**Abstract Research Plan**

From the beginning of my academic journey, my research has dealt with Hassidism. I wrote my doctoral dissertation on R’ Chaim from Chanze (1797-1876), a Rebbe in 19th century Galicia who founded Hassidism and wore two crowns: Prominent and influential *posek* and central Rebbe, founder of Sanz Hassidism. My dissertation handles the thoughts and legal rulings of R’ Chaim through both his contemplative books that involve homilies on the Torah and Festivals, and his legal works, *Shut Divrei Hayim* being at the foreground. The study examines features of his ideological conceptions and legal rulings on following subjects: Torah interpretation (*halacha* and interpretation), Rabbinic leadership, ‘Sinners’ (*halacha* and society), and Wealth and Income (*halacha* and economics). The research explores the ‘Philosophy of *Halacha*’ particular to R’ Chaim, in his capacity of Rebbe-*Posek* and adopts an inter-disciplinary approach: His legal rulings are analyzed using tools from Jewish Law research while a conceptual examination aims to identify the principles at their base, his policy considerations and the unique way his Hassidic outlooks find expression. A central and surprising discovery that emerges is that although R’ Chaim was a Hassidic master – who even founded a new branch of Hassidism – he believed that the path of serving God through Hassidism had come to an end and that Hassidism must return to the original methods of Torah study and fulfilling mitzvoth. For this reason, R’ Chaim did not integrate Kabbalistic or Hassidic traditions into his legal rulings, and used them only in guiding his disciples, viewing the traditions as a form of community glue and shield against modernity. The work shows R’ Chaim found the greatest force of Hassidism to be the strength of the community. The dissertation is currently in the process of being transformed into a monograph.

In spite of R’ Chaim’s particular standards for Hassidic communities, his rulings for the general public reveal a sensitivity to reforming sinners and a strong desire that they remain within the framework of the Jewish community. In my article on this subject, published in Tarbiz, I point to his leniencies towards sinners of ‘appetite’ - which at times contravene *halacha* - for the purpose of allowing them to remain inside the Jewish community.

In a different study, I explore the phenomenon of Rebbe-*Posek* from a more comparative angle: I contrast the method of R’ Chaim with his great-grandson R’ Yekutiel Yehudah Halberstam of Sanz-Klaussenberg (1905-1994). The article first examines the fundamental conceptions each expresses on the relationship between Kabbalah and Jewish Law, and most prominently, the role of Kabbalah in rendering *halachik* rulings, and additional practical implications of their views. The study shows that each represents a different model of Rebbe-*Posek*, the ‘Distinguishing Model’ Model’ of R’ Chaim which separates between the two titles, and the ‘Unifying Model’ of R’ Yekutiel of Klaussenberg who integrates Kabbalah and Hassidism into his legal Responsa. It is to be noted that I am the first researcher to examine the phenomenon of Rebbe-*Posek* - a critical phenomenon in the history of Hassidism – and in practice, I have developed a new branch of study that deals with the tie between Hassidism and Jewish Law.

I examine the outlooks of the Rebbi from Klaussenberg two other studies as well. One deals with his approach towards the image of the Jewish woman and presents his unique and unparalleled views of *Nidda* which have far-reaching implications both in practice and in the ideological realm. On account of his Kabbalistic orientation, his conception of *Nidda* impurity goes far beyond the constraints of *halacha*, and he considers it a central component of the existence of the Jewish woman. In a different study, I dealt with the Rebbe’s approach to settling the land of Israel and his fascinating views on Zionism and State institutions. In contrast to the widespread approach of Haredi leaders who deny Zionism and advocate passivity, he encouraged his disciples to move to Israel and represented new values to the Haredi community - an active building of the land in spiritually and physically - a semi-form of Haredi Nationalism. Accordingly, he develops and spearheads Haredi enterprises that serve Israel’s general population, such as the Lanidau Hospital in Netanya and various Haredi Torah academies such as *Mifal Ha-Shas*.

I adopt a different stance towards the relation between Hassidism, Jewish Law and tradition in my article on changing views towards the value of ‘cleansing the body’ (the endeavor to purge the body of waste) as a Hassidic ethos towards prayer. The article adopts a similar methodology to that of Dr. Tzippi Kaufman in her research on *Mikvah* immersion: An examination of Hassidic ritual as a practical expression of Kabbalistic conceptions that were transformed and adapted to the Hassidic lifestyle. I examined the tradition’s Kabbalistic source in the Ari’s work and its transformation from being a desirable accepted Hassidic tradition to its rejection, the grounds for the overturn in the approach (R’ Nachman from Breslau plays a pioneer role in this), and the insistence of the Hassidim, in spite of their leaders’ instruction, to sanctify the tradition. Similar methodology is adopted in a new article I am writing - and is in the advanced stage of preparation - on the Galician-Hungarian tradition for women to shave their heads. Alongside the Kabbalistic and Hassidic sources, the article outlines key points touching gender and anthropology.

I’ve recently written a comprehensive article on Hassidism and Jewish Law for the collection ‘Or Hozer,’ published by Bar Ilan University, and am now writing a new book treating five educational ideologies of the franchise Beis Yaakov. While the study does not investigate Hassidism itself, the Hassidic backgrounds of two central figures, Sarah Shnirer and Rav Yehuda Orlean is discussed as part of their outlooks. This holds true for my article on the Hebrew language, that devotes much discussion to the viewpoints of central Hassidic figures. This study explores the fight of radical Haredi sectors against modern Hebrew and its use for ordinary speech. My central argument is that in the second generation, the Haredi objection changes its base from educational and ideological grounds to legal or semi-legal grounds. Leading personalities of this change are the Rebbes of Chabad, Munkatch, and Satmar. R’ Yoel from Satmar, for instances bases his claim in the Zohar’s conception that the holy language has a supernatural, even magical force and was used by the builders of the Tower of Babylon in their quest to empower Sitra Ahra over the world. The Zionistic endeavor to impose the holy language in its ‘impure’ modern version is perceived as a renewal of the efforts of that Biblical generation.

My research does not deal exclusively with the connection between Hassidism and halacha, but with Hassidic thought as well. In an article on the Legend of the Walls I dealt with the metamorphosis of a well-known legend initially found in the work of the Baal Shem Tov ‘Ben Porat Yosef.’ The article examines differing versions of the legend – each ascribed to the Baal Shem Tov and his disciples - and its appearance in writings of R’ Nachman from Breslau. The legend makes an unanticipated appearance in work of R’ Yosef Yuzel Horowitz of Novharduk (1850-1919), a leader of the Lithuanian Mussar movement rather than a Hassid. The article demonstrates that the Legend of the Walls transforms and takes on different interpretations suited to the conceptions of the teller: In the Baal Shem Tov it has a strong mystical emphasis, in R’ Nachman the stress is existential and Saba of Novharduk highlights its moral-educational dimension. These metamorphoses also exhibit their authors’ conceptions of the relations between God and Man and his ability capacity to become close to the Deity.

Much of my instructive work has involved Hassidism. On the whole, I’ve taught courses dealing with foundations of Hassidism as developed by first generation personalities, however several courses have dealt with other thinkers as well, mostly familiar figures (such as R’ Elimelech of Lijnesk and R’ Nachman of Breslau), but also less- known personalities (such as R’ Yehezkel from Shinava and R’ Yekutiel Yehuda from Sanz-Klaussenberg). Many courses involve the institutionalization process of the movement, which includes the consolidation of Eastern-European Orthodox Jewry, as part of their struggle against the rising forces of modernity in the 19th century.

Hassidism is central in my research plans for the future, both in terms of developing existing directions, as well as expanding the field in new directions. I will continue to explore the relationship between Hassidism and Jewish Law, particularly with respect to Hassidic custom and conceptions of Women. In examining both topics I will bear in mind the Kabbalistic roots of Hassidic conceptions and the veer of Hassidism from the Zohar and the Kabbala of Ari on these matters. The image of women will be explored both in early Hassidism, and through several later figures from the 20th century.

My recent research has focused on the transition process from Early Hassidism to later Hassidism, with emphasis on the thoughts of the Rebbes of Galicia. On one hand these personalities advance the conservative spirit of late Hassidism, but on the other, there are those who wish to revive a Kabbalistic or neo-Kabbalistic orientation, and among them R’ Tzvi Hirsch from Zedeitchov (who was studied by Prof. Dov Schwartz) and R’ Isaac from Kumarna (who has been researched as well), and others who have not yet featured in research such as the later Rebbes of the Kumarna dynasty, R’ Tzvi Hirsch of Munkatch, and the Rebbes of the Sapinka dynasty. I aim to examine the extent to which their Hassidic world views impact their interpretation of Kabbalistic sources.

I also wish to examine several fundamental values of Hassidism. While certain standards have received much attention (‘*deveiku*t,’ ‘*yeridat hazadik*’ and the like), additional Hassidic values require defining, such as ‘fear and love’ and ‘holiness and purity’ along with the meanings they are lent by different movement and in different eras.

From the start, I’ve perceived academic instruction as an inseparable part of research. Many of the ideas I’ve developed into articles were triggered in a class or lecture setting. I intend to continue teaching Hassidism - including the Kabbalistic background necessary for understanding it - from introductory courses to advanced workshops that raise new questions and tackle less-known sources. In a University setting I can present material that spans a broad chronological range, starting from the Baal Shem Tov and his disciples to twentieth century Rebbes. I have strong experience instructing students at different levels, from introductory courses, to courses on methodology and seminar (and supervising seminar papers). I find personal and direct connection with students – on all levels in all degree programs - highly valuable, and throughout my academic work I’ve made myself available for question, clarifications, and brainstorming.

I consider supervising students in writing papers and advanced research a vital component of the daily academic agenda. Should I become involved in instruction at the University, I will refer research students to personalities and movements of early Hassidism and those that have yet to appear in the academic forum. (Naturally, I have no interest in dictating research agendas to students, and I will happily supervise any project that involves new and creative content, exposing students to a broad range of research directions, and especially to the new directions emerging from young scholars).

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"The Hasidic Rebbe as Halakhic Authority: Halakhah and Kabbalah in the Writings of Two Rabbi-Rebbes of the Sanz Dynasty", in: Yedidiah Stern and Joshua Friedman, eds., *Rabbis and Rabbinate: The Challenge,* vol. 2, Am Oved and the Israel Democracy Institute, Jerusalem 2011, pp. 871-934 (Hebrew).

In the article, I examine the phenomenon of Rebbe-Posek that developed in Hassidism and the Rabbinate in the nineteenth century from the standpoint of issuing halacha rulings. The article surveys two Rebbe-Poskim as test cases: R’ Chaim Halberstam (1797-1876), founder of Sanz Hassidism, and his great-grandson, R’ Yekutiel Yehudah Halberstam the Rebbi of Sanz-Klaussenberg (1905-1994). Each represents a different model of Rebbe-*Posek*, the ‘Distinguishing Model’ which separates between the titles of Rebbe and Posek, and the ‘Unifying Model’ which unites the two. The article opens by examining their fundamental conceptions on the role of Kabbalah in determining halacha, and illustrates the practical implications of their diverging conceptions through three issues: The shaving of beards, the requirement of minors to fulfill the commandment of ‘cleansing of the body,’ and the mitzvah of phylacteries on Hol ha-Mo-ed. As here Kabbalistic sources veer from the Shulhan Aruch and legalists of Ashkenaz, the cases are optimal testing grounds for verifying the methods of the Rebbe-posek. I reveal that R’ Chaim adopts the separation model in which one kingdom does not affect the other. There is almost a dichotomy between his two functions: As a Hassidic leader he instructs his disciples to fulfill Hassidic traditions that are largely based on Kabbalistic custom or reasoning, while as a posek for the general public he instructs according to halacha only using halachik sources and disregarding, even contravening, Kabbalah and Hassidic custom without apology. By contrast, the Rebbe from Klaussenberg reflects a model that unifies the two crowns and he gives precedent to Hassidic-Kabbalistic custom in his halachick rulings. The study also shows his views on deviating from his great-grandfather’s rulings. In its conclusion, I suggest grounds that may have led to the diverging approaches, and particularly, to explain the path of R’ Chaim who consistently distinguishes between his two roles.