

American Neo-Hasids in the Land of Israel

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ABSTRACT: American Neo-Hasidism in Israel today is part of a sustained revival of traditional Judaism that began in the late 1960s among followers of Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach, who sought to restore meaning to Jewish practice and identity. This unique religious subculture blends elements of New Age spirituality and American countercultural values with Hasidism, a mystical movement within Judaism dating back to the eighteenth century. The result is a new syncretistic Jewish culture and practice. At two English-speaking yeshivas, one in Jerusalem and the other in Bat Ayin in the West Bank, this Neo-Hasidic subculture exhibits kinship with both the conservative religious culture of Israeli settlers and the countercultural spiritual values of young American Jewish immigrants.

When I came to Jerusalem in the fall of 2003 I was introduced to a community of young Americans in the small neighborhood of Nachlaot near the central market. Some had been in Israel for years, others had arrived in the last few months. The men wore their hair long—in dreadlocks or ponytails—with colorful knit *kippot*, and had their *tzitzit* hanging down conspicuously at their sides.¹ Some wore a blend of Eastern-style clothes, such as Thai fisherman pants, open-collared Indian shirts and embroidered vests; others wore baggy pants and T-shirts like any other American youth. The women wore long flowing skirts and dresses, multilayered over loose pants, with colorful tunics, scarves and shawls. The young Americans were demonstrative in their piety, uninhibited and enthusiastic in their adherence to Jewish law, and youthful and informal in their behavior. They were not averse to smoking marijuana or using hallucinogenic drugs. At parties they sat on the floor in a circle playing acoustic guitars

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and drums, singing Hasidic songs, drinking and smoking. Many were regulars at the Rainbow Gathering, an annual outdoor event in the United States attracting upwards of 20,000 participants, celebrating the values of the 1960s hippie counterculture. Many of the young people I met in Nachlaot knew each other from Jerusalem Camp, a makeshift Jewish enclave within the Rainbow Gathering that has been running since the late 1990s, complete with kosher kitchen, Torah learning, and Shabbat services and meals.² Their speech was interspersed with Yiddish exclamations—*Mamesh! Gevaltic!*—that took some time for me to decode.³ Even more curious was what I perceived as nationalistic tendencies among these otherwise pacifist young Americans. Their political stance in Israel seemed to contradict the values of freedom and nonviolence that characterized the American counterculture in which they were steeped.

The people I encountered in this community seemed both foreign and familiar. Though there were many aspects of this subculture that seemed to be lifted from the American counterculture, on the whole it also seemed unique and insular, a world unto itself within American religious community in Israel. These young people seemed to embody a unique variation on mystical religious Zionism, which mingled American counterculture with a primordial philosophy of the Jewish people's tie to their ethnic-spiritual homeland, the Land of Israel (*Eretz Yisrael*).⁴ As I learned more about Israeli society I perceived an overlap between the scene I found in Nachlaot and the world of the settlers in the West Bank (and, until the 2005 Disengagement, Gaza). Many of them would spend time studying, working or visiting friends in the settlements. Some settled in the West Bank after marrying, drawn by the pastoral landscape, cheap prices and close-knit religious communities. They voiced sympathy for the settlers even while “seeing the other side” of the Palestinians, of whom the mere mention could produce an awkward pause followed by a change of subject or a terse exchange. Their style of dress and worship also referenced settler styles with long *peot* and *tzitzit*, multilayered skirts and scarves made of inexpensive Indian materials, and a generally informal and rugged appearance.⁵ Outsiders expressed wonder at people who appeared to be “hippies” in the United States and “settlers” in Israel.

In my fieldwork, I sought to understand better how American countercultural discourse provides an ideological bridge to Zionist Orthodox Judaism. More specifically, I wanted to examine the political consequences in Israel of New Age spiritualities that often accompany the American counterculture.⁶ In this case, I found that the countercultural discourse, with its particular construction of “spirituality,” disrupted the familiar right-left political continuum in Israel by exhibiting both progressive and reactionary political features. This spirituality is differentiated from current streams of Jewish practice and identification by its

combination of environmental consciousness, “back-to-the-land” ethos, attraction to non-Western “alternative” spiritualities, and traditional or premodern lifestyles. In general the American Neo-Hasids’ preoccupation with otherness belies the tacit antimodern sentiment that runs throughout the movement. What is more, the mix of concern for environmental protection and antimodernity with perennial Jewish concern for continuity sets this phenomenon apart from other forms of contemporary Judaism and marks it as new and distinctive.

In this article I argue that American Jewish youth living in Israel have replicated and recontextualized styles and attitudes of the 1960s hippie movement to signify their allegiance to a spiritualized worldview and way of life in the 2000s. The American Neo-Hasidic movement in Israel provides a picture of how an anti-establishment stream of American culture is exporting countercultural values and signifiers from the 1960s to another country and grafting them onto local identities and narratives. In comparison with other contemporary Jewish groups, the movement provides insight into new strategies and paradigms for Jewish continuity. It presents a model for how religion and identity may adapt not only within the context of multicultural American society, but also in a globalized and fluid “network society” in which borders are increasingly porous and social structures overlap.⁷ It also attempts to come to terms with recent upheavals in Jewish history caused by modernity, the Holocaust, and the founding of the State of Israel. This study of American Neo-Hasidism in Israel provides a window onto the struggles and innovations, dreams and realities, of a syncretistic ethno-religious group in the twenty-first century.⁸

HISTORY

American Neo-Hasidism in Israel is continuing the work of the late Shlomo Carlebach (1925–1994), the Berlin-born son of an Orthodox rabbi.⁹ For many years he was a student of the last Chabad Lubavitcher *rebbe*, Menachem Mendel Schneerson (1902–1994). Together with another student, Polish-born Zalman Schachter¹⁰ (b. 1924), Carlebach became one of the first Chabad *shluchim* (literally, emissaries) in the early 1950s.¹¹ The men began to visit American college campuses in the 1960s to engage secular Jews in traditional Jewish practice. During the cultural upheavals of the era, Judaism had acquired an aura of exoticism and authenticity in contrast to the mainstream secular Christian “establishment.” Furthermore, Israel’s military victory in the 1967 Six-Day War had imbued Jewishness with mythic heroism, and Carlebach and Schachter—charismatic, welcoming and generous—embodied the warmth and wisdom of the idealized Jewish sage. By mixing traditional Jewish rituals and mystical Hasidic philosophy with a hippie ethos and aesthetic, the men were able to build a following among young Jews (and non-Jews

who later converted).¹² Their main work took place in San Francisco at an urban commune called the House of Love and Prayer (HLP).¹³ Carlebach was a *hazan* (a cantor who leads religious services) and self-taught musician, who created a unique form of Jewish music incorporating modern folk music with Hasidic *nigunim* (traditional melodies) and storytelling. In this way Carlebach became a leading figure in a movement that became known as *ba'al teshuvah*, a traditional term for a secular Jew who “returns” to Orthodox Judaism.¹⁴

Both rabbis eventually moved away from the strict orthodoxy of Chabad and fashioned their own approaches to Jewish observance, which incorporated themes and elements of the burgeoning culture around them.¹⁵ Carlebach maintained Orthodox halachic standards in the key areas of food, dress and Shabbat observance, but he blurred other halachic boundaries, most notably those between the sexes. He quietly ordained female students as rabbis and encouraged women as Torah scholars and community leaders. He encouraged men and women to sing together, which is prohibited in most Orthodox communities, and was conspicuously lax on laws against touching between the sexes, visible in his famously effusive embraces of both men and women.¹⁶ In this way, Carlebach initiated a range of innovative Jewish practices that, for the most part, fell outside the standards of Orthodox observance and piety. Moreover, his conspicuous and lively vision of Judaism was in stark contrast to the assimilationist streams dominating American Judaism by the mid-twentieth century.

Carlebach also maintained a proactive Zionist stance that influenced his followers.¹⁷ In the early 1970s several of his followers from the HLP relocated to a *moshav* (agricultural community) in central Israel called Mevo Modi'im.¹⁸ Not long afterwards, a family close to Carlebach moved to Jerusalem and settled in Nachlaot. Other students of Carlebach (including the founder of Yeshivat Shirat HaTorah) soon followed, becoming the seeds of another important Neo-Hasidic enclave in Israel.

American Neo-Hasidism in Israel has traveled mostly through Carlebach's followers. Following his death in 1994 Carlebach's charismatic influence remains alive through several channels: the repetition of his stories, aphorisms and style of speech by students and followers (the Yiddishisms mentioned earlier were popularized by Carlebach); studio albums and recordings of live performances that include spoken word pieces with teachings and inspirational stories; and “Carlebach *minyanim*” or prayer groups, which conduct Shabbat services in his signature musical style, with his original melodies and joyous clapping and dancing.¹⁹ In the Neo-Hasidic world, even those who never met Carlebach refer to him familiarly as Shlomo. Teachers and students celebrate his *yarzeit* (annual death memorial) every year with a *kumstiz*, an evening of music with acoustic guitars and drumming, singing, storytelling and drinking.²⁰

In the decades since the founding of the *moshav*, *ba'alei teshuvah* have become more accepted in Orthodox Jewish circles and *ba'al teshuvah* yeshivas have become more common.²¹ In addition, the discourse of New Age spirituality highlighted in American culture in the 1960s has entered the mainstream culture in the United States and in Israel.²² These trends contribute to the viability of the two yeshivas that are the focus of this article. These Neo-Hasidic *ba'al teshuvah* yeshivas occupy specialized niches in the current religious and cultural landscape in Israel.

THE FIELD

Yeshivat Chesed V'emet

My fieldwork began with in-depth interviews in 2005 and 2006 of students at Yeshivat Chesed V'emet (CV),²³ located twenty minutes outside Jerusalem in the settlement of Bat Ayin, on the far edge of the Gush Etzion settlement bloc in the West Bank. CV is an obvious entry point for studying the political tendencies of Neo-Hasidism since it is located in a settlement known for political extremism. Its students are well known in the Neo-Hasidic and larger American religious communities. Though relatively small, CV's influence is far-reaching and resonates with other cultural movements in Judaism, both in Israel and North America. Graduates of its rabbinical program are joining the small but influential ranks of Israeli-trained American Jewish educators in both countries. They lead congregations, teach at community centers and build educational programs.

As mentioned earlier, CV students are not very different in appearance from young settlers living in outposts in the hills of the West Bank. Among Americans in Israel and the Occupied Territories, they are recognizable for their long beards and *peot*, conspicuous *tzitzit* hanging at their sides, large knit *kippot* and informal dress. They are known to be hyper-expressive, especially in prayer and song. Their *minyanim* are loud and spirited, full of woeful moans and ecstatic singing. The image broadcasts an exaggerated religious fervency, naturalism and ideological intensity.

Although Gush Etzion is known for its suburban atmosphere, Bat Ayin is more akin to the extremist settlements deeper in the West Bank. Yitzchak Ginsburgh helped found the settlement with his students—a mix of American and Russian immigrants and native Israelis, the majority *ba'alei teshuvah*—in 1989.²⁴ Ginsburgh is an American-born rabbi associated with the Chabad Lubavitch movement. He immigrated to Israel in 1965 and currently lives in Kfar Chabad, a Chabad Lubavitch community outside Tel Aviv. Ginsburgh is well known for his Neo-Kabbalistic writings and mystical ethnic nationalism. As a result, he is

celebrated by religious Zionists and vilified by secular liberals.²⁵ He is often scorned by religious non-Zionists. Ginsburg's work is taught at the yeshiva, but he neither teaches there nor is formally associated with the school.

In Bat Ayin ramshackle, self-built homes sit among organic, permaculture gardens amidst the natural beauty of the West Bank's Judean hills. The settlement's culture is one of modest simplicity and pious poverty. Televisions are not allowed and signs of consumer culture are noticeably absent. Such rules are made by consensus, and failure to follow them can result in being asked to leave the community. In general, a rugged do-it-yourself culture prevails. Like most homes in Bat Ayin, the yeshiva is made up of metal trailers built over with bricks and concrete.

The settlement of Bat Ayin was not a subject of my fieldwork, but an environment that my subjects engaged with in different ways and on different levels. I focused on the settlement to the extent that it was relevant to CV students and teachers. Only three subjects lived permanently in the settlement. These were the *rosh yeshiva* (head of the school), a teacher who refused to be interviewed and a married alumnus. Most of the students were temporary inhabitants of yeshiva dormitories in the settlement. Among the students attitudes varied widely from ambivalence to identification with the extremist views associated with the settlement. Some voiced outright rejection of the Bat Ayin brand of militant religious nationalism and were resigned to their temporary stay; others expressed the desire to live permanently in Bat Ayin.

The settlement is known in the Israeli Jewish religious world for its particular mix of cultural and religious influences summed up in the acronym *Chavakuk*, which stands for Chabad, Breslov, Carlebach and Kuk.²⁶ This blend is reflected in the curriculum at CV, which includes the usual yeshiva subjects (Tanakh and Jewish law) along with classes on Hasidic texts and philosophy.²⁷ Experiential and interpersonal exercises such as meditation, group sharing, singing and hiking are incorporated into the yeshiva schedule and are encouraged by teachers.

At the time of my fieldwork, the number of students fluctuated between fifteen and twenty-five. The school catered to a transient audience—young North Americans coming to Israel with open-ended plans to explore their Judaism. Class attendance was inconsistent. An atmosphere of leniency encouraged what some described as a lackadaisical attitude among some students. When I came to interview Shalom, the yeshiva was on afternoon break. In the makeshift yard between trailers where the men lived, one student played a saxophone while another played an African drum. One young man whirled dreamily to the music, his head covered with a ski cap and a T-shirt hanging loosely over his wrinkled khaki pants. Shalom and I sat and ate lunch on some nearby boulders while the wind whistled around us. A *muezzin* from a nearby Arab village could be heard in the background.

For those outside the world of religious Zionism, Bat Ayin has another set of associations. In 2003 three residents were implicated in a plot to bomb an Arab girl's school in East Jerusalem. They were dubbed "the Bat Ayin cell" by the press, and two men from the settlement were later convicted and jailed for attempted murder. Some residents tried to distance themselves and the community from this incident by arguing that it was the work of a few misguided individuals, but the community as a whole never publicly condemned the plot. When I told secular Israelis that I was interviewing people in Bat Ayin, their immediate association was the story of the Bat Ayin cell.

Beyond this public association with political violence, the culture and policy of the settlement reflect extremist attitudes in relation to the Palestinian Arab population and the claimed right of the Jewish people to the biblical land of Israel. Bat Ayin has long maintained a ban on Arabs working in the community and, more recently, a total ban on Arabs in the community for any reason.²⁸ While this antagonism is indicative of settlers' attitudes in general, Bat Ayin is extreme in its relatively lawless militancy.

Settlements and outposts further inside the West Bank characteristically view State sovereignty as superfluous to their mission of settling the land for the Jewish people.²⁹ Yet ironically, Bat Ayin, like all officially recognized settlements, depends on the constant presence of the Israeli army to maintain a secure living space. As is well known, the West Bank has been under military occupation since the Six-Day War of 1967. The Second Intifada (Uprising) started in the summer of 2000, not long before several Bat Ayin students I interviewed arrived in Israel.

The West Bank is an arena of competing nationalist aspirations, overlapping power structures, and continual clashes between Israeli troops, Palestinian militants, Palestinian youth left idle by a collapsed economy, Jewish Israeli settlers and groups of activists from Israel, the Occupied Territories and around the world. In the struggle over resources and power that characterizes this region, the extensive settlement system (especially roads designated for Israeli use only) works to extend Israeli power throughout the West Bank, hence Palestinians generally perceive Israeli settlers as usurpers and colonizers, representatives of a brutal occupation. Settlers have become frequent targets of political violence.³⁰ Palestinians in turn have become victims of revenge attacks by settlers practicing vigilante justice.

While the army tries to frustrate potential attacks on settlers, residents of Bat Ayin take their own protective measures, such as additional guard duty and weapons drills. As a community Bat Ayin flaunts its fearlessness and right of ownership of the land. As a few residents proudly informed me, it is the only settlement that is not surrounded by a fence, an expression of their unwillingness to compromise their ideals out of fear. Rather, as some students implied with mild smiles, the settlement

depends upon its reputation for vigilante justice to deter Palestinian attacks, a belief buttressed by the circulation of anecdotal stories of individual acts of revenge.³¹ I was told that the surrounding Arab villagers refer to the Bat Ayin settlers as “the crazies.”

These aspects of the settlement create an atmosphere uncommon among English-speaking yeshivas in Israel (let alone North America). As many students noted, the proximity to “nature” was a key ingredient in their positive experience at the yeshiva. In a similar vein, the simple and rugged lifestyle is conducive to introspection. On a more complex level, I sense that the political extremism and marginalization of the settlement also appeal to these yeshiva students, but only to the degree that these qualities reflect the values of anarchism, radicalism, and self-sufficiency and an underlying mystical vision—even though the same students may be uncomfortable with the racism or violence that results from these same values and ideas.

All the young men I met in Nachlaot had either passed through CV or were still students there. I conducted thirteen in-depth interviews: two with Rav Aryeh, the *rosh yeshiva*, one with another teacher, Rav Chaim, and ten with students and recent alumni. The rabbis were called by their first names, further highlighting the informal atmosphere of the yeshiva. I spent one Shabbat at the settlement, although my contact with students was limited by strict gender divisions at the yeshiva and in the settlement in general. Before beginning the project, I asked Rav Aryeh’s permission to solicit interviews with students. He told me it was not up to him to give permission, reflecting the school’s spirit of individual freedom. Half the interviews took place in my Jerusalem apartment, three in the settlement, and the rest wherever there was adequate room and relative silence.

I worried that it might be awkward for the men to be interviewed by a woman. At first I dressed in T-shirts and skirts that hit below the knee (a typical Modern Orthodox look), but I noticed that some of these interviews had the subtle atmosphere of a date coordinated by a matchmaker for religious singles. In the next few interviews, I wore jeans and found that the date atmosphere quickly dissipated. This mirrors the approach I took in the interviews. I found I was able to connect with students as a fellow countercultural American, and thus circumvent their more recently acquired identities as religious Jews in Israel. I should note, however, that one student declined to be interviewed because he did not feel comfortable having a personal conversation with a woman he was not dating, and one teacher told me over the telephone that he had decided not to give interviews after he once saw his words twisted by a reporter. This teacher, students told me, had the most extreme political views of anyone on the CV staff. In general, the students were open and generous with their personal stories and thoughts. I often had the feeling that they appreciated my curiosity and that I was aiding in

their construction of a meaningful personal narrative. Several thanked me when we finished our conversations.

Yeshivat Shirat HaTorah

Since I was interested in the reach and influence of CV, Yeshivat Shirat HaTorah (ST) was a logical extension of my research. The three main teachers at ST (Yizhar, Moshe and Yonatan) studied at CV for substantial periods; Yizhar and Yonatan received their rabbinical ordinations from the school. The yeshiva is in the home of Hezi and Debbie Rohm in Jerusalem but spills over into the local synagogues. Hezi Rohm had been close to Carlebach for many years. Although there is a cultural and pedagogical continuity between CV and ST, the schools are quite distinct. In that sense, if ST is not an offshoot of CV, it is at least an offspring, mixing with other elements to create something related but different.

Like CV, ST follows the *Chavakuk* model. The core curriculum is Tanakh and Jewish law augmented by classes in Hasidism and Rav Kuk and by experiential and interpersonal group activities. The two schools share a similar culture that is expressed in the style of worship, dress, diet and speech. There are also significant differences. For one, ST has both men's and women's programs. More importantly, it is set in a dense and diverse urban neighborhood, where students are less socially and culturally isolated. They live in their own apartments and have daily social lives outside the yeshiva. Students mix with native Israelis, secular and religious, Ashkenazi and Mizrahi, neighborhood elders and young college students, working-class older workers and gentrifying young families. It is a far cry from the remote, bucolic setting of Bat Ayin and the homogenous culture of the settlements.

At ST I conducted thirteen interviews with eight students and two teachers, including Yizhar, the *rosh yeshiva* whom I had interviewed as an alumnus of CV during 2006 and 2007. I interviewed two men who were important players in two notable episodes at the yeshiva: a fundraiser for Israeli and Lebanese victims of war in the fall of 2006, and a student's egalitarian wedding ceremony that caused tension at the yeshiva when some teachers declined to attend. I also conducted participant-observation in the women's program for the winter semester.

My entry into the field at ST was significantly easier than at CV due to the presence of females in the environment and the fact that my presence in the *beit midrash* had already acquainted me with the women. I was able to observe and experience the pedagogical methods of the school and see how Neo-Hasidic principles were put into practice in the classroom and the day-to-day culture.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Demographics

The youngest student I interviewed was nineteen, the oldest forty. The age range at the schools hovered in the mid- to late-twenties. The teachers at CV were in their forties and fifties, at ST the teachers were in their late-twenties and thirties. At CV three informants were married with young children, one was recently married and one was engaged. Only one of the women at ST, Rachel, was married. (She had been wed recently and came to Israel with her husband to study Torah; she did not stay long at the school.) All the interviewees came from middle-to upper-middle-class backgrounds and grew up in urban and suburban environments. They fell into a particularly high educational bracket of American society. Of fifteen students, only three did not have college degrees: one was in college; one was deciding where to go to school; and one did not have an undergraduate degree but was an autodidact and was one of the most articulate students I interviewed. Three men and one woman had Master's degrees.³²

Nearly all the students expressed a commitment to live in Israel permanently, although several had expired tourist visas and no immediate plans for applying for citizenship.³³ Only one student, Liz, voiced doubts; she later married a student from ST and settled in Jerusalem. There was a remarkable degree of transience at both schools, with temporary and part-time students matriculating through the *beit midrash*, and full-time students often spending summers in the United States visiting family, attending the Rainbow Gathering, or working at jobs in Jewish education. This coming and going and the casual attitude toward visas and citizenship reflected the group's ambiguity of State-national allegiance. While they all spoke about the Land of Israel (*Eretz Yisrael*) in spiritual and personal terms, their relationship with the State of Israel (*Medinat Yisrael*) was mostly perfunctory and peripheral to their Jewish identities.

Who Are These Students?

Both schools are known as *ba'al teshuvah* yeshivas that cater to secular Jews who have (re)discovered Orthodox Judaism. The students came from a range of backgrounds; while the majority came from non-Orthodox families (Reform, Conservative or unaffiliated), a few grew up relatively religious. Three students had some form of Modern Orthodox education and upbringing. One student's father was a congregational rabbi at a Modern Orthodox synagogue. Two students had a family background in Renewal Judaism: one student's parents took part in Jewish Renewal

retreats with Schachter, and another student was the son of a prominent leader in the Renewal movement.³⁴

The ST students had been relatively more connected to Judaism while growing up than the CV students. In general, the women were more comfortable with traditional Judaism and had some personal experience with Neo-Hasidic Judaism. For the women ST was their first choice for study. In contrast, most of the CV men were raised Reform, went to non-Jewish schools and socialized in mostly non-Jewish circles. (Only one, the rabbi's son, went to a Jewish high school; the Renewal leader's son grew up in the center of a Jewish community). In their cases, the decision to become religious was more radical. The CV men shared the experience of an unsatisfactory encounter with a traditional ("black and white") yeshiva before coming to CV and feeling "at home."³⁵ Yizhar was an exception in that he received his ordination from CV after being raised mostly in Israeli secular schools, meaning his education was nominally Jewish and Zionist but "secular" in the Israeli sense of the word, meaning non-Orthodox.

Many CV students came to Orthodox Judaism with a weak Jewish identity but a strong "spiritual" identity and were seeking to strengthen the latter. Inversely, many ST students had strong Jewish affiliations and were seeking to infuse their Jewish identities and practice with a sense of spirituality. This range displays the ideological reach of Neo-Hasidism and its ability to appeal to American Jews from many backgrounds.³⁶ In addition, the fact that students from such diverse Jewish backgrounds identified as *ba'alei teshuvah* attests to the flexibility and potency of this archetype within Neo-Hasidism. The term *ba'al teshuvah* has retained its significance within Neo-Hasidic culture over generations, augmenting its traditional meaning of a non-religious or lapsed Jew who becomes religious. Within Neo-Hasidic circles, the term has expanded to imply a broader cultural model that frames personal narratives with collective and cosmic significance.

Countercultural Background

Among students and teachers there was a clear continuity between the American counterculture and the spirit of religious revival that infuses Neo-Hasidism, both in terms of ideas and of cultural trappings such as dress, music and speech. The critical and antimodern principles that pervade American countercultural discourse (authenticity, holism, experiential knowledge, anarchism and individual freedom) are founding cultural principles on which the Neo-Hasidic culture is built. For most of the students I interviewed, interest in Judaism grew out of countercultural experiences. Nearly every interviewee had been part of the countercultural milieu that includes subcultural successors to the 1960s

hippie movement—Rainbow Gatherings, Grateful Dead and Phish concerts, raves, radical environmentalism, Neopaganism, anti-globalization activism, and other youth subcultures. Students from this milieu shared a particular construction of spirituality associated with the New Age movement and an antagonism toward mainstream society. With a broad brush, they painted American, Western, capitalist, consumerist, modern, and even postmodern culture as environmentally destructive, spiritually distorted, morally degenerate, boring, vapid, uninspired, and even more importantly, “cut off” physically from the Earth and spiritually and morally from an elemental life force. These conceptions and assumptions are important components of the American countercultural discourse in which almost all of these students and teachers participated. This discourse was referenced through a matrix of cultural signifiers—music, literature, clothing, hairstyles, speech, mannerisms and lifestyle—to create a sense of affinity among students and to define elements of the American Neo-Hasid culture in Israel.

For example, students cited 1960s counterculture books, authors and iconic figures, such as Carlos Castaneda’s *The Teachings of Don Juan* (1968) and Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World* (1932), as well as writings by Timothy Leary, the Beat poets, William Blake and others. Independently of each other, four CV students cited Ken Kesey as an influential figure in their youth. “Read that book,” said Aharon, referring to *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* (1968), Tom Wolfe’s journalistic account of Kesey and his LSD-dropping crew, the Merry Pranksters, Yizhar and Rav Aryeh, both devotees of J. R. R. Tolkien, cited *The Lord of the Rings* (1955). (In Rav’s office, I noticed Tolkien books sharing shelf space with Jewish history books and Torah commentaries, and Yizhar occasionally quoted Tolkien). During one interview, Binyamin went into a long explanation of Theodore Sturgeon’s *More Than Human* (1953) by way of explaining his vision of the messianic reality toward which we are moving. He had picked up the science fiction novel after a Grateful Dead member referenced the book in an interview. Although he “never liked the word hippie,” Binyamin identified with them. “All my friends were definitely hippies or some kind of weird antiestablishment people.”

Among other students, Bob Marley and the Grateful Dead were the most common non-Jewish (or pre-*teshuvah*) music of choice. Psychedelic drugs were another common theme in individual stories of *teshuvah*, although only among the men, another sign of the greater experimentalism and social marginality of the yeshiva in Bat Ayin compared to the urban yeshiva in Jerusalem. Overall, this assortment of books and music, along with shared fashion, speech and informality, allude to the countercultural background of these students and, to an extent, the teachers, pointing towards a kinship between an American countercultural milieu and Neo-Hasidic culture and thought.

COUNTERCULTURAL THEMES

In this diverse set of cultural references, two notable themes can be discerned: pervasive ecological concern, and an attraction to foreign cultures and alternative spiritualities.

Environmental awareness and activism was one of the most self-consciously distinct aspects of both yeshivas. CV and ST hosted various “eco” programs seeking to connect an environmental agenda with Torah and Jewish practice through textual exegesis, the observance of *halakha* and cultivation of mystical experiences. The websites of both schools had online archives of ecologically focused Torah commentary. Yonatan was the driving force in starting the “eco”-*beit midrash* at ST. Several CV alumni went on to start programs with a similar vision in Israel and the United States. The same was true for ST students. Elisheva and Orli both worked at the Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel (SPNI), as did Jason after leaving CV. Elisheva said one of her main goals was “making connections between Torah and *teva* (nature).”

This orientation was apparent in the students’ backgrounds as well. Jason and Yonatan were environmental activists and participated in protests against logging and mining companies (notably on Native American sacred lands) before becoming religious. As a community organizer involved in environmental justice issues, Liz began her exploration of religion by reading about the connection between environmentalism and Judaism. The ecological theme was also apparent on a discursive and conceptual level. Before discovering Kabbalah and traditional Jewish practice, Rachel had been active in a Wiccan coven that practiced Earth-based religious rituals. Many students described themselves as “natural” in their lifestyles, meaning anything from camping and hiking, to reducing waste, to choosing psilocybin (“magic”) mushrooms over the synthetic compound LSD. Some were vegetarian and ate only health food and organic produce. Teachers hosted crowded Shabbat and holiday meals with plates of tofu, vegetables, brown rice and whole wheat or spelt challah. The organic garden at CV was a major draw for incoming students who sought to learn at a place that reflected their desire for holistic spirituality. (One teacher noted with chagrin that some students spent more time gardening than studying.)

The second theme was an attraction to alternative spiritualities and non-Western cultures. This theme was more personal, but just as pervasive in students’ stories of *teshuvah* as environmental concerns. It could be discerned in a general preoccupation with foreign cultures (for example, world music, indigenous peoples or Eastern religions) before rediscovering Orthodox Judaism and taking up Jewish law. Jason and Yonatan spoke at length of their inspiration from North American indigenous cultures. Jason told me that before he met the Neo-Hasidic crowd at the Rainbow Gathering that precipitated his coming to Israel,

he had been planning to go and “learn” with a Lakota community. Shlomo studied West African drumming and dance for years and even traveled to West Africa to study there. Bracha received her bachelor’s degree from a university affiliated with Tibetan Buddhism in the United States. Rachel had been Wiccan. Liz wore an African-style head wrap for a year before coming to Israel.³⁷ “People on the bus used to say to me, ‘What *are* you?’” she told me, laughing. Shlomo received similar comments during his travels through Muslim Africa. Although he did not yet identify as a religious Jew, he covered his head with a Muslim-style knit hat as a sign of a “spiritual” identification.

This experimentation and exploration of foreign cultures found expression in the material culture of students in their Orthodox incarnations. Jason, Yonatan and Yizhar all had dreadlocks pre- and post-*teshuvah*. After studying at CV for some time, Yonatan cut off his dreadlocks but left two above his ears as *peot* hanging down to his chest in long s-shaped curves under his knit *kippa*. In this way, CV and ST students created a syncretistic material culture linking countercultural styles with innovative religious ones. With the exception of dreadlocks, many of these styles carried over from Carlebach’s hippie followers in the late 1960s and 1970s.³⁸ This was yet another sign of the distinctive nature of this new stream of Judaism.

The preoccupation with alterity and the cultural critique that drives it also found expression among teachers and students in a generalized suspicion of institutionalized power, especially of governmental bodies. Yizhar refused rabbinical ordination from the Rabbanut, the government-appointed Jewish religious authority. This was a radical move in Israel, where civil marriages are non-existent and the ability to perform legally binding marriage ceremonies can influence one’s success as a professional rabbi. When I asked Rav Aryeh about his position on the State of Israel, he replied that he was “anti-every institute that’s now a part of my existence,” but he also understood the need for them. Liz explained carefully that her desire for the Jewish people to have “a relationship with the land” did not necessarily justify “a military-industrial complex” (terminology notably coded in the language of the radical left).³⁹

The continuum between countercultural suspicion of authority and Orthodox religious identity was made possible through the archetype of the Neo-Hasidic *ba’al teshuvah*. For Neo-Hasids the *ba’al teshuvah* is fierce in religious devotion, pure in intention and critical of social and political authorities (although reverent of “spiritual” authority). The *ba’al teshuvah* is an idol smasher, an iconoclast in the original sense of the term, a “searcher” deeply dissatisfied with the status quo, and sustained on a solitary journey through a “personal relationship with God,” a phrase often repeated by students and teachers at both schools. As Aharon explained, “I’m a *ba’al teshuvah*—I’m an anarchist on some

level. I do not hold by governments—I hold by the truth, and the truth is that the Jewish people have always been here and we'll continue to be here." Anarchistic self-sufficiency, vigilantism and the settlers' mystical mission resonated with the students' antiestablishment and back-to-nature ideals of the counterculture, especially when these values were presented with a mystical gloss. Here, we see how circumvention of the modern legal system in the West Bank in favor of a higher, "spiritual" connection with the land dovetailed with hostility toward modern society expressed in the American counterculture milieu, where that society is often portrayed as a purveyor of alienation and destruction. American Neo-Hasids in Israel position themselves in the ambiguous space between the anarchistic spirituality of American hippie culture and the anarchistic fundamentalism of present-day Jewish settlers.

This range of interests and orientations gave both schools, but especially CV, the reputation as homes for "hippies," "freaks" and "alternative" types who did not fit into (or were turned off by) other yeshivas. In the two themes outlined above, we can discern some fundamental preoccupations of American Neo-Hasidism in Israel. One is the pursuit of a spirituality that is holistic (in both ecological and mystical senses), authentic and personal. On another level, this is also the pursuit of an alternative identity and way of being—of alterity in general. One can become "Other" through discovering and reclaiming one's forgotten or alienated true self. The attraction to alterity is a symptom of a perceived loss of authenticity. Alterity is conflated with authenticity, which is then displaced onto other foreign identities ("other Others," one could say). Thus, with paradoxical emotional logic, the individual longs to attain otherness to achieve a sense of "realness" and reunite with one's true self. The familiar culture from which one feels alienated is replaced by a new and unfamiliar culture to which persons ascribe uncanny feelings of belonging and recognition. In this way, Judaism supersedes the other substitutes (be they Wiccan, West African, psychedelic or Native American) as the holistic spirituality providing a way out of the desiccated and alienated (post)modern society depicted in American countercultural discourse. Values of holism and authenticity at the core of this discourse promote an elemental connection with the Earth, which—when wedded to an ethnic-religious framework—easily crosses over into primordial nationalism that favors singularity over equality and particularism over universalism.

CONCLUSION: SYNCRETISTIC RELIGIOUS IDENTITIES

What began as a fringe movement on the margins of normative Orthodox Judaism has become a new religious culture for American and American-Israeli Jews in both North America and Israel. In this article I have focused on two English-language Neo-Hasidic yeshivas, one

in Jerusalem and one in a West Bank settlement. What I first recognized as “hippie”-style clothes and musical tastes was not merely the superficial style of suburban North American Jews, but rather resonant cultural signifiers in a syncretistic expression of Jewish religiosity. These counter-cultural references indicated a particular orientation embodied in Neo-Hasidic subculture and practice. Although these young American Jews were foreign in appearance and in their Hasidic songs and customs, they were familiar in *the way* they were foreign: they ardently embraced an alternative spirituality as a path out of the world they knew, away from the confines of consumerist suburban America. This American Israeli Jewish revival has roots in a particularly American strain of anti-authoritarianism and transcendentalism.

In the American Neo-Hasidic community in Israel, the pursuit of an alternative lifestyle and holistic spirituality is incorporated into a Jewish framework through adaptation and reinterpretation of canonical concepts, texts and practices. With its mystical orientation, Hasidism is the primary means of providing the desired spiritual dimension in Jewish ritual, theology and law. Countercultural holism, authenticity and spirituality contribute to a mystical Zionist perspective that tends towards nationalist primordialism and ethnic essentialism. In addition, anti-authoritarianism, anarchism and individualism find resonance in the settler movement. In this way, American Neo-Hasidism in Israel interweaves both progressive and reactionary impulses: radical environmentalism and female empowerment intermingle with ethnocentric nationalism and gender essentialism.

I conjecture that the American Neo-Hasidism found at Chesed V’Emet and Shirat HaTorah is not a momentary phenomenon but an extended revitalization movement in the stages of routinization following the 1994 death of Carlebach.⁴⁰ Schools such as CV and ST have taken over where this charismatic leader left off, harnessing cultural and social trends in the Western world (the United States in particular) to revive Jewish religious practice in the postmodern era.⁴¹

This strain of Neo-Hasidic culture serves multiple goals. In a Jewish context, it is a way of reclaiming Jewish identity and practice in a way that differentiates it from dominant forms of Judaism in the United States, both Orthodox and non-Orthodox—or, as described by one student, “black and white Judaism” on one hand and “pathetic suburban Judaism” on the other. Neo-Hasidism implies that something has been lost in current approaches to Judaism and must now be revived. Hasidism is the path to revival.⁴² In the context of North American society, Neo-Hasidism provides a lost sense of authenticity. It “grounds” students both ecologically in the Earth and abstractly in an authentic, alternative identity.

These dual purposes intertwine as American Jews move between a globalizing American society and an Americanizing Israeli society, as

American identity becomes more porous and fluid and Jewish identity expands into multiple, diverse and often contested forms. American Neo-Hasidism in Israel, as practiced at Chesed V'Emet and Shirat HaTorah, is a syncretistic revival of traditional Judaism that uses American countercultural expressions to give meaning to Jewish practice and identity. Hasidism becomes the means to achieve this revitalization. In the process, a new Jewish practice and identity is created that aspires to relevance in today's global society.

ENDNOTES

¹ *Kippot* are skullcaps (*yarmulkes* in Yiddish). *Tzitzit* are Torah-prescribed (Numbers 15:38) ritual fringes attached to the bottom corners of an undershirt (*tallit katan*).

² I thank Zev Padway, Jerusalem Camp's current organizer, for this information.

³ *Mamesh*, with a stress on the first syllable (a Yiddish, rather than Israeli, pronunciation) means "really," in the hyperbolic sense. *Gevalt!* (also Yiddish) means "amazing" or "unbelievable."

⁴ I use the term Land of Israel (*Eretz Yisrael*) in contrast to State of Israel (*Medinat Yisrael*). The former can refer to the biblical land of Israel (whose borders differ from the modern State), the physical land (regardless of political governance), or the mystical state of mind associated with the land, especially in Kabbalistic writings. Religious Zionists argue that the Land of Israel is a mystical ideal that the State of Israel will naturally reflect in the messianic era, presumably when the government takes the form of a theocratic monarchy reinstated by the Messiah.

⁵ *Peot* are the forelocks that Jewish men are prohibited from shaving. See *Vayikra/Leviticus* 19:27.

⁶ See Wouter J. Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998); James R. Lewis and Gordon Melton, ed., *Perspectives on the New Age* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992); Paul Heelas and Linda Woodhead, *The Spiritual Revolution: Why Religion Is Giving Way to Spirituality* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2005); and Paul Heelas, *The New Age Movement* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996). On Jews and the New Age, see Jonathan Garb, "The Power and the Glory: A Critique of 'New Age' Kabbalah" in *Zeek* (April 2006), at <<http://www.zeek.net/604garb/>>; and Garb's more comprehensive work in Hebrew, *Yekhidei HaSegulot Yiheyu La'adarim* (Jerusalem: Shalom Hartman Institute, 2005), ch. 7; and Boaz Huss, "The New Age of Kabbalah," *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 6, no. 2 (July 2007): 107–25.

⁷ I use the term "network society" after Manuel Castells, who argues that in an information-based society, connections are made possible by information technologies and result in new relationships to social space. Power is concentrated through control of information that influences social behavior and cultural identity ("the power of flows"). Transnational identity movements ("project identities," as Castells names them) are products of the network society. See Manuel

Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society*, 2d ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 500; and *The Power of Identity*, 2d ed. (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2004), 8, 422.

⁸ In my transliteration of the word Hasidism, I am following the modern English pronunciation. The modern Israeli pronunciation is Hasidut (with the stress on the last syllable) while the Yiddish pronunciation is Hasidus (with the stress on the first syllable). I chose the English pronunciation for the sake of consistency although the subjects only used the Israeli or Yiddish pronunciations. The distinction between these two pronunciations, Israeli and Yiddish, has cultural and ideological implications. Yiddish is the language most common in modern-day Hasidic communities in both Israel and the Diaspora. It harkens back to a lost era and conjures a nostalgia that is often at odds with modern society. In contrast, Neo-Hasidism maintains a Zionist orientation (however ambivalent and nuanced) and an active interplay with modern Israeli culture. Pronunciations are significant in that they highlight the negotiation of Jewish identity across cultures and over time.

⁹ Hasidism is a mystical pietistic movement that began in the mid-eighteenth century with Rabbi Yisroel ben Eliezer (1698–1760, more commonly known as the Ba'al Shem Tov, “master of the good name”) as a response to a perceived over-emphasis on Jewish scholarship to the detriment of the immediate experience of God. Hasidism emphasizes praying, singing, miracles and the charged presence of the *rebbe* over traditional scholarship.

¹⁰ Schachter, who later changed his name to Schachter-Shalomi, is regarded as the founder of the Jewish Renewal movement, which is an international and trans-denominational movement that seeks to reinvigorate Judaism with meditation and Hasidic music, chanting and dancing. He and Carlebach worked together for some time before parting ways. They remained friends, and their work and their followers' social circles often overlapped.

¹¹ See interviews with Schachter and Carlebach in M. Herbert Danzger, *Returning to Tradition: The Contemporary Revival of Orthodox Judaism* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1989), 58–59. Chabad Lubavitch is the sect that developed around the Hasidic dynasty of Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi (1745–1812), a dynasty that ended with the death of the last Lubavitcher *rebbe*, Menachem Mendel Schneerson (1902–1994). His contested status as the Messiah continued after his death and has become a contentious subject within the movement and the larger Jewish world because of the halachic and theological implications of such a claim. Besides the intrigue surrounding the Rebbe's true identity—as the Messiah or “just” a *tzadik* (“righteous one,” a holy man)—Chabad is known for its extensive Jewish outreach. Chabad houses like the kind Carlebach and Schachter pioneered can be found around the world, especially on college campuses. While Chabad maintains strictly Orthodox standards of practice, Chabadniks have wide exposure to the non-Orthodox world due to the group's focus on outreach. Their relative openness has made them a popular subject for anthropologists.

¹² See Yaakov Ariel, “Hasidism in the Age of Aquarius: The House of Love and Prayer in San Francisco, 1967–1977,” in *Religion and American Culture* 13, no. 2 (Summer 2003): 147.

¹³ See Ariel, “Hasidism in the Age of Aquarius;” also see Yaakov Ariel, “Can Adam and Eve Reconcile? Gender and Sexuality in a New Jewish Religious Movement,” in *Nova Religio* 9, no. 4 (May 2006): 58–59.

¹⁴ The term *ba'al teshvavah* can be translated as “master of repentance,” “master of return,” or “master of the answer.”

¹⁵ Renewal Judaism, associated with Schachter, is traditional but not halachic in the Orthodox sense. The movement’s orientation is universalistic and “spiritual.” It eschews conformity to traditional rabbinical structures of authority and is known for reinventions of ritual and borrowing from non-Jewish mystical traditions. Schachter-Shalomi has close ties with Tibetan Buddhist leaders and held the World Wisdom Chair at Naropa University, a Buddhist institution in Boulder, Colorado, until retiring in 2004. He was quoted as saying, “I see myself as a Jewish practitioner of a generic religion.” See Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, *Paradigm Shift: From the Jewish Renewal Teachings of Reb Zalman Schachter-Shalomi* (Northvale, N.J.: Jason Aronson, 2000), 257.

¹⁶ Orthodox Judaism prohibits women from singing in the presence of men to whom they are not directly related (for reasons of modesty). Carlebach never forbade premarital sex or drug use among his followers. In the years since his death, numerous women have stepped forward with charges of sexual harassment against him. A number of women have reported that they were molested by Carlebach when they were under-age girls. See Sarah Blustain, “A Paradoxical Legacy: Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach’s Shadow Side,” *Lilith* (Spring 1998), 10–17.

¹⁷ Ariel suggests that Carlebach’s religious Zionism was perhaps informed by the messianism of his early years with Chabad. See Ariel, “Hasidism in the Age of Aquarius,” 156.

¹⁸ A *moshav* is a cooperative community that is not collectively owned, as is a *kibbutz*. Mevo Modi’in remains a center for Carlebach-style Judaism today.

¹⁹ There are also special Carlebach-style services held around the country at shuls that are otherwise non-Hasidic.

²⁰ It is customary to commemorate the life of the deceased on that day, according to the Hebrew calendar.

²¹ Danzger, *Returning to Tradition*, ch. 5; and Janet Aviad, *Return to Judaism: Religious Renewal in Israel* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1983), ch. 2.

²² Heelas and Woodhead, *Spiritual Revolution*, ch. 4; Ido Tavori, *Rokdim b’sadeh kotzim: ha’idan hakhadash b’israel* (B’Nei Brak, Israel: Hakibbutz Hame’ukhad, 2007), 10.

²³ In this essay I changed the names of the schools I studied and the individuals I interviewed, but I kept place names since the setting was relevant to my findings. I tried to obscure identifying details where I could without losing their significance.

²⁴ Inhabitants informed me that the land was purchased from the neighboring settlement Kfar Etzion, which had purchased it from local Palestinians, although I did not check this account in land registries or with neighboring Palestinian communities.

²⁵ Ginsburgh, whose work in Hebrew and English was used in class at Shirat HaTorah while I studied there, has been quoted as making a number of racist comments. He infamously used a mix of Hasidic and Kabbalistic concepts of mystical subjectivity and embodiment to praise Baruch Goldstein’s mass murder of twenty-nine Palestinian Muslims (and the wounding of more than a hundred others) praying at the Ibrahim mosque in the Cave of Machpelah (Cave of the Patriarchs). See Garb, *Yekhidei HaSegulot Yiheyu La’adarim*, 93–95.

²⁶ Breslov refers to Rebbe Nachman of Breslov (1772–1810). The writings of Nachman and his student, Rav Natan (1780–1844), have become popular in the last few decades and are now published for mainstream audiences in Israel and North America. Rav Avraham HaCohen Kuk (1865–1935) was the first Ashkenazi chief rabbi of the Jewish settlement in Palestine during the British mandate period. His Kabbalistic philosophy poetically describes the metaphysical connection between the Land of Israel, the People of Israel, and the Torah. Kuk's philosophy has become the ideological foundation of the religious Zionist movement in Israel, largely through the work of his son Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook (1891–1982), an important leader in political religious Zionism.

²⁷ Besides those listed above, the *Mei Shiloach* (of Rebbe Mordechai Joseph Leiner, or Ishbitzer Rebbe), the *Aish HaKodesh* (of Rebbe Klonimos Shlomo Shapiro, the Piaszena or “Warsaw Ghetto” Rebbe), and *Sfat Emet* (of Rebbe Yehuda Aryeh Alter, the late Ger Rebbe) are popular Hasidic texts. Tanakh is a Hebrew acronym for the Jewish canon of sacred texts—*Torah*, *Nev'im* (Prophets), and *Ketuv'im* (Writings).

²⁸ The first ban was ideological, a promotion of *avoda ivrit*, or Hebrew labor, a classic Zionist principle. The second ban was explained as a security precaution.

²⁹ The political and ideological distance between the settlers and the Israeli State widened dramatically during the 2005 Disengagement from Gaza. A large-scale campaign against the program was launched in the months leading up to the action, invoking treason and comparing the Israeli State to Nazi Germany. There were threats made against those responsible for the evacuation, but for the most part there was no substantial violence.

³⁰ Most recently, on 4 April 2009, a 13-year-old boy was attacked with an axe and murdered in the settlement. The man who was arrested and confessed to the attack was from nearby village Khirbet Safa, near Hebron. I am abbreviating a complex and sprawling topic. The literature on Israeli settlements and the military occupation is voluminous, varied, and often polemical, condemning or justifying. For a personal yet informative Palestinian perspective on the effect of settlements on the geopolitical and day-to-day reality in the West Bank, see Raja Shehadeh, *Palestinian Walks: Forays into a Vanishing Landscape* (New York: Scribner, 2008).

³¹ In one story, the settlers woke up one morning to find that some of their sheep had been stolen. The next morning, the shepherds of Zurif awoke to find that their sheep had been slaughtered. It should be noted that attacks are not less common in Bat Ayin than in other settlements, although perhaps the absence of a fence would cause one to hypothesize they would be more frequent.

³² This reflects the curious fact that the American-Israeli population, especially those who settle in the Occupied Territories, represents one of the most highly educated brackets of American society. In a 1984 study Chaim Waxman found that less than 10 percent lacked an undergraduate degree, and up to 17 percent had a doctorate. These are high levels of education compared to the general population of American Jews, which in turn is one of the most highly educated minorities in American society. At the same time, it correlates with the education level of American immigrants in Israel in general (not just in the Occupied Territories), who tend to be more highly educated than their counterparts in the United States. See Chaim Waxman, *American Aliyah: Portrait of an Innovative Migration Movement* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1989), 152.

³³ For a Jew, becoming an Israeli citizen is relatively easy due to the Law of Return, whereby any Jew has a right to become an Israeli citizen. Of course, bureaucracy can be a compelling reason to put off the necessary paperwork.

³⁴ Renewal Judaism developed around the leadership of Rabbi Zalman Schachter in the 1970s with the B'nai Or congregation (later P'nai Or) in Philadelphia and then the Aquarian Minyan in Berkeley. It has since established retreat centers and congregations throughout the country.

³⁵ The phrase “black and white” plays on the black and white wardrobe of the men in this milieu—black suit, white button-down shirts, black velvet kippot and black fedoras—as well as the dualistic outlook in which every action, not just those prescribed or forbidden by Jewish law, is clearly marked as right or wrong.

³⁶ The only notable absence in this spectrum of religious backgrounds is the Ultra-Orthodox Jewish community.

³⁷ In Orthodox Judaism, it is a custom for men to always cover their heads and for women to cover their heads only after marriage.

³⁸ Ariel recounts fashion experimentation in the original House of Love and Prayer. One man made his *tallit* out of a green fabric he bought in India. Another “put on seven *kippahs* for mysterious kabbalistic reasons, and [once] wore a large mirror.” Ariel, “Hasidism in the Age of Aquarius,” 146–52.

³⁹ The phrase was first used by President Dwight D. Eisenhower in his farewell address speech, 17 January 1961.

⁴⁰ I refer to Max Weber’s concept of the routinization of charisma extrapolated in Anthony F. C. Wallace’s model of a revitalization movement in his article, “Revitalization Movements,” in *American Anthropologist* 58 (1956): 264–81. For Wallace, the point when a social or religious movement takes hold and successfully establishes a legitimate new way of being is when the authority of the charismatic leader is maintained and distributed throughout a stable institutional structure following the leader’s death. In proposing this concept, Wallace integrates Weber’s concept of the routinization of charisma into his own model of the revitalization movement.

⁴¹ These schools developed parallel to Jewish Renewal, which incorporates a similar pantheistic theology but presents a decidedly different take on religious authority and nationalism.

⁴² Not coincidentally, this is the basic guiding assumption of traditional Hasidism as first practiced by the Ba’al Shem Tov and his students in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In this way, Neo-Hasidism can also be viewed as a revitalization not only of Jewish practice but of Hasidism in particular.