later succeeded by his brother Shemu'el Tsevi (d. 1923).

A unique figure in the world of late Hasidism was Tsadok ha-Kohen of Lublin (1823–1900), a disciple of the Izhbits school, who became a leader of Hasidim only after the death of his mentor, Yehudah Leib Eger. He was known as a prolific author who wrote several works of original Hasidic-kabbalistic thought (including *Tsidkat ha-tsadik*, *Peri tsadik*, and *Resise lailah*) that aroused considerable interest outside the Hasidic world as well.

**Upheaval and Destruction (1918–1945).** World War I and the disintegration of the multinational empires of Austria and Russia resulted in the physical destruction of some of the greatest Hasidic centers in Ukraine, Poland, and Galicia (including the courts of Sadagora, Chortkiv, and Belz). The *tsadikim*, their families, and associates were forced to relocate, departing for other countries or large cities such as Vienna. The shift of Hasidic courts from the small town to the great city was one of the signs of the times.

Civil wars in Ukraine and the creation of the Soviet regime, which sealed its borders, all but liquidated Hasidic activities within the Soviet Union. Only Lubavitch managed to maintain an underground presence under the iron fist of the anticlerical regime. Hundreds of Bratslav Hasidim in Poland, unable to assemble at the grave of Nahman in Uman moved the location of their “Holy Gathering” during the High Holy Days to Lublin. They lodged and prayed in the spacious halls of the Hakhme Lublin Yeshiva, enjoying the hospitality of its principal, Me'ir Shapira, himself a Hasidic rabbi.

Even in independent Poland, however, Hasidism could not recoup its losses, although a few of its centers seemed to enjoy some quantitative and qualitative success, particularly in the larger cities (Warsaw and Łódź) and medium-sized towns. Typically “Polish” branches of Hasidism, such as Ger or Aleksander, which favored a combination of Hasidic piety with a tradition of deep political involvement in Jewish community affairs, still attracted thousands of followers and admirers, but even these successes could not stem the tide of secularization, socialism, and Zionism (including religious Zionism) that swept over large numbers of Jewish youth in Eastern Europe.

In reaction to the threat of secular heresy and Zionism, ultra-Orthodox society (including Hasidism), especially in Galicia and Hungary, closed its ranks, adopting ever more stringent and conservative positions. Leading Hasidism at this time, and largely dictating the fanatical tone, were the rebbes of Belz, Sandz, and Satmar and their offshoots, who opposed not only Zionism but even Agudas Yisroel. Most prominent were the venerated leader of Belz Hasidism, Yisakhar Dov Rokeah (1854–1926), and his rival, Hayim El'azar Shapira of Munkatsh (1872–1937), leader of the Carpatho-Rusyn

Hasidim from 1914, who was known for his scholarship but also for his belligerent personality.

One particularly outspoken figure was Yo'el Teitelbaum (1887–1979). In 1934, he settled in Satmar where, thanks to his vigorous activities as rabbi, principal of the yeshiva, and *tsadik*, he became a revered Hasidic figure throughout Transylvania. In 1944, he escaped the Germans in the “Zionist” rescue train organized by Rezső Kasztner, reaching Switzerland and going from there to Palestine. After a brief stay, he left for the United States, where he reestablished his court, making it the largest Hasidic community in existence after the Holocaust, and continuing to be an indefatigable foe of the State of Israel. Another fierce opponent of Zionism and Agudas Yisroel was Yosef Yitshak Schneersohn (1880–1950), leader of the Lubavitch Hasidim in Soviet Russia. Imprisoned in 1927 and then released, he wandered through Russian, Latvian, and Polish cities, finally reaching New York in 1940, where he reestablished his court.

One of the most colorful Hasidic leaders was Aharon Roth of Beregsas (Hun., Beregszász; now Ukr., Berchove; 1894–1947), who founded a new, extreme, Hasidic community known as Shomre Emunim, with centers in Satmar, Beregsas, and Jerusalem. His Hasidim followed strict rules of simplicity and modesty, and were known for their fierce stance against Zionism.

The terrors of the Holocaust and the diabolical implementation of the Final Solution dealt a mortal blow to ultra-Orthodox Jewry in general and to Hasidim in particular. Besides the physical threat, Hasidim had to grapple with grave theological misgivings, a desperate quest for divine providence, profound guilt feelings, and attempts to explain the catastrophe as a divine punishment. Impassioned faith was mingled with bitterness and doubt about the wisdom of Hasidic leaders who had despised Zionism before the Holocaust, some of whom had urged their followers to remain in the Diaspora but had unhesitatingly taken the opportunity to escape to safety in their own time of need.

Unique Hasidic voices could be heard even during the Holocaust. One such voice was *Esh kodesh* (Holy Fire), an anthology of sermons delivered by Kalonymus Kalmish Shapira of Pisisz (Piaseczno; 1889–1943) to his Hasidim in the Warsaw ghetto, reflecting on the horrors of the Holocaust from a sober, anguished, Hasidic perspective. Another text, *Em ha-banim semehah* (Happy Mother of Children), by Slovakian rabbi Yisakhar Shelomoh Teichthal (1885–1945), is a rare expression of personal and communal self-reckoning written in Budapest in the midst of the war (1943). Teichtel, formerly a foe of Zionism, did not hesitate to castigate contemporary *tsadikim* for their fanatical opposition to the national movement, and for their loss of the opportunity to save the Jewish people from extermination.

**Rehabilitation and Revival (since 1945).** The destruction of the centers of Hasidism during the Holocaust, especially in Poland and Hungary,

signaled the historical end of Hasidism as a Jewish experience on East European soil. From then on, its history has belonged to those countries where remnants of the movement, having escaped or survived the European inferno, managed to reconstitute their communities—in particular, the eastern regions of North America and the State of Israel. Despite the inherently East European character of Hasidism, leaders and devotees were able to adjust to entirely new political and economic conditions, in fact taking advantage of them to consolidate their communities anew.

In the course of the 1950s, thanks to an impressive series of charismatic leaders with organizational talents who knew how to instill their followers with faith and self-confidence, the world of Hasidism began successfully to rebuild itself. Within a single generation, it has again established itself on spiritual, social, and demographic planes. In so doing it has once more proved its unbelievable power of survival and its inherent vitality and creativity.

Despite sea changes in Hasidism in this period, its East European features are still evident, whether in the names of the various courts (which preserve the names of the East European towns or villages that were once their centers), in their customs of everyday clothing, culinary traditions, and religious lifestyle, but particularly with the survival of Yiddish as the main spoken language among most Hasidic communities.

Since the collapse of Communist rule, Hasidim have been expressing their East European roots through ritual pilgrimages to the tombs of *tsadikim* and other historical sites associated with Hasidism, and through vigorous activities aimed at repairing tombstones and memorials of famous rebbes. These developments are especially evident in the Ukrainian towns of Mezhibezh, where the Besht and some of his disciples and successors are buried, and Uman, site of Nahman of Bratslav's grave, which has become—especially during the High Holy Days—a favorite pilgrimage site for thousands of visitors, many of whom are not Bratslav Hasidim themselves. Hasidic hotels have in fact been built in these towns to accommodate the many visitors.

Hasidic emissaries are active today in Russia, Ukraine, and the Baltic states, particularly members of the Lubavitch and Karlin dynasties, but their activities are aimed primarily at reinforcing religion and traditional education among the Jewish community at large and not at creating new Hasidic communities.

*[The principal Hasidic dynasties and figures mentioned are the subject of independent entries.]*

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