

***Devekut* and bodily service- the role of the Tsaddik and the redemption of the “evil urges” of the flock in Eastern European Hasidic communities**

In a homily included in the *Maggid Devarav le-Yaakov*, the Maggid of Meseritz develops a rather startling interpretation of the episode of Judah and Tamar in Gen. 38. The Biblical text tells us that Tamar “sat at Petach Einayim” and that Judah “saw her and thought her to be a prostitute, for she had veiled her face”; then it proceeds to tell us of Judah’s misdemeanor and subsequent humiliation for failing in his duty towards his daughter-in-law. The Maggid, however, has no interest in the law of levirate, and prefers to linger on the hidden meaning of the name Tamar, which he reads as an acrostic of *tam* (“whole”, or “innocent”) and *mar* (bitter). Tamar represents the alien thoughts that sometimes enter the heart of the *hasid*: outwardly, they are bitter, but in truth, they are pure- in fact, they are a divine entity that has been uprooted from its original place and it has become distorted into an impure or a sinful thought. Not accidentally are we told that Tamar “sat at Petach Einayim” (literally, “the opening of the eye”); for the Maggid, this symbolizes prayer, by which we seek to ascend to the Holy One, and which more than any other human activity is beset by alien thoughts. Tamar’s beauty, however, is such that eventually Judah recognizes her for who she is; indeed, *zonah* (prostitute) stands for *zo na’ah* (she is beautiful) and intimates that by yoking our instincts, we engage in mystical intercourse with the *Shekhinah*. The true mystic must wrestle with the alien thought so as to uncover its inner beauty; only in this way shall he progress on the spiritual path towards *devekut*, which is the term deployed by Hasidic writers to indicate a close intimacy with God¹.

Notes

¹ Cf. Yoram Jacobson, *Hasidic Thought*, pp. 139-140.

The teaching on the raising of alien thoughts and the redirection of our evil urges towards the service of God constitutes one of the most intriguing aspects of Hasidic theological speculation, but also one that is often overlooked. The enduring popularity of the Hasidic story even outside the boundaries of Orthodox Jewish communities has not been accompanied by an equal interest in the more speculative writings of the Hasidic masters, many of which are only now becoming accessible to a wider audience. My purpose in this paper is thus to explore the theology underlying the figure of the *tsaddik* within the Hasidic communities of Eastern Europe and to outline how the doctrine of “service through corporeality” (*avodah be gashmiyyut*) was crucial to its development; indeed, the social role played by the *tsaddik* in fostering cohesion and solidarity within his community was only the outward manifestation of this hidden, but infinitely far-reaching activity. By the end of my discussion, I hope to have conveyed a sense of how the teaching on the *tsaddik*’s relationship with his community and his ability to redirect towards the service of God the evil urges of his flock combined centuries of reflection on the soteriological value of created reality as well as the more recent belief in the redemptive value of voluntary self-abasement.

The *tsaddik*’s engagement of creation’s disfigured aspects in his spiritual practice cannot be understood without referring to the Kabbalistic notion of *tikkun*. Following the *Zohar*, the writings of the Lurianic School postulated a process of divine withdrawal (*tsimtsum*), whereby God, at the beginning of time, went into exile from Himself and let the universe emerge. In the so-called “breaking of the vessels” (*shevirath ha kelim*), something of God’s primordial light overflowed into the primordial space, where it continues to appear under a variety of aspects. We might then start wondering what is the origin of evil. Luria views the latter as a by-product of the life of the Sephiroth², particularly of the quality of stern judgment (*din*), but, unlike the *Zohar*, insists that it is only after this cataclysmic event that evil assumed a separate existence; from then on, until this cosmic imbalance is mended, the good

² Cf. G. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, p. 267.

elements of the divine order are bound to be mixed with the evil ones. This vision construes the emergence of the created order as one stage in the inner life of God, which unfolds in an endless process of *hithpashtuth* (egression) and *histalkuth* (regression) reminiscent of the Neo-platonic emanations of antiquity. Man alone can bring this process to completion; humanity is called to engage in a cosmic process of restoration (*tikkun*), whereby the exiled sparks of the Godhead are separated from evil (*beirur*) and returned to their proper place.

The Lurianic perspective invests the spiritual life of the individual with an extraordinary resonance. On one hand, prayer sustains the soul's progress towards God; on the other hand, it brings every Jew to the forefront of the process of universal restitution, ensuring that the historical event of Israel's galut is a mere reflection of this cosmic imbalance³. But the doctrine of the breaking of the vessels has another important implication: namely, that there is no aspect of creation, not even the most humble and insignificant, that does not conceal a spark of the *Shekhinah*. By means of our spiritual actions, these sparks are separated from the "evil shells" of the *kelippoth* and returned to their original root. The Halakhic distinction between "pure" and "impure" aspects of reality is thus grounded within a wider cosmological horizon, where even minor Talmudic injunctions appear to reflect the inner dynamics of the divine life.

The story of Judah and Tamar might seem to fit into this scheme, but the Maggid does not ask to separate good from evil, but rather to engage evil on its own terms and operate its transformation. This shift can be accounted for if we consider that the precarious equilibrium between Halakhic tradition and the Lurianic notion of *tikkun* had been deeply shaken by the antinomian tendencies of the Sabbatian movement. The well-known episode of Sabbatai Zevi's apostasy to Islam had led his more devoted followers to elaborate an ethical doctrine, which invested the breaking of Talmudic laws with a virtually sacramental significance. As a result, within certain Sabbatian communities, the infringement

³ Cf. G. Scholem, *Tradition und Neuschöpfung im Ritus der Kabbalisten*, in *Eranos Jahrbuch*, 19, 1950, pp. 121ff.

of *kashrut* or Shabbat prescriptions by means of so-called *maasim zarim* (“strange, or paradoxical acts”), would develop into secret rituals, whereby individual practitioners would share in the self-abasement of the Messiah⁴. In this new perspective, following the Talmud is not enough to bring about *tikkun*; in the last stages of the process, it is necessary to descend into the realm of darkness and liberate the sparks imprisoned in its depths, through an ordeal to which only a few extraordinary individuals are called. If the behavior of these athletes of the spirit appears outlandish to the other members of the community, it is because they already act in accordance with the law of the world of *tikkun*, where the fully spiritual *Torah de Atsiluth* has superseded the sensory and inferior *Torah de Beriah*.

Soon enough, an orthodox reaction against such self-destructive tendencies would emerge, but the Sabbatian contention that it was somehow meritorious to sin, so as to conquer evil from within, would not so easily disappear. In fact, the areas of Eastern Europe where Sabbatianism had been stronger would be the areas where the Hassidic movement would be most popular. In Lithuania, where Sabbatianism had little impact on religious and intellectual life in general, the Jewish community would soon come under the spell of the Talmudic revival spearheaded by the Gaon of Vilna. On the other hand, as Scholem reminds us in his history of Jewish mysticism, many prominent Jews from Galicia and the Ukraine would secretly remain Sabbatian sympathizers well into the 19th century. Among the more educated classes, the opposition between a “higher” and a “lower” approach to spiritual practice would paradoxically favor the emergence of the “enlightened” Judaism of the reformers, who opposed the Talmudic strictures of the tradition⁵. At a more popular level, Sabbatian speculation about the nature of evil and the inner dynamics of the spiritual life would operate a shift in the way spiritual practice was understood; rather than just observing the letter of *haskala*, the *tsaddik* was seen as contributing to the restoration of the cosmic equilibrium by means of a more creative struggle with the forces of evil, which would bear the mark of his individual personality. Instead of the

⁴ Cf. John Freely, *The lost Messiah: in Search of the Mystical Rabbi Sabbatai Sevi*, 2003, pp. 56ff.

one cosmic struggle with evil expected of the Messiah, the entire existence of the *tsaddik* would become an incessant series of less visible, but no less effective mystical feats. In this way, the spirituality of the Hasidic movement accomplished an effective *Aufhebung* of Sabbatian antinomianism within the framework of a renewed commitment to a traditional reading of the Torah. Indeed, the disappointment following the apostasy of Sabbatai Zevi ensured that the veneration of the *tsaddik* would come to fill the vacuum left by what Scholem calls the virtual neutralization of Messianic expectations.

Within the world of the Eastern European *shetl*, Hasidism would become greatly popular among the less educated populace, who could not aspire to the heights of Talmudic scholarship; and this historical reality has led many scholars to view Hasidism as spearheading a more democratic vision of the spiritual life. The reality, however, is more complex, since the existence of the Hasidic communities rested upon a small number of individuals, who were thought to have discovered the secret of true *devekut* and were therefore made the object of an almost fanatical reverence. In addition, the *tsaddik* differed from the Jewish mystics of earlier generations in the way he related to the larger community of the believers. Sabbatai Zevi had never returned to the fold of the community after his apostasy to share his mystical experience; on the contrary, he had died leaving his followers in deep disarray. Even the Lurianic cabalist had often had little interest for the spiritual life of those who lacked the intellectual means to engage in the highest levels of mystical speculation. On the other hand, the *tsaddik* would undertake to share his knowledge with his followers and all the men of good will, whom he feels God has entrusted to his care. Rabbi Elimelekh of Lyzhansk would draw a distinction between *tsaddikim* more concerned with spiritual guidance and *tsaddikim* more directly involved with the practical affairs of the people; but what truly matters is that the *tsaddik* no longer sees mystical life as a pursuit that requires solitude and isolation. Thus the simple believer seeking spiritual fulfillment no

⁵ Cf. G. Scholem, *op. cit.*, p. 319.

longer needs the treatises of the Talmud or the tomes of the Kabbalah; rather, she can follow the Tsaddik's example and imitate certain traits of his character and outward behavior, certain that in this way she can draw closer to the divine. Personality entirely replaces knowledge; even a single *mitzvah*, if performed in imitation of the *tsaddik*, can help one attain *devekut*.

As we see from the writings of Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Lyady, the life of the *tsaddik* is characterized by a constant dialectic between the desire to flee this world losing oneself in the mystery of the divine, and the call to sanctify this world and the Jewish community through everyday actions. In the *Devarim* section of *Likkutei Torah*, Schneur Zalman resorts to the metaphor of a wedding dance to describe the relationship between God and the people of Israel, but the same metaphor is then applied to the relationship between the *tsaddik* and his flock. As in a dance the two partners move away from each other and then once again draw close, so it is with the souls who seek the Lord in all things: indeed, there is never any true distancing, since the Holy One indwells all aspects of creation⁶. *Devekut* as a permanent state is beyond the reach of most, but it is always possible to slide back on one's spiritual path; at the same time, God can find us even in the lowest depths of abjection. The *tsaddik*, however, having reached a permanent condition of *devekut*, can choose to go back to his flock, while his mind remains always fixed on God. Schneur Zalman compared this movement to the seraphs that rash back and forth (*ratso va-shov*) around God's throne in the vision of Ezekiel, but ultimately never leave the divine presence⁷; the practice of "service through corporeality", which requires that one leaves the divine presence for a time, is part of the mystical dance whereby the Holy One wishes to woo Israel, her beloved⁸. In the *Tanya*, the founder of Habad states clearly that some reach *devekut* more easily than others, and indeed that different degrees of *devekut* are within the reach of different individuals; no matter how far you see into the divine mystery during *ratso*, decisive importance is

⁶ Cf. Rabbi Schneur Zalman, *Likkutei Torah, Devarim*, 86b.

⁷ Cf. Ezekiel, 1,14.

⁸ Cf. R. Elimelekh of Lyzhasnsk, *Noam Elimelekh*, 5b, 1960.

ascribed to the phase of *shov*, since it is in the created realm that the mission of man must be accomplished. Thus the *shov* of the *tsaddik*, who more than anyone else has penetrated the divine mystery during *ratso*, is going to be invested with an extraordinary value.

The *tsaddik* incarnates that very paradox which Mahāyāna Buddhists have encapsulated in the notion of active *nirvāna*: that of the individual who has attained the highest degree of the spiritual life, and yet forsakes his mystical intimacy with the divine to become the linchpin of a community of believers. According to Rabbi Levi Yitzhak of Berdichev, the *tsaddik* can talk of worldly matters with his followers and yet indwell in *devekut*; his most insignificant actions overflow with salvific power⁹. In the *Tsaavat ha Rivash*, we are told that man must serve the Holy One by bringing every bodily pleasure to God, and the *tsaddik* is there to show us the way; he is said to foster *tikkun* even as he eats, and the leftovers from his table are regarded as holier than the sacrificial offerings in the temple of Jerusalem¹⁰. The Maggid of Meseritz claimed that the *tsaddik* accomplishes *tikkun* even as he performs his bodily functions¹¹. Along the same lines, Rabbi Yaakov Yosef of Polonnoye applies the Scriptural injunction “you will know Him (*daehu*) in all your ways” (Proverbs 3, 6) to the *tsaddik*’s service through corporeality; in a startling move (familiar to the scholars of Vajrayāna Buddhism), the term *daehu* is read as intimating the sexual union between the Shekinah and the Holy One which sustains the universe, and which is brought about as the *tsaddik* takes over the sin of his flock¹².

Scholem notes that in the context of Hassidism, “general ideas became individual ethical values”; the cult of the personality of the *tsaddik* becomes so overbearing as to displace traditional speculation on redemption and the last times. Indeed, in some of the more speculative works of the tradition, the spiritual life of the *tsaddik* comes to absorb, and virtually take over, the spiritual life of

⁹ Cf. *Kedushat Levi*, 39-40.

¹⁰ Cf. *Tsaavat ha Rivash*, 2, 1965.

¹¹ Cf. *Or Torah*, p. 166.

the community. According to Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Lyady, the *tsaddik*'s struggle with evil includes redeeming the evil thoughts and urges that he "takes over" from the members of the congregation¹³. The *tsaddik* is related to his disciples in the same way as the soul gives life to its body, or as form gives shape to matter; what happens in the depths of his psyche has an impact on the psyche of each one of his followers, since his soul somehow encompasses the soul of all his disciples. At this point, Christian theologians and Buddhist scholars will find interesting threads of continuity with their own tradition. The former will think of the teaching of vicarious atonement, as the *tsaddik* takes over the sin of his followers and suffers in their stead. When we are told that he unveils the true nature of their vices, we are also reminded of the Christological doctrine of anhypostasy, according to which, in the event of the incarnation, Christ deified human nature as a whole, turning its flaws into virtues. Buddhist scholars familiar with Tantric practices will also recognize Tibetan teachings on the hidden salvific value of disordered emotions, which can be rectified and turned into a support in our search for enlightenment.

Going back to the Jewish tradition, however, we must remember that this high theology of the *tsaddik* makes sense only against the background of the Hasidic theology of divine immanence, which in its turn is related to the belief in the "hidden sparks" of the divine which are scattered in the world. Hasidic masters were fond of the Zoharic saying "there is no place empty of Him", and saw it as their duty to seek the divine presence even in the most unlikely locations¹⁴. While Lurianic *tikkun* was an eschatological reality of which only indirect intimations could be seen, its Hasidic counterpart is something that is present here and now, and that every individual has the potentiality to realize. The *Shekinah* is no longer associated with the world of the *sephiroth*, but is rather identified with the principle of the divine life that indwells all living beings. The *tsaddik* is called to scrutinize his inner life and seek the spiritual element hidden within it, until he apprehends the all-embracing unity of the

¹² Cf. *Toldot Yaakov Yosef*, p. 23.

¹³ Cf. *Sefer shel Beinonim*, Ch. 28, p. 35.

¹⁴ Cf. *Tikkunei Zohar*, Sect. 57, ed. R. Margolioth, 1948, 91b

divine nature that sustains all phenomena. The Lurianic notion of *beirur* (separation between good and evil) sought to retrieve the divine sparks and to restore them to their previous condition, but Hasidism has no wish to evacuate the principle of divine vitality from creation; rather it seeks to show that the world itself is a pure vessel that discloses God's holiness and sustains our path to salvation.

On the other hand, the language used by Hassidic authors such as the already mentioned Maggid of Meseritz, or the latter Rabbi Simhah Bunem of Przysucha, appears to mirror the Madhyamaka school of Mahāyāna Buddhism and its distinction between conventional and ultimate truth. The injunction to cast off the veil of delusion and discern the fundamental unity of all phenomena echoes the language of awakening and the interpretation of the *Shekinah* as a reality concealed with all beings reminds one of stronger readings of the doctrine of Buddhahood (or even of Eckhardt's monism). The scholar of comparative religions might also note that the shift from Luria's *contemptus mundi* to the more optimistic Hasidic understanding of *devekut* mirrors the shift from the Theravada to the Mahāyāna notion of *nirvāna*; so that the role of the *tsaddik* within the community resembles that of the *bodhisattva* whose merits come to benefit all sentient beings. There is however a fundamental difference, inasmuch as Hasidic masters have an ultimately more positive understanding of the value of created reality than their Buddhist counterparts. On one hand, they echo their concern that preoccupation with one's separate existence obscures our awareness that everything is ultimately one; on the other hand, their theistic assumptions do not allow them to view created reality as something merely provisional and instrumental, but rather as the ambit where God's kingdom is finally going to be revealed. The evil urge that must be redeemed is authentically evil, and at the same time it is an authentic offshoot of God's own life

This assertion of the sacramental value of evil must be read against the long history of Jewish speculation on the *sitra ahra*, the "dark side" of God. The author of the *Zohar* posited the existence of a so-called "left emanation", an ordered hierarchy of ten evil potencies that mirrored the realm of the

Sephiroth¹⁵. Later Kabbalistic speculation, while continuing to see the *sitra ahra* as an embodiment of evil, would eventually come to explain it as a providential element in the cosmic dialectic that is God's inner life. The Hassidic writers that describe the inner life of the *tsaddik* go even further and explain evil thoughts as means for our spiritual ascent coming directly from God; the Maggid of Meseritz notes that when we push aside an alien thought so as to cling to God with greater fervor, we are hastening *tikkun* but also showing that evil is ultimately part of God's design. In the *Maggid Devarav le-Yaakov*, we find this point supported by yet another imaginative exegesis, this time of one of the opening verses of the *Qohelet*: "and the sun rises, and the sun sets, and it longs to its place from which it rises". While, taken literally, the text quite clearly indicates the cyclical nature and ultimate pointlessness of all natural phenomena, the Maggid reads it as intimating the divine origin of alien thoughts. The sun stands for the mystical ardor that is aroused in prayer and that is undercut by the alien thought, and this is because the alien thought itself "longs for its place", inwardly desires to return to the condition of utter purity that is truly its own. In this perspective, even lustful desires are nothing but a distorted manifestation of divine love¹⁶; and indeed, in the cosmology developed by Schneur Zalman, evil urges possess a higher metaphysical dignity than their holy counterparts, because the divine root of evil is higher than the divine root of good. In the *Likkutei Torah*, we are reminded that when a building collapses, the stones on the top often end up at the bottom of the rubble; similarly, at the breaking of the vessels, what was closest to the divine source ended at the bottom, turning into evil urges¹⁷.

The *tsaddik's* task is thus to subdue these urges, or better, to help his followers attain *devekut* through their ordinary inclination to sin. Hasidic literature, however, retains a degree of ambivalence as to the extent to which ordinary believers in the community can imitate the *tsaddik* in his struggle with alien thoughts. The Maggid of Meseritz seems to believe that every Jew is called to this type of

¹⁵ Cf. G. Scholem, *op. cit.*, pp. 177-178.

¹⁶ Cf. *Maggid Devarav le-Yaakov*, pp. 143-144.

¹⁷ Cf. *Likkutei Torah*, pp. 27-34.

practice, and that the only difference between ordinary believers and the *tsaddik* is that the latter is going to bring it to the highest level of perfection, thereby benefiting the whole of Israel's community. Schneur Zalman, however, disagrees. In the *Tanya*, he voices his concern that many individuals who wish to give themselves fully to the practice of asceticism are hindered by their lower, "animal" soul; in this case, what would otherwise be meritorious can become a source of great danger. Better to shun alien thoughts, lest one is induced to heed their suggestions, or, which is worse, to yield to despair, which Hasidic masters regarded as possibly the most grievous sin. Schneur Zalman is adamant that this type of spiritual practice is to the reserve of the *tsaddik*, because he has fully subjugated his animal soul; otherwise, it would be like one who wrestles with a person covered in dirt and is by him dragged down into filth¹⁸. The question is then how is it possible to determine whether an individual is truly a *tsaddik*. How can one measure *deveikut*? Or is there some other distinctive trait in one's inner life that sets the *tsaddik* apart?

Rabbi Schneur Zalman, the founder of Habad, was very well aware of the tremendous suffering caused to the Jewish people by their readiness to trust individuals such as Sabbatai Zevi and Jacob Frank. Similarly, a community of Hasids would come to tremendous grief if it were to follow a false *tsaddik*; thus, a considerable portion of the *Tanya* is devoted to the question of *discretio spirituum*. In Ch. 10 of the *Tanya*, we find a distinction between the perfect *tsaddik*, whose godly soul has achieved the final victory over the animal soul, the incomplete *tsaddik*, in whom "a fragment of evil is still present", and those individuals who, even if they engage in extensive spiritual practice, are not yet *tsaddikim*, but rather "intermediate" people (*beinonim*). In this perspective, a person might practice the virtues to the highest degree and expect a reward in the world to come, and yet he might fall short of what is required to be a real *tsaddik*, because he has yet to tame his animal urges; Schneur Zalman calls

¹⁸ Cf. *Tanya*, Ch. 28.

this person “a *tsaddik* to whom is evil (*tsaddik ve ra lo*)”¹⁹. The contemporary commentator Adin Steinsaltz reads this as a distinction between the *tsaddik* who consciously does what God wants, and the *tsaddik* who spontaneously does God’s will in every action. The earlier chapters of the *Tanya* note that it is only by means of a prolonged struggle that the individual can direct his or her inner forces towards God, but if a person succeeds in reaching authentic *devekut*, his or her energies are wholly redirected to the pursuit of holiness. At this point the individual no longer requires “direction” and can give free rein to his or her desires, because they shall invariably reflect God’s will. The perfect *tsaddik* has not lost free will, but whichever alternative he chooses is pleasing to God. The 7th century Greek theologian Maximos the Confessor would have said that he has reached *egchoresis gnomike* (volitional stability), whereby his will has been fully deified. Using a more homely metaphor, Rabbi Nachum of Shtifinshti compares the life of a *tsaddik* to a game of checkers: initially, you can only move in one direction, but after you reach the end of the board (*devekut*), you can move any way you wish.

The notion of *avodah be gashmiyyut* rests then on the belief that desire as such is ultimately only a pointer to God’s true nature. If a holy person experiences animal cravings such as “the desire for intercourse or other physical pleasures”, he should remember that the phenomenal reality of this world exists only in order to be negated; the *Mishnah* tells us that the glory of God only shines through the means of blemishes and imperfections²⁰. Even if our evil urges are ten times stronger than their holy counterparts, as the Maggid of Meseritz tells us, the Hassidic tradition urges one not to yield into despair, since these urges, once purified, are going to take us much closer to God. Schneur Zalman goes even further and reminds us that every time we experience pleasure, we experience the principle of divine vitality that pervades all things. The *Likkutei Torah* present God as the embodiment of all pleasure, and effectively the hidden cause of even sinful desires; while we derive pleasure from things that are outside of us, God finds pleasure in Himself; another way to interpret the breaking of the

¹⁹ Cf. *Tanya*, Ch. 10.

vessels is to view this as the overflow of the divine pleasure into the world. Thus, another way to interpret the *tsaddik*'s mission amidst his community is that he educates the members of his flock to see earthly pleasures as channels of God's glory; much as children in a *heder* learn how to use inference from the smaller to the greater (*kal va homer*) when they study the Talmud, in the same way the *tsaddik* must teach his community to raise their thoughts from the small, fleeting pleasures of this world to their divine source in God. In his actions, the *tsaddik* sets the terms for authentic theology of desire; scholars of comparative religion will find here an echo of the Tantric notion of *mahasukhakāya*, which construed Buddhahood as encompassing and purifying even disordered pleasures and lusts.

It is in connection with this pedagogical task that the *tsaddik* is sometimes *required* to sin, if this is to the benefit of his congregation. The *Ben Porat Yosef* notes that if the *tsaddik*'s disciples are burdened by sin, in order to raise them up to God, he may have to sin so as to get back to their level. How could the *tsaddik* work for the welfare of his flock without knowing what troubles their hearts? Indeed, there could be occasion when choosing not to sin would be detrimental to the greater good; the Talmud blames the destruction of the temple and the exile of Israel from the Holy Land to the excessive humility of one Zechariah ben Avkulos²¹. In these cases, God wills the *tsaddik* to forego consideration of his own salvation. Schneur Zalman makes yet another provocative claim when he observes that the complete *tsaddik* is readier to sin when necessary than the *tsaddik ve ra lo*, since the former is absolutely incapable of hatred; as such, he does not even hate the *sitra ahra*, and can engage in evil if his flock shall not respond to mere words of warning²². The *Toldot Yaakov Yosef* observe that the *tsaddik* is like the minister of a king who chooses to wear ordinary cloths to befriend straying members of the court and restore them to friendship with the king²³. Here, the Sabbatian influence on the doctrine of the *tsaddik* is evident; in the same way as the Messiah would voluntarily descend to the

²⁰ Cf. Y. Jacobson, p. 151-152.

²¹ Cf. *Talmud Gittin*, 66a.

²² Cf. *Tanya*, 10.

realm of evil, the *tsaddik* has to cloth himself in the garments of sin²⁴. Admittedly, however, a degree of ambiguity remains as to whether the *tsaddik* is truly expected to engage in sin (like Sabbatai Zevi), or he is merely *pretending* to do so for the sake of his disciples.

The story of Judah and Tamar is thus again emblematic of the relationship between the *tsaddik* and his community. It is only by engaging in what was effectively unlawful sexual intercourse with his daughter-in-law that Judah could ensure that God's promises to Abraham would not remain void; in the same way, it is only by embracing his evil urges and those of his congregation that the *tsaddik* celebrates his mystical union with the community. The difference here is that the *tsaddik* is acting lucidly and in full awareness of what he is doing, connecting the transient world of the phenomena to their eternal source in God. In this sense, we can say that the *tsaddik* embodies the tragic, though not hopeless destiny of man, who is forever torn between his aspiration to the infinite and his ties with the fallen world.

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²³ Cf. Y. Jacobson, pp. 187-188.

²⁴ Cf. *Toldot Yaakov Yosef*, f. 50b.

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