

REVIEWS

Together with his volume on Rabbi Nahman of Brazlav published in German in 1906, the present volume, unlike his later publications in the field of Hasidism, uses the original texts with considerable freedom and Buber's translations are rather free reconstructions of the original motifs. He does not translate, he retells.

In his introduction (written in 1907) Buber does not pretend to treat his subject in a scholarly fashion or to give a literal translation of the text with critical notes. He defines his own function not as that of a scholar, but as that of transmitter of the spirit of Hasidism. "I bear in me the blood and the spirit of those who created it, and out of my blood and spirit it has become new. I stand in the chain of narrators, a link between links" (p. x).

The public to whom Buber was speaking was quite different from the public of the Hasidic narrators themselves. He did not speak to crowds of intent listeners in the semi-darkness of eastern European synagogues, but to a western public, Jews and non-Jews alike, of good literary education: the Jews trying to recapture their lost spiritual allegiances and the non-Jews eagerly seeking some insight into oriental wisdom and revelations. The counterpart of these two movements in the English-speaking countries appears to be now on the crest, and the book under review takes its place in the literature of this movement.

The founder of the Hasidic revival in eastern Europe of the eighteenth century, Israel Ba'al Shem appears in the cycle of legends in two aspects. On the one hand we see an itinerant exorcist and practising magician, a successful trader in amulets (a thriving business indeed, for to write his amulets he had a staff of two scribes whom we know by name). The epitheton *ba'al shem* adjoined to his name means "the master of the [Divine] name", i.e. one who knows how to use the holy Name of God efficiently in amulets. This epitheton was not coined for the founder of Hasidism personally. He is not an isolated phenomenon in that cultural environment, as we know of several *ba'alei shem* contemporary with him. They had a natural function, and an important one, in the Jewish section of the rural society, which needed *ba'alei shem* as much as the non-Jewish needed its exorcists and miracle workers. The use of the epitheton clearly indicates that the founder of Hasidism belonged to this type of popular quacks, wandering from village to village selling their merchandise. Even within the group of the mobile second-rate intelligentsia of the itinerant preachers and wandering village teachers, to which they belonged, the social reputation of the *ba'alei shem* was not very high; needless to say their profession was not highly valued in the superior urban intellectual circles. The career of Israel ran through the wide span of the professions of the second-rate intelligentsia: he was an assistant teacher in a village school, the caretaker of a synagogue, etc. His position as *ba'al shem* and exorcist was the ultimate stage of his personal ascent of the social ladder.

A reading of the legends about Israel clearly shows that the sociological hinterland of the activities of Israel was identical with that of the *ba'alei shem* in general. He had a driving ambition to break out of his social boundaries and in his marriage he imposed himself on circles of higher educational and social standing. But in his professional life, whenever he tried to break out of the traditional village boundaries of the *ba'al shem* and penetrate into more refined urban society, he met with failure; so that he was compelled to restrict

REVIEWS

himself to these circles for the plying of his trade, and it was from here that the first adherents of his revivalist teaching were drawn.

The characteristics of Israel Ba'al Shem as a charismatic leader of the new Hasidic movement present a quite different aspect. In Buber's picture the features of the charismatic prevail over those of the magician and exorcist, which is not surprising in view of Buber's well-known anti-magical religious philosophy, which clearly determined his principles of selection for this book.

The life-story of the founder of the Hasidic movement, as we find it in the book under review, already exhibits many of the features of the typical biographical pattern which recur in the hagiological literature about many of the later religious leaders of the sect (*Tzadikim*). It differs strikingly from the typical biography of the contemporary Rabbinic scholar whose life as depicted in a biography develops in an uninterrupted ascending line of increasing knowledge and fame—fame representing the social recognition of his scholarly greatness. According to their biographers rabbis begin their careers as child prodigies, their subsequent rise is rapid and their later distinction in studies is latent in the achievement of the child of tender age who arouses shame in his schoolmates and amazement in his teachers. According to the pattern of the typical biography of the great rabbi, after having exhausted the scholarly resources of his home environment, he usually migrates in search of further knowledge from one famous Rabbinic academy to another still more famous. The career of a rabbi is the spectacular, though unsurprising, unfolding of his inherent intellectual capacity, which is never in doubt from the first. The type of the dramatic biography of Rabbi Akiba, who was according to the Talmud an illiterate until the age of forty, would be impossible in later Rabbinic biographical literature.

The element of surprise is an essential motif in the hagiological literature about the lives of the great Hasidic leaders. In the life of the rabbi the point of departure is very early, and from it there is a steady development and a gradual fulfilment of the confident expectation of his family and early environment; whereas the fundamental fact about the life of great Tzadikim is that they have a turning-point. Their legendary biographies represent them as leading a kind of double life until the day of their self-revelation. This self-revelation (the Hasidic technical term for which is *Hitbgalluth*) is not an eruptive event which happens on one single day, but is a process which takes place in a comparatively short period. Prior to this *caesura* in their lives the Tzadikim are vaguely conscious of their spirituality, but would not divulge it, and following some inner compulsion, they don the mask of vulgarity in order to conceal the spiritual life within them. Neither in the legend of the Baal Shem, nor in the later Hasidic legendary literature which derived from it, do we find the radical form of the religious double life of a saint as it occurs in some Christian hagiological literature, where the saint sometimes poses as a sinner in order to conceal his spirituality and avoids public adulation accorded to sainthood—a well-known type of hidden saintliness with its countless variations in Christian literature. The Tzadik shuns actual sin but shrouds himself in a deliberate vulgarity. This course successfully accomplishes the aim of avoidance of ministry with its social implication. The virtue of *Hester* (self-concealment) is not simply the practice of the religious virtue of humility but has a significance of an inner preparation for a mystical—

spiritual *début*. The spiritual leader-to-be reveals here a hidden arrogance: the psychological dialectics of humility and pride are at work.

The *Hester* of Israel Ba'al Shem, which leads up to his *Hithgalluth* at the age of thirty-six, consists of his accepting menial tasks which send him to the utter seclusion of the Carpathian mountains or to common jobs of religious vagabond life (itinerant teacher, etc.). At the age of thirty-six he lets fall the mask and the second part of his life commences, to be an unexpectedly sharp contrast to the first. The turning-point, however, is not an absolute break and a new beginning, but is a continuation of his earlier hidden spiritual life now uncovered to the public eye (see chapter "Revelation", pp. 62-72). His social position is reversed and he now apparently becomes the central figure of the community in which he was once a slightly despised member. He now trades isolation and obscurity for charismatic leadership.

Numberless *Tzadikim*, who tried to relive the biographical pattern of the first leader, were to have this social-religious experience of Israel Baal Shem, and a generation or two after the publication of the *Shivbei ha-Besht* an idiomatic expression was coined to denote the acceptance of the social function after a period of utter isolation which ended in the *Hithgalluth*: *limshokh Edah*, literally "to draw a community [of followers]".

The book has an eloquent introduction dealing with the four cardinal virtues of Hasidic life ("The Life of the Hasidim", pp. 17-50). They are in Buber's view (1) *Hithlahavuth*, i.e. ecstasy; (2) 'Avoda, i.e. service; (3) *Kavanah*, i.e. intention, and (4) *Shifluth*, i.e. humility. This classification of the cardinal virtues of Hasidism is not to be found, to the reviewer's knowledge, either in the theoretical or in the hagiological literature of Hasidism itself: Buber appears to follow in part S. Schechter's pioneering essay (*Die Chassidim* (1904), reprinted in English in his *Studies in Judaism*, 1st ser., pp. 1-45). Schechter's list contains only three cardinal virtues, which are (1) *Shifluth*, (2) *Simha* (joyfulness), and (3) *Hithlahavuth*. Buber omitted *Simha* from the cardinal virtues in Schechter's list, added *Kavanah*, and changed their order. 'Avodah, second in Buber's list, does not belong to the cardinal virtues of Schechter's analysis but is discussed by him independently (on p. 58). A comparison of the two books will show that where Schechter still felt a need to be apologetic about some points, Buber did not. This is clearly due to the different intellectual climate of the two authors. The typography is on the whole satisfactory, marred only by the rather ugly *fin de siècle* chapter-headings.

J. G. WEISS

PH. LIPPENS, *Expédition en Arabie Centrale*. 1956. Pp. xii + 216 + map. (Adrien-Maisonneuve, Paris. Price: Fr. 1500, or bound, Fr. 4500.)

The author of this volume first came to the attention of scholars in connexion with the Dead Sea scrolls, since it was by his initiative and activity that the first Qumran cave could be first visited by scholars. At that time he was a Belgian lieutenant and an observer for U.N.O. in the area. His part in that story will be remembered with gratitude by scholars.

In the present volume he tells the story of an expedition in Saudi Arabia in 1951-2, in which he took part. The leader of the expedition was H. St John Philby, who contributes a foreword, and the other members were Professor