**Synopsis**

This article discusses the thought and life of the Hassidic leader Rabbi Ben Zion Halberstam of Bobov (the Bobover Rebbe) in the period between the two world wars, and, specifically, his attitude towards adolescents.

It so happens that until the early twentieth century, adolescents were by and large treated as adjuncts to the Hassidic community: they were not considered as an integral part of the Hassidic society, were not admitted by the ‘rebbes’ nor was their education paid any unique consideration. However, secularization and a multitudinous trend of turning away from religion spreading through the Hassidic public, particularly after World War I, triggered a shift in dominant attitudes on the subject. Some, such as the Bobover Rebbe, understood that if attitudes towards Hassidic adolescents would not change, their numbers would dwindle, and Hassidism's future would be jeopardized.

It was at this crossroads that the Bobover Rebbe had taken the initiative to actively draw adolescents to him. He admitted them for personal conversations, took interest in their physical and mental health, and tended to their needs. He also fostered a communal atmosphere that shored adolescents up by underscoring the importance of orderliness and uniformity, *niggun* and dress. Concurrently, the rebbe founded a network of yeshivas attended by many hundreds of young men. This step was groundbreaking, as up until then Hassidic adolescents were seldom educated at yeshivas.

The shift in the Bobover Rebbe's attitude towards adolescents is particularly striking given his conservative convictions and principled objection to any deviation from tradition. The rebbe did not hesitate to throw his weight behind a seismic shift in the Hassidic community. He has done so publicly and was criticized for it. This could be taken to hint at the importance the rebbe accorded to the issue.