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**“THE STRUGGLE WITHIN CHABAD LUBAVITCH AND
ORTHODOX JUDAISM: A RESURRECTED KING MESSIAH”**

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“WE WANT MOSHIACH NOW!” is a bumper-sticker that hangs over my office door. It has hung there for many years, long before the death of the last leader of the Chabad Lubavitch Hasidic movement – Rebbe Menachem Mendel Schneerson. I keep it there for many reasons: first, it reminds me to pray for the Lubavitchers and other Hasidim; it reminds me of their deep messianic longing; finally, it reminds me of my own longing for the Day when our true Messiah shall return to this world.

It also takes me back to an incident that occurred more than twenty years ago at Lubavitch World Headquarters in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, at their famous address: 770 Eastern Parkway, when I led a group of young people to scout out the neighborhood. We were quietly walking up and down the streets – the goal was to gain more insights about the community. I asked my team to put away our tracts. It was my first visit to Crown Heights, and I could quickly see that passing out tracts would lead to a confrontation. So, instead we walked through the area. Several of us visited the *shul*. Prior to coming to Crown Heights, we had prayed for the opportunity to perhaps be able to share the Gospel with at least one person.

God answered that prayer in a way we weren’t expecting. Despite my attempt to avoid any sort of confrontation, an elderly Lubavitch man spied a tract with some Hebrew written on it in the hand of one of our team members; he grabbed it, looked at it in disgust, then ripped it into shreds and spat. I could see all this unfolding from about a couple of hundred feet away. I began to run toward my team members. In seconds it seemed, a sea of Lubavitchers had gathered and a full-scale riot appeared underway. People were screaming, hitting and cursing. Suddenly I yelled out: “Is this how you fulfill the Law of Moses? Is this what your Rebbe teaches you to do – attack people in the street?”¹

At that comment, someone shouted, “Be quiet! He is talking about the Rebbe.” Suddenly the crowd quieted down. The Lord gave me the words to speak in that incredible moment: as I looked into many young Lubavitch faces, some hostile but others very curious, I said, “We see your signs everywhere that proclaim, ‘We Want Moshiach Now!’ We want Him, too,” I added. “But we believe that He came already, and it is a *mitzvah* for us to come here and speak to you words from your prophets about Him.” It was a scene and an opportunity that I shall never forget.

¹ I also described this scene in another paper that may be of interest to readers regarding general outreach to the Hasidim. It is entitled, “The Hasidim: The Last Frontier of Jewish Missions?” (Joint paper, *Booklet - 15 August 1999*, The Lausanne Consultation on Jewish Evangelism, Sixth International Conference, New York, 1999), pp. 214-224.

I first became aware of the Lubavitchers because of their intense opposition to our ministry to new Russian Jewish immigrants in Chicago in the late 1970s and early '80s. Lubavitchers had been and remained our chief rivals in seeking the attention of Jewish immigrants from the former Soviet Union, many of whom came out of an atheistic background but were open spiritually.

Though most Russian Jews respect the Lubavitchers for their pro-Jewish and pro-Israel activism and are thankful for any help they receive from such groups, the majority of Russian Jews have not embraced their precepts and in fact are repulsed by the strictures of Orthodox Judaism. Nevertheless, there is usually a Chabad Lubavitch presence in most large Russian Jewish communities around the world. We had a major incident in our ministry some years ago when a Russian Jewish teenager in Chicago who had professed faith in Jesus as a new believer was spirited away by local rabbis to Lubavitchers in New York for “deprogramming.” They did everything they could to try to get him to deny the faith.

We did not know at first where he was or who had him. But then we found out that he had been taken to New York and was under the control of a Lubavitch group. We had to very quickly find out everything we could about them. We soon learned a great deal, including their dark side. The young man escaped, but that is another story. The whole incident was a major turning point in our ministry. We had had run-ins with the Lubavitchers before. A Lubavitch Russian language newspaper had promised its readers that they would close the doors of our evangelical center. There had been protests and threats. But it was this incident that brought everything into sharp focus. I began to study their theology and methods. From that day forward, the Chabad-Lubavitch movement has been on my missionary and spiritual radar screen – “beloved enemies,” so to speak, to paraphrase Romans 11: 28.

The Pervasive Influence of Chabad-Lubavitch.

The Lubavitch Hasidic sect was founded by Rabbi Schneur Zalman (1745-1813). Its roots extend back to areas within the Russian Empire before the Communist Revolution and the town of Lubavitch in what is present-day Belarus (White Russia).²

Chabad Lubavitch influence upon world Jewry remains very pervasive in our day. According to the official Chabad website, there are more than 3,300 Lubavitch-related institutions worldwide and “a workforce that numbers in the tens of thousands.”³ Part of that force includes the so-called *shlichim* (emissaries),⁴ committed veteran Chabadnik

² Rabbi Zalman’s main volume, the *Tanya*, forms the foundation of Lubavitch theology. “CHABAD” is an acronym that stands for: *Chochmah* (wisdom), *Binah* (understanding), and *Daat* (knowledge) – forming what author Tzvi Rabinowicz calls an “intellectual Hasidism.” See Tzvi Rabinowicz, “Habad - the Global Lamplighters,” *Hasidism in Israel: A History of the Hasidic Movement and Its Masters in the Holy Land* (Jason Aronson, Inc.: 2000), p. 72. The movement was previously known simply as “Chabad” until the sect moved to the town of Lubavitch (City of Love), where it “continued to be the seat of the movement until 1916.” (Lis Harris, *Holy Days* (1985), pp. 97-98).

³ See “About Chabad Lubavitch” on Chabad.org at: <http://www.chabad.org/generic.asp?aid=36226>, October, 2004.

⁴ Unpublished report (2004), “From the 770 to a Grave in Queens,” recalling the tenth anniversary of Schneerson’s death and discussing the Chabad-Lubavitch movement (for more information, contact

“missionaries” of sorts scattered throughout the world. According to Tzvi Rabinowicz, a chronicler of Hasidism, Lubavitch institutions are found in more than 35 countries.⁵ The group is estimated to have an annual worldwide operating budget approaching \$1 billion.⁶

When Schneerson was still alive, he - who never set foot in Eretz Yisrael - could nevertheless bring down Israeli coalition governments if he thought it necessary. I remember when then former Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin came to the U.S. – he *first* visited the Rebbe in Brooklyn, *then* he met with the then President of the United States.

Most workers in Jewish evangelical ministry cannot be involved in outreach or ministry for very long without having some contact with Lubavitch influence in one form or another. In March 2003, I was doing some evangelistic scouting in the Forest Hills area of Queens in New York City, checking out the Bukharan Jewish community. Sources vary, but there are apparently tens of thousands of Bukharan Jewish immigrants in this part of New York City alone, a mission field unto themselves.⁷ I went into a small kosher Bukharan restaurant and chatted in Russian with a Bukharan Jewish grandfather working there. Behind the counter I noticed a placard in English titled, “The Voice of Moshiach” and Schneerson’s picture prominently displayed on it. The same kind of example can be found in many regular Russian Jewish stores or restaurants in New York City or Israel. Its presence there may not signify that those Bukharan Jews – most of whom practice a form of Sephardic Judaism⁸ -- necessarily think that Schneerson is the Messiah. For many of them it may simply represent a way for an immigrant Jewish population to show common alliance with a powerful Orthodox Jewish movement. Bukharan Jewish roots go back thousands of years; Bukharan Jews may be remnants of Jewish exiles from ancient Babylon and Persia. Nevertheless, it seems clear that at least some Bukharan Jewish immigrant children growing up in New York will be exposed to the premise that Schneerson is the Messiah. The influence of Chabad Lubavitch is very strong even upon distinctly different forms of Judaism.

Chutzpahnik.org, PO Box 5501, Falmouth, VA 22403). See also Dan Pine, “Writer gets inside to recount Chabad movement,” *Jewish Bulletin News of Northern California*, May 23, 2003, <http://www.jewishsf.com/bk030523/sb24.shtml>

⁵ Tzvi Rabinowicz, *Hasidism in Israel: A History of the Hasidic Movement and Its Masters in the Holy Land* (Jason Aronson, Inc.: 2000), pp. 76-77.

⁶ Sue Fishkoff, “Chabad Today: The Lubavitcher Hasidic movement continues to grow, influence extending far beyond Jewish Orthodoxy,” MyJewishLearning.com (2003), http://www.myjewishlearning.com/history_community/Jewish_World_Today/Denominations/ChabadToday.htm. Fishkoff is also the author of *The Rebbe’s Army: Inside the World of Chabad-Lubavitch* (Schocken Books, 2003).

⁷There are two different sources on the size of the Bukharan Jewish community in New York City. According to Youth With A Mission’s (YWAM) publication, *An Intercessor’s Guide to the Jewish World: A Year-Round Prayer Guide* (Second Edition, 1998), there were some 15,000 Bukharan Jews in New York City in the 1990s. (Volume I, p. 21). However, according to a Jewish website, there may be as many as 50,000. See Linda Morel, “Bukharan Jews now in Queens recreate their Sukkot memories,” Sep. 20, 2002. <http://www.jewishsf.com/bk020920/us19.shtml>. The YWAM prayer-guide is a wonderful resource, since it contains a wealth of information on often little-known Jewish communities scattered around the world. It can be ordered from: YWAM Jewish-World Office, PO Box 7736, Richmond, VA 23231-0236 USA. The e-mail address is: YWAMJWO2@aol.com. Within the U.S., the requested donation for the 135+ page volume is \$10 plus \$2.50 shipping.

⁸ *An Intercessor’s Guide to the Jewish World* (1998), op. cit., p. 20.

Strong Opponents

Lubavitch theology has also created some strong opponents within Judaism - opposition that began long before Rebbe Schneerson came on the scene and really goes back to the sect's founding, when anti-Hasidic *mitnagdim* conspired to have Rabbi Zalman arrested and thrown into a Russian Tsarist prison. Thus, the sect has always had its struggles with other Orthodox Jewish groups. However, the messianic fervor surrounding the Rebbe and his actions certainly accentuated that opposition in the modern era. A 1988 article, written when Schneerson was still alive, quoted then 92-year old Rabbi Eliezer Schach, a Torah scholar in Israel, who denounced Schneerson as "the madman who sits in New York and drives the whole world crazy."⁹ The Satmar Hasidim of Williamsburg, Brooklyn, who are virulently anti-Zionist (they believe that only Messiah should establish the state of Israel) have been particularly strong opponents of Lubavitch within the Hasidic world, where the antagonisms run deep at many levels. In his fascinating book, *Boychiks in the Hood: Travels in the Hasidic Underground*, author Robert Eisenberg says that Satmars will ordinarily marry other Satmars, or perhaps Hungarian Hasidim, or "occasionally even other non-Hungarian Hasidim, *but never Lubavitchers*."¹⁰ (emphasis added). The Lubavitchers in general are viewed by the Satmars as "damaged goods, idolaters," because of their beliefs concerning Schneerson, at least according to this account.¹¹

As Rabbi Simon Jacobson wrote in *Toward a Meaningful Life: The Wisdom of the Rebbe* (1995): "Much of the media coverage in the later years of the Rebbe's life concentrated on the controversy over whether or not he was the Messiah..."¹² At the time of his death, one of his greatest rivals in the ultra-Orthodox Jewish world, the Satmar Rebbe, said: "Now we have to wait for the real Messiah."¹³

Messianic Pretensions While Still Alive

While he was still alive, there were many allusions by Lubavitchers to the view that Schneerson could be the Messiah. The messianic fervor surrounding him seemed to reach greater and greater heights through the years – not the opposite. As far as I know, Schneerson himself did little or nothing to explicitly rebuke or officially discourage this activity.

I well remember going to a local Jewish Community Center meeting in the 1980s and hearing with what near-reverential awe Schneerson was described by one Lubavitcher, replete with claims of Schneerson's alleged wonder-working powers and insights. The groundwork for everything that followed was laid during his lifetime. As

⁹ Glenn Frankel, "Brooklyn Rabbi a Power in Israel," *The Washington Post*, November 23, 1988, p. A16.

¹⁰ Robert Eisenberg, *Boychiks in the Hood: Travels in the Hasidic Underground* (HarperCollins, 1995), pp. 14-15.

¹¹ Eisenberg, pp. 14-15.

¹² Rabbi Simon Jacobson, Introduction, Menachem Mendel Schneerson, *Toward a Meaningful Life: The Wisdom of the Rebbe* (1995), p. ix.

¹³ Cited in Robert Eisenberg, *Boychiks in the Hood: Travels in the Hasidic Underground* (HarperSanFrancisco: 1995), p. 232. This amazing travelogue also provides insights on many other Hasidic groups.

one Orthodox Jewish book puts it, “it was no secret that towards the end of the Rebbe’s life his followers declared him to be Moshiach.”¹⁴ Some Lubavitchers might dispute that, but it is hard to think otherwise. We will look later at the differences between the Orthodox Jewish concepts of the “presumptive” versus “halachic” types of Moshiach and how those play into this discussion.

The bottom line is this: there are all sorts of stories and hints derived from various incidents associated with Schneerson and his alleged messiahship while he was still alive. One example from an unofficial Lubavitcher messianist website suffices. It proclaims Schneerson to be the Messiah and promotes a book that includes a section entitled, “The Rebbe Approves our Acceptance of Him As King Moshiach.”¹⁵ In that case, the website says that Schneerson approvingly received a tambourine from an Orthodox Jewish woman during an event in 1992 that had these words written in Hebrew: “*Yechi Adoneinu, Moreinu V'Rabeinu, Melech HaMoshiach, L'Olam Va'ed,*”¹⁶ thereby not denying his messiahship when it was presented to him, according to the view of the website.

However, did he ever proclaim anything definitive about himself? Did he or did he not ever order his followers to cease from endless proclamations about his alleged “messiahship” while he was still alive? There is nothing authoritative that I have been able to find to clinch the discussion one way or the other. It certainly seems doubtful to me that, while Schneerson was alive, anyone would have been expelled from the Lubavitch movement for proclaiming him to be Moshiach. If that is incorrect, I would like to be made aware of the error.

Isaiah 53: The Suffering Messiah (Messiah ben Yosef) and King Messiah – Melekh Moshiach (Messiah ben David)

Before he died and while still suffering from a stroke in 1992, many of the Rebbe’s followers began – amazingly – to apply Isaiah 53 and its description of the Suffering Messiah to Schneerson.¹⁷ This was doubly astounding, given that the modern Jewish view and position have been that Isaiah 53 does not apply to a Person, but rather to the

¹⁴ Gil Student, *Can the Rebbe Be Moshiach? Proofs from Gemara, Midrash and Rambam that the Rebbe cannot be Moshiach* (Universal Publishers, 2002), p. 4.

¹⁵ “The Rebbe As Moshiach - Based On Torah Sources , Chassidim Proclaim To The Lubavitcher Rebbe ‘Long Live Our Master, Our Teacher, Our Rebbe, King Moshiach Forever and Ever!’” (4th edition, 1998) Moshiach.net, <http://www.moshiach.net/blind/itmotrw.htm#The%20Rebbe%20Approves>. One of the chapters in this book is entitled, “The Rebbe Told us That He is Moshiach.”

¹⁶ Ibid., op. cit.

¹⁷ Michael L. Brown, op. cit., p. 228. See also, for example, the public Jewish Mailing List on the Internet at: <http://shamash.org/listarchives/mail-jewish/volume14/v14n23> (Vol. 14, No. 23, July 14, 1994). One posting says: “While the Rebbe was sick, Chabad activists used to quote verses from Isaiah 53, a chapter they felt explained the suffering the Rebbe was going through. Personally, I was appalled at the similarity to Christian theology, having always understood that chapter as talking about Am Yisrael [the people of Israel], but at least their interpretation was a plausible one...” Additionally, although I have not seen this asserted anywhere, I would not be surprised if some Lubavitchers – given their strong mystical beliefs – might also at the time have tried to find parallels between the fact that Isaiah 53 is the 53rd chapter of that book, that there are 53 chapters in the movement’s most prominent book, the *Tanya*, and that their founder, Schneur Zalman, was once held by the then Tsar in St. Petersburg, Russia for 53 days, a very important fact to the movement: “The anniversary of the release, which happens to fall six days before the holiday of Hanukkah, is celebrated by Lubavitchers annually.” (Lis Harris, *Holy Days* (1985), pp., 94-96.

nation of Israel, or to any other interpretation that will push people away from the conclusion that it describes Jesus.¹⁸ As Dr. Michael Brown has pointed out, this modern-day Jewish position to refuse to apply Isaiah 53 to a Person fails on numerous logical points alone.¹⁹ Everyone involved in Jewish evangelism knows how powerful the Isaiah 53 passage is in pointing to Yeshua.

With respect to Schneerson, at the time, with every slight improvement or possible change in his condition, his followers would be seized with messianic fervor, hoping that he would be healed and that the appearance of Messiah was imminent. When he died, some of his followers even “proclaimed in writing that his death was an atonement for us, in keeping with the traditional teaching that the death of the righteous atones...”²⁰

The parallels to the Christian interpretation of Isaiah 53 are startling.

Beyond the issue of whether Isaiah 53 applies to a Person is the issue of whether it also applies to the Messiah King (Messiah ben David). Michael Brown has said: “In our own day, Isaiah 53 [has been] applied directly to Menachem Schneerson, hailed as Messiah ben David by his devoted followers worldwide.”²¹ In a debate with the well-versed anti-missionary Rabbi Tovia Singer (who is not a Lubavitcher), Singer challenged Brown to show even one Jewish commentary that interprets Isaiah 53 as referring to the person of the Messiah as Messiah ben David.²² Brown met that challenge by citing Moses ben Nachman (the Ramban), one of the most respected figures of Orthodox Judaism from the medieval period. The Ramban interpreted Isaiah 53 both in terms of the Suffering Servant Messiah (Messiah ben Josef) and King Messiah (Messiah ben David).²³ As Michael Brown relates the incident in his book, *Answering Jewish Objections to Jesus* (Vol. II), Singer then amended his challenge to say that what he meant to say was whether there was any Jewish commentary that spoke of Isaiah 53 as describing the *death* of Messiah ben David, an issue that Brown says “had never come up once in our previous discussion.”²⁴

In any event, when the issue involved Schneerson and his alleged messiahship, many Lubavitchers did not hesitate trying to apply Isaiah 53 to him. The modern Jewish objection against interpreting Isaiah 53 as describing a Person (whether with respect to Messiah ben Yosef or Messiah ben David) was suddenly thrown out the window when it was not convenient, showing the utter hollowness of the objection in principle.

¹⁸ However, there are various older Jewish interpretations of Isaiah 53 that apply the passage to the Person of Messiah.

¹⁹ Michael L. Brown, *Answering Jewish Objections to Jesus*, Volume Two, Theological Objections (Baker Books: 2000), Section 3.23, “Jews don’t believe in a suffering Messiah,” pp. 220-231.

²⁰ Michael L. Brown, op. cit., p. 228.

²¹ Michael L. Brown, op. cit.

²² Traditional commentaries recognize that Isaiah 53 applies to a Person. The passage is best known as describing the “Suffering Servant,” often referred to as “Messiah ben Yosef” (Messiah son of Josef), or also as the Leper Messiah (see also the Sanhedrin tractate from the Babylonian Talmud, 98b, citing Isaiah 53:4), but the issue here was whether it also applied to Messiah ben David.

²³ Michael L. Brown, *Answering Jewish Objections*, op. cit., pp. 226-227. See also the extensive citations in the footnotes on pp. 306-309.

²⁴ Michael L. Brown, op. cit., p. 226.

Going to the *Ohel*

Schneerson died on June 12, 1994, the seventh in the line of the Hasidic dynasty of Lubavitch. He left no successor. He was buried in Montefiore Cemetery in Queens, New York, near other Lubavitch luminaries from the past. The gravesite has become a Lubavitch shrine, with thousands of prayers placed on small sheets of paper cast into the burial area, based on a custom practiced by some Hasidim. Prayer requests are even faxed or e-mailed from around the world to a Lubavitch building nearby so that they can be cast upon the grave.²⁵ I have taken various missions teams to this site (the *ohel*) to show the contrast between our risen Lord and the grave of a dead non-messiah. We conduct no evangelism when we go to the *ohel*. I use it instead as a great learning opportunity, and it is a powerful but very sad experience each time. Going there fills me with compassion for these people – truly sheep without a shepherd. Their “shepherd” is dead, and he is not coming back to lead them to the Promised Land. It is heartbreaking to see how their hearts long so for redemption, yet they turn away from the One Who came to give it to them.

Initial Reactions to Schneerson’s Death

When Schneerson died in 1994, the Lubavitcher Hasidim were plunged into crisis. That day on the Jewish calendar was the third of the month of Tammuz, a date which has since become memorialized in Lubavitch writings. Suddenly, the movement was in a very similar situation to the Breslover Hasidim (also known as the Bratslaviers), the so-called *Toite Hasidim* (the “dead Hasidim”), who lost their rebbe, Rebbe Nachman of Breslov, in 1810 at the age of 41 with no successor.²⁶ The two groups now share something in common – both have no rebbe. The Breslovers gather annually from all over the world each Rosh Hashanah to visit Nachman’s grave in the town of Uman, Ukraine.²⁷

At the time of Schneerson’s death some of us hoped that great opportunities for the Gospel witness might soon break out among the Lubavitchers. That had been and continues to be our prayer and hope. Since the world of Chabad Lubavitch was rent asunder with the Rebbe’s death and no successor, it did not take long for factions to develop. One camp began to propound the amazing position that, despite his death, Schneerson would be resurrected as the Moshiach.

The fact that at least one faction of Lubavitchers began positing that Schneerson would rise from the dead as the Messiah was so remarkable that Avi Snyder of Jews for

²⁵ Besides the near adoration shown toward Schneerson specifically by some Lubavitchers, this is also an element of the Hasidic tradition of making pilgrimages to the gravesites of rebbes and other revered Hasids. This practice is called “*kayver Tzaddikim*.”

²⁶ See Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan, *Until the Mashiach: Rabbi Nachman’s Biography: An Annotated Chronology* (Jerusalem/New York: Breslov Research Institute, 1985).

²⁷ See Robert Eisenberg, *Boychiks in the Hood: Travels in the Hasidic Underground* (1985), Chapter 5, “Uman, Uman, Rosh Hashanah.”

Jesus quickly responded with a Gospel tract entitled “Are the Lubavitch Chassids Becoming ‘Jews for Jesus’?”²⁸

Several years passed. The view among some Lubavitchers that Schneerson was the Messiah continued unabated. For example, while visiting Jerusalem in 1998 some four years after Schneerson’s death, I saw a large sign with his picture on it and the words “*Melekh Moschiach*” (“*King Messiah*”) displayed not far from the Western Wall. Also in 1998, one Lubavitch group placed a full-page ad in *The New York Times* proclaiming – in the present tense -- that Schneerson was born “to change the world in which we live and lead it to the ultimate redemption as predicted by the prophets...the Rebbe *is* a source of help and hope to hundreds of thousands who turn to him for advice and blessing...Moshiach’s presence and achievements *are* already manifest. The complete redemption and transformation of the world *is imminent*...”²⁹ (emphasis added).

In an article on the official Chabad website commemorating the ten-year anniversary of his death (the 10th *yahrzeit*), comments made about Schneerson were in the past tense but nearly as effusive: “In pondering the apparent paradoxes of the Rebbe, we recognized him as a mystic of the highest order engaged in the concerns of the mundane and the masses. We wondered at his ability to negotiate a peace between the extremes of heaven and earth, self and other, spirit and matter.”³⁰

Lubavitch Belief in Reincarnation (*Gilgul*)

Lubavitch views on reincarnation (*gilgul*) help frame the beliefs of some who think that Schneerson could be the Moshiach. This is based on the belief that Schneerson’s soul will be reincarnated.³¹ This, in fact, goes to a central part of Chabad-Lubavitch teaching. Schneerson himself taught that the souls of some Jews were reincarnated in order to “rectify their lack of performance of some of the 613 *mitzvos* in their previous incarnations.”³² How this relates to their view of Moshiach is unclear, but Chabad-Lubavitch belief in *gilgul* is based on the Zohar, which teaches that souls descend from the so-called World of Souls and that their descent to this world may occur more than once.³³

“Histalkus” and “Hisgalus”

The concept of “histalkus” is another view forming Lubavitch beliefs. “Histalkus” (passing, ascent) in Hasidic theology refers to a *tzaddik*’s passing from death to life.

²⁸ Avi Snyder, *Jews for Jesus* Booklet: “Are the Lubavitch Chassids Becoming ‘Jews for Jesus’?”

²⁹ Full-page Lubavitch ad for Rebbe Schneerson’s birthday, appearing in *The New York Times*, April 8, 1998, p. A18.

³⁰ Baila Olidort, “Ten Years Later,” <http://www.chabad.org/library/article.asp?AID=144906>

³¹ See, for example, Anne Rackham, “Life after life,” *Jewish News of Greater Phoenix*, www.jewishaz.com/jewishnews/970314/life.html, March 1997.

³² *Eternal Joy* - Volume 3. “A Guide To Shidduchim & Marriage.” Based On The Teachings Of The Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, “Married Life And Shalom Bayis” (date unknown) <http://www.sichosinenglish.org/books/eternal-joy-3/08.htm>

³³ Rabbi Nissan Dovid Dubov, *To Live and Live Again: An Overview of Techiyas Hameisim* (Based on the Classical Sources and on the Teachings of Chabad Chassidism), Chapter 4, “Reincarnation,” at <http://www.sichosinenglish.org/books/to-live-and-live-again/05.htm>

Schneerson himself taught a great deal about the *histalkus* of his father-in-law, the former Rebbe.³⁴ According to one book that is strongly opposed to the view that Schneerson could be the Messiah, “rather than ending Chabad, the Rebbe’s *histalkus* has fueled its growth.”³⁵

“Hisgalus” (Revelation), on the other hand, as the term is used among Lubavitch messianists, refers to the Rebbe being more fully revealed as messiah. On a website of “Beis Moshiach,” one of the most enthusiastic of the messianist groups and publications in Chabad, Rabbi Yoram Ulman from Sydney, Australia (who directs a Chabad House for Russian immigrants) maintains that if his fellow messianists can speak with enough *rabbanim* (rabbis) and convince them that messianist belief is fully grounded in *halacha*, “then all those Lubavitchers who are ashamed of their faith” will join with those who presently proclaim Schneerson as Moshiach and together they “will bring the *hisgalus* of the Rebbe...”³⁶

Kfar Chabad and the Lubavitch Messianists in Eretz Yisrael

In October, 2002, I visited the Lubavitch settlement of Kfar Chabad in Israel, located not far from the city of Rishon LeTzion. In February, 1992, the community of Kfar Chabad erected a house precisely similar to Rebbe Schneerson’s then residence at Lubavitch World Headquarters in Brooklyn at 770 Eastern Parkway in the hopes that Schneerson would come to Israel. He never did. When asked by Tzvi Rabinowicz, the author of *Hasidism in Israel*, why he never went to Israel, Schneerson is said to have replied that “he would never be allowed to leave the promised land once he had set foot in it.”³⁷ There is a strong Jewish tradition that the true Messiah, if he once sets foot on the holy soil of Eretz Yisrael, can never leave the Land until He sets up the Messianic Kingdom. Thus, Schneerson had set himself up for the paradoxical situation that he could not visit Israel without setting in motion an even greater worldwide clamor among his followers that the redemption (“Geulah”) of the world was imminent.

Many of them needed no such incentive to begin with – as is clearly evident from their actions and beliefs following his death. But if Schneerson had actually gone to Israel during his lifetime, it would have been a development of epic proportions in the Hasidic world and in the history of the Jewish state. The messianic hopes of some of his followers would have been magnified even beyond what they are now. And because of that, at one level, he was probably right – his followers would never have allowed him to leave.

Meanwhile, it is quite fascinating to see the role played at Kfar Chabad today. A Russian-English language website, www.moshiach.ru, staffed by Kfar Chabad, is called “Vremya Moshiakha” (“Time of the Moshiach”). They have created what they call the “International Moshiach Center for Russian Speakers” and proudly proclaim, using Schneerson’s picture, what they say is “the clear message of the Rebbe King Moshiach.”

³⁴ “Talks by the Lubavitcher Rebbe,” Vol. 3, Tishrei-Teves, 5711, located at <http://www.sichosinenglish.org/books/proceeding-together-3/14.htm>

³⁵ Gil Student, *Can the Rebbe Be Moshiach? Proofs from Gemara, Midrash and Rambam that the Rebbe cannot be Moshiach* (Universal Publishers, 2002).

³⁶ “When the Rabbanim understand, the ‘Man on the Street’ will accept it,” Beis Moshiach, <http://www.beismoshiach.org/Moshiach/moshiach330.htm>, Interview with Rabbi Yoram Ulman (Sydney, Australia).

³⁷ Tzvi Rabinowicz, “Habad - the Global Lamplighters,” *Hasidism in Israel*, op. cit., p. 80.

A review of the website in November, 2004 showed this phrase: “Long Live our Master, Teacher and the Rebbe King Moshiach forever!” The website also encourages readers to write letters to the Moshiach, meaning, of course, Schneerson. There does not seem to be any debate among this Russian-speaking group at Kfar Chabad that Schneerson is the Messiah. It is also true that Kfar Chabad has been associated with such views for some time. A book published during his lifetime to celebrate Schneerson’s eightieth birthday was entitled *The Anointed King and Complete Redemption*.³⁸

The Kfar Chabad settlement is considered to be one of the main centers for the messianist strain within the Chabad Lubavitch movement in Israel. Another is the Chabad school system in the city of Safed. However, not all Lubavitch institutions in Israel are considered “messianist.” According to a letter from a rabbi published in *The Jewish Press* in March, 2002, under the subtitle, “Enemy of Lubavitch,” “there are at least another six or seven big Chabad schools in Israel that are not controlled by Messianists.”³⁹

Recent Controversies within Chabad-Lubavitch

The view of some within Chabad-Lubavitch that Schneerson might be resurrected from the dead as the Messiah has ignited a storm of controversy within the Orthodox Jewish world. It had been simmering there for years during Schneerson’s life. However, the activities and comments of some Lubavitch followers after Schneerson’s death have now blown this controversy wide into the open.

As a result, some Lubavitch elements are considered to have gone beyond the “pale of orthodoxy” as far as Orthodox Judaism is concerned. An Orthodox Jewish scholar named David Berger has led the charge in this effort with his book entitled, *The Rebbe, the Messiah and the Scandal of Orthodox Indifference*.⁴⁰ Some of the more extreme messianist followers of Schneerson were dubbed *Moshiachistin* (or *Moshichistin*)⁴¹. Some within Orthodox Judaism accused the *Moshiachistin* of heresy.⁴² The movement and belief is also referred to as “Lubavitch meshichism.”⁴³ One reviewer of the Berger book, David Singer, director of research at the American Jewish Committee, said that Berger “excoriates the Lubavitcher messianists as vile heretics, accusing them of undermining classic Jewish teaching about the messiah and facilitating

³⁸ Jerome R. Mintz, Chapter 28, “Lubavitch: The Messiah Issue,” *Hasidic People: A Place in the New World* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992), p. 355.

³⁹ Letters to *The Jewish Press*, “Mashiach Controversy: Readers Respond,” March 13, 2002. Subtitle: “Enemy of Lubavitch,” Letter via e-mail (Rabbi Yosef Piekarski), http://www.jewishpress.com/news_article_print.asp?article=965. Another letter in that series, under the subtitle: “Messianic Belief Not a Case of *Avodah Zorah*” says: “Even if you don’t agree with the ideology that the Rebbe is Mashiach, there are still enough sources within Yiddishkeit that legitimize this opinion...” (Binyamin Hoen).

⁴⁰ David Berger, *The Rebbe, the Messiah and the Scandal of Orthodox Indifference* (Portland: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2001).

⁴¹ Tzvi Rabinowicz, op. cit., p. 82.

⁴² Rabbi Chaim Rapoport, *The Messiah Problem: Berger, the Angel, and the Scandal of Reckless Indiscrimination* (Ilford, UK: 2002), p. 108.

⁴³ Gil Student, *Can the Rebbe Be Moshiach?* (Universal Publishers, 2002), p. 2.

Christian missionizing of the Jews.”⁴⁴ Singer adds that Berger’s tone is “one of barely controlled hysteria.”⁴⁵

Without question, Berger’s book and comments created a firestorm and a major counter-response among many Lubavitchers and their defenders, including a book by Rabbi Chaim Dalfin called *Attack on Lubavitch: A Response*.⁴⁶ Dalfin cited the opinion of Professor Aviezer Ravitzky, chairman of the department of Jewish philosophy at Hebrew University concerning the view of some Lubavitchers that Schneerson might be resurrected as the Messiah: “...those inside Lubavitch who wait for their rebbe to return from the dead and redeem the world may be foolish, but by no means is this expectation heretical or antithetical to Judaism.”⁴⁷ Another rabbi, who is critical of some within the Lubavitch movement for pushing the doctrine of Schneerson’s messiahship (“a vocal faction”⁴⁸ he says), nevertheless wrote the following: “Does this mean to say that I agree with Berger, in principle, that the notion of a resurrected Messiah, is in reality a definite error.....? Absolutely not!”⁴⁹

One Lubavitch view (whether this has any “official” sanction or is an “unofficial” view is unclear) says that “there are indications that Mashiach could possibly be a righteous individual who has already lived and died and will then be resurrected as Mashiach.”⁵⁰

Whether an “official” or “unofficial” view, this is indeed an amazing development! It is also very clear that there is strong support among many Lubavitch co-religionists (and numerous other non-Lubavitch Orthodox Jews) that, though not all believe that Schneerson can now be the Messiah, nevertheless, they believe the Lubavitch *Moshiachistim* are entitled to their views and remain welcome within Chabad and Orthodox Judaism’s ranks.

However, Berger sees this as a terrible problem that threatens Judaism’s very core. As David Singer observes, Berger sees “Christianity and Lubavitch messianism [as] parallel phenomena.”⁵¹ Berger attacks as “indifference” the fact that greater numbers of Orthodox Jews do not join with him in condemning the ongoing Schneerson-as-messiah movement within Chabad. But it is hard to say, as Singer notes, that Orthodox Jews have been “indifferent” to the issue when Berger was able to get the Rabbinical Council of America (RCA),⁵² the largest Orthodox rabbinical group of its kind in the world, to pass a

⁴⁴ David Singer, “The Rebbe, the Messiah, and the Heresy Hunter,” *First Things*, May 2003, No. 133, pp. 42-49. Also found on OrthodoxyToday.org at:

<http://orthodoxytoday.org/articles2/SingerHeresyHunter.shtml>

⁴⁵ David Singer, op. cit.

⁴⁶ Rabbi Chaim Dalfin, *Attack on Lubavitch: a Response* (Brooklyn, New York: Jewish Enrichment Press, Spring 2002), p. 11. See also <http://www.jewishinfo.org/attack.htm>

⁴⁷ Rabbi Chaim Dalfin, *Attack on Lubavitch: a Response* (Spring 2002), op. cit., p. 25.

⁴⁸ Rabbi Chaim Rapoport, *The Messiah Problem*, op. cit., p. 36. Rabbi Rapoport asserts that “most Lubavitchers no longer believe that the Rebbe is the Messiah.” (p. 41).

⁴⁹ Rabbi Chaim Rapoport, *The Messiah Problem*, op. cit., p. 108.

⁵⁰ Rabbi Nissan Dovid Dubov, *To Live and Love Again: An Overview of Techiyas Hameisim* (Based on the Classical Sources and on the Teachings of Chabad Chassidism,” Chapter 6, “When Will the Resurrection Take Place?” <http://www.sichosinenglish.org/books/to-live-and-live-again/07.htm>

⁵¹ David Singer, “The Rebbe, the Messiah, and the Heresy Hunter,” *First Things*, op. cit.

⁵² According to its website, the Rabbinical Council of America (RCA) is made up of nearly 1,000 ordained rabbis. It was established in 1935 “to advance the cause and the voice of Torah and the rabbinic tradition by

one sentence resolution (authored by Berger)⁵³ against Lubavitch messianism. The resolution, passed in June, 1996, said that “there is not and has never been a place in Judaism for the belief that Mashiach ben David [Messiah son of David] will begin his Messianic Mission only to experience death, burial and resurrection before completing it.”⁵⁴ Though on its face, this resolution would appear to be quite devastating to the Lubavitch messianist movement, its bite was largely eviscerated soon after when the highly respected halachic scholar Rabbi Aaron Soloveichik of Yeshiva University (where Berger himself was ordained) rebuked the RCA resolution as follows: “The belief held by many in Lubavitch...that the Rebbe can still be Moshiach...cannot be dismissed as a belief that is outside the pale of Orthodoxy.”⁵⁵ Berger admitted that Soloveichik’s letter hit like a “thunder-bolt,” but he sought to discredit its impact by claiming that it was written under duress when the rabbi was infirm.⁵⁶ Rabbi J. Immanuel Schochet, who has extensively critiqued Berger’s book, wrote that he contacted Rabbi Soloveichik’s family about the matter. They told him that Soloveichik “regarded the attribution of messiahship to the deceased Rebbe as a *shtut* (folly) but definitely not heretical.”⁵⁷

In any event, Berger has not been content to merely denounce Lubavitch messianists and to seek to persuade them to give up their view of Schneerson-as-messiah. He has called for “the dismissal of Lubavitcher messianists currently holding positions in the Orthodox community as congregational rabbis, Jewish educators, ritual slaughterers, or religious scribes.”⁵⁸

It is also fascinating to delve somewhat deeper into Berger’s own position and background. As already mentioned, he is an ordained rabbi from Yeshiva University (1967) and also holds a PhD in Jewish History from Columbia University (1970).⁵⁹ He is a professor of history at Brooklyn College and Graduate Center at the City University of New York (CUNY). Interestingly enough, he is also the author of one of the best-known anti-missionary books, *Jews and ‘Jewish Christianity,’* published in 1978.⁶⁰ Thus, he is probably well equipped – given his long struggles against the beliefs of Messianic Jewish believers in Yeshua - to see the “dangers” inherent (from an Orthodox Jewish standpoint) in the Lubavitch messianist position that the Messiah could be one who is resurrected! Indeed, as Rabbi Schochet puts it in his critique of *The Rebbe, the Messiah and the Scandal of Orthodox Indifference*, Berger is deeply concerned that “one of the defining

promoting the welfare, interests, and professionalism of Orthodox rabbis all around the world.”

http://www.rabbis.org/about_us.cfm

⁵³ Debra Nussbaum Cohen, “1,000 Orthodox rabbis reject claim rebbe was Messiah,” Jewish Telegraphic Agency, *J* (Jewish news weekly of Northern California), www.jewishsf.com/content/2-0-/module/displaystory/story_id/3912/format/html/displaystory.html

⁵⁴ Debra Cohen, op. cit.

⁵⁵ See Review Essay by Rabbi J. Immanuel Schochet, “The Professor, Messiah and Scandal of Calumnies,” a review of Berger’s book. Cited in Shmais.com at: <http://www.shmais.com/printchabad.cfm?ID=279>

⁵⁶ Rabbi J. Immanuel Schochet, op. cit.

⁵⁷ Rabbi J. Immanuel Schochet, op. cit.

⁵⁸ David Singer, op. cit.

⁵⁹ David Berger’s curriculum vitae can be found at: http://www.cardozo.yu.edu/jlis/fa_berger.html

⁶⁰ *Jews and ‘Jewish Christianity’* (by David Berger and Michael Wyschogrod, Ktav, 1978). This was reprinted in 2002 by Jews for Judaism as *Jews and ‘Jewish Christianity’: A Jewish Response to the Missionary Challenge*. A Russian translation of the original book was published in 1991.

characteristics of Judaism in a Christian world will have been erased' by the possibility of a resurrected messiah..."⁶¹ That statement speaks for itself.

Berger plans to publish a Hebrew language update to his controversial book. This updated version will be called, *The Rebbe King Messiah, the Scandal of Indifference, and the Threat to the Jewish Faith*.⁶² Thus, for Berger, the threat posed by Lubavitch messianist beliefs (and perpetuated by those who have failed to exclude them from the "pale of Orthodoxy") has by no means abated.

The Operational Side of Chabad Lubavitch and the "Big Tent"

It is also important to differentiate some of the various strands within Chabad Lubavitch since Schneerson's death. As already noted, there is an *official* position of the Chabad Lubavitch movement, which must of necessity be more restrained and *orthodox* (with respect to traditional Hasidic views and Orthodox Judaism) than the unofficial, more extreme, and less restrained *Moshiachistim* within Chabad.⁶³ Certainly not all Lubavitchers believe that, since he died, Schneerson could still be Moshiach. But it seems clear that, at least with respect to how Chabad Lubavitch seems to define its own orthodoxy, that those who believe that Schneerson is or could still be Moshiach remain welcome under the Lubavitch "big tent." Berger reportedly believes that a "large segment – almost certainly a substantial majority" of Lubavitcher Hasidim still believe in Schneerson as the Messiah.⁶⁴ However, as far as is known, there are no hard statistics one way or the other, merely anecdotal and subjective views on the matter.

Speaking of the "big tent," the huge worldwide effort just to keep the Lubavitch empire running and expanding must also be noted. This is the operational side of the sect, which goes forward despite theological disputes and requires a huge organization. It has already been noted that the budget for Chabad Lubavitch operations worldwide is estimated at some \$1 billion annually. The Israeli diamond and real estate billionaire magnate, Lev Leviev, a Lubavitcher born in Uzbekistan, is estimated to give "at least" \$30 million to Lubavitch causes each year, according to *Forbes*.⁶⁵

The influence of Chabad Lubavitch, which reached its zenith under Schneerson's leadership, has expanded to reach out to Jews of all types in an effort to bring about their goal of worldwide redemption. This messianic impulse remains the guiding force of the movement today (with or without the Rebbe). It depends upon more and more Jews doing *mitzvot* to allegedly bring about redemption through deeds and to thus usher in both Moshiach and the Messianic Age. Certainly that includes a very sympathetic view toward their fellow Lubavitchers, regardless of the latter's views on whether Schneerson can still be the Messiah or not.

⁶¹ Rabbi Schochet, op. cit., citing Berger, *The Rebbe, the Messiah and the Scandal of Orthodox Indifference* (Berger, pp. 31 and 35).

⁶² According to Berger's curriculum vitae, this updated Hebrew version of the book is due to be published in 2005.

⁶³ Rabbi Schochet says that even Berger admits that "the official leadership of Lubavitch...[is] decidedly non-messianist." (Schochet, op. cit.).

⁶⁴ David Singer, "The Rebbe, the Messiah, and the Heresy Hunter," *First Things*, op. cit.

⁶⁵ Phyllis Berman and Lea Goldman, "Cracked De Beers," *Forbes*, September 15, 2003, http://www.forbes.com/forbes/2003/0915/108_print.html

Given that background – and the fact that the Rebbe himself did not explicitly condemn his more enthusiastic messianist supporters while he was alive – supports the position that the messianists will likely continue to press their views within their movement. Whether some of the most extreme elements of Lubavitch are excluded from the sect or not, if the Rebbe did not condemn or hinder the messianists on account of their views and actions while he was alive, who within Chabad has the authority to condemn them now? Thus, the “big tent” within Chabad Lubavitch Hasidism is likely to continue, despite Berger’s and others’ efforts.

“Presumptive Moshiach” versus the “Halachic Moshiach”

At this point, we must consider the very significant aspect of Jewish theology that differentiates between the concepts of the “Presumptive” Moshiach versus the “Halachic” Moshiach. This issue, in fact, goes to the very heart of the controversy over Schneerson and the question of orthodoxy. This is a very important aspect to consider not only for understanding what is happening within Chabad Lubavitch but also for our Gospel witness to Orthodox Jews and the Hasidim in general.

According to the traditional Jewish view, until the Messiah is revealed, various candidates could be considered to be the “Presumptive Moshiach.” This concept is also in line with the Orthodox Jewish view that Moshiach could be present in any generation. Belief in reincarnation in some Hasidic and Lubavitch theology⁶⁶ also plays into this concept.

The guiding definition of who the Messiah can be according to Orthodox Judaism goes directly back to Maimonides (“the Rambam”), the rabbi whose works and influence still define what “orthodoxy” is. Maimonides’ full name was Rabbi Moses ben Maimon (1135-1204). According to Maimonides, the “Halachic Moshiach” must “meet the criteria of building the Temple and gathering the dispersed of Israel.”⁶⁷ For an excellent summary of Maimonides’ views of the Messiah, see the recent article by Elliot Klayman titled, “A Composite of the Characteristics of Messiah: A Maimonidean View” in the journal, *The Messianic Outreach*.⁶⁸ Klayman lays out the Maimonidean distinctions concerning Messiah as a two-tiered approach. If the candidate meets “tier one” qualifications (someone who might be the “Presumptive Moshiach”), he is said to have “messiah potential.”⁶⁹ This concept comes from Maimonides’ *Mishneh Torah*, where he wrote that a candidate meeting these qualifications is *presumed* to be Messiah.⁷⁰ If a candidate qualifies in tier one and also meets the requirements of “tier two,” he then is proclaimed

⁶⁶ Lis Harris, *Holy Days: The World of a Hasidic Family* (New York: Summit Books, 1985), pp. 89-98. The issue of reincarnation is also currently addressed prominently on the Chabad website. See “What’s the Story with Reincarnation?” at: <http://www.chabad.org/magazine/article.asp?AID=209444>.

⁶⁷ Dalfin, op. cit., p. 28.

⁶⁸ Elliot Klayman, “A Composite of the Characteristics of Messiah: A Maimonidean View,” *The Messianic Outreach* journal, Issue on “Millenarianism,” Vol. 23:3, Spring 2004, pp. 3-12.

⁶⁹ Klayman, op. cit., pp. 7-8. “Tier one” Maimonidean qualifications for Messiah are summarized by Klayman as including: Davidic lineage, one who studies Torah and does *mitzvot* according to both the Oral and Written Torah, one who “reinstates widespread Torah observance” and who “fights battles for the Lord.”

⁷⁰ The citation provided by Klayman (op. cit., p. 11) can be found in *Maimonides’ Mishneh Torah* (Yad Ha-Hazakah), abridged, Phillip Birnbaum, ed. (New York: Hebrew Publishing Company, 1944), p. 327.

as “King Messiah” according to the Maimonidean view.⁷¹ This is also expressed as *chezkat Mashiach* (a validly potential Mashiach) versus the *Mashiach vadaï* (the “actualized Messiah”).⁷²

As Klayman points out, Maimonides’ system set up what he considered to be a rational, step-by-step procedure for determining who was Mashiach. He sought to harmonize “Greek rationalism with Jewish law.”⁷³ He believed that “there have been *messiah potentials* throughout the ages, but that the *messiah certain* had not arisen as yet.”⁷⁴ This view can be found repeated in various ways: “...every generation has a *potential Mashiach* who, if and when the generation should merit it, will immediately become the *actual Mashiach*..”⁷⁵

As far as the controversy within Lubavitch is concerned, some believe that a reading of Maimonides leads to the “unescapable conclusion that even a legitimately ‘presumed Messiah’ who passed away before completing his mission must be seen as a righteous king who is clearly *not* the ‘halachic Messiah’.”⁷⁶ But others do not, and therein lays the crux of the matter. As one rabbi states: “when some Lubavitchers say the Rebbe is Mashiach, they mean, in Rambam’s words, the presumptive Mashiach....”⁷⁷ Rabbi Dalfin, cited earlier, in arguing with Berger on whether there could be a Presumptive Mashiach who returned from the dead, says that: Berger “argues that Mashiach cannot begin his work, pass on, and then come back to be the definite Mashiach.” In response, Dalfin says, “I will mention just a few sources supporting the idea that the presumptive Mashiach could begin his job, disappear, and then come back as the definite Mashiach in order to complete his mission through the rebuilding of the Temple and gathering of the dispersed Jews.”⁷⁸ For example, Dalfin cites Rashi’s view of Daniel 12:12 and concludes: “Clearly the verse says that the idea of Mashiach being present, then disappearing and finally coming back as the final redeemer is an acceptable Jewish concept!”⁷⁹

I believe this controversy provides an extraordinary development for evangelical missions to the Hasidim specifically and to Orthodox Jews in general. The New Testament view of Messiah in all its power and fulfillment cannot be squeezed into a Maimonidean framework whose *a priori* conception began with a rejection of Jesus as Messiah. Nevertheless, we should become very familiar with these concepts and phraseology, since they will be very useful, I believe, in our Gospel witness to Orthodox Jews. We should also use the very phrases of “the definite Moschiach,” “Melekh Moshiach,” in our descriptions of Yeshua, the One Who has purchased our Redemption (our Geulah) and Who is coming again in Glory as our Righteous King (our Melekh Mashiach and *Moshiach Certain!*).

⁷¹ Klayman, op. cit., pp. 7-8.

⁷² Review Essay by Rabbi J. Immanuel Schochet, “The Professor, Messiah and Scandal of Calumnies,” a review of Berger’s book. Cited in Shmais.com at: <http://www.shmais.com/printchabad.cfm?ID=279>

⁷³ Klayman, op. cit., p. 9.

⁷⁴ Klayman, op. cit., p. 8.

⁷⁵ Gil Student, *Can the Rebbe Be Mashiach?* (2002), op. cit., p. 16.

⁷⁶ Rapoport, op. cit., p. 41.

⁷⁷ Dalfin, op. cit., p. 28.

⁷⁸ Dalfin, op. cit., p. 103.

⁷⁹ Dalfin, op. cit., p. 105.

Additionally, the whole controversy within the Hasidic and Orthodox Jewish world over Schneerson and whether the Moshiach can be one who is resurrected from the dead presents us with unprecedented opportunities. We can use the fact that some Hasidic Jews believe that the Messiah can be one who is raised from the dead to go on to complete his Messianic mission as the basis of reaching some Jewish seekers. Those who are truly seeking Truth may next be led to examine the Person of Yeshua and what is said about Him in both the Tanakh and the *Brit Chadasha*.

How Do We Reach Them?: H.O.P.E. (Hasidic Outreach Partnership for Evangelism)

Several of us founded HOPE (Hasidic Outreach Partnership for Evangelism) in January, 2002, as an evangelical outreach to the Hasidim, including the Lubavitch Hasidim. The goal of HOPE is to bring together evangelical ministries and workers from around the world into a group that can concentrate resources and prayer on specifically reaching these groups with the Gospel. We welcome inputs and participation by other believers in building this network of ministries and mutual goals.⁸⁰ For now, our meetings have been held in New York, but we would like to expand that network to other parts of the world in the future. We also have “virtual meetings” online from time to time which others could join in to participate in this ministry.

A number of websites contribute to this overall goal. These include Chutzpahnik.org (www.chutzpahnik.org), where Jewish seekers can read materials in Yiddish and English, and a wonderful new website called “UgotChutzpah” (www.ugotchutzpah.com) that has many different types of material available. There is also the very significant *Orthodox Jewish Bible* and the *Orthodox Jewish Brit Chadashah*. These are available online for download at the website of Artists for Israel International (www.afii.org).⁸¹ We mail these out upon request to Jewish seekers and to those in ministry based on availability.

There is also very exciting news about various individual Hasidic Jews coming to the Lord. Obviously, these testimonies and situations are very sensitive and cannot be publicly shared. Please pray for these believers who face enormous difficulties but whom God is blessing in various ways. Additionally, the process of integrating some of these believers into reaching other Hasidim with the Gospel has already begun. In one case, a Hasidic Jewish believer who is growing in the Lord (and who still lives in a Hasidic Jewish community) wrote a tract that others distributed. That tract created a powerful and lively reaction in the Hasidic community where it was distributed.

We also hear many stories from various parts of the world of secret believers in Jesus as the Messiah in other Hasidic communities. All these cannot be confirmed, but

⁸⁰ To contact us at HOPE, please send an e-mail to either: Moshiachiscoming@juno.com or info@chutzpahnik.org or write to: Chutzpahnik.org, PO Box 5501, Falmouth, VA 22403 or: “Chutzpah!” c/o, PO Box 5470, Lansing, IL 60438 USA. Artists for Israel International can be contacted at: AFII, PO Box 2056, New York, NY 10163-2056 USA or via www.afii.org.

⁸¹ *The Orthodox Jewish Bible* is the result of more than thirty years of labor by the translator/editor and is an extraordinary resource. See my review, “The Orthodox Jewish Bible,” *Lausanne Consultation on Jewish Evangelism Bulletin*, Issue No. 72 (May 2003), p. 18.

the Lord knows His own, wherever they are. We would hope to find ways to reach out to them and to encourage them.

Taken together, these are amazing developments within the Orthodox Jewish world. They provide us with tremendous opportunities in seeking to reach these communities with the Good News of the one and only True Messiah, Yeshua HaMashaich, Jesus of Nazareth. *“Brethren, my heart’s desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation.”* (Romans 10:1).