

A HOUSE DIVIDED

By Shoshanna Silcove

The "Messianist" (or "Moshichists") as they call themselves, are a fringe group of fanatics within Lubavitch. The Messianist ringleaders created this aberrant movement by using some of the same tactics employed by many of the well known tyrants of history. The same dynamics of group psychology that I studied in college are at play here. Fanaticism of all kinds, but especially religious fanaticisms, all share the same ugly face of intolerance, rigidity, irrationality, hatred and rage. The difference here is that this fanatic movement has as its central figure, our beloved Lubavitcher Rebbe (zt"l), who was a great giant of Torah righteousness and truth. Herein lies the real tragedy of this illegitimate movement within Lubavitch - that it misrepresents the Rebbe and threatens to destroy everything he built.

It all began when the unthinkable occurred. After a long and protracted illness the Rebbe finally went the way of all flesh, leaving us, his kinderlach, in a state of helplessness, shock and grief. For over forty years the world had watched this great tzadik in amazement as he accomplished what seemed to be superhuman feats. His influence permeated both the entire Jewish and non-Jewish world. I personally lived within blocks of the Rebbe for over a decade and can say unequivocally that this was the most formative decade of my life. As a baalas teshuvah who had been educated to believe in secular moral relativism, it was only the Rebbe who could have brought me closer to Hashem and His Torah. The Rebbe made Moshiach a palpable reality. The Rebbe could make us all practically see, feel, smell, and taste Moshiach. This is why we all felt that if Moshiach were imminent, as the Rebbe promised us he was, then the Rebbe must have been the Moshiach himself. After all, we asked, who else could it be?

This is the background from which this false Messianic movement sprung. The Messianic ringleaders wasted little time after the Rebbe's demise and immediately went to work. They created a new ideology using distortions and misrepresentations of the Rebbe's discourses and were able to convince a large portion of the masses that the Rebbe would still be revealed as the Moshiach even after his death. I vividly recall sitting in 770 and listening to the Messianic lectures. They told the people not to cry. They actually said it was a sin to cry since it showed lack of faith. I paid no heed to their words as I uncontrollably cried bitter tears from the depth of my broken heart. The tearless crowd gave me cold stares as their Messianic teachers told them that people like myself didn't really believe. The dynamics of group psychology were being cleverly manipulated by the Messianic ringleaders who told their legions that they were

actually spiritually superior to people like me. The Messianist ringleaders played upon the vulnerability of the masses' emotions. They placated the crowd into a mindless stupor and told them they had nothing to be saddened about because the Rebbe was really here. They called in respected rabbis and teachers and quoted the Rebbe's discourses repeatedly until a large portion of the masses became brainwashed. They told the people what they wanted to hear. And those who dared to disagree or argue with their logic were ostracized from the group. The message became clear - you believe like us or you are not part of the group and are thereby not worthy of our love and friendship. The weaker ones succumbed. They became intimidated psychologically and would choose not to speak out. No one wants to be ostracized. They even went so far as to tell the people that if one did not believe that the Rebbe was still Moshiach after his death, then one was a non-believer in the entire concept of Moshiach altogether and was going against the Rebbe.

This aberrant movement began to gain steam very quickly. The Messianic ringleaders made certain that every single class was dedicated to propagating their new Messianic ideology. The baalei teshuvah became their most vulnerable victims. As a baalas teshuvah I can assert that most of my peers are insufferably naive when it comes to their teachers. Baalei teshuvah come to Yiddishkeit with the openness of purity of children and most of us believe our teachers are holy, righteous and all-knowing. We basically believe everything they tell us and do not believe that we know enough Torah to argue against them. I am lucky since I was born with a healthy cynicism and an acute sense of reality. These characteristics, along with having had the right teachers, thank G-d, saved me from becoming part of the Messianic cult.

Fanaticism is like a progressive illness of the spirit that poisons one's soul. The Messianic movement has grown in its intensity and its ferocity with time. I have watched formerly nice people whom I had known for years become mean, bitter and vicious before my eyes. I do not blame them but rather the heads of the false "leaders" of the Messianists who have a hidden agenda. These ringleaders use their legions to do their dirty work. This includes actual physical intimidation and harassment of the "non-believers" who express contrary opinions. The Messianists have created a one-sided war and they are the only ones who are fighting.

The hidden agenda of the Messianic ringleaders is one of gaining as much power as possible. They are not content with just having power over their followers, but they are also interested in gaining control over institutions and the structure of Lubavitch itself. They have attempted to encroach their power over every facet of the educational system in Crown Heights and in many cases have been successful. Some yeshivot are more subject to their influence than others, but they have to some extent made their new ideology a part of the curriculum in all of them. This has proven to be a major problem for many of the children who are becoming

confused and alienated from Yiddishkeit in greater numbers than ever before. This has also become a major factor in dividing the community as never before with bitter feuds between and even within families.

Furthermore, the Messianic ringleaders have attempted to replace the structure of Lubavitch, as was originally set up by the Rebbe, with a new structure while putting themselves at the helm. They have replicated the key institutions of Lubavitch and have remade them in their own image. All of this has been done in the name of the Rebbe and the bringing of Moshiach. These fake Chassidim would never have dared to even think of attempting such perfidy if the Rebbe were alive today!

All of this is being done by them while they demonize the very people the Rebbe appointed to head these institutions. They assert that these individuals, whom the Rebbe himself hand picked as the leaders of Lubavitch, are actually evil and corrupt. Therefore, they must be saying that they (the Messianist leaders) know better than the Rebbe did about who should run Lubavitch! Apparently, they believe the Rebbe did not really know what he was doing when he chose the people to head up these institutions since he didn't pick the Messianic ringleaders! And herein lies the real root of the entire problems with these Messianic ringleaders. Herein lies the root of all their motivations- JEALOUSLY! Just look in the beginning of the Chumash. Why did Kayin kill Hevel? Because he was jealous that Hashem preferred Hevel's sacrifice over Kayin's. In the same vein, these fake Chassidim who have appointed themselves as the leaders of the Messianic movement are jealous that the Rebbe chose the members of Agudas Chasidei Chabad, and NOT THEM to be the leaders of the Lubavitch Empire after his demise. The entire Messianic ideology is nothing more than a smokescreen for their true agenda of lust for power fueled by their own deep jealousy.

Unfortunately, they have divided us bitterly! They have irreparably tainted our reputation around the world! And they are tarnishing the legacy of the greatest tzadik of our century! Yet, understanding all of this, I still believe. I still believe in the triumph of light over darkness. I still believe that the Rebbe will prevail. The Rebbe stated that his true Chassidim are his emissaries and they continue to spread his true message around the globe. Therefore, I still believe that we will live to see our Holy Moshiach speedily in our days!