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## AN INTRODUCTION TO *SEFER ḤASIDIM*

SHOLOM A. SINGER, Highland Park, Ill.

### INTRODUCTION

THE rise of Ḥasidism in the life of German Jewry has long been regarded as one of the major events in the religious history of that community. For many scholars it is indeed the only decisive development of major consequence in the spiritual life of German Jewry.<sup>1</sup>

This particular religious growth which bears the name *Ha-Ḥasiduth Ha-Ashkenazith*, German Pietism, evolved under the impact of the Crusades and their concomitant persecutions. In essence such newborn pietism represents a response to the methodical pattern of humiliation and degradation inflicted upon Jews during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries; it is a heightened and more intense form of religio-moral idealism and saintliness. Destined to write a glorious chapter in Jewish history, it arose first in the Rhenish Jewish communities. Its representatives were referred to by their contemporaries as *Ḥaside Ashkenaz*, The Devout of Germany.

The creative period of the movement was relatively short, the century from about 1150 to 1250, but its influence on German Jewry was lasting. The religious concepts and ideas to which it gave rise and filled with meaning through their own practice and conduct retained their vitality for centuries.<sup>2</sup> The protagonists of this heightened pietism were accepted and regarded as genuine representatives of an ideal Jewish way of life.

While it is true that the movement itself never achieved the proportions or dimensions of a mass movement, the teachings and leadership did enjoy wide popularity, authority, and prestige. It must, of course, be recognized that the very nature of the calling with its demanding and exacting teachings made it a vocation for the few rather than for the multitude. Nevertheless, it did not preclude the community at large from aspiring to inclusion in its select ranks and

<sup>1</sup> Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1946), p. 81.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

being numbered among its devotees. The simple fact that this movement exerted such a powerful influence over a short period of time and a lasting influence over succeeding centuries demonstrates and reveals the deep roots it struck in the heart, life, and mind of German Jewry.

### *The Man*

Judah ben Samuel, the Pious of Regensburg (Ratisbon) who is regarded as one of the most prominent and influential of the *Ḥaside Ashkenaz*, the Devout of Germany, was born in Speyer<sup>3</sup> about the year 1140.<sup>4</sup> He died in Regensburg on February 22, 1217.<sup>5</sup> So long as Ḥasidism remained a living and vital force he held an almost unrivaled position of leadership. There can be no question that his own stature was enhanced by the fact that he was a descendant of one of the most illustrious families in Jewry, the Kalonymides. For many generations this family took a leading part in the development of Jewish learning in Germany.<sup>6</sup> Although originally from Lucca, Italy, the family migrated to many different regions in Europe. A branch of the Kolonymides settled in Speyer, Mayence, and Worms.

Judah the Pious' grandfather Kalonymus ben Isaac the Elder already lived in Speyer during the eleventh and twelfth century and established a reputation as rabbi and halakhist. His son Samuel the Pious, the father of Judah, added further to the lustre of the family name through his writings, scholarship, and personal piety.<sup>7</sup> It is,

<sup>3</sup> Abraham Epstein, *Collected Writings* (2 vols.; Jerusalem: Mosad Harav Kook, 1950), I, 250, n. 10. A complete discussion is presented by the author concerning Judah's birthplace. The other ascribed birthplace, Worms, Epstein rejects. I. Elbogen, A. Freimann and R. Tykocinski in *Germania Judaica* (2d ed.; Breslau: Verlag M. and H. Marcus, 1934), p. 293, agree with Epstein in choosing Speyer as the birthplace. Interesting to note is Scholem's reference to Judah the Ḥasid of Worms (Scholem, p. 82).

<sup>4</sup> V. Aptowitzer, *Introduction to Sefer Rabiah* (Jerusalem: Mekize Nirdamim, 1938), p. 348, n. 20. The author presents convincing arguments in support of this rather than a later date. See also, J. Freimann in his introduction to *Sefer Ḥasidim*, Parma MS, Cod. de Rossi No. 1133, ed. Jacob Freimann and Jehuda Wistinetzki (2d. ed.; Frankfurt: M. A. Wahrman Verlag, 1924), p. 14. Future reference to this will be designated as *S. H.*, Parma MS.

<sup>5</sup> Salo W. Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews* (8 vols.; 2d. ed. rev.; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1958), VIII, 42 (ca., 1140-1217); also Scholem, p. 82; Aptowitzer, p. 344; and Epstein, I, 150.

<sup>6</sup> Isaac Brojde, "Kalonymus," *Jewish Encyclopedia*, ed. Isidore Singer, VII (1904), 424a.

<sup>7</sup> Epstein, I, 251. The author provides a complete genealogical chart of Samuel's forbears and descendants (Epstein, I, 248). This would have stabilized matters had it not been challenged by Aptowitzer, p. 348.

however, unfortunate that most of his writings, which were considerable, have been lost.

Samuel the Pious, his son Judah, and the latter's disciple and relative Eleazar ben Judah of Worms may be regarded as the molders of German Ḥasidism.<sup>8</sup> The fact that scholarship still remains divided on the question of authorship for the opening sections of *Sefer Ḥasidim* between Judah, or his father Samuel, reveals the great similarity of ideology and teaching of these two men.<sup>9</sup> Judah the Pious and his brother, Abraham,<sup>10</sup> who was head of an academy in Speyer, were apparently pupils of their father Samuel and received their early instruction from him.<sup>11</sup>

Records indicate that Samuel the Pious was an outstanding Talmudic scholar for his time, in addition to being a pietist of distinction. He maintained an academy in Speyer, wrote commentaries and other works, and is quoted often by contemporary scholars.<sup>12</sup> As far as legend guides us, it seems that Abraham studied with his father Samuel in the conventional and customary setting of student-teacher relationship. Judah's introduction to study was apparently delayed for many years because of his interest in more worldly matters. When he finally began to study the moment of initiation reverberated with dramatic and prophetic effects,<sup>13</sup> pointing to the fact that Judah would soon overshadow his brother Abraham in mystical knowledge and achievement. After this, Judah applied himself diligently to study.

Later, Judah went to Regensburg,<sup>14</sup> established his dwelling there and was esteemed as one of the foremost scholars and teachers in

<sup>8</sup> Scholem, p. 82.

<sup>9</sup> Epstein, I, 260, ascribes the two chapters in *S. H.*, Parma MS, on "God-fearing" and "Repentance," sections 1 through 26, to Samuel He-Ḥasid.

<sup>10</sup> Epstein, I, 250; Aptowitz, p. 344; and Freimann in his introduction to *S. H.*, Parma MS, p. 3, have a rather strenuous go at the difficult problem of identifying Samuel the Pious' children. All three agree that he had two sons, one being Judah. They fail to agree on the identity of the other son. Aptowitz further maintains that the person of Golda, usually described as Judah's sister, is in fact Judah's granddaughter.

<sup>11</sup> Epstein makes mention of the fact that the *Ma'aseh Book*, trans. Moses Gaster (2 vols.; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1934), II, 326, records the name of Eleazar, supposedly a twin brother of Abraham. However, he concludes quite plausibly and convincingly that the reference may be dismissed since it occurs just this one time and the source itself is not completely beyond question.

<sup>12</sup> Epstein, I, 252.

<sup>13</sup> *Ma'aseh Book*, II, 336.

<sup>14</sup> Aptowitz, p. 346, challenges the date 1195 or 1196 as the time when Judah arrived in Regensburg. Contrary to Epstein and Freimann, he pushes it back prior to 1175.

that town. He wrote many mystical and ethical treatises, the best known being *Sefer Ḥasidim*.<sup>15</sup> He wrote a commentary on the Pentateuch and books on legalistic matters. Few of these have survived. He was the teacher of Rabbi Eleazar, author of the *Rokeaḥ*, and his mentor in mysticism.

Rabbi Isaac Or Zarua was another of Judah's pupils. A correspondence was carried on between Rabbi Judah and many of the outstanding Franco-German scholars of the day. Rabbi Judah had three sons, Rabbi Samuel, Rabbi Zalman, and Rabbi Moses.<sup>16</sup>

Numerous and illustrious teachers contributed to the personality and development of Rabbi Judah the Pious. Aside from the instruction which Rabbi Judah received from his father in traditional matters, he received his mystical initiation from him as well.<sup>17</sup> The meaning of the "Pyut" he learned from the martyred Rabbi Jom Tob the Holy.<sup>18</sup> He, in turn, influenced very many important rabbis, most especially Rabbi Eleazar b. Judah, called the "Rokeaḥ," Rabbi Baruch of Mayence, Rabbi Isaac Or Zarua. Judah the Pious was referred to by his contemporaries as the "Great Pietist," "Father of Wisdom," and the like.

Legends about Judah abound but their reliability is doubtful.<sup>19</sup> However, through them all there shines the unquestionable impressiveness of his piety and holiness. Tradition states, "If he had lived in the time of the prophets he would surely have been a prophet, if during the time of the Tanaaim a Tana, and in the time of the Amoraim an Amora."<sup>20</sup> His contribution to medieval Jewish mysticism is a matter still to be investigated and evaluated fully.

Part of the difficulty of such an investigation stems from the lack of authentic and reliable primary material dealing with the period. Though the life of Francis of Assisi, a contemporary with whom Judah has been compared,<sup>21</sup> is copiously commented upon by medieval writers, Judah's life remains a mystery and virtually unknown. In

<sup>15</sup> This point will be discussed at length further on in a special section.

<sup>16</sup> Here again the problem of identifying, let alone numbering, the descendants properly becomes quite difficult. A good deal of controversy among scholars persists. See Freimann's remarks in his introduction to *S. H.*, Parma MS, pp. 2-3; Aptowitz, p. 344; and Epstein, I, 248.

<sup>17</sup> Freimann, *S. H.*, Parma MS, p. 2.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* The identification of this individual is quite difficult.

<sup>19</sup> See *Ma'aseh Book* for much of the anecdotal material and legend on the life of Judah and many other notable rabbis.

<sup>20</sup> *Germania Judaica*, p. 293.

<sup>21</sup> Baer, "Religious Social Tendency of the Sefer Ḥasidim," *Zion*, III (1938), 1-50, cited by Scholem, p. 83.

spite of the fact that we have *Sefer Ḥasidim* before us, there is still much we should like to know in detail about the man. Even if we presume to attribute authorship to him, which is no small matter, other information about his personal life, and his opinions on important matters are still not available to us.

### *Sefer Ḥasidim*

Concerning the authorship of the book there is no complete agreement among scholars except on one point, namely, that the book is not the work of one writer but a composite of many writers.<sup>22</sup> This is proved by an internal examination which discloses frequent conflicting statements and sentiments. Some believe<sup>23</sup> that the book in its present form consists of three revisions of a text of which Judah is the original author.<sup>24</sup>

Moritz Gudemann is of the opinion that the task of assembling the material of *Sefer Ḥasidim* fell to the first and second generation of students and disciples of Judah the Pious, who had at their disposal their master's original. The place of composition, Gudemann feels, as do almost all other scholars, is in the Rhineland. S. A. Wertheimer agrees that the book is not the work of Judah the Pious alone. He is of the opinion that Judah's student Eleazar Rokeaḥ played a major role in collating the material and adding his own to it. The text then passed into the hands of students who continued to add and arrange the material in diverse ways.<sup>25</sup> Abraham Epstein attributes authorship of the basic and earliest text to Samuel the Pious, Judah's father, which Judah and his student Eleazar Rokeaḥ embellished.<sup>26</sup> There have been other writers who have attributed the book to other contemporaries of Judah the Pious, but such views have not been seriously received.<sup>27</sup>

Perhaps the most balanced and measured opinion on the question of authorship has been put forward by Fritz Baer in a view which is

<sup>22</sup> This, I would say, is the general consensus among scholars and most widely accepted opinion. See Freimann, *S. H.*, Parma MS, p. 12.

<sup>23</sup> M. Gudemann, quoted by *Jewish Encyclopedia*, VII, 357.

<sup>24</sup> Freimann, *S. H.*, Parma MS, p. 10, gives a very succinct and useful presentation of the major points of view in this very dubious matter of authorship.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> Epstein, I, 259.

<sup>27</sup> Graetz is one such case. He ascribes the book to R. Judah ben Isaac of Paris (b. 1166—d. 1224) sometimes called Sir Leon. Graetz does this on the strength of the French expressions occurring in the text. See article on "Judah ben Samuel He-Ḥasid," *Jewish Encyclopedia*, VII, 357.

shared by most scholars. He says<sup>28</sup> that the teachings of *Sefer Ḥasidim* form a definite and consistent whole emanating from a specific school and reflecting the spirit of a dominating central figure, Rabbi Judah the Pious. The book itself may be regarded as a collection of ethical and religious precepts for the life of the community and the individual in Germany during the early thirteenth century. It is not an anonymous creation of successive generations; on the contrary, two or three generations of development are seen here, starting with a small group of scholars gathering themselves around a specific leading personality. This one dynamic personality sets the foundation for the *Torath Ḥasidim*, "Doctrine of the Ḥasidim," and for most of its conclusions. Baer feels that the tradition ascribing the book to Judah the Pious is quite correct in the sense that Judah stands in the center of the movement. The impact of his personality on his contemporaries may be considered from many points of view. There is hardly a category of thought or action which does not receive his comment. Perhaps it would be incorrect to ascribe all views found in the book to the man directly. But it would be fair to say, in the light of previous remarks, that they come as a consequence of the real and dominating position Judah the Pious enjoyed within the movement. Perhaps in view of the many difficulties that emerge when attempting to ascribe authorship to individuals, it would be more appropriate to refer authorship to a school of thought led by Judah the Pious. This sort of ascription, group or corporate, would of necessity imply in a single work the presence of diverse and often contradictory views. And such is the case here.<sup>29</sup> Nevertheless, contradictions notwithstanding, the book aspires to a higher unity, which is in essence the groundwork and message of the *Ḥaside Ashkenaz*. It represents their interpretation of "Pietism." Naturally, such interpretation embraces a good deal: their view of the reality around them, their interpretation of ritual observance, their conception of Jewishness, of the relationship of man to God, of sin, prayer, and whatever may fall under the rubric of theology and spirituality. Observations on magic, death, and immortality and comments on miscellaneous other subjects are also present in the work. It is this latitude in subject matter, together with the unadorned treatment, that gives the book its intrinsic value as a primary source for the movement which it represents and adorns.

The fact that it represents a departure from certain traditional rabbinic norms and categories of value accounts in part for the ambivalences and contradictions that frequently occur. The departure

<sup>28</sup> Baer, *Zion*, III, 1-50.

<sup>29</sup> Examples abound in which conflicting directives are put forward.

for new climes of opinion and feeling that characterize it, very often brings a reaction in the form of nostalgia for the older and more familiar traditional touchstones. Moreover, tradition itself, pervasive and all-penetrating as it is, very often makes us heirs of contrary and irreconcilable beliefs and views. The alternation between the old and new may therefore be viewed as being in fact less a matter of contradiction than of tension between two views for greater loyalty. Very often when deeper and more intensive probing occurs, we find that the yield of both views is complete agreement on a more sublime level of aspiration and intent. It is here that a convergence and unity involving religiosity and godliness is ultimately achieved.

In an article dealing with Jewish liturgy and its development, Dr. Judah Rosenthal brings to our attention the infusion into German Ḥasidism of a mystical element from former generations.<sup>30</sup> He traces the chain of continuity from Bagdad to Italy to the Rhineland, ultimately into the possession of Judah the Pious.

The Kolonymides, outstanding and preeminent in scholarship, served in fact as the preservers of this tradition, handing down the legacy of mysticism from father to son. Dr. Rosenthal makes further mention of the important influence that this mystical tradition exerted over the content of Jewish prayer composed by German pietists during this period. He further indicates the important influence that the pietists and the movement as a whole exerted on the entire Jewish community at that time, most especially through the "Rokeaḥ."

With these observations in mind, certain deductions become quite apparent. The mystical tradition, complex and devious as it is, possesses a higher unity which makes blood brothers of diverse elements and points of view. Once again, the lack of absolute unity and agreement on all religious dicta gives an added dimension of historicity to this movement which in fact did not resolve all of its own problems systematically. Our book leaves us, so to speak, in *medias res* not at the end of a movement but in its middle, which happens to be the most advanced stage that German pietism achieved.

### *The Pious*

In defining the nature of "piety" and the "pious" we can do so from two points of view. One view is that of the masses as reflected in contemporary literature. The other, perhaps more important and to

<sup>30</sup> Judah Rosenthal, "L'Toldoth Ha-Siddur," reprint from *Hadoar* (Shebat 5707), p. 11. This article helps us to appreciate more fully the rich resource of the prayer for investigating the diverse elements in the spiritual development of Judaism.

which we will restrict ourselves, is the definition garnered from the book itself.<sup>31</sup> Here, broadly speaking, although a case could be made for additional and, if hard pressed, infinite subtleties and nuances, three main categories of behavior and attitude single out "the pious"; serenity of mind, altruism, and an ascetic renunciation of the things of this world.<sup>32</sup>

A more detailed enumeration of the component elements comprising these major rubrics would be as follows: indifference to offenses of all sorts,<sup>33</sup> doing deeds of kindness,<sup>34</sup> controlling the evil inclination in all its varied manifestations,<sup>35</sup> avoiding all idle and useless occupations and pastimes,<sup>36</sup> purity of intent and the doing of everything almost to extreme for the "sake of heaven."<sup>37</sup> Baer is quite right in saying<sup>38</sup> that all these manifestations of pietism were elicited by a demand embodied in a higher form of law, *Ius Divinum*, heavenly law. The pietist must at times veer from *Ius Positivum*, the demands of conventional law of halakha, in order to fulfill the dictates of "heavenly law."<sup>39</sup>

We find *Sefer Ḥasidim* describing the substance of pietism as the duty to act beyond the limit of the law.<sup>40</sup> That the law does not represent the ideal optimum of justice has its genesis in Talmudic literature.<sup>41</sup> We have statements in *Sefer Ḥasidim* to the effect that there may be things which the Torah permits and yet if a man practices them he will be brought to judgment because of them, for man must realize that the Torah permits them only because of the evil

<sup>31</sup> There is no complete unanimity on precisely who might be deemed a *ḥasid*. Very often terms other than *ḥasid* are used in a context designating piety. Often the attributes and qualities involved in piety are indicated without reference to an individual. It might be said, except in one instance of which I am aware, that the various scholars commenting and writing on this subject have used such excellent discretion and fair-mindedness in their handling of the references to "piety," *ḥasid*, etc., that the question of taking liberties with the meaning seldom arises. Needless to say, the temptation to give infinite elasticity and application to the term *ḥasid* so as to cover almost everything, is great.

<sup>32</sup> Scholem, p. 92. See also, Norman M. Bronznick, "Some Aspects of German Jewish Mysticism as Reflected in the *Sefer Ḥasidim*" (unpublished M.A. dissertation, Department of Philosophy, Columbia University, 1947), p. 8, for a discussion of these categories and their component elements.

<sup>33</sup> *Sefer Ḥasidim*, by Judah the Pious, ed. Mosad Harav Kook (Jerusalem: The Hebrew, 1957), secs. 7, 9, 10, 11. This version is generally referred to as the Bologna Edition. Future references will be designated as *S. H.*, Bologna Ed.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, secs. 7, 10, 11.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, secs. 7, 9, 10, 29.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, secs. 10, 29.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, secs. 9, 10, 12.

<sup>38</sup> Baer, *Zion*, III, 12.

<sup>39</sup> *S. H.*, Bologna Ed., sec. 44.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, sec. 11.

<sup>41</sup> See passages quoted in *S. H.*, Parma MS, sec. 975, p. 240, n. 1.

inclination.<sup>42</sup> Baer identifies this "heavenly law" which involves human relationships with natural human fairness and equity. Concerning relations between God and man this would provide a stricter interpretation and application of ritual and religious practices. This new line of action governed by good heart and conscience would naturally well up from the soul's assimilation of the divine spirit.

It is quite reasonable to assert that the distinctive element in "pietism" which gives it its most prominent characteristic is the striving to fulfill heavenly law, a demand which is additional, self-imposed by conscience and good heart, a law which is beyond the immediate claims of the traditional law or halakha.

### *Pietism and Asceticism*

The ascetic strain found within the pietism of the *Ḥaside Ashkenaz* is touched upon by numerous authors. To my mind the subject has not really been given its proper perspective. Baer tries to show differences that exist between the ascetic proclivities of the *Ḥaside Ashkenaz* and that of non-Jewish asceticism. More, perhaps, should have been said about the similarities which are equally interesting but have received sparse comment. Dom Ursmer Berliere's remark concerning Christian mystics can very well apply to our own *Ḥaside Ashkenaz*; that in every mystic there is an ascetic and that asceticism is at the very source of mysticism.<sup>43</sup> This, of course, helps to explain some of the severe forms of penance and self-denial in *Sefer Ḥasidim*. Moreover, we find in *Sefer Ḥasidim* overtones and allusions to that triple mystical root which has been sketched for the Christian mystic, purgation, illumination, and union. This is not native to Christianity alone, but was then and is today, shared by many other religions. This can be accounted for by the simple fact that so many faiths drink from a common ideational source.<sup>44</sup>

The period with which we are dealing and which witnesses similar mystical activity in Jewish and non-Jewish camps can be attributed to a religious influence and atmosphere, then prevalent, which affected both equally.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>42</sup> *S. H.*, Bologna Ed., sec. 378, quotes statement from Kiddushin 21b.

<sup>43</sup> Berliere is quoted by Ray C. Petry, *Late Medieval Mysticism*, Vol. XIII of *The Library of Christian Classics*, ed. John Baillie and others (Philadelphia; Westminster Press, 1953 —), p. 19.

<sup>44</sup> Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism* (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1960), p. 167. This is found in Platonic and neo-Platonic thought. In view of the long history of Judaism something of this is therefore to be anticipated in the Jewish mystic.

<sup>45</sup> H. H. Ben-Sasson, *On Jewish History in the Middle Ages* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved

Baer's observation is quite true that the Jewish mystic-ascetic never goes beyond a certain point in self-denial because of legal prohibitions. However, this does not set him apart from the non-Jewish mystic-ascetic in their common striving and spiritual personality. In a manner of speaking, both Christian and Jewish mystics strive and achieve the extreme within their respective faiths that is permissible. It is only in comparison with each other that this "extreme" for the Jewish mystic appears foreshortened. The Jewish mystic goes to the extremity permitted by law as does the Christian; in the latter's case, however, the extent of self-denial permitted is far more generous. The foregoing observation does not indicate at all that the basic concept and mood of Christian and Jewish mystics differ. It is the law which directs and defines the mystical ascetic personality. The Jewish mystic might well be placed beside the Christian and made to appear similar in terms of a common mood, view and aspiration. It is the rule of law and tradition which sets them apart sending them into different areas of mystical preoccupation. In this respect Baer is quite right when he says that *Haside Ashkenaz* did not and could not avoid involvement in the social scene and communal enterprise. The Christian mystical tradition with its greater latitude for escape and isolation could hold out to its contemplative mystics complete insulation from social contact and exposure. The "activists" however might well correspond in terms of their mobility and social exposure to a counterpart in Judaism, namely, the *Haside Ashkenaz*.

There are many Christian mystics who espouse in their writings, if not in their personal conduct, the virtues of the "mixed life," a balance between contemplation and action, social responsibility and mystical experience, such as is found among Jewish pietists.<sup>46</sup> Men like Jan Rysbroeck,<sup>47</sup> Nicholas of Cusa, Meister Eckhart,<sup>48</sup> Bernard of Clairvaux, let alone St. Francis and a host of others of lesser standing immediately come to mind.<sup>49</sup> One could assent in behalf of the *Haside*

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Limited, 1958), p. 190. Briefly, the author touches upon parallels between the German pietists and the Franciscans and some of their common characteristics. Also see Baron, *Social and Religious History of the Jews*, VIII, 295, n. 54.

<sup>46</sup> Petry, *Late Medieval Mysticism*, p. 30: "In the balance of the contemplative and the active, there is in Augustine, as later in Gregory and Bernard, an incitement to Christian service and responsibility that inspired the whole of the Middle Ages."

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 319, quoting Rysbroeck in *The Sparkling Stone*, chapter xiv.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 207, quoting from *Love Can Not Be Lazy*, Meister Eckhart.

<sup>49</sup> Ray C. Petry, "Social Responsibility and the Late Medieval Mystics," *Church History*, Vol. XXI (1952). Here he develops the theme of balanced contemplation and action for many of the medieval mystics.

*Ashkenaz* with Ray C. Petry's observation that the call to renunciation echoes throughout the centuries of contemplation.<sup>50</sup> We might add in conclusion that Gershom Scholem and Baer have in their own way, made this very same observation.<sup>51</sup>

### *The Texts*

In addition to the problem of authorship, there is the question which of the two editions of *Sefer Ḥasidim* is earlier. We have today two different versions of *Sefer Ḥasidim*: one based on the Bologna Edition,<sup>52</sup> most recently republished by the Mosad Harav Kook<sup>53</sup> in Israel. The other version is based on the Parma MS which was prepared and edited by Jehuda Wistinetzki and Jacob Freimann.<sup>54</sup>

In his introduction to *Sefer Ḥasidim*,<sup>55</sup> Freimann states that he believes the Parma MS to be the older. In support of his view he points out that the Parma MS lacks the unity, systemization, and relative freedom from corrupt and variant readings already in evidence in the Bologna edition.

For immediate purposes, without entering into a critical analysis of Freimann's views, it suffices for us to agree with Freimann's observations although not necessarily with his conclusions. The Bologna edition does possess the qualities which Freimann enumerates. It does indeed possess the inner unity, style and integration which the Parma MS lacks.<sup>56</sup>

As matters stand at present, weighty and cogent arguments can be advanced in support of either text as representing earlier authorship. Serious criticisms, as well, can be directed against each set of arguments. When we consider both positions in this light one conclusion remains, namely, that neither view dare be dogmatic or absolute in its assertions.

<sup>50</sup> Petry, *Late Medieval Mysticism*, p. 18.

<sup>51</sup> Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, p. 91; Baer, *Zion*, III, 27.

<sup>52</sup> First published in Bologna in 1538 by Abraham the son of Moses the Priest. Apparently published without censorship. See Freimann's introduction to *S. H.*, Parma MS, p. 9.

<sup>53</sup> A publishing house in Israel specializing in Hebraica and Judaica texts.

<sup>54</sup> Published by the Mekize Nirdamim Society during the years 1891 to 1893 based on MSS attributed to the thirteenth century. See Freimann's introduction to *S. H.*, Parma MS, p. 9.

<sup>55</sup> Freimann's introduction to *S. H.*, Parma MS, p. 19. See also Epstein, I, 258, n. 24, wherein he agrees with Freimann and offers additional evidence.

<sup>56</sup> Freimann's introduction to *S. H.*, Parma MS, p. 19.