‘The culture of manuscript copies of Hasidic discourses – a preliminary overview based on Hasidic Manuscripts in the Gaster Hebrew Collection, John Rylands Library, University of Manchester’

By Israel M. Sandman
Rebbe Menachem Mendel Schneersohn of Lubavitch, the ‘Tzemach Tzedeq’ (1789 – 1866)

- 1802: began writing on Torah topics;
- 1806: began career of issuing Jewish legal rulings;
- 1826: Tsarist authorities renewed and enforced regulations against printing Hasidic & other Jewish works;
- 1828: the ‘Tzemach Tzedeq’ formally accepted post of Rebbe, over the years writing and delivering hundreds of Hasidic discourses.
to institutions of higher learning and so forth. Firkovich also tried to be of service to the *maskilim* where censorship was concerned. He was a friend of the influential censor Wolf Tugendhold, who in 1827–64 worked in the employ of the Vilna censorship committee. Tugendhold was a prominent enemy of Ḥasidism and an educator and supervisor in a rabbinical seminary in Vilna, and he endeavored to the best of his ability to promote the publi-
In 1831 Tugendhold presented to the Vilna censorship committee a programmatic document entitled “A Report on the Works of the Ḥasidic Sect” that was subsequently passed on to the “Third Section” and the Ministry of Internal Affairs, which oversaw censorship, as well as to Emperor Nicholay 1. The report discussed, among other topics, the beginnings of Ḥasidism, Ḥasidic beliefs, and the role of the rebbe, and included a list of Ḥasidic works and recommendations for putting an end to Ḥasidic influence and eradicating these works; see Эльяшевич Дмитрий, Правительственная политика, 149–56. Tugendhold’s discussion is chronically superficial and takes numerous liberties with the factual record. The report influenced government policy on the censorship of Ḥasidic literature and on the Ḥasidim in general; see Эльяшевич Дмитрий, Правительственная политика 203. For the report see Тугенгольд, “Борьба правительств с хасидизмом.” In 1840 and 1841 Tugendhold authored Russian-language pamphlets entitled The Russian Jew in His Present Condition (Российский еврей в настоящем его виде) and The Means of Changing Jewish Education Quickly and without Side Effects (Средства к преобразованию еврейского воспитания в самое короткое время и без издержек).
The Solution: Manuscripts

Gaster Hebrew 1345 & 1352 © John Rylands Library
Ligatures

MS Oppenheimer 183, ff. 1a, 3a, details © Oxford Bodleian Library Sephardic / Provencal, 1376 or 1476

בריאה
שהשלים מצד הרצון
ולרצון שבנפש שהנפש משתנה
אמרול
לרצון שבנפש שלنفس משתנה

חבור בחשבון העבור
וך

Gaster Hebrew 1352, 14b, 15a, 156a, details © John Rylands Library
Cursive Writing
(note some extra loops to avoid lifting pen)

Gaster Hebrew 1345, ff. 90a, 92b, 93a, details © John Rylands Library
ביאור על ראה קריאתי בשם צלאל

ביאור הדברים הנל. הנה שרשת עניין מזה' המזה' פושר עניין הקטרת כו.' יה' הקחילה
דאוה' המזה' חבר עולם האצוי' וחבר CORPORATE' המזה'itary המזה' צלאל' בחיה' ב"ע
ועמה' שבד"ה במד' שכאוה' מ"ל פי"ז' הצר אווה' המזה' צלאל' בחיה' פ"ו שירדה שנאה על הרעם, וככ

Manuscript Gaster Hebrew 1352, folio 68a, detail © John Rylands Library
Faithfulness of Transmission

Gaster Hebrew 1345, ff. 117b-118a, 127b, 144b, 153b details © John Rylands Library
Rebbe’s Involvement in Written Transmission

Gaster Hebrew 1342, f. 309a:

מוגה النبيיב
בעדה"ת ויתעלה
מכ"ק אדמו"ר
שליט"א

מוגה מכ"ק

Gaster Hebrew 1345, ff. 76b, 142b, 199b, details © John Rylands Library
Special Transcribers

'Transcript. By Rabbi DovBer (Ashkenazi) Kalisker'

Gaster Hebrew 1345, front flyleaf, detail © John Rylands Library
Collator’s Gloss?

Gloss: ...

Summary: ...

הגה ‘Gloss: ...’

קייזור ‘Summary: ...’

Gaster Hebrew 1345, f. 220a © John Rylands Library
Editorial Gloss

Gaster Hebrew 1345, f. 203a, detail © John Rylands Library
Psalm 102, ‘The prayer of the Pauper’, and Psalm 90, ‘The prayer of Moses’, are contrasted in various ways: the prayer of the pauper is an ascent, whereas the prayer of Moses is a bestowal downward; the prayer of the pauper connects Creation to Emanation, whereas the prayer of Moses connects Emanation to the Infinite. The gloss adds the following: “It can be said that both of them are ascent. It is only that the prayer of the pauper is the ascent of Creation into Emanation, while the prayer of Moses are the ascents of Emanation into what is beyond Emanation. The proof is from the 515 prayers that Moses offered, which were pleas, which are in the mode of ‘ascent’.” (Gaster Hebrew 1345, f. 108a, detail © John Rylands Library)
Financial Aspects

Gaster Hebrew 1342, inside of back flyleaf:

280 – ס"ה = ספרculo דפיים בשם הספר כהוים
560 – עמודים

280: Total number of written leaves in this book
560: Pages written in this book.

List of discourses and the number of pages that they run:
Gaster Hebrew 1345, front flyleaf, detail
© John Rylands Library
רְכֵבָּה מְדִינָה: גָּטֶּר בָּבֶּל 1345, ff. 83b-84a © John Rylands Library
Scribal Flourish: ‘The End’

Gaster Hebrew 1345, ff. 88b, 138b, details © John Rylands Library