# Between Brooklyn and Brookline: American Hasidism and the Evolution of the Bostoner Hasidic Tradition[1]

Seth Farber

One morning after services, a hasid [*sic*] approached his Rebbe and said: "Rebbe, I had a dream. I was the Rebbe and all of the hasidim [*sic*] revered me." The Rebbe ignored the hasid. The next morning, the disciple once again approached the Rebbe and said: "Rebbe. I had the dream again! I was the Rebbe and all the hasidim revered me!" The Rebbe, unimpressed, once again ignored his disciple. On the third morning, the hasid approached the Rebbe. "Rebbe," he said, "I had the dream again. How can you be sure that I'm not the Rebbe?" "My dear hasid," responded the Rebbe, "when you dream you are the Rebbe, you can be certain that you are not the Rebbe. When your hasidim dream you're the Rebbe, then you are the Rebbe."

- A story told by R. Levi Yitzchak Horowitz, the Bostoner Rebbe

> "For years I nourished a desire...to witness this past and to experience the world destroyed before my birth, but from which I knew I came...But Brookline was not Brooklyn."
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> -Samuel Heilman, *Defenders of the Faith*

Though Hasidism is rooted in the European religious conservative milieu of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, its American descendants have demonstrated remarkable variance, both within the religious and social contexts and on a much broader scale in the political and cultural spheres. Little has been written about the dynamics of American Hasidism, and almost all of the literature has focused on the prominent Hasidic groups such as Lubavitch (Chabad) and Satmar. This paper seeks to correct this trend by analyzing and contrasting the careers of two American brothers who each became known as the Bostoner Rebbe. Though these rebbes are unique and the story of their Hasidic tradition anomalous, their history reflects a number of noteworthy issues that must be considered when evaluating the nature of the American Hasidic tradition in particular and the nature of American ultra-Orthodoxy in general.[2]

To whom does the term Bostoner Rebbe refer? In his seminal essay on American Orthodoxy,[3] Charles Leibman described the rebbe's Palestinian and European origins. Stephen Sharot identified

the Bostoner Rebbe as the creator of an outreach (*kiruv*) movement in Boston.[4] And *HaModia,* the newspaper of the ultra-Orthodox union Agudat Yisrael, suggested that he was the leader of a Brooklyn Hasidic court who represented the United States at the fifth Agudah convention in Jerusalem. Each of these descriptions, of course, relates to different Bostoner Rebbes: Leibman referred to Rabbi Pinchas Dovid Horowitz , the founder of Bostoner Hasidism, while Sharot referred to Rabbi Levi Yitzchak Horowitz and *HaModia* to Rabbi Moshe Horowitz.

The history of the second generation of Bostoner Rebbes—Rabbi Moshe of Brooklyn and Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Brookline—provides an excellent opportunity to contrast the development of "in-town" and "out-of-town" American ultra-Orthodoxy. Rabbi Moshe established his court in New York, the center of American Hasidism, while Levi Yitzchak moved north to a community where Hasidism was peripheral to Orthodoxy's core. Though these courts claimed loyalty to the same dynastic tradition, they developed in distinctive ways and took divergent paths. Their evolution raises the following questions: To what extent did the second generation of Hasidic rabbis in America maintain the already Americanized traditions of their parents? What were the effects of the development of a Hasidic center in Brooklyn on minor Hasidic sects? How were these differences manifested in the Bostoner courts in Brooklyn and Boston?

## BACKGROUND

Pinchas Dovid Horowitz, a descendant of prominent Hungarian rabbis, was born at Jerusalem in 1876. After developing a reputation as a Talmudic scholar, Pinchas Dovid was sent to Galicia in 1913 to serve on a rabbinical court adjudicating the distribution of funds for the old Yishuv. Caught in Austrio-Hungary at the outbreak of the First World War, he escaped to America, sailing under the false name of Isaac Abraham. Although he spoke no English, Rabbi Pinchas Dovid was invited to serve as the rabbi of Congregation Rayim Ahuvim in Brownsville, New York, where he resided for almost a year. Because he felt indebted to certain Bostonians who helped him emigrate, he settled in Boston's West End in 1915. Rabbi Pinchas Dovid's first son, Moshe, was born at Jerusalem in 1909 and was separated from his father for more than eight years before the family reunited at New York in 1919. His second son, Levi Yitzchak, was born

in 1920 at Boston, thereby becoming, according to Bostoner tradition, the first Hasidic rebbe born in America. It is these two brothers who are the focus of this study.[5]

## SOURCES

Before analyzing the careers of these two brothers, it is important to distinguish between the research resources available, as they clearly reflect the disparate careers of Moshe and Levi Yitzchak. The most comprehensive analysis of Bostoner Hasidism is found in Shalom Wallach's *Shushelet Boston,* a hagiography published in 1994 about the Hasidic dynasty. This text is important not only for the historical kernels found within it, but also because of the numerous documents it contains. Only one chapter in this book is dedicated to Rabbi Moshe, while the last six chapters chronicle Rabbi Levi Yitzchak's career. This qualitative disparity is characteristic of a general trend found in all writings about the Bostoner Hasidic tradition.

Sparse information about Rabbi Moshe is found in a number of newspapers such as *Di Yiddishe Vort,* the *Jewish Press,* and *HaModia,* as well as a number of Agudat Yisrael of America documents. By contrast, a plethora of information has been published about Rabbi Levi Yitzchak in almost every Jewish newspaper and in articles in Boston's secular press. Numerous journals, including the *Guide to Jewish Boston* and *The Jewish Catalogue,* have featured Levi Yitzchak. Two histories of Rabbi Levi Yitzchak were published by the Beth Pinchas Center in Boston, and a number of public relations pamphlets feature the activities of the New England Hassidic Center, Levi Yitzchak's organizational base. Rabbi Levi Yitzchak is the subject of a book by the renowned Hasidic storyteller, Hanoch Teller. And, most remarkably, both Rabbi Levi Yitzchak and his wife published memoirs titled *And the Angels Laughed* and *The Bostoner Rebbetzin Remembers,* respectively. Rabbi Levi Yitzchak may also be the only living rabbi to be featured in Artscroll's *Judaiscope* series. Of course, these sources must be employed selectively and analyzed critically, but the very existence of so wide a range of accounts relating to a relatively minor Hasidic tradition is remarkable.

One issue that needs to be explored is why Rabbi Levi Yitzchak has received disproportionate attention in the press. Was his charisma so compelling? Was he indeed unique among Hasidic rabbis in America? In what ways did he stand out from his older brother?

## EDUCATION OF THE BROTHERS

From the outset, the two Horowitz brothers were schooled in different environments. Though Moshe was born in Palestine, his formative years were spent in Europe, where he lived with his grandparents until 1920. He began his formal studies in 1921, after his family arrived in America. According to Wallach's history, Moshe did not attend school but rather, in traditional Hasidic fashion, received home tutoring.

> Rabbi Pinchas Dovid hired private tutors for his son who was then eight years old, and did not consider sending his son to public school, despite the "mandatory education law"... [He was brought to trial, and] defended his position by arguing... "I will only teach my son Torah."The mandatory education law of our tradition is written in the Torah in the words "And you shall teach your children"... The judge could not accept these arguments, but he was so impressed with the Rebbe's passion that he ruled that the Rebbe could teach his son at home, on the condition that private tutors for secular studies be employed to teach the curriculum of the public schools. Obviously, these tutors were only hired for show.

There is no way to ascertain the accuracy of the claim that Moshe did not attend public school. However, Wallach's contention is suspect because of a similar claim he makes about Rabbi Levi Yitzchak:

> The Rebbe also hired private tutors for Levi Yitzchak. This time, he was not brought to trial, for the authorities knew his intransigence and his stubbornness when it came to the education of his sons.[6]

Archival resources seem to contradict this claim. A 1955 newsletter from Torah Vodaas, the Brooklyn yeshiva which Levi Yitzchak later attended, described Levi Yitzchak's early education as follows: "After receiving his secular education in the Boston school system, Rabbi Horowitz left for Israel to pursue an intensive training in Talmudic and Hasidic lore."[7] Since this source says explicitly that Levi Yitzchak studied in public school, it is likely that Levi Yitzchak attended public school, even if Moshe did not. Most American Orthodox children in the early decades of the century attended public schools and received

a Jewish education only in supplementary schools. Orthodox Judaism had yet to confront the vicissitudes and possible deleterious effects of the public schools on Orthodox students. In later years Orthodoxy's negative posture toward the public schools ultimately led to its failure to capture the spirit of America's Jews during the first half of the century. In any case, Moshe learned English from private tutors during the early 1920s.

In 1924 Rabbi Pinchas Dovid sent his elder son Moshe to the yeshiva of Rabbi Asher Lemel Spitzer in Kurchdorf, Hungary.[8] Rabbi Spitzer was an influential member of Agudat Yisrael, and Rabbi Moshe's involvement with the Agudah can be traced to this point. This was a relationship critical to his later career. During Moshe's three years in the yeshiva, he traveled to meet his father in central Europe and joined his father for a trip to Palestine. The significance of these trips was that Rabbi Moshe was exposed to many European Orthodox Hasidic leaders, some of whom he would meet again when he became the Bostoner Rebbe.[9] In 1929 Moshe's father sent him to the yeshiva of Rabbi Moshe Kliers in Tiberias and Moshe was married in Zidichov three years later.

While Moshe received a traditional European Hasidic education, his brother Levi Yitzchak was schooled in modern, non-Hasidic institutions. In 1934 Rabbi Pinchas Dovid left Boston for Palestine, taking his younger son and wife with him. Levi Yitzchak studied at Torah V'Yirah, a mussar yeshiva in Me'ah Shearim, under the guidance of Rabbi Aaron Katzenellenbogen and R'Zev Cheshin. Though Rabbi Pinchas Dovid had planned to settle in Palestine, his financial situation made this impossible and in 1936 the entire Horowitz family, including Moshe and his bride, returned to Boston. In 1938 Levi Yitzchak was sent to study at Mesifta Torah Vodaas in New York under the guidance of Rabbi Shraga Feivel Mendelowitz and the tutelage of Rabbi Shlomeh Heiman.[10]

Moshe studied in a nurturing environment for a Hasidic rebbe and was exposed to the Hasidic culture of Hungarian Orthodoxy. Levi Yitzchak, by contrast, studied in an alien environment. In Jerusalem he was known as the American kid, and in Torah Vodaas his Hasidic form of dress made him stand out from the other students.[11] By providing differing modes of education for his sons, Rabbi Pinchas Dovid implicitly trained Moshe to be his successor. Moshe's final teacher was his father, whom he served as apprentice (*shamash*)

during the 1930s. Levi Yitzchak's schooling, which was non-Hasidic and very American in nature, style, and content, did not foreshadow his future as a Bostoner rebbe. Torah Vodaas was a training ground for educated *ba'alei batim* (laymen), not rabbis.[12] When his parents left Boston permanently, Levi Yitzchak was uninterested in returning there or having any involvement with the organized rabbinate.

## THE MOVE TO BROOKLYN

Three primary factors motivated Rabbi Pinchas Dovid's decision to move to Williamsburg, New York, in 1939.[13] First, Boston's West End had undergone a rapid economic decline in the 1930s, encouraging many Jews to move to the more suburban community of Dorchester. In addition, there were a number of personal considerations. Rabbi Horowitz's failure to establish a Talmud Torah in Boston, his inability to raise enough money for a settlement in Palestine, and the death of his close friend and confidant, Rabbi Solomon Jacob Freiderman, all convinced the rebbe to leave Boston. Finally, in order to be close to his son Levi Yitzchak, who was to study at Torah Vodaas, Rabbi Pinchas Dovid decided to settle in New York.[14]

Williamsburg had sustained a flourishing Jewish community in the 1920s, but during the Depression era many of its wealthier Jews, wanting to be free of the Orthodox life patterns which dominated there, moved to other neighborhoods.[15] In the 1930s a new era in Brooklyn Orthodoxy began, as a number of Hasidic rebbes moved their *shteibels* to Williamsburg. The pattern of customs and mores that had satisfied the Orthodoxy of the earlier inhabitants did not meet the Hasidic standards of these newcomers .

Rabbi Pinchas Dovid moved into his new apartment at 542 Bedford Avenue at the corner of Bedford and Wilson Avenues and set up a small *shteibel*.[16] His main communal activity was his Friday night *tisch*, and like many other Hasidic rabbis he campaigned for community-wide Sabbath observance, *kashrut*, and family purity laws (*taharat hamishpacha*). Rabbi Pinchas Dovid's battle for observance in Williamsburg, however, was a source of tension between himself and many Orthodox Jews. Two examples illustrate this point.

While still in Boston, Rabbi Pinchas Dovid founded the Religious Literary Society, an association that promoted observance. This society published a Jewish calendar which outlined parameters and rituals for *Halachic* observance in America. When he moved to Brooklyn he published another calendar, this time directed to New

York's Orthodox community. A comparison of the Boston calendar and the New York calendar highlights the nature and impact of Rabbi Pinchas Dovid's activities in Brooklyn.

Since Boston's observant Jews read New York's newspaper, the *Morgen Journal,* it was natural that information relating to the Sabbath and holiday rituals would be extracted from that source. The New York newspaper did not print Sabbath candle lighting times for Boston. Rabbi Pinchas Dovid's Boston calendar showed accurate times for candle lighting in Boston. However, Rabbi Pinchas Dovid adopted a unique stringency relating to Sabbath time. He believed that the Sabbath should start earlier than the usual eighteen minutes before sunset and thus the Boston calendar listed candle lighting times approximately thirty minutes before sunset.[17] In addition to the calendar, Rabbi Pinchas Dovid published an explanation justifying his schedules and an exhortation to his readers to observe the Sabbath. When he moved to New York, Rabbi Pinchas Dovid's candle lighting tables were no longer necessary, as they were readily available in the *Morgen Journal.* Nonetheless, he printed a new calendar (this time published by his disciples, as he was too frail to write the exhortation himself) which contained a more detailed legal analysis advocating early candle lighting. Further, a direct attack on those who did not observe the Sabbath—according to the Bostoner legal interpretation —was printed:

> Many people are stumbling (because of our sins) in the sin of Sabbath violation, even those who call themselves Sabbath observers, for they do not recognize the patterns of the stars, they delay the lighting of candles Friday evening and they end the Sabbath early when it is still light out, each making his own "Sabbath", thus violating a biblical principle...[18]

With this statement Rabbi Horowitz accused Sabbath observers who did not adopt his suggested custom of candle lighting times of desecrating the tradition. Statements such as these marked Rabbi Pinchas Dovid's Brooklyn career and antagonized the Orthodox community.

Another of the rebbe's rulings caused a rift between himself and Brooklyn's synagogue rabbis. Rabbi Levi Yitzchak told the following about his father:

> Wherever we lived, Father was always particular about having both a mikveh and a small shul in our home. In Williamsburg, our mikveh fit into a 6 foot by 6 foot area off our kitchen, but it was still a mikveh... Ours was the first private mikveh in Williamsburg. Everyone else used the community mikveh in the Polishe shteibel. When people asked why we needed our own mikveh, Father would say "How much does a mikveh cost? $500? People buy a bedroom set or a dining room set for $500. Why not a mikveh? That's certainly worth more than fancy furnishings."[19]

Rabbi Levi Yitzchak implied that the community questioned Rabbi Pinchas Dovid's desire to maintain his own *mikveh*. But another archival source indicates that the community reaction went beyond mere curiosity. A letter from Rabbi Abraham Selmenovitz, a local Williamsburg rabbi, suggests that Rabbi Horowitz considered all the local *mikvehs* to be unsuitable.

> I have read your opinion, and though I am unhealthy, and I cannot compose long letters, nonetheless, I did not hesitate to examine your letter, which heaps clusters of stringencies which are not accepted in any mikvehs in the world . . .which were certified by great elders whom all of Israel rely on. Nonetheless, despite all this, I do not oppose implementing your suggestions in our mikvehs, as long as it does not cause excessive financial expense, in order to appease you. In fact, I will encourage these implementations on the condition that you give your word that our mikveh is presently acceptable, and that you state that the renovations you demand...are purely stringencies.[20]

Rabbi Pinchas Dovid's open criticism created a perception in the Orthodox community that the local *mikveh* was unusable. Rabbi Selmanovitz blamed Rabbi Pinchas Dovid for threatening his credibility and the credibility of the rabbis who had certified the *mikveh*.

Both the Sabbath and *mikveh* examples demonstrate that Rabbi Pinchas Dovid was a nonconformist. He refused to adopt the norms

or mores of Williamsburg's Orthodox community and was unafraid to challenge the local established leadership on matters of principle. Did this uncompromising spirit accompany his children as they assumed their roles as Bostoner rebbe? This question cannot be answered without comparing the community within which Rabbi Pinchas Dovid served and the communities in which Rabbi Moshe and Rabbi Levi Yitzchak operated.

### SUCCESSION AND TWO BOSTONER REBBES

Rabbi Pinchas Dovid passed away in December 1940 just as Brooklyn was absorbing a large population of European Hasidim. Though Rabbi Pinchas Dovid requested in his will that no eulogies be recited at his funeral, Rabbi Moshe preached a short *derasha* after his father's interment, thus establishing himself as heir to his father's dynasty. Public pronouncements and flyers proclaimed Rabbi Moshe Horowitz the Bostoner Rebbe of Brooklyn, and a "committee for the perpetuation of the Bostoner dynasty" was formed.[21]

Despite rumors that Levi Yitzchak was destined to move to Boston, where Rabbi Pinchas Dovid had maintained contact with a few older Hasidim, Levi Yitzchak resisted entering the rabbinate. Upon finishing Torah Vodaas in 1943, Levi Yitzchak became a businessman, first becoming a diamond polisher and subsequently an investor in the Dainty Edges stationary company. Levi Yitzchak was a poor businessman and his career was short lived.[22]

After declaring bankruptcy in early 1944, the recently married Levi Yitzchak relocated to Boston and moved into his father's former house in the West End. If Moshe's transition into his father's seat was natural and obvious, Levi Yitzchak's first years in Boston were awkward and challenging. The members of the synagogue were all elderly men, three times Levi Yitzchak's age, and their native language was Yiddish, not English. Whereas Moshe concentrated his initial efforts as rebbe on maintaining his father's *shteibel* in Brooklyn, Levi Yitzchak's first act as Bostoner Rebbe was to uproot the *shteibel* from the West End and move it to Dorchester, which was experiencing unprecedented growth.

### TWO COURTS: TWO LEADERS

The two Bostoner communities—one in New York and one in Massachusetts—developed in radically different ways, even as they maintained a connection and as their rebbes were involved in similar

activities. To begin, Levi Yitzchak, with no Hasidim to follow him and operating in an alien environment, had little to lose by opening a *shteibel* in Dorchester. Using the *shteibel* as a base during the 1950s, Levi Yitzchak developed a unique brand of Hasidism and surrounded himself with some of the most unusual Hasidim in America. Speaking with a perfect Boston accent, he integrated Boston's cultural ethos into his Hasidic preaching. Rather than perpetuating a transplanted European-Palestinian tradition, Levi Yitzchak began preaching Hasidism with a distinctive Boston aura. Boston not only delineated the area from which this Hasidism emerged, but also exerted a powerful influence on and became a defining characteristic of Levi Yitzchak's teachings. This was manifested in his interaction with Boston's academic culture and his activities on Boston's college campuses.

Before the 1960s the interface between the Orthodox community and Boston's more than forty colleges and universities was limited. The distancing of the Orthodox community from the academic one was partly due to geographic factors. Once the center of the Orthodox community moved from Dorchester to Brookline, the universities in Cambridge and Boston became accessible.

Levi Yitzchak moved his Hasidic center to Brookline in the early 1960s, placing his court within walking distance of Boston University, MIT, Harvard, Radcliffe, and Boston College and close to Northeastern and Brandeis Universities.[23] During a period of universal rebellion on college campuses throughout the United States, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak opened his home to Boston's Jewish college students.[24] The rebbe engaged university students and faculty in dialogue at the Brookline Chassidic Center on Beacon Street. The center became a focal point for Shabbatons, late-night discussions, and Torah classes, and his Hasidic *shteibel* was transformed into an outreach center. The youthful, charismatic, and dynamic Rabbi Levi Yitzchak perceived himself a fighter for lost souls of Jewish college youth, and to this end he created multiple environments to bring them back to the fold. He personally rented halls and gymnasiums to allow maximum participation of disaffected and alienated young Jewish students. One contemporary anthropologist of Hasidism associated Rabbi Levi Yitzchak's outreach activities with those of the Lubavitch and Bratslav movements.[25] But the Bostoner outreach activities were a one-man operation. Rabbi Yitzchak also took his campaign for Orthodoxy to

the campus, battling with college deans and presidents about kosher food, minyan, and commencement celebrations on the Sabbath or holidays. Not everyone appreciated Rabbi Horowitz's outreach efforts, and he incurred the resentment of segments of the Orthodox community.[26]

Boston's liberal, academic, and professional environment had another effect on Levi Yitzchak's activities. Even as he struggled at Friday night meals or at a *Havdala* service to neutralize the secular values preached on university campuses, he also utilized universities to sustain his outreach efforts. The many stories published about the Bostoner Rebbe reveal a consistent pattern of demonstrating the accuracy of Jewish values with the help of university faculty. MIT professors contributed to the founding of the first Shaatnez laboratory in Boston, Harvard medical professionals confirmed the diagnoses of the rebbe,[27] and, according to these stories, the rebbe utilized manuscripts in Harvard's Weidner Library to discover how and where to do *tevilah* (ritual immersion) in Katmandu.[28] Moreover, Levi Yitzchak developed connections with the major Harvard-affiliated hospitals in order to sustain his ROFEH (Reaching Out Furnishing Emergency Healthcare) organization, which provided medical assistance for Jews from outside of Boston. Boston's Bostoner Hasidim often looked more like hippies or professors than the traditional Hasidim who had venerated Levi Yitzchak's father. Levi Yitzchak was an atypical Hasidic rebbe, and his Hasidim were distinct from those in Brooklyn.

Rabbi Moshe pursued a different type of career in Brooklyn. Having experienced the resentment directed toward his father by some elements of Williamsburg's Orthodox community, and having reconnected to the Hasidic rebbes whom he knew from his time in Europe, Rabbi Moshe was determined to mold his Hasidim in a manner that would allow them entry into Brooklyn's developing Hasidic community. Rabbi Moshe was not involved in public outreach activities, but rather worked almost exclusively within Brooklyn's Orthodox community. After serving for a short time as the principal of Torah Vodaas, Rabbi Moshe concerned himself with maintaining the Hasidic traditions of his father within his own circle. In the conservative, self-sufficient society of Williamsburg, Rabbi Moshe's court consciously adopted the cultural norms of Hasidic Brooklyn and slowly the Bostoner's Brooklyn community became indistinguishable

from the many other Brooklyn Hasidic communities of the 1950s and 1960s. While his brother moved his Hasidic court to the center of the academic community, Moshe entrenched himself in the core of the Hasidic community, living next-door to the Satmar rebbe in Williamsburg and, subsequently, adjacent to the Lubavitcher rebbe in Crown Heights.

Though both Rabbi Moshe and Rabbi Levi Yitzchak had an acute and personal awareness of American culture (Hasidim of each told me that their rebbe knew more Boston Red Sox statistics than the other) only Rabbi Levi Yitzchak sought to engage this culture. Brooklyn's Bostoner Hasidic community underwent a form of acculturation, like many of the Williamsburg and Crown Heights Hasidic sects, and adapted to American culture in the areas of commerce, business, and politics. But Rabbi Moshe was more concerned with being accepted by other Hasidic sects than fitting into American society. If Levi Yitzchak's brand of Bostoner Hasidism evolved because of Boston's environment, then Moshe's version of the Bostoner tradition evolved in an opposite direction because of where he resided.

The repercussions of this distinction are ironic. One might have expected that traditions unique to the Bostoner dynasty would more likely have been sustained in Brooklyn's Hasidic environment than in Boston's alien environment. Yet, the opposite is the case. Since Rabbi Moshe was concerned with conforming to Brooklyn's Hasidic community, he abandoned some of the unique Bostoner traditions. By contrast, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak, who adopted the norms of Boston's cultural climate, was able to maintain some of the unique elements of Bostoner Hasidism. One example of this can be illustrated clearly.

Often a seemingly minor detail related to a ritual observance can reflect the entire gestalt of a particular trend or movement. In this case, the calendars issued by the Hasidic courts in Boston and Brooklyn characterize the distinguishing traits of the two Hasidic traditions as they evolved in the 1960s and 1970s. Earlier we compared the calendars issued in New York and Boston in the 1940s and noted how they reflected a *suigeneris* Bostoner tradition. How did later calendars issued by the rebbes in Brooklyn and Boston adhere to the *Halachic* tradition of the first rebbe?

In the Brooklyn calendar, the tradition of lighting candles thirty minutes before sundown is listed together with the normative candle lighting times. The calendar's format encourages the normative

Orthodox Sabbath lighting times of eighteen minutes prior to sundown. The page also lists citations of American ultra-Orthodox leadership. The essay which accompanies the calendar, written by Rabbi Moshe's son, Chayyim Avraham, provides insight into these innovations:

> In 1917, my grandfather published his first luach, in which he listed the time for hadlakas neiros according to his psak halacha—one half hour before shkia—and the time for motzai shabbos—72 minutes after the shkia. He published a luach every year until his histalkus in 1941, after which my father continued to do so until his histalkus in 1985. The new Bostoner Luach follows the tradition established by my grandfather and records the zmanim of Shabbos according to his psak, as well as the zman of hadlakas neiros most commonly observed by today's frum community—18 minutes before the shkia.[29]

In this passage there is a tacit acknowledgment that while identifying the first rebbe's tradition of lighting candles thirty minutes before sundown, the calendar also departs from tradition by listing the normative candle lighting time. The desire on the part of the Brooklyn branch to be part of the normative *frum* community is made even clearer in the Hebrew explanations which describe some of the other innovations of the calendar, such as learning a daily *mishna*. All of the innovations attempt to make the calendar acceptable to the *frum* community.[30]

Rabbi Levi Yitzchak also published a calendar for New York's Orthodox population. But Boston's calendar differs in form, scope, and content from that of Brooklyn's. To begin, the Boston version was printed in the *Siddur Tephilla Chadasha,* a prayer book published by Rabbi Levi Yitzchak to promote his father's unique order of prayer (*nussah ha-Tephilla*).[31] No apology (nor any mention) was made of the fact that the thirty-minute candle lighting times are not normative in the ultra-Orthodox community. Both the *siddur* and the candle lighting times suggest that even as Levi Yitzchak adopted a more positive and integrated posture toward modern American culture than his brother did in Brooklyn, he was able to maintain more of the family's dynastic traditions.

AGUDAT YISRAEL, EDUCATION, AND OTHER HASIDIC REBBES

While developing a modern American Hasidic tradition that focused on college students, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak still maintained a connection to the normative Hasidic community in Brooklyn, perhaps by virtue of his brother's prominence. While Rabbi Moshe established his reputation as a traditional, conformist Hasidic rebbe, he attained a high standing among both Hasidic and non-Hasidic Orthodox leadership. By the late 1940s Rabbi Moshe had become a member of the Agudat Yisrael in America and in 1964 he led the American delegation to the fifth Kenessia Hagedola (convention) in Jerusalem. Subsequently, he was appointed to the Moetzes Gedolei Hatorah (council of rabbinic sages) of Agudat Yisrael in America. Although the influence of this group of rabbis on Agudat Yisrael has been debated, the fact that Rabbi Moshe served on this body indicates his high standing in the rabbinic community.[32] Given Rabbi Levi Yitzchak's independence from the ultra-Orthodox community, one might have expected that his role in Agudat Yisrael would be more limited. Yet Rabbi Levi Yitzchak was a junior member of the Agudat Yisrael rabbinical board, and he took his brother's seat when Rabbi Moshe passed away in 1985. Subsequently, he was asked to serve on the Moetzes Gedolei Hatorah in Israel. This fact illustrates the potency of *yichus* (dynastic lineage) in the contemporary ultra-Orthodox community, even as it demonstrates that Rabbi Levi Yitzchak never completely abandoned normative Hasidut.

Rabbi Moshe's high standing in the Orthodox community was derived in part from his activities in the educational sphere. In Williamsburg Rabbi Moshe founded an elementary school, Yeshivat Darchei Noam Hafloah, which became a base for Brooklyn's moderate Hasidim, as well as some modern Orthodox Jews. The school was supported by a distinguished group of rabbinic organizations including the Agudat HaRabonim, the Agudat HaAdmorim, the Rabbinical Council of America, and the Iggud HaRabonim. Following a pattern set in Brooklyn's other Hasidic communities, the Darchei Noam School opened a high school in the 1960s and a rabbinical college in the 1970s. The school's development reflects the integration of Rabbi Moshe into Brooklyn's normative Hasidic community.

Levi Yitzchak, by contrast, was able to be more creative in his educational initiatives, simply because he was based in Boston rather

than Brooklyn. During the late 1950s Rabbi Levi Yitzchak served on the educational committee of Rabbi Soloveitchik's Maimonides School. The innovations at Maimonides included coeducational classes and Talmud study for female students, both of which were anathema in traditional Orthodox and Hasidic circles. Nonetheless, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak involved himself in the school and worked together with both Rabbi and Mrs. Soloveitchik on various aspects of the school's development. Despite the fact that his children were being raised in a Hasidic milieu, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak sent them to the Maimonides School.[33] Ultimately, however, as a result of both pressure and competition from Brooklyn's Hasidic branch, Levi Yitzchak eventually sent his children there to study and subsequently sponsored an ultra-Orthodox day school in Boston—the Torah Academy, which his grandchildren now attend.[34]

Rabbi Levi Yitzchak was also able to maintain close links with Brooklyn's ultra-Orthodox community through his activities in political and medical arenas. Having appointed himself Grand Rabbi of Boston, Levi Yitzchak used his title far beyond his sphere of influence, accessing and developing relationships with major personalities in Washington, D.C. Levi Yitzchak's first political involvement was in the March of Rabbis on Washington in 1943 which protested immigration policies. In 1946 he petitioned Washington politicians to arrange for the transfer of his father's remains to Palestine. John F. Kennedy visited the Hasidic center in Brookline when he was running for Senate, as did Tip O'Neil when he was running for the House of Representatives. With a wide range of contacts in the Capitol, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak was often able to advance the political agenda of Brooklyn's Hasidic community in a way that their Hasidic leadership was unable to do.

Rabbi Levi Yitzchak also tended to the needs of individuals in Brooklyn's Hasidic community through his medical organization, ROFEH. Leading Hasidic personalities received treatment in Boston's Harvard-affiliated hospitals and were cared for by physicians associated with ROFEH. The Satmar rebbe, for example, spent a few weeks recuperating from an illness in a convalescent home directed by ROFEH in Boston. These personal connections guaranteed that Rabbi Levi Yitzchak did not completely abandon the ideology of the Hasidic community in Brooklyn. More important, they indicate that Rabbi Levi Yitzchak forged ties with Brooklyn's Hasidic leadership out of mutual interest.

## BOSTONER HASIDISM

The parallel stories of Rabbi Moshe and Levi Yitzchak lead to the conclusion that acculturation is complex and multifaceted and may have unexpected or even counterintuitive repercussions. The fact that Levi Yitzchak moved "out of town" freed him from the fetters of the Brooklyn Hasidic community which restricted his brother Rabbi Moshe. Though Rabbi Levi Yitzchak adopted the Boston cultural ethos and worked within its framework, he also stayed true to his father's traditions in a way that his brother in Brooklyn could not. Rabbi Levi Yitzchak maintained close ties to the Brooklyn community, both because of his family there and through a conscious effort to be needed by that community. Living in Brookline he developed an independent and original style of Hasidism. But creativity has its limits, and for Rabbi Levi Yitzchak, complete alienation from Brooklyn's Orthodoxy was inconceivable.

There is no one Bostoner Hasidism, nor a singular Bostoner Rebbe. The Boston branch of this dynasty developed in the spirit of Boston, while the Brooklyn branch was contoured by the Hasidic culture there.

In 1980 Rabbi Levi Yitzchak proclaimed his two younger sons, Rabbi Meyer and Rabbi Naftali, rabbi and dayan of the New England Hasidic Center. Both sons studied in ultra-Orthodox Lithuanian environments of B'nei Brak and Lakewood, and their version of Hasidism resembles that of their uncle's more than that of their father's. In 1985, when Rabbi Levi Yitzchak moved to Israel, he organized a Bostoner community in Har Nof, which is now directed by Rabbi Meyer. Ironically, the process of acculturation that engulfed Rabbi Moshe's Brooklyn court is presently repeating itself in Har Nof, this time with Rabbi Levi Yitzchak's Boston court. The community in Har Nof is composed of two Lithuanian-style *kollels* and a number of synagogues. The Hasidim conform to traditional Hasidic dress, although the population contains a number of professors and former hippies who will be happy to share the story of their conversion to Hasidism with any visitor.

## CONCLUSION

The story of the Bostoner Rebbes suggests that the social ethos of American Hasidism is similar to that of other American culturally distinctive cooperatives. Its history is predicated on a tension between

being both part of and unique from the normative American community. Economic, educational, political, and demographic considerations must be taken into account in the analysis of this community. Modern means of communication bridge the gap between geographically disparate locales and changed the opportunities for diversity among scattered members of a similar tradition. And yet, despite its reliance on European (and in the case of the Bostoner tradition, Palestinian) Hasidic norms, American Hasidism has adopted a uniquely American ethos. Its penchant for pluralism on one hand and its acceptance of the reality that dynasties are only made when "the Hasidim dream that the Rebbe is the Rebbe" highlight the fact that America is not simply a place for the Hasidim, but a critical aspect of their culture.

The story of these Hasidic brothers who promoted the dynastic traditions of their families illuminates both internal and external developments within Orthodoxy over the course of the century. The impact of day schools and ultra-Orthodox immigration on American Orthodoxy pushed these more moderate Hasidim to conform to transplanted European norms of post-World War II Orthodoxy. And yet the recognition of the variety of American life and its profound impact on Judaism also pulled these Hasidic leaders in the opposite direction. Geography played a critical role in the different careers of the two brothers, but as the values of the Hasidic center in Brooklyn adopted some of the norms of the immigrant Hasidim, these attitudes permeated the core of Boston's version of Bostoner Hasidut. The careers of the brothers highlight the path that Orthodoxy has taken during the post-World War II era, yet reflect that Orthodoxy is ever changing, resilient, and malleable.

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*Seth Farber received his Ph.D. from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. His doctoral dissertation is titled "Community, Leadership and Schooling: Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik's Maimonides School." He presently lectures in the graduate program at Touro College and serves as the rabbi of Kehillat Moriah in Jerusalem.*

*NOTES:*

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Rabbis in North America," *American Jewish Archives* 44 (1992): 501–6.

2. See the description in *Jewish Boston: A Guide for Students and Newcomers* (privately published, 1969-70), 13–15; and *The Story of the New England Chassidic Center* (n.d.), 1–20. On the name Bostoner, see David Assaf, "*Hasidut Polin" oh 'he-Hasidut be-Polin': le-Ba'ayat ha-Geographia ha-Hasidit,*" in *Gal-Ed* (Hebrew section) 14 (1995), 200.

3. Charles Leibman, "Orthodoxy in American Jewish Life." *American Jewish Year Book* 66 (1965): 82–83.

4. See note 25.

5. Despite claims that Rabbi Horowitz founded the Beis Midrash Mahaziei Torah, the Yiddish press authenticates that the Beis Midrash existed for at least two years prior to Rabbi Horowitz's arrival. See Shalom Wallach, *Shushelet Boston* (Jerusalem: Mosdot Boston, 1994), 278; *Di Bostoner Yiddishe Shtieme,* December 5, 1913. In Boston Rabbi Horowitz joined the faculty of a small yeshiva and worked together with Rabbis Solomon Jacob Friederman and Israel Mayer Jacobson. According to Wallach, this yeshiva was established to help students avoid military conscription, and it disbanded soon after the war.

6. *Shushelet,* 291–93. All translations of the Hebrew texts are my own.

7. "Portrait of a Chassidic Rabbi-Torah Vodaath Style,"in *Torah Vodaath Alumni News,* 1955, reprinted in *And the Angels Laughed* (New York: Mesorah, 1997), 172. The rebbe claimed that he learned English from Mr. Edward Gerber and in return he taught Mr. Gerber Talmud. *And the Angels Laughed,* 65-66, 102; Rochel Horowitz, *The Bostoner Rebbetzin Remembers* (New York: Mesorah, 1996), 130.

8. This yeshiva was chosen after Rabbi Spitzer visited Boston on behalf of the Agudat Yisrael.

9. See *Der Tag,* September 7, 1925.

10. *And the Angels Laughed,* 65–78, 172.

11. *And the Angels Laughed,* 65, 104.

12. William Helmreich, *The World of The Yeshiva* (New York: The Free Press, 1984), 26–29.

13. *Jewish Advocate,* 1939, republished in *And the Angels Laughed,* 116.

14. Shushelet, 394.

15. Gershon Kranzler, *Hasidic Williamsburg* (New Jersey: Jason Aaronson, 1995), 5–7.

16. The Brooklyn branch of Bostoner Hasidim saw mystical significance in the apartment number identifying it with the numerology of the Hebrew word Mevaser–forseer or diviner.

17. Rabbi Horowitz's claim that he relied on the position cited by *Aruch HaShulchan* is not accurate. In *Aruch HaShulchan* the following appears:

תלקם" ולא נתקבלה שיטה זו . ובאמת בדורות הקודמים היו להפריש ממלאכה ולהדליק את הנרות מקדימים לקבל שבת במעט שתי שעות קודם הלילה ואשרי

*Arukh ha-Shulkhan, O.H.* 261:6 .

18. *Shushelet,* 314. *And the Angels Laughed,* 53-56, 118–19, 145–48; *Rebbetzin,* 134–36; Rabbi Horowitz was critical not only of the Sabbath observance of his contemporaries, but he considered the *kashrut* standards of 1940s Brooklyn to be insufficient. The historiographies are careful to mention that the *kashrut* standards in 1940s Brooklyn were unacceptable to the Horowitz family to the extent that one thousand new place settings were purchased for Levi Yitzchak's wedding in 1943. The Horowitz's insisted on owning their own matzoh oven so as not to rely on any other *hashgachah.* Rabbi Horowitz also refused to daven in a *shul* that had once served as a church, despite the fact that this was a common practice in the early 1940s.

19. *And the Angels Laughed,* 150.

20. *Shushelet,* 305.

21. *Shushelet,* 400–405.

22. Ira Axelrod, *Seventy Years of Chassidic Life In America: The Story of the Bostoner Rebbe* (privately published, 1990), 15–17; *Rebbetzin,* 137–38.

23. *Rebbetzin,* 158. The membership patterns of the group Young Israel of Brookline reflect this geographical pattern as well, since a disproportionate percentage of its membership belonged to the academic communities of Boston University, Harvard, MIT, and Brandeis.

24. See for example *The Jerusalem Post,* September 19, 1975; and *Boston Jewish Times,* June 6, 1985. His openness toward secular education stemmed not only from his own experience in the Boston public school system, but also from the attitude of his teachers and contemporaries at Yeshiva Torah Vodass. Rabbi Shraga Feivel Mendelovitz, director of the yeshiva, preached tolerance and even recognition of the value of a comprehensive secular education. Jerome Mintz, *Hassidic People: A Place in the New World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), chap. 3. Mendelowitz was also open to Hasidic tradition and used to bring his students to visit various Hasidic rebbes, among whom was the Bostoner.

25. Stephen Sharot, "Hasidism in Modern Society," in Gershon Hundert, ed., *Essential Papers on Hasidism* (New York: New York University Press, 1991), 526. See also *The Jerusalem Post,* September 19, 1975.

26. *And the Angels Laughed,* 314–17.

27. Hanoch Teller, *The Bostoner* (New York: Feldheim, 1990), 138–45. The prohibition against wearing clothing that contains both linen and wool created a problem for Orthodox Jews who purchased their clothes from non-Orthodox manufacturers. In order to guarantee that the clothing did not contain both fabrics, Orthodox Jews utilized a chemical test that was performed in a laboratory.

28. *And the Angels Laughed,* 358.

29. For further examples of this phenomenon in Orthodox life, see Menachem Freidman, "Haredim Confront the Modern City," in *Studies in Contemporary Jewry* 2 (1986): 74–96. For a more general discussion, see Liebman, "Orthodoxy in American Jewish Life," 40–41.

30. *Luach Emunas Itecha: The Bostoner Calendar,* 1992. The Hebrew text places the explanation about the thirty minutes in parentheses.

31. *Seder Tephilla Hachadash* (Jerusalem and Boston: Boston Publishing, 1985).

32. *Annual Report of Agudat Yisrael,* 1985, 40–41.

33. *Rebbetzin,* 170–71. In a letter from Mrs. Tonya Soloveitchik to Rabbi Levi Yitzchak, dated October 17, 1958, the following appears: "We have been privileged to have you as a member of our Board of Directors for some time and have benefited by your devotion to our school." This letter is found in the Maimonides School Archives. After Levi Yitzchak's sons left Maimonides, they studied in Torah Vodaas. Rabbi Naftali subsequently transferred to the Philadelphia yeshiva before attending Ponevich in B'nei Brak and Lakewood in New Jersey.

34. *Rebbetzin,* 171–72.