

TANYA



People of the Book
Rabbi Efrem Goldberg

January 29, 2013
Boca Raton Synagogue



R. Shneur Zalman of Liadi

- ◆ Born 18 Elul 5505 – September 14, 1745
- ◆ Born in Lyozna, White Russia, now Belarus





Arizal



- ◆ Rabbi Isaac Luria Ashkenazi = Arizal (1534-1572)
- ◆ Born in Yerushalayim to an Ashkenazi father and Sefardi mother.
- ◆ Lived only 38 years, but revolutionized the world with his teachings.
- ◆ Until the Ari, the Zohar & it's esoteric teachings and Jewish mysticism were concealed, intended just for the elite.



Arizal

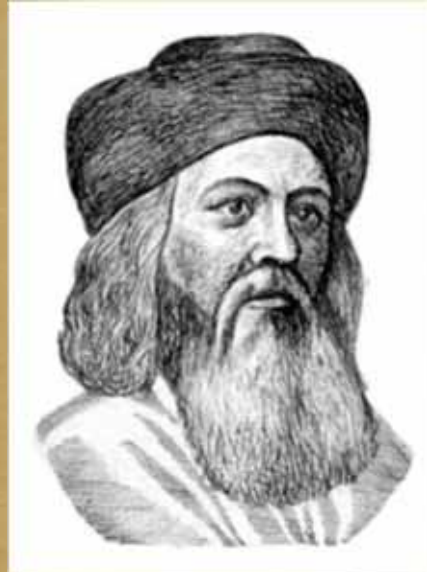


- ♦ Didn't personally publish, but his student for last 2 years of his life, Rav Chaim Vital, recorded the Kisevei Ha'Ari.
- ♦ Arizal reinterprets many ideas in the Zohar and popularizes its study. Introduces Lurianic Kabbalah with emphasis on reincarnation, repair, redemption and Messianism.
- ♦ His ideas travel to Italy, Poland and spread far and wide
- ♦ False Meissahs born most famous among them Shabttai Tzvi
- ♦ Rabbi begin to ban the study of kabbalah as a result

Shabbtai Tzvi 1626-1676



- Turkish Rabbi and Kabbalist
- 1664, proclaimed by Nathan of Gaza as the long awaited Moshiach
- 1666, at age of 40, forced by Ottoman Sultan Mehmed IV to convert to Islam
- Spurned series of false Messiahs
- Introduced suspicion for centuries that great rabbis were truly Sabbatians including R' Yaakov Emden's accusation of R' Yonasan Eibschitz

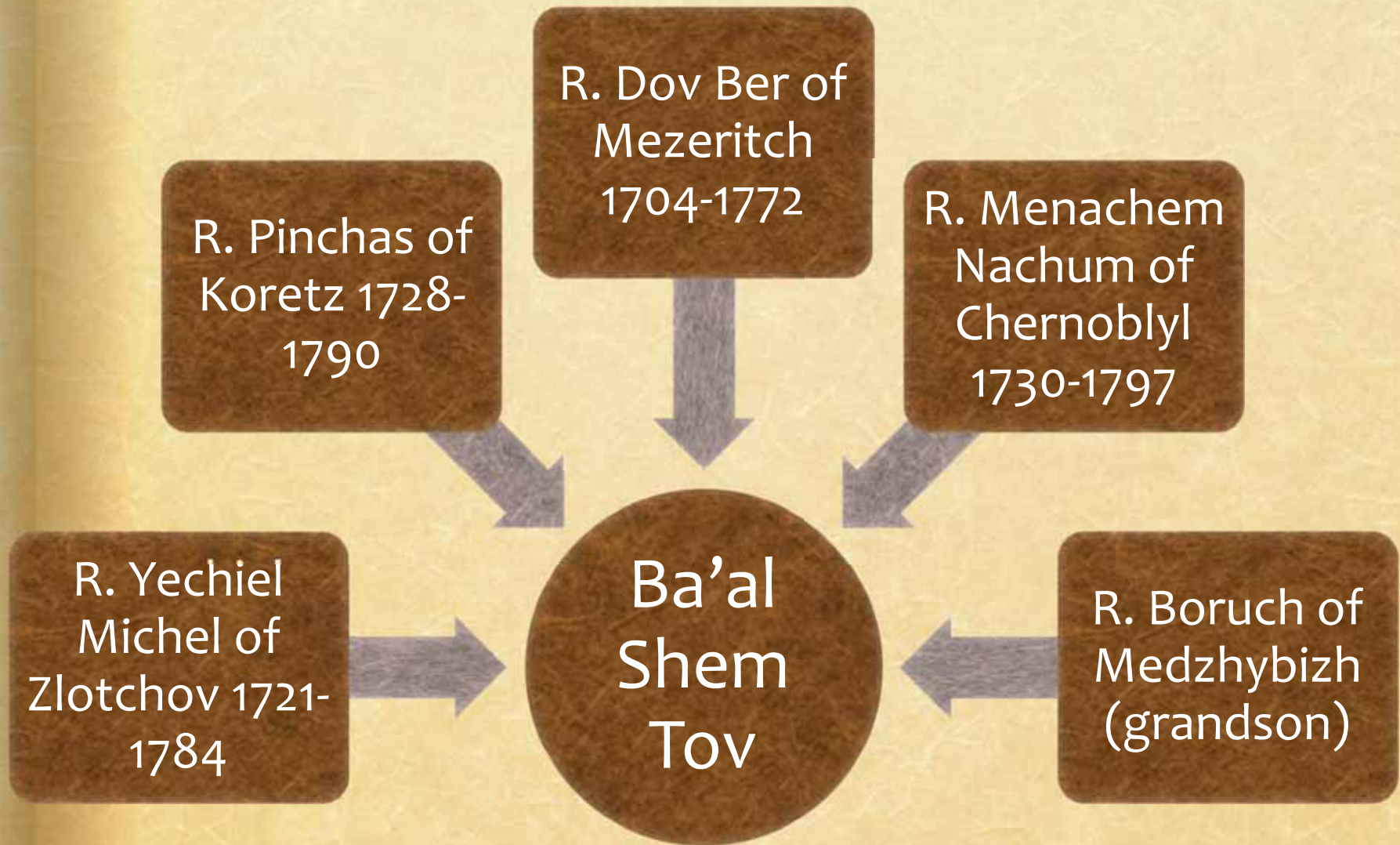


Chassidus

- ◆ In aftermath of Shabbtai Tzvi controversy, Jewish community is devastated. Tremendous split between the scholars and the ignorant. Many are pious but illiterate.
- ◆ R. Yisroel ben Eliezer (1698–1760), known as the Ba'al Shem Tov or Besht lives in Ukraine and becomes known as a healer and miracle worker.
- ◆ He was amazingly sincere and sought to elevate the spirituality of the masses. He taught that true service of Hashem is not only about learning and scholarship, but about faith, trust, sincere love and passionate prayer.
- ◆ He settled in the town of Medzhybizh in the Ukraine and from there he spreads Chassidus in a systematic fashion.



Students of the Ba'al Shem Tov



Chassidim vs. Misnagdim

- ♦ Mostly teaches a small circle of loyal students including Dov Ber of Mezritch, the Maggid of Mezritch.
- ♦ Chassidim introducing unusual practices including changing Nusach to that of the Ari, jumping up and down during davening, screaming, banging their heads against the wall.
- ♦ Rabbinic leadership is worried that they are distorting Judaism like Shabbtai Tzvi and so in 1772, the Vilna Gaon excommunicates Chassidim

R. Shneur Zalman of Liadi

- ◆ Born 18 Elul 5505 – September 14, 1745 in Lyozna, White Russia, now Belarus
- ◆ His father is R. Baruch, a descendent of the Maharal (R. Yehudah Loewe of Prague 1520-1609)
- ◆ Recognized as a child prodigy and genius

After a few years of marriage, decides he needs to move to a great Torah center and grow further. Two choices:

- ◆ Vilna – home to R. Eliyahu Kramer, Vilna Gaon
- ◆ Mezherich – Home of the great Maggid, R. Dov Ber



R. Shneur Zalman of Liadi

- ◆ Feeling he knew little about how to study Torah but even less about how to pray, he decides to go to Mezherich, a decision that would have a huge impact on Jewish destiny.



Shulchan Aruch Ha'Rav

- ◆ Arrives in Mezherich in 1764 and quickly enters Maggid's inner circle of disciples.
- ◆ In 1770, recognizing R. Shneur Zalman's talents and genius, Maggid asks him to compile an updated Shulchan Aruch.
- ◆ This would show Misnagdim that Chassidim could learn and cared about Halacha as well.
- ◆ Labored for years but tragically most of manuscript was lost in a fire and only part survived including most of Orach Chaim and small parts of other sections.
- ◆ Written concisely, clearly and great use of Hebrew language. Despite opposition to Chassidism, Shulchan Aruch Ha'Rav enters halachic literature.
- ◆ In attempt to make it universal didn't make Chabad centric but added Chabad customs to Siddur



Chabad & Vilna Gaon

- ◆ 1767, R' Shneur Zalman becomes Maggid in his hometown of Liozna and attracts followers who want to study with him.
- ◆ 1772 while forming three chadarim, groups of students, he develops his philosophy of Chabad. 1772 is celebrated as the founding year of Chabad chassidus.
- ◆ 1774, R. Shneur Zalman and his teacher/colleague R. Menachem Mendel of Vitebsk go on a mission to the Vilna Gaon to make peace. Vilna Gaon refused to meet with them.

R. Shneur Zalman & the Gra

they are heretics and must be brought low. Additional information that supplements and clarifies the picture is found in a passage from the letter of Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Lyady: We went to the Gaon he-Hasid, may his candle burn brightly, to his house to debate with him and to remove his complaints from us, while I was there with the Hasid rabbi our late teacher Rabbi Mendel Horosener of blessed memory, and the Gaon closed his door before us twice. And when the great people of the city spoke to him, [saying]: Rabbi, the famous rabbi of theirs has come to debate with his venerable, holy Torah, and when he is defeated, certainly thereafter there will be peace upon Israel, he put them off with delays. And when they began to implore him greatly, he left and went away and traveled from the city, remaining there until our departure from the city. Afterward in our country we traveled to the holy congregation of Shklov also to debate, and we did not succeed. And they did something to us that was not right, they broke their word and the promise they had given us at first not to do anything to us. Only when they saw that they had nothing to respond to our words did they come with a strong arm and suspend themselves from a high tree, ha-Gaon he-Hasid.

Etkes, I.. Gaon of Vilna : The Man and His Image.

Ewing, NJ, USA: University of California Press, 2002. p 80-81.

In 1797, when the Gaon passed away certain Chasidim expressed happiness at the news of his death. R. Shneur Zalman issued a public letter forbidding such statements and requiring his followers to speak of the greatness of the Gaon.

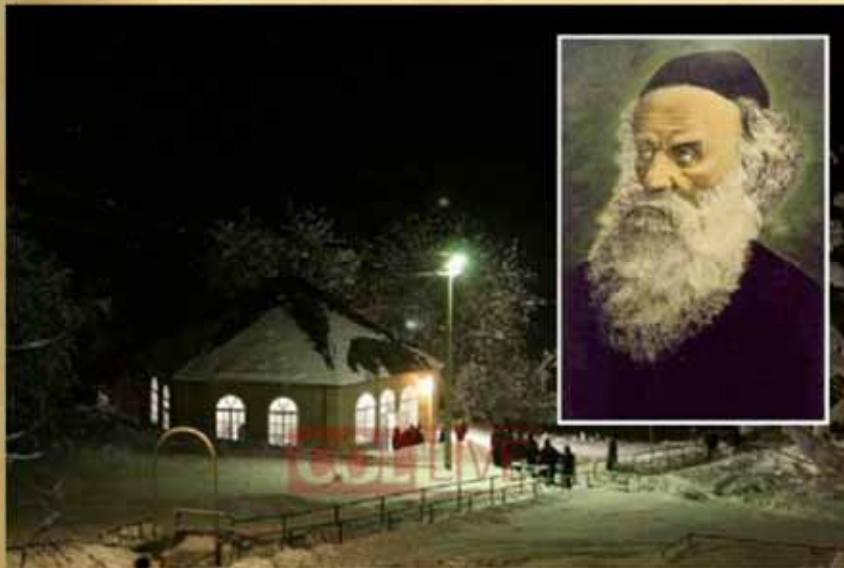
Becomes Rebbe

- ◆ In the same year, 1774, following the death of the Maggid, R. Menachem Mendel of Vitebsk viewed as leader of Chassidus.
- ◆ 1777 R. Menachem Mendel flees threats from opponents of Chassidus and emigrates to Israel.
- ◆ R. Shneur Zalman is originally part of his group but returns home where he emerges the de facto leader of all Chassidus.
- ◆ Created system of Shelichim so he could send messengers to other locations and educate others.
- ◆ Became too popular and was frustrated he couldn't spend more time with individuals. Realized he could spread his message by writing a book. Originally post anonymously but later by name

Rosh Hashana of Chassidus

- ◆ Authors Tanya in 1797 as a systematic articulation of fundamentals of Chassidus.
- ◆ Influence spreads throughout White Russia, Lithuania and even Vilna.
- ◆ Misnagdim inform against him to Russian government claiming he sent money to Sultan of Turkey when he sent to Chassidim in Israel.
- ◆ 1798 he is arrested with capital crime and tried in Petersburg.
- ◆ After trial, released from prison and exonerated of all charges on 19th of Kislev, 1798.
- ◆ Understood his release as a message from Hashem to spread Chabad and Chassidus and indeed gains tens of thousands of followers

- ♦ A second accusation comes in 1800 and he suffers a lengthy imprisonment. On his release he moves to Liady.
- ♦ In 1812 when Napoleon invades Russia, R. Shneur Zalman is among greatest opponents of French conquest.
- ♦ He worried French would emancipate Jews and freedom would lead to assimilation and so supported Russia.
- ♦ As French advanced he had to flee. In 1812, 24 Teves 5583, he died in the remote village of Pyern and was buried in nearby Haditz.



Tanya – 3 Names



1. Tanya – means a teaching and refers to a Beraisa which is how the book opens.
2. Sefer Ha'Beinonim – Book of the Intermediates
3. Likkutei Amarim – Collection of teachings. He says in introduction he just collected Rabbinic teachings, but it is a very original work

Purpose of Tanya

- ◆ Doesn't delve into specific problems but delves into root causes of human failing.
- ◆ Inner workings of the inner soul and analysis of good and evil as fundamental forces competing in the soul.
- ◆ See all human imperfection, all struggles, doubts, drives and temptations as expressions of one basic problem – struggle between good and evil.
- ◆ Mesillas Yesharim is written to be following chronologically. Tanya can be worked on simultaneously.

Godly Soul vs. Animal Soul



Nefesh Elokus

Aspiration to the Divine
Transcendent
Disciplined
Godly Spirit



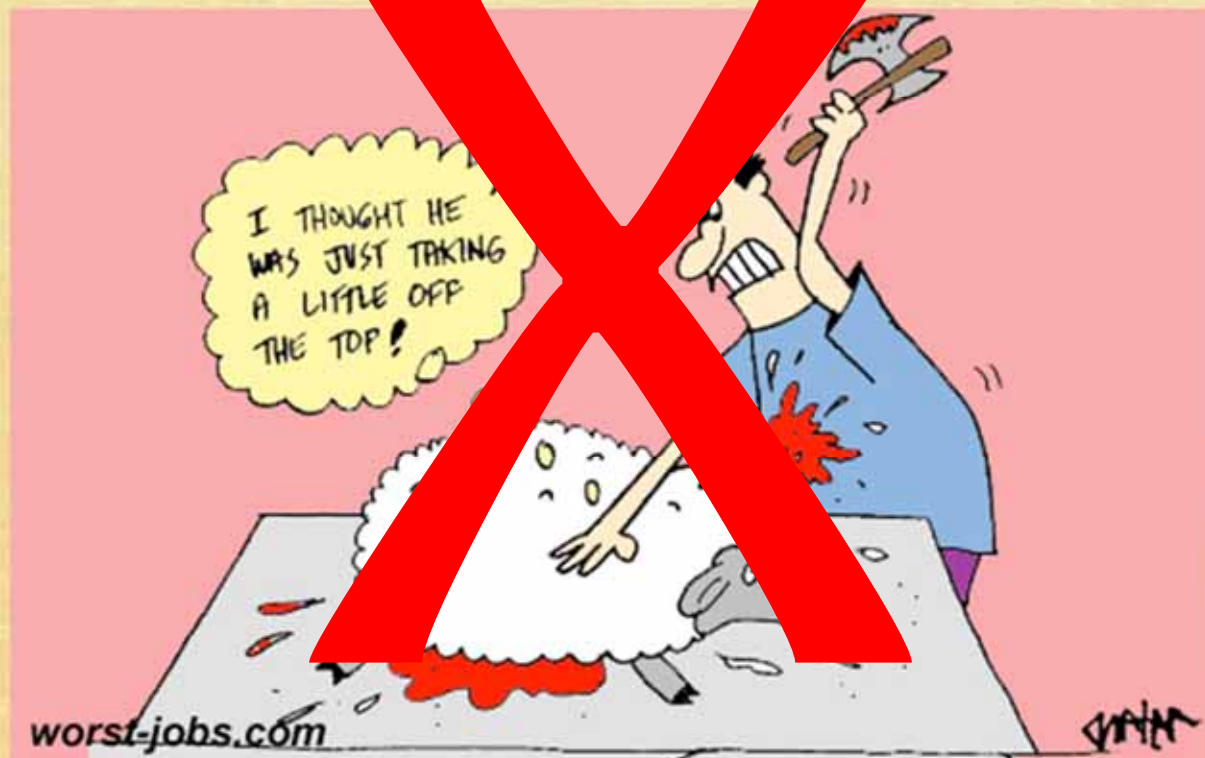
Nefesh B'heimis

Physical identity
Material world
Aspect of human soul
Not inherently negative
Can be refined



Godly Soul vs. Animal Soul

- Goal is not to slaughter the animal soul and obliterate a piece of himself
- Animal soul not fundamentally evil so battle is one of education
- Train the animal soul and elevate it to a higher level of awareness and understanding.
- Seeking peace and harmony of body and soul, earthliness and transcendence



Beinonim



- ♦ Beinonim = intermediates
- ♦ Beinoni is not someone who is 50% righteous & 50% evil
- ♦ Most mussar books directed at becoming a tzadik. Tanya recognizes that not everyone can achieve absolute victory of Godly soul over animal one.
- ♦ For Tanya Tzadik = Stable, Beinoni = tension/struggle
- ♦ Beinoni is in a State of war
- ♦ Can achieve perfection in the garments of the soul
 - ♦ Thought
 - ♦ Speech
 - ♦ Action

Even if not in the essence of the soul

Beinonim

- ◆ Identify and recognize that undesirable lusts and thoughts and doubts come from within a component of ourselves and we may not have power to uproot totally.
- ◆ Their presence within us is not tragic or categorically bad. We can achieve perfection in mastering and controlling them.
- ◆ Concept of Beinoni who is in everyone's reach and everyone can aspire to it.
- ◆ Beinoni is the hero of Tanya

Other Chassidus focuses on idea that "God desires the heart." Tanya argues that God also desires the mind, and that without the mind the heart is useless. Must have joy and enthusiasm, but not emotional superficiality.

"...understanding is the mother of...fear and love of God. These are born of knowledge and profound contemplation of the greatness of God." Tanya, Chapter 13

CHaBaD

Chochmah – wisdom/insight

- Intellectual insight
- Provides idea for Binah

Binah – understanding

Develops idea from
chochma
Implications, ramifications

Da'as – knowledge/connection

Allows intellect to influence the
soul

Structure of the Book

1. Sefer Ha'Beinonim
2. Sha'ar Ha'Yichud V'HaEmunah
3. Iggeres Ha'Teshuva
4. Iggeres Ha'Kodesh
5. Kuntrus Acharon

Published originally anonymously and had 3 parts. Last two parts added in 1814, after R. Shneur Zalman's passing

Written & Oral Torah

- ◆ Chassidim consider Tanya the Torah she'bichsav, the written Torah of Chassidus.
- ◆ Just like Chumash needs Torah she'b'al peh, so too Tanya.
- ◆ “I wonder how he managed to put such a great and awesome God into such a small book.” R. Zusha of Anipoli (1718-1800)

