

## Sigmund Freud and the Lubavitcher Rebbe

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**INTRODUCTION** In the winter of 1902-1903, Rabbi Shalom Dov-Ber Schneersohn, the 5th Lubavitcher Rebbe<sup>1</sup> (known by the acronym RaSHaB), from a scion of Chassidic Rabbis, travelled from Russia to Vienna to consult with 'the famous Professor Sigmund Freud.' He was accompanied by his son, Rabbi Josef Yitzchak Schneersohn (known by the acronym RaYaTZ). At that time the Rebbe RaSHaB was forty two years old his son was twenty two years old. While various details of this visit to Vienna had been known in Lubavitch circles for some years, the name of the famous doctor was not revealed in print until 1997 when the private Diaries (R'Shimos) of the late Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson were published. The diary for the period spring 1932 relates a conversation that Rabbi Menachem Mendel (the 7th Rabbi in the dynasty known as Lubavitch Chassidim) had with his predecessor in Riga, Latvia, about the three month visit (6 January - 5 April 1903) that he had made with his father (the RaSHaB, the 5th Lubavitcher Rabbi) to Vienna. In this conversation the name of the famous professor is specifically identified. <sup>2</sup> The authors have tried, unsuccessfully, to confirm this meeting by referring to letters and diaries of Freud. <sup>3</sup> It is possible that corroborating materials have not been released or because Freud was chary that the consultation(s) had taken place, as we shall discuss later in this paper. <sup>4</sup> According to his son, the RaSHaB met Freud on several occasions during the period January-April 1903. (J. Y. Schneersohn in Glitzenstein, 1972, p.53 ) At this point a brief description of Chassidism in general, and Lubavitch Chassidism in particular, is in order. The Chassidic movement, a mystical and religious renewal movement, began in the 18th century in the Ukraine and Southern Poland and, within a few generations, spread to other parts of Eastern Europe (Poland, Rumania, Hungary). <sup>5</sup> Chassidic teachings are rooted in the esoteric or concealed dimension of Judaism, specifically the Kabbalah, the Jewish mystical tradition, as expounded by Rabbi Isaac Luria (known by the acronym as the ARI, 1534-1572). The Chassidic movement itself was founded by Rabbi Israel ben Eliezer, known as the Baal Shem Tov (1698-1760). <sup>6</sup> He revolutionised Judaism by reintroducing the powerful imagery of Lurianic Kabbalah in conjunction with an everyday language that could reach the most uneducated person. The Baal Shem Tov emphasised a direct, heartfelt relationship with God that touched every aspect of life through prayer, study of the Torah and inner contemplation <sup>7</sup>. His followers were known as Chassidim (Hebrew for the 'pious ones') and the opposing group of religious Jews who did not accept this direction were known as Mitnagdim (Hebrew for 'opponents'). <sup>8</sup> Loewenthal (1990) points out that Chassidism is a system of radical mysticism as well as a popular social movement. It originally aimed to replace a restrictive structure of Torah study with a culture that was able to uplift the daily life of men and women in the mundane world. This could be accomplished by attending to the inner, hidden, essential aspects of Judaism and openly communicating esoteric wisdom through the person of an enlightened leader to whom everyone had potential access. Initially these leaders were disciples of the Baal Shem Tov and then disciples of the disciples and so on. The leader was called a Tzaddik ('the righteous one'), and also by the term Rebbe. A Rebbe is far more than a Rabbi. The latter is a person who is knowledgeable about Jewish laws and practices. The Rebbe, on the other hand, not only possesses such revealed knowledge, but is also an

expert on the inner essence of life, the concealed knowledge. This is exemplified in the basic text of Kabbalah, the Zohar, the Book of Illumination, as well as in other mystical texts. 9 The Rebbe is often described as a person touched by God, someone who possesses immense powers to sustain the lives of his followers, his Chassidim, on earthly and spiritual planes. The Chassidim, in turn, feel dependent on their Rebbe for guidance and help in accessing Divine grace about all matters -- spiritual and mundane. A Rebbe may share some qualities with a psychoanalyst. Both are experts about human nature as well as esoteric matters. For the Rebbe this includes spiritual or supraconscious realms, while for the psychoanalyst this includes inner reality, or the unconscious. And both encourage intense real and transference relationships among their adherents. The first Lubavitcher Rebbe and the founder of the Chassidic dynasty of Lubavitch was Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi (1745-1812). He liked to refer to himself as the Baal Shem Tov's spiritual grandson. He was also known as the Alter Rebbe (the old Rebbe), in order to signify his major contribution as the father of Lubavitch Chassidism by his creation of a highly intellectual system of mystical contemplation through his seminal work, the Tanya ('The Teaching,' 1796; bilingual edition, 1973). 10 This book has become the basic text of ChaBaD Chassidim in that it seeks to present the deepest mystical insights of Jewish philosophy to a general audience. 11

The RaSHaB became the leader and the 5th Rebbe of Lubavitch Chassidim in 1882 at the age of twenty two, after the death of his father. He has been described as physically weak and frail throughout his life, a condition exacerbated, no doubt, because he took on the burden of communal leadership as a young man. He married at age fourteen to his first cousin, and was known for his devotion to self-sacrifice and striving for the truth, working long hours in study, teaching and service to his followers.

By the year 1902 it was noted that the RaSHaB was suffering from a certain malaise. He often compared himself to his grandfather (the 3rd Lubavitcher Rebbe, known as the Tzemach Tzedek, 1789-1866) and his father (the 4th Lubavitcher Rebbe, the MaHaRaSH, 1834-1882). In spite of his erudition and accomplishments as a Rebbe and founder of the central Lubavitch Yeshiva, in Russia, he felt that he was nothing and had accomplished nothing in comparison to his father and grandfather. He would remark, "Where am I? Where do I turn? ( i.e. What have I accomplished?) What should I say? Here I have to go in the path of our Rebbe." (J. Y. Schneerson, 1992, p. 42). At that time the RaSHaB was under great pressure both internally and externally. The outside pressures were related to historical events that were taking place. By the turn of the century the Lubavitch movement had been under threat from other Jews as well as from the Russian Government and the Czarist police. In addition to the vehement enmity of the Mitnagdim, religious Jews opposed to Chassidism, Lubavitch was also threatened by the Maskilim ('the enlightened ones'), militantly secular Jews who tried to spread modern European culture and secular knowledge. Both groups regularly informed on the Lubavitcher Chassidim to the Czarist police. The RaSHaB and his son had been arrested and gaoled on several occasions. In addition, the secularists brought about temporary closures of the Yeshiva in Lubavitch and were proponents of the emerging Zionist movement which attempted to replace religion with nationalism. As to the internal pressures: 1902 was the 20th anniversary of the RaSHaB's ascension to the mantle of leadership. (it was also the 20th anniversary of his father's death). His son referred to his father as being very upset and low in spirits (quoted in M.M. Schneerson, 1997). Around this period, the RaSHaB continuously complained to his wife that he was unable to study, that he was unworthy, and that he was deficient in his emotional attributes. By this the Rebbe meant that his love for his fellow man, and that his love and fear of God, were not as they should be. He was overheard to cry out, "How can I apply myself to my Chassidim, if (my) Chassidim

don't recognise me?" He added, "I have other ways. But I don't want to use them." (J. Y. Schneerson, 1992, p. 23) 12 It was at this point that the RaSHaB proposed to travel to Vienna to seek help for himself. This was a journey which he considered to be the equivalent of going into exile for the purpose of self-refinement or self-purification (J. Y. Schneerson, 1992, p.23). He asked his son to accompany him. **FREUD AND THE RaSHaB IN VIENNA**

The meeting in Vienna brought together two extraordinary intellects and creative giants, Freud and the RaSHaB. The RaSHaB was a seminal figure in Chassidic circles and was known as the Maimonides of Chassidism, because he was the major codifier of Chassidut (the exposition of Chassidic philosophy, theology, hermeneutics and customs) and was able to do so with great depth and clarity. 13 When the Diaries of the late Lubavitcher Rebbe (M.M. Schneerson, 1997) were published and Freud was revealed as the famous professor with whom the RaSHaB consulted, some Chassidim were aghast that the Rebbe, a profound healer in his own right, had sought help from Freud, a secular Jew known for his anti-religious views. Yet others saw this as a sign of his greatness: that he knew when to seek help for himself, would go to the best professional available, and could do so without being prideful. As far as we can ascertain, the RaYaTZ accompanied his father for some or all the meetings that he had with Freud. According to the RaYaTZ, Freud said that in order to make a diagnosis, he needed to know what the Rebbe did, how many hours he worked and what was his daily schedule. 14 Following a variety of Lubavitch sources we are able to reconstruct significant aspects of the exchange which took place between the Rebbe and Freud (based on: M.M.Schneerson, 1997, diary entry of 24 May 1932; J.Y.Schneerson, 1987, pp.174-5; S.D-B. Schneerson, 1993, p.357): *Rebbe* : The discipline of *Chassidut* requires that "the head explains to the heart what the person should want, and that the heart implement in the person's life that which the head understands." *Freud* : "How do you do this? Are not the head and heart two continents completely separated? Does not a great sea divide them?" *Rebbe* : "The task is to build a bridge that will span these two continents, or at least to connect them with telephone lines and electric wires so that the light of the mind, the light of the brain, should reach the heart as well." The RaSHaB added: "I must point out that for Chassidim, from birth, the matter of the mind, and the matter of the heart, is fit for study and for *avodah* ." 15 After a further unspecified exchange between Freud and the Rebbe, his son recalls that Freud made the following 'diagnosis:' "The head grasps what the heart is unable to contain, and the heart cannot tolerate." (quoted in M. M. Schneerson, 1997, dairy entry of 24 May 1932).16 The word Freud used, in German/Yiddish was *fartroght*, to carry or to bear (German: *fertragen*, to endure), or to hold or contain. So the diagnosis can also be translated as: "The head grasps what the heart cannot carry/bear,". or, 'The head grasps that which the heart cannot contain/endure." The RaSHaB's son, the 6th Rebbe, has himself offered another perspective on Freud conclusion. "The head comprehends what the heart cannot bear to hear, and the heart cannot assimilate what your mind comprehends." (quoted in M. M. Schneerson, 1997, dairy entry of 24 May 1932) The implication here is that the RaSHaB was upset to hear certain things and needed to find a way to obtain relief from an overwhelming despondency. These depressive feelings moved him to seek relief from Freud.

Freud's recommendations were that the Rebbe should try to remove himself from the sources of tension and change his venue for a while. Maybe Freud remembered the famous Rabbinic dictum from his childhood: change ones place to change ones fate (Talmud Rosh Hashanah 16b). Freud hoped the Rebbe could be far removed from the source of his tension and depressive feelings. This advice is consistent with the recommendations Freud made to Bruno Walter circa 1904. Walter was at the time Gustav Mahler's young assistant conductor at the Vienna Court Opera. He was suddenly afflicted with a paralysis of his right arm for which he consulted Freud. After seeing him, Freud told him to go for a holiday in Sicily.

(Sabbadini, 1997, p191.) But the paralysis persisted. Freud then told Walter to forget about it and resume conducting. When Walter remonstrated that this would not do, Freud replied, "I will take that responsibility upon myself." (Walter, 1947, p184) 17

Following Freud's instructions, the Rebbe RaSHaB began to take long walks. He also visited many different Synagogues, and met with people, many of whom didn't know who he really was. During this time his son recalls a fascinating aside. The Rebbe always regretted that his father, the MaHaRaSH, did not spend time with him, or his Chassidim, telling stories of his predecessors and other Tzaddikim. But while in Vienna the Rebbe began to have dreams in which his father told him Chassidic stories. During the long walks which Freud recommended he, in turn, related these stories to his son. (J Y Schneerson, 1992, p. 89 )

Freud also recommended that the RaSHaB should "be in good surroundings where others could learn from him and tell him how much they appreciated his scholarship, so that his spirits will lift " (M. M. Schneerson, 1997, diary entry for 24 May 1932). These suggestions are comparable to those which the 7th Rebbe ascribed to 'the famous Professor' during his farbrengen of fall 1962. Freud said that Chassidim should seek to exalt the spirit of the Rebbe by studying intensely and by delving more deeply into his writings. Moreover, they should inform him that they have done so. Then (akin to what he instructed Bruno Walter) the Rebbe should teach more. (M. M. Schneerson, 1962, p.7 ) 18 Freud was very perceptive in his analysis of the RaSHaB's upset at the situation back home in Russia: *Tomchei Temimim*, the Yeshiva he founded, was temporarily closed because Jewish informers had gone to the Czarist police. His son, who now accompanied him to Vienna, had been in prison in 1902 also due to informers to the authorities (J.Y. Schneerson, 1997, p.3.). Freud cautioned his patient to spend time in Vienna, away from the volatile situation in Russia and away from Russian Jews -- some of whom may indeed have been informers. An interesting anecdote from the RaSHaB's diary notes S. D-B. Schneerson, 1993, pp.344-5, J.Y. Schneerson in Glitzenstein 1972, p. 56) can shed more light on this. For the Festive Purim Holiday Feast, many people travelled to Vienna to be with the RaSHaB. They came from Russia, Poland and Hungary. The Russian Jews wanted to spend time alone with the Rebbe, but he refused. About an hour later the Rebbe's assistant brought a special delivery letter. His son opened the letter -- it was a report on the status of the RaSHaB's Yeshiva in Russia. The document was a good report on how the Yeshiva was functioning and that the students were engaged in learning. The RaSHaB felt better and then agreed to see the Russian Jews. This connects to what Freud told the Rebbe: that he needed to hear good things. **AN ANALYSIS OF THE WRITINGS OF THE RaSHaB** In order to better understand the depressive feelings of the RaSHaB, and to consider how he may have been helped by his meetings with Freud, we would like to analyse his published writings before and after he visited Vienna. In so doing we will seek to discern any changes that have taken place. Writings Before Visiting Vienna The RaSHaB, like the other Leaders of Lubavitch Chassidim before and after him, published his learned essays in a Collected Writings (1985). In reviewing his writings of 1902, exactly one year prior to his visiting Vienna in the Winter of 1903, we can detect some interesting features that can give us some insight into his thinking processes. These writings are qualitatively different than those that appear after his visit to Vienna. In the 18 January paper (Hebrew date: 10 Shevat 5662), a central issue is prominent in this essay -- joy. The RaSHaB quotes two verses from Psalms which seem to be seemingly contradictory: 1. Psalms 100:2: Worship God in joy, come before Him with song 2. Psalms 2:11: Worship God in fear (awe), and rejoice with trembling. The RaSHaB states that the essence of worship should be out of joy. Yet the second verse seems to imply that fear of God is also necessary. Fear or awe, according to the RaSHaB seems to be the opposite of joy. In joy the soul spreads-out and

widens its circle so that the joy permeates ones entire being. Fear, on the other hand, is the constriction of the soul. The RaSHaB then proceeds to differentiate between trembling inside that allows for expression of happiness on the outside, and joy that is pervasive and all-encompassing. Both are necessary ingredients in order to properly come before God. To be just joyful runs the risk of frivolity. Whereas a more sombre attitude allows for rejoicing but in a more humble and serious manner because it is permeated with the Godly Light from above.

In order to try and understand the mind-set of the Rebbe, we need to tease apart his writings in order to arrive at the underlying essence. One way of doing this is by deconstruction.

(Silverman, 1989) Deconstruction, according to the French philosopher Daniel Derrida, is a way of decentering. Instead of focusing on what seems to be the central term, we allow the marginalised terms to become central. This allows us to reverse the central theme and pay attention to the non-central aspects. In our two verses above, this would mean that the central theme seems to be joy. In both verses, there are three words that relate to joy: joy, song and rejoice. This seems to overwhelmingly tip the scale in favour of the theme of joy. The sub-theme of fear is relegated to a secondary position. The RaSHaB even tries to attach the Godly Light to that term. If we now focus on the secondary theme of fear and make it primary, the intent of the RaSHaB is to stress how fear can often times subvert joy and block a person from attaining his potential and therefore constrict the soul. However, when we turn that fear into awe, the inner fear motivates the striving for and expression of happiness on the outside.

This essay shows us that the RaSHaB was obviously struggling with this seeming contradiction and was probably experiencing a constriction of an aspect of his spiritual being. He identified the issue. Now he needed to find a way out of this constrictive feeling that was impeding his spiritual and emotional growth. The RaSHaB takes the verse from Exodus (23:25): "...and He (God your Lord) will bless your bread and your water..." He is interested in conveying the message that we find several times in the Zohar, that bread refers to the Torah. And as the Tanya states: "...the Torah is clothed in the soul and intellect of a person, and is absorbed in them, it is called bread and food of the soul." (Wineberg, 1987, p.94) The RaSHaB states that bread is what connects the body to the soul. In other words, being able to study and learn is food for the soul. Why is he so preoccupied with this metaphor that repeats itself several times over the space of a few paragraphs?

The RaSHaB himself partially alludes to the reason. Towards the end of the same essay he writes: "We know that the evil inclination is sometimes referred to as an illness." The word for illness in Hebrew (*machalah*) has the same letters as the word for bread (*lechem*) but in reverse order. For bread connects the soul to the body, and illness separates the soul from the body. We see that if one is blessed with bread (i.e. Torah), then sickness will be banished. Learning Torah banishes the evil inclination and transforms it into good.

We can look for a deeper psychological reason as to why the RaSHaB was engrossed with the bread-Torah vs. the illness-evil inclination paradigm. The Talmud (Bava Kammah 92b) tries to understand what is the meaning of the word illness and arrives at the conclusion that it is *marah* (gall). In medieval and modern Hebrew *marah*, as part of the expression, *marah shachor* (black bile), refers to a depression. The RaSHaB was trying to show us that by learning Torah one can banish the evil inclination which can cause depressive feelings. This is the importance of this verse for understanding the RaSHaB's intellectual and emotional distress at this point. The RaSHaB was having difficulty concentrating. Simultaneously he needed to continue studying Torah in order to banish the evil inclination and mitigate despondency brought about by the many issues, external as well as internal, that were weighing upon him. But he found he could not study, or at least, not to his satisfaction. Therefore, he felt stuck and became depressed, unable to do what he needed to do to

overcome his situation. A visit to Vienna, to see 'the famous Professor Freud,' seemed to be one step he could take to confront his depressive feelings and return to a stable, non-depressed condition. Writings After Visiting Vienna

We have chosen parts of several essays in order to see some of the RaSHaB's thinking as contrasted with essays written prior to his visit to Vienna. While the RaSHaB may be dealing with similar themes (happiness, sadness, bitterness), the post-Vienna papers are written more tightly and organised, with a clearer transition from idea to idea.

In January 1904 the RaSHaB discusses certain aspects of joy or happiness (in Hebrew: *simchah*) (1986). Joy, he feels, is the expression of an inner revelation which can be seen on the exterior as a blush or redness. For the face shows to the outside world the strengths and senses of the person. In a play on words, he relates face (in Hebrew: *panim*) to internal feelings (in Hebrew: *pnimiyut*). The RaSHaB avers that ever since the soul descended from Heaven and found its place in man, there is bitterness (in Hebrew: *merrirut*) and weeping in the world. Only through the merger with the Godly Light (Divine emanation and influence) can man turn this bitterness into joy. The study of the inner aspects of the Torah (*pnimiyut*) will turn one to joy and happiness.

It is interesting that the RaSHaB utilises his own unique deconstructionist method of taking a main theme or idea and turning it around so that negative concepts can take-on positive connotations. These two representative essays differ in their approach to sadness and depression from the earlier, pre-Vienna writings. The RaSHaB had undergone considerable changes in the year since Vienna. The later writings show a clarity of thought that serves the RaSHaB well as a teacher of his followers. Whereas the earlier writings showed the RaSHaB's brilliant learned erudition, these later writings show his unique ability as serving as a Master Teacher. He is able to transcend his own sense of self and communicate to his followers in a manner that they can hear and understand. Nowhere is this more clearly seen than in the RaSHaB's major work: Kuntres Etz HaChayim (The Tree of Life) (1998/1904). In 1896 the RaSHaB founded *Yeshivas Tomchei Temimim*, the central Lubavitcher Yeshiva in Russia. In order to help the students at the Yeshiva to grasp the importance of their combining learning scholarship with community service, the RaSHaB published the Kuntres Etz HaChayim in 1904. We would like to bring some examples of the RaSHaB's lucid, insightful and incisive thinking, bearing in mind that this was written one year after the RaSHaB's visit to Freud in Vienna. In Chapter 3, the RaSHaB quotes the Rabbinic statement in the Talmud (Kiddushin 30b) that the Torah is an elixir of life. Interestingly the Hebrew word for elixir also means a poison (*sam*). The RaSHaB states that one can transform a poison into an elixir by drawing down influence from the Infinite Light (in Hebrew: *Or Ein Sof*). Since sickness comes from the translucent shell (in Hebrew: *kelipat nogah*), a shell containing both good and evil, one needs to transform darkness to light and the bitterness (the evil) of the translucent shell to sweetness.<sup>19</sup> This is transforming the bitterness (in Hebrew: *marah*) from sickness into health. The RaSHaB's preoccupation with this theme points to an issue that especially affected him. He wanted to be sure that his students would strive for higher spiritual values and felt that they needed to understand the fine line separating illness from health; how they needed to utilise their emotional swings in order to reach the higher spiritual levels. During the time that the RaSHaB was in Vienna, we find many accounts of his helping widows, orphans and others. He preached what he lived: that the way to reach the higher spiritual levels was by doing community service and subverting the depressive feelings of bitterness into studying Torah and doing acts of kindness (cf. end of chapter 19). When

we read chapters 25 and 26, we see how organised the RaSHaB actually was. The entire days schedule is mapped-out so that each student will know what is expected of him every hour of the day. This is very reminiscent of Freud's Papers on Technique which were published in 1912. By analogy we see here an exact schedule of what an analyst was expected to do, clearly elucidated. **THE RaSHaB's POSSIBLE INFLUENCE ON FREUD** We are embarking on a very difficult quest when we attempt to show how the RaSHaB may have had an influence upon Freud's thinking. While it may be difficult to prove a direct causal linkage, we can show several parallels between Freud's thinking and the RaSHaB's philosophical orientation and emotional condition when he consulted with Freud.

We know that Freud had a considerable Jewish education while growing-up. <sup>20</sup> Various authors have tried to show that Freud could never have understood his father's birthday inscription to him in the family's Philippon Bible, had the 35 year old not been raised in a Jewish environment that provided him with more than a rudimentary knowledge of Jewish sources (Ater, 1992; Rice, 1990; Yerushalmi, 1991). In addition, Freud's grandfather, Shlomo (after whom he was named), and great-grandfather, Ephraim, were both Chassidim and learned Rabbis who surely imparted some of their Jewish learning to their (later to become) *luftmensch* son, Freud's father, Jacob. Since Freud's father had grown-up in a Chassidic environment in Freiberg (Aron, 1956/7) young Sigmund could hardly not have been aware of Jewish, and indeed Chassidic, ideas and customs. <sup>21</sup>

While Freud was known for his critical views of religion (Küng, 1979; Meissner, 1984; Palmer, 1997), he was able to rise to the occasion and deal with religious patients, if he understood the context from which they were based. Because of Freud's religious and cultural background, he certainly knew much more about Judaism, in general, and Chassidism, Kabbalah and Mysticism, specifically, than he acknowledged.. Freud consistently refused to allow others to enter his personal religious/cultural Jewish world. If Freud so wanted psychoanalysis to be accepted, that he was willing to openly disavow any knowledge of Hebrew and Yiddish as languages that he grew-up with, as well as any Jewish knowledge (Freud, 1934-Hebrew translation to Totem & Taboo; Freud/Abraham, 1965; Gay, 1987; Miller, 1981). No doubt Freud was highly sensitive to the viciously anti-semitic ambiance of Vienna. ( Berkley, 1988) He also had been very upset by and critical of the anti-semitic humiliations to which his father, Jacob, had been subjected. (Krull, 1986, p.154; Yerushalmi, 1991, pp. 39-40, 54, 97) In consequence, we think that he believed that only if psychoanalysis could be accepted as a secular discipline, not necessarily advocated by Jews, then this new science stood a chance of surviving. <sup>22</sup> In 1904, Freud delivered a lecture before the Wiener medizinisches Doktorenkollegium entitled 'On Psychotherapy.' (Freud, 1905b). In this address Freud tried to elucidate some of the pitfalls of treating patients with the method of psychotherapy. He tried to make it clear that while the therapist may expect the patient to make him a present of his secrets (p.261) the therapist needs to allow time to take its course. One cannot drag the secret of his depression out of him (p.262). According to diary records, the RaSHaB spent time in Vienna, at the advice of Freud, in order to change his environment and to try and improve his depressive condition. The RaYaTZ makes it quite clear that his father had discussions with Freud -- on Chassidism and on how the heart and mind work in Chassidic thought. This was an education of sorts for Freud. If we take into account Freud's obvious past experience with Jewish learning and education, this was really a reeducation. It helped Freud to not only help his patient by understanding the cultural context, but it also helped Freud return to his roots and place his religion and background up-front. It is unclear if the RaSHaB spoke German, so Freud must have spoken to him in Yiddish mixed with German. While Freud has denied knowing Yiddish, Yerushalmi (1991)

counted thirteen Yiddish words in Freud's correspondence (p.69). This, again, is another example of Freud trying to hide his Jewishness. Interestingly, Freud (1905b) discusses psychotherapy as being a *reeducation in overcoming internal resistances* (p.267).

It is clear from the diaries and notes of the various Lubavitcher Rebbes that there was a mutual interactive understanding between Freud and the RaSHaB regarding the workings of the mind and heart. However, it is unclear who may have influenced whom! In 1905, Freud published an essay entitled: 'Psychical (or Mental) Treatment' (1905c). In trying to explain why nervous or neurotic patients suffered from their ailments, Freud stated: "...the signs of their illness originate from nothing other than *a change in the action of their minds upon their bodies* and that the immediate cause of their disorder is to be looked for in their minds...the mutual relation between body and mind" (p.286). The RaSHaB's case was a classic example of this thesis of Freud. Yet, Freud could not quote the case of a Chassidic Rabbi as the details of the case could not be sufficiently disguised. Bear in mind that the famous Dora case while written in 1901 was not published until 1905, because several scientific journals were fearful of the possible violation of confidentiality (Freud, 1905a, p.8). The year 1905 seemed to be a very propitious year, indeed!

**PSYCHOANALYTIC AND CHASSIDIC VIEWS ON DEPRESSION** At the end of 1914, Freud presented his paper on Mourning and Melancholia to the Vienna Psychoanalytical Society. While the final draft of the paper was published in 1917, Freud had two earlier communications with Fliess in 1895 and 1897 (Freud, 1917, pp.239-240), where Freud described melancholia in neurological and then psychological terms. It is clear that Freud had these thoughts in the back of his mind for over 20 years.

We would like to speculate how the RaSHaB's view of depression and melancholy, which was philosophically grounded in Lubavitch Chassidic philosophy, may have helped Freud finally formalise his theoretical formulations.

Freud's paper on Mourning and Melancholia (1917) can be regarded as an extension of Freud's paper On Narcissism (1914). The critical agency, the superego, is at work both in paranoia as well as in melancholia. While mourning is viewed as the reaction to the loss of a loved person, melancholia is a more pathological manifestation. In melancholia, an object cathexis is replaced by an identification (1917, p. 251).

In chapter 31 of the Tanya, the classic work of Lubavitch Chassidic thought, we find several terms that are used to describe a downtrodden, low and depressed spirit.

1. *nemichat ruach* = lowly of spirit. This affect occurs when the person feels that he is not able to achieve what he would like to. 2. *lev nishbar* = contrite of heart. This feeling could allow one to see his spiritual inadequacies. However, it can also lead to deep sadness when one realises that he is not fighting strongly enough against the *evil impulse* (cf. chapters 29-30 in Tanya ). 3. *atzvut* = depression and/or melancholy; sometimes called black depression. If the depression arises out of the awareness of spiritual failings, then this could lead to a burst of desire to change ones behaviour. The soul has two sides: an evil side and a good side. The evil is the source of depression. The good element gives rise to spiritually motivated depression (Wineberg, 1987, p.406). 4. *merrirut hanefesh* = bitterness of the soul. This is being remorseful about being removed from Gods presence. *Atzvut* literally means constricted. It is "a numbing depression that constricts ones heart, blocking out all feelings...for *atzvut* means that ones heart is as dull as a stone, and that there is no vitality (or) arousal of feeling, in his heart" (Wineberg, 1987, p.407). This results in a state of emotional despondency and deadness, with no hope, vitality or holiness. In



contrast to *atzvut*, the Tanya describes two conditions where a person is not stuck or blocked. These are feelings of contriteness and bitterness. Contriteness or *lev nishbar* can be freely translated as broken hearted. In this state a person may be sad, but he has chosen to face his spiritual shortcomings and is not disconnected from God. The other condition, *merrirut*, or bitterness, does not necessarily lead to melancholia or the implosion of the self. It is associated with anger and a welling-up of energy, an inner stimulus to change ones situation. A sad bitterness which arises from spiritual stocktaking, and from the struggle with ones standards is not *atzvut*, but *merrirut*. The stirring of bitterness is a necessary precondition for a person extricating himself from despondency. The term that described the RaSHaB was *nemichat ruach*, a lowness in spirit which is analogous to low self esteem. This term also denotes humility. A person suffering from *nemichat ruach* realises that he has a long way to go to reach his goals. For Chassidim this is not self pathology but rather an expression of humbleness.

Ultimately these different conceptualisations of depressive or low feelings teach us that there are two main kinds of depression. One is rooted in physical and emotional states beclouded by mixtures of good and evil. This parallels the psychoanalytic concepts of envy and narcissism. It is close to our psychological understanding of depression -- related to guilt, shame and conflicts over need and dependency. The other kind of depression is spiritually inspired and according to the Tanya is not depression at all but rather like an emotional hiccup, a lowness about ones spiritual failings, a momentary sadness, which can then be used as an effective weapon against the depressive feeling.

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This formulation is very similar to Freud's prescription for depression: that one needs to release the cathected object from ones ego. Sometimes the connection cannot be easily broken. In Freud's view, a depression develops because of the loss of a love object. Regression to a narcissistic identification can ensue. In order to minimise the risks of melancholia occurring, which can lead to stuckness and constriction, anger has to occur. Such anger will break the cycle. Freud calls anger at the lost love object 'hate'. When ambivalence follows we return "back to the stage of sadism which is nearer to that conflict" (Freud, 1917, p. 252). In the Tanya such an intra-psychic progression is referred to as: "redirecting his depression into soul-searching and into anger at his evil inclination, (this) will dispel the mundane depression " (Wineberg, 1987, p.411).

**CONCLUSION** Two extraordinary men met in 1903. While one came to seek help for depressive feelings from the other, it seems probable that both individuals gained from this encounter. Only a great person like the RaSHaB could allow himself (and indeed push himself) to obtain help in a consultation with another great man, Freud. Both were seekers of truth. Both needed to analyse themselves and their worlds to the utmost degree. It must have been strange for Freud to meet a Chassidic Rebbe after having been brought up in surroundings that both exposed and alienated him from Judaism and Chassidism. By 1903 Freud had long left his home environment for a secular and professional world, had achieved

success as a neurologist and was in the process of developing psychoanalysis, which subsequent generations have seen as a new science, and also as a 'new religion' of the mind. It is likely that the shock of meeting the RaSHaB must have brought Freud back to his roots, albeit for a brief time. While Freud may have felt himself to be "completely estranged from the religion of his fathers" (Preface to the Hebrew Translation of 'Totem and Taboo,' 1930, p. xv), he is still one who has never repudiated his people, he feels that he is in his essential nature a Jew and who has no desire to alter that nature (ibid). Thus Freud lived the life of a secular, skeptical Jewish intellectual, a preeminent figure in developing a profound understanding of the mind, the self, culture, and social reality. This was his revealed persona, or as the RaSHaB would say, the 'garment' he wore while 'being in-the-world.' We also think there was a 'concealed Freud,' who revelled in his meetings with the RaSHaB and utilised Chassidic ideas in his work, even if he chose to conceal the connections and disparaged their Jewish contents through jokes.<sup>23</sup> This 'concealed Freud' found the Kabbalah of considerable interest.<sup>24</sup>

Chassidic teachings talk about power of a person's 'neshamah' or soul, which, in psychological terms, is related to one's strength of character. Whether revealed or concealed, it is clear that Freud possessed an exceptional 'neshamah' which allowed him to touch the heart and mind of the RaSHaB during a period of severe turmoil. This enabled the RaSHaB to activate his own healing potential, and overcome his sense of spiritual failure. Then his bitterness and depressive feelings became not an impediment, but an impetus to action. He was able to think clearly, engage his students and write his greatest works.

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This paper describes consultations Sigmund Freud had with the 5th Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Shalom Dov-Ber Schneersohn (also known by his acronym, the RaSHaB) between January and April 1903. The RaSHaB had been suffering from feelings of depression, in his terms, 'lowness of spirit,' and travelled to Vienna, with his son, Josef Yitzhak Schneersohn (who subsequently became the 6th Lubavitcher Rebbe and was known as the RaYaTZ) to seek Freud's help. These feelings were precipitated by external as well as internal events. The RaSHaB was being persecuted by secular (maskilim) as well non-Chassidic religious Jews (mitnagdim) and by the Czarist police. In addition 1902 was the 20th anniversary of his father's death and of his taking on the mantle of Rebbe.

After a brief discussion of the Chassidic context in which the RaSHaB lived, the paper details the meetings that took place with Freud as recalled by his son, the RaYaTZ, which have come to light through the release of the private diaries of the late Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneersohn, the 7th Lubavitcher Rebbe. We consider the condition of the RaSHaB before and after he met Freud as revealed by his writings, and also consider the RaSHaB's possible influence on Freud. After reviewing both psychoanalytic and Chassidic views on depression, we conclude that the interaction between Freud and the RaSHaB was enlightening for both men, and show how each gained from the experience. **REFERENCES** Aberbach, D. (1980) "Freud's Jewish Problem," *Commentary*, 69,6: 35-39. Aron, W. (1956/7). Notes on Sigmund Freud's ancestry and Jewish contacts. *YIVO Annual of Jewish Social Science*, 11:286-295. Ater, M. (1992). *The Man Freud and Monotheism*. Jerusalem: Magnes Press. Bakan, D. (1990) *Sigmund Freud and the Jewish Mystical Tradition*. London: Free Association Books. Berkley, G. (1988) *Vienna and Its Jews*, Cambridge, MA: Abt Books Inc. Freud, S. (1905a).

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(1991) Freud's Moses. New Haven: Yale University Press. Zohar (ed. 1931-1934) volumes 1-5, translated by Sperling, H. and Simon, M., London: Soncino Press. (c) Copyright 1999 Stanley Schneider & Joseph H. Berke. All Rights Reserved. This paper may not be reproduced in any form without prior written permission of the authors. **ENDNOTES** 1 Lubavitch is a town in White Russia. Rabbis of Chassidic dynasties are named for the cities in which they lived or worked. The Lubavitcher Rebbe came from the town of Lubavitch.

2 Rabbi Shmuel Lew, the Lubavitch emissary in London, first brought to our attention to the meeting of the RaSHaB with Freud. He noted that this subject arose at a farbrengen, a Chassidic gathering, in the spring of 1962. At that time Freud was mentioned by name. Rabbi Lew adds: "There was no transcript of this meeting except mine (written at Chazarah - when R' Yoel Kahan would review the Rebbe's talks from memory, usually on Motzei Shabbat), and it was discovered (in R' Yoel's house; he must have borrowed it to assist in writing an "official" transcript, which never materialised) about 10 years ago, after Gimmel Tamuz, and was incorporated as an addendum into the booklet with the Rebbe's notes about that episode." Personal Communications, 1998, 2007.

3. Personal communications: Keith Davies, Marvin Kranz, Michael Molnar, Joseph Sandler, Richard Skues, Peter Swales and Robert Young.

4. According to Michael Molnar, The Freud Museum, London, and Marvin Kranz, Sigmund Freud Archives, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., there exists patient documentation for the period 1896-1899 and 1910 and after. But there is no patient documentation available for the period 1900-1909.

5. Today the Chassidic movement can be found extensively in the State of Israel and North and South America, as well as Europe.

6. Also known by the acronym, the BeSHT. His name means the master of the good name. The Baal Shem Tov had a profound knowledge and understanding of the Kabbalah as well as sharing many characteristics of a shaman in that he was an expert of ecstatic healing practices. For a detailed discussion of the Baal Shem Tov see Rosman (1996)

The remarkable success of Chassidism can be partially attributed to the difficult circumstances affecting Polish Jewry at that time. The Cossack uprisings led by Chmielnicki in 1648, the severe poverty, the failure of the false messiah Shabbatei Tzvi who held-out promise of a better life, and the religious and educational shortcomings of the masses contributed to their being drawn to Chassidism.

7. The Torah is the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible.

8. The Chassidim were also opposed by the growing secular movement known as the Haskalah ('enlightenment'). Freud's father, Jacob, who had been brought up as a Chassidic Jew, was greatly influenced by the Haskalah and consequently relinquished many of his religious practices. (Krull, 1986, pp. 78, 95 & 98). Nevertheless he remained Jewish to the core. He could and did recite the entire Passover Seder by heart and regularly studied the Bible and Talmud. Aberbach, (1980, p36).

9. Parts of the Zohar date back to discussions of a group of scholars in Palestine of the 2nd century, led by Simeon bar Yochai. Most of the book deals with the inner, esoteric meaning of Scripture. Modern scholarship has concluded that the main part of the Zohar was written down toward the end of the 13th century by Moses de Leon, a Castilian Kabbalist who died in 1305. The Zohar is a mixture of theosophic theology, mystical psychology, anthropology, myth and poetry.

10. Tanya is also known under the sub-titles of: Selected Teachings and the Book of the Intermediates. The latter sub-title refers to the type of personality on which the book centers attention: the intermediate position between righteous and wicked.
11. Lubavitch Chassidim are also known by the acronym, ChaBaD. This refers to the first letters of the Hebrew words, Chachmah, Binah and Daat, meaning Wisdom, Understanding and Knowledge. According to the Kabbalah, these represent the higher intellectual emanations or qualities of God.
12. The Rebbe was referring here to the use of miraculous powers.
13. Maimonides, the RaMBaM (1135-1204), was a major Jewish philosopher, codifier and physician, who was born in Spain and lived most of his life in Egypt where he was a court physician.
14. The RaYaTZ is well known in the Lubavitch community for his phenomenal memory.
15. *Avodah* usually means practice or service. But in this instance the Rebbe means the process of self-refinement.
16. In another essay, the RaShaB's son, the Rebbe RaYaTZ, recalled that the Professor said that his father's suffering was a deeper inner one, a suffering which was only experienced by deep, devoted thinkers. His diagnosis was that "the heart covets more than the head can bear, and that the head understands more than the heart can bear".(J. Y. Schneerson, 1940, p. 28.)
17. Freud's advice seemed to work. Walter overcame his paralysis and his career soared. (Sabbadini, 1997, p191)
18. One must keep in mind that in all of these instances, Rabbi Menachem Mendel, is referring to what his predecessor, the Rebbe RaYaTZ, told him.
19. In Chassidic thought a 'klipah' is a shell or barrier that separates man from God. A negative character trait can be seen as a psychological equivalent because it blocks or separates man from man.
20. In addition to being tutored by his father, Yerushalmi points out that Freud "studied Bible, Jewish history and religion, as well as Hebrew throughout his Gymnasium years with Samuel Hammerschlag," whom he called a wonderful teacher and with whom he maintained a close relationship throughout his life. (1991, p69)
21. Freud's wife, Martha Bernays, also came from a deeply religious family. Her grandfather, Isaac Bernays, was the Chief Rabbi of Hamburg. (Yerushalmi, 1991, p11). However, his mother, née Amalie Nathanson was not religious. (Krull, 1986,p 98; Yerushalami, 1991, p.65.)
22. For this very reason, Freud made C. G. Jung, a Christian and son of a Pastor, his heir apparent. He did not want psychoanalysis to be seen as a Jewish enterprise.
23. A prominent feature of Freud's relationship to his Jewishness was intense hostility. Freud published his book on 'Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious' (1905d). In it, we find many Jewish Jokes, with some poking fun at Rabbis, in particular, or Jews, in general. Some of the jokes attack religious dogmas as well as the belief in God (p.114). While the idea of putting together a volume of jokes that are Jewish-related had been percolating for some time within Freud's head (he had written to Fliess in 1897 about this dream; Freud, 1905d, p.4), it may not be a coincidence that he chose to publish his Joke Book less than two years after meeting the RaSHaB.

24. In the preface to the paperback edition of his book, Sigmund Freud and the Jewish Mystical Tradition, David Bakan(1990, pp.xviii-xx) describes a conversation he had with Rabbi Chaim Bloch who had met with Freud in 1925 to discuss, among various subjects, Kabbalah and Chassidism. Bloch said Freud showed a keen interest of the material and was particularly taken by Bloch's book on Rabbi Chaim Vital, a prominent 16th century Kabbalist from Safed, Israel who chronicled the work of the ARI. According to Bloch, Freud was very excited after reading the manuscript and exclaimed, "This is gold." (Bakan, 1990, p. xi: Aron, 1956/7, p.290).