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Galician Tzadikim in the Light of Russian-language Jewish Press. On the Example of the Online Edition of the 'Yevreiskij Mir' Newspaper

Streszczenie

Celem niniejszego artykułu jest analiza publikacji dotyczących liderów chasydzkich społeczności galicyjskich, zamieszczonych w internetowym wydaniu amerykańskiego czasopisma rosyjskojęzycznego „Jewreiskij Mir”. Przeprowadzone w tekście rozważania nad artykułami poświęconymi galicyjskim cadykom pozwalają stwierdzić, w jaki sposób ich sylwetki i nauki wykorzystywane są przez dziennikarzy wywodzących się ze środowisk dawnych sowieckich Żydów w Stanach Zjednoczonych. Zaprezentowane wyniki badań statystycznych wyraźnie wskazują, że zdecydowana większość tekstów poświęconych galicyjskim cadykom została napisana przez publicystów związanych bezpośrednio z żydowską sferą duchową. Publikowane przez nich treści przyczyniają się do popularyzacji wiedzy o chasydzkiej duchowości wśród zlaicyzowanej żydowskiej ludności rosyjskojęzycznej. Niekiedy też wspomniane materiały dziennikarskie stanowią inspirację do odkrywania swojego pochodzenia. Pokazuje to analiza przytoczonych w artykule publikacji Szymona Brimana oraz Soni Tuczyńskiej.

Sylwetki galicyjskich cadyków, zamieszczane przez redakcje rosyjskojęzycznych mediów żydowskich, mają wymiar moralizatorski. W rezultacie opowieści o rzeźmowych dokonaniach Elimelecha z Leżajska, Zusji z Annapola czy też Lewi Icchaka z Berdyczowa mogą pobudzać czytelników do refleksji nad swoim życiem i stanowić zachętę do podjęcia pracy nad własną osobowością. Co ważne, większość z nich wydaje się być zaczerpnięta z prac m.in. Martina Bubera, choć sami autorzy na ogół raczej o tym nie wspominają. Paradoksalnie jednak zabieg ten przyczynia się do rozpowszechniania utrwalaonych w tradycji wzorców duchowości żydowskiej, nie zmuszając jednocześnie czytelników do samodzielnych poszukiwań.

Słowa kluczowe:

Chasydyzm, „Jewreiskij Mir”, media, pamięć, Żydzi rosyjskojęzyczni.

Introduction

This article is a continuation of the author's reflections upon the problem of the commemoration of Hasidic leaders in the Russian-speaking Jewish press. So far, the reflections have focused on the image of Elimelech of Lizhensk and the function of his figure in the media portrayal of journalists of former Soviet Jews. As has been shown, the life and teachings of the Lizhensk tzadik are for these journalists an important source of inspiration and a point of reference for their reflections on the moral principles of Judaism and the essence of Jewishness in its broadest sense. Thus Elimelech is portrayed as a historical figure of merit for Hasidism on the one hand, as a cultural phenomenon on the other, and as a role model for both Jews who practice Judaism and those who are completely secularized¹.

These conclusions, however, seem to be incomplete, considering the fact that the presentation of the media image of an outstanding and meritorious individual for the Hasidism, such as the tzadik of Lizhensk, cannot be the same as the image of the rest of the Hasidic community and its leaders. Therefore, the above-mentioned considerations require further exploration, even though research on the history of Hasidism is already very advanced². This also applies to the use of media studies of the Hasidic movement in this research. It should be stressed, however, that the content studied differs mainly in terms of its use by mass-media connected with the Chabad-Lubavitch Hasidic group, which originated in the 18th century³. On the one hand, this seems natural, given that Chabad-Lubavitch as an organization targets secular Jews in an attempt to encourage them to return to Judaism. On the other hand, such research, while demonstrating the religious value of the published content, fails to show what role it may have for Jews not involved in the religious sphere on a daily basis.

The purpose of this study is to analyze articles about the leaders of the Galician Hasidic communities published in the online edition of the American Russian-language newspaper 'Yevreiskij Mir'. It is a weekly publication that covers political, religious, and cultural issues. This study takes into account only the online version of the newspaper, due to its greater popularity among Russian-speaking Jews, both in mainland America and around the world. For this reason, it was decided not to analyze the traditional (paper) edition, which has a much smaller audience; it is distributed only in the United States, and its volume is limited in terms of content.

¹ See K. Propola, *Cadyk Elimelech z Leżajska w świetle internetowego wydania amerykańskiego czasopisma „Jewrejskij Mir”*, „Prace Historyczno-Archiwalne” 2020, vol. 32, pp. 167-178.

² Of works published in English see, for example, M. Idel, *Hasidism: Between Ecstasy and Magic*, Albany 1995; *Hasidism: A New History*, ed. D. Biale et al., Princeton-Oxford 2018; in Polish see, for example, J. Doktor, *Początki chasydyzmu polskiego*, Toruń 2017; M. Wodziński, *Groby cadyków w Polsce. O chasydzkiej literaturze nagrobnej i jej kontekstach*, Wrocław 1998; *idem, Chasydyzm. Wszystko, co najważniejsze*, Kraków–Budapeszt–Syrakuzy 2019. Also noteworthy are the works of Israeli scholars, including Rachel Elijor (see, for example, r. Elijor, *The Mystical Origins of Hasidism*, transl. S. Carmy, Oxford 2006).

³ Cf. e.g. M. Blondheim, E. Katz, *Religion, communications, and Judaism: the case of digital Chabad*, 'Media, Culture & Society' 2015, vol. 38, no. 1, pp. 89-95; O. Golan, N. Stadler, *Building the sacred community online: the dual use of the Internet by Chabad*, 'Media, Culture & Society' 2015, vol. 38, no. 1, pp. 71-88.

Reflecting on the articles devoted to the Galician tzadikim, it is possible to see how their profiles and teachings are used by journalists in the United States with a Soviet-Jewish background. Narrowing the focus of this research to Hasidic leaders in Galicia is not accidental. This area, understood as the lands of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth under Austrian rule in the years 1772–1918, is in a way the cradle of Hasidism. The use of the statistical method in the research will make it possible to determine the number of references to the Galician tzadikim in the online edition of this newspaper, as well as the authors who mentioned them in their texts. Furthermore, it will make it possible to assess whether issues pertaining to Jewish spirituality, or people associated with it, might be of any interest to the audience of the online issue of 'Yevreiski Mir', and if so, how they might shape their distinct identity.

At this point, it should be noted that by the term "Galician tzadikim," the author also understands, in this case, those Hasidic leaders who were born and started their activity before the aforementioned year 1772 and for whom the following years were just the final phase of their activity. Therefore, such leaders will be included in the considerations, alongside figures such as Tsvi Elimelekh of Dinov, also prominent 18th-century tzadikim such as Elimelekh of Lizhensk or Yehiel Mikhel of Zlotshev. Moreover, tzadikim who were not active in the Galician area, but had strong ties to its territories, will also be included. An example is Levi Yitshak. Although the area of his activity was mainly central Poland and the Russian Empire, he came from Husakiv, which later became part of Galicia.

Authors and publication frequency

Addressing the above issues requires prior analysis of the people who mention Galician tzadikim, as well as the frequency with which they publish articles about them. At this point, it should be noted that the target audience for the newspaper, which was founded in 1992 and has been online since 2003, includes Russian-speaking Jewish emigrants from the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (hereafter, the USSR). According to the data presented by Mark Tolts, just between 1989 and 2009 approximately 326,000 of Russian-speaking Jews emigrated to the United States. However, if the earlier emigration waves of the 1970s and 1980s are taken into account, their total number would reach almost 500,000⁴. This fact is important because many representatives of this group, due to the policy of the Soviet authorities and mixed marriages, clearly lost their ties with Judaism⁵. Very often

⁴ M. Tolts, *Demography of the Contemporary Russian-Speaking Jewish Diaspora* [in:] *The New Jewish Diaspora: Russian-Speaking Immigrants in the United States, Israel, and Germany*, ed. Z. Gitelman, New Brunswick–New Jersey–London 2016, p. 24.

⁵ Cf. e.g. L. Remennick, *Russian Jews on Three Continents: Identity, Integration, and Conflict*, New Brunswick–London 2007. It should be noted, however, that Remennick, addressing the issue of the religiosity of Jewish emigrants from the former USSR, very often referred to the research of other scholars employed by various American research agencies, such as Samuel Kliger (S. Kliger, *The Religion of New York Jews from the Former Soviet Union* [in:] *New York Glory: Religions in the City*, ed. T. Carnes, A. Karpathakis, New York 2001, pp. 148–161) or Dimitri Liakhovitsky (see D. Liakhovitsky, *Community Conversations with Young Russian Speaking Jewish Professionals. Report on Findings*, New York 2005).

they and their descendants adopt an indifferent or even hostile attitude towards the religion. Yet it is somewhat ironic that the founder and publisher of 'Yevreiski Mir' was a rabbi and lecturer at one of the New York yeshivas, Aryeh (Lev) Katzin. Significantly, it was he, along with other representatives of the spiritual sphere associated with the newspaper, who authored the vast majority of publications in which the leaders of Hasidism in Galicia were mentioned. This can be illustrated by a comparison of these authors.

Table 1. List of authors of texts in which Galician tzadikim are mentioned (n=29)

Author	Number of articles
Aryeh (Leonid) Yudasin	10
Aryeh (Lev) Katzin	9 (4) ⁶
Sergey Biarem ⁷	1
Shimon Briman	1
Meir Bruk	1
Ezra Khovkin	1
Menachem-Michael Gitik	1
Nahum Purer	1
Sonya Tuchinskaya	1
Anonymous articles/author not mentioned	3
Total	29 (24)

Source: author's research based on articles posted on the 'Yevreiski Mir' newspaper's website from 2003 to 2020.

As can be seen, as in the case of Elimelekh himself⁸, the vast majority of texts dedicated to the Galician tzadikim were written by columnists directly connected with the Jewish spiritual sphere. Their authors were primarily rabbis, such as

⁶ To the total number of articles authored by Katzin was also added a publication posted four times, successively in 2009, 2015, 2016, and 2018, entitled "Forgive Yourself!" (Russian: *Прости себя!*). In the calculation, they were included as separate articles due to the fact that they were cited in different years and circumstances, and, moreover, they were accompanied by completely different graphics. In parentheses, however, the actual number of publications is presented. Cf. e.g., Л. Кацин, Прости себя!, in: <http://evreimir.com/122962/prosti-sebya/> [accessed May 1, 2021].

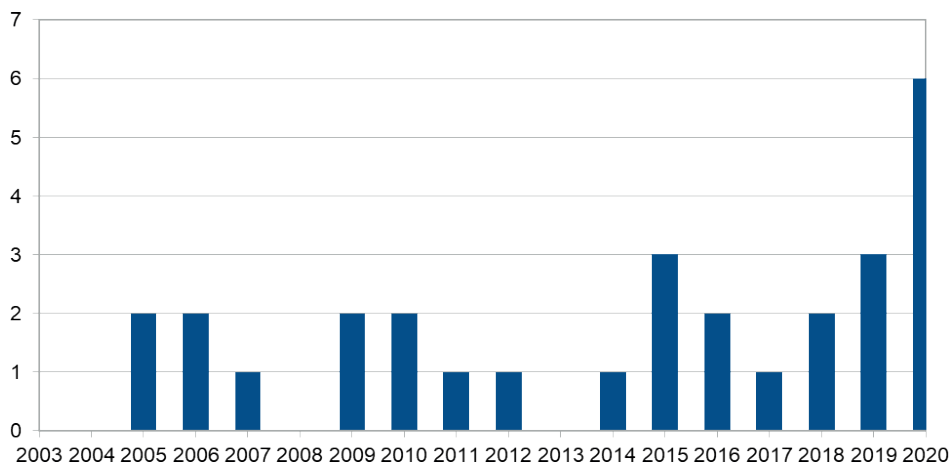
⁷ Although in the online edition of 'Yevreiski Mir' Biarem's name appears under the heading "Author," in practice he quoted from a publication originally posted by Robert Berg on the Jewish.ru portal, which is also noted at the end of the text. The original article has not been preserved on the portal to the present day. See С. Биарэм, Сердце Утесова, in: <http://evreimir.com/98329/serdtse-utesova/> [accessed April 30, 2021].

⁸ Cf. K. Propola, *op. cit.*, pp. 169–170.

Katzin, other religious teachers (Meir Bruk⁹), and also popularizers of religious knowledge in Russian-speaking Jewish circles, such as Aryeh Yudasin, Nahum Purer, Ezra Khovkin, and Menachem-Michael Gitik. This clearly indicates that the online edition of the newspaper has become a platform for them to popularize religious content in Russian-speaking Jewish communities. By publishing online journalistic materials devoted to, among others, tzadikim active in Galicia, they try to reach not only the Russian-speaking Jewish population in New York, but also those living in other areas, both in the United States and in other countries. In this way, they have transformed from teachers into promoters of Jewish spirituality, reaching Russian-speaking Jews all over the world with their message.

The significant impact of the articles presenting the profiles of the tzadikim and their teachings on the process of the “rebirth” of Judaism in the communities of former Soviet Jews can be seen in the data presented in the chart below.

Chart 1. Articles in the online edition of ‘Yevreiski Mir’ mentioning Galician tzadikim over the years



Source: author’s research based on articles posted on the ‘Yevreiski Mir’ newspaper’s website from 2003 to 2020.

As can be seen, initially, i.e. between 2003 and 2014, content about Galician tzadikim played a marginal role in the religious coverage of the online edition of the analyzed newspaper. In recent years, however, there has been a noticeable increase in the columnists’ interest in this topic. This is interesting because the area of Galicia at the time of the activity of the tzadikim was not then a sphere of Russian influence, and therefore that element is somehow unusual to Russian Jewishness. Meanwhile, after 2015, and especially since 2017, the number of articles devoted to them has

⁹ In his discussion of the image of Elimelekh in the online edition of the ‘Yevreiski Mir’ newspaper, the author mistakenly referred to Bruk as a “rabbi” (see *ibidem*). The mistake stems from the fact that in the United States, this is often the title given to teachers who help secularized Jews learn about Judaism. Bruk himself mentions it on his website. See *O6 avmope*, in: <https://meirbruk.net/en/aboutme> [accessed April 30, 2021].

been gradually increasing. This shows, therefore, that after the initial focus of the journalists of 'Yevreiski Mir' on themes related to the Russian-language area, the columnists noticed in their audience a readiness to read a publication devoted also to other themes focused on the sphere of Judaism. As a result, Russian-speaking Jews, while preserving their sense of individuality and language, gain a platform for their integration with the rest of the Jewish population.

References to the leaders of the Hasidim in Galicia published by people who do not deal with this subject professionally on a daily basis have a completely different dimension. This concerns Sergey Biarem, Shimon Briman, and Sonya Tuchinskaya. Biarem's article focuses on the cultural inspiration of Elimelekh of Lizhensk, pointing to the important role of religion, including Hasidic legends, in the survival of elements of Jewish identity in the post-Soviet area¹⁰. Briman's and Tuchinskaya's publications, on the other hand, are more of a sentimental "journey" to the places where their ancestors lived. The places they describe provide an opportunity for the authors to reminisce about the activity of Hasidic communities in these areas¹¹ or to emphasize family ties with old Hasidic dynasties¹².

Tzadikim and their teachings

When speaking of the media image of Galician tzadikim, it is impossible not to explain the concept of a tzadik (from Hebrew, *tzadik*, meaning "righteous one") and the role he played in his community. First and foremost, his unique status was based on his authority, and at the same time, his fellow Jews attributed to him the power to perform miracles. As Marcin Wodziński wrote, Hasidic religious life concentrated around the tzadik not only in the institutional sense, but also in the spiritual dimension¹³. Their supposed accomplishments became fixed in the memory of the Hasidim mainly through oral tradition, which was later written down and immortalized in the 20th century by the Jewish philosopher Martin Buber¹⁴. Although these descriptions should not, of course, be taken as profiles of the leaders of the Hasidic movement, their interesting narrative continues to inspire Russian-speaking Jewish journalists who address religious issues in their texts.

Table 2. presents the Galician tzadikim mentioned in the articles and the number of mentions of them.

¹⁰ С. Биарэм, *op. cit.*

¹¹ Briman, while describing Zlotshev and its surroundings, mentions the activity and presence of tzadik Yehiel Mikhel, who established his court there. See Ш. Бриман, *Львов и Западная Украина: взгляд из Израиля*, in: <https://evreimir.com/102618/lvov-i-zapadnaya-ukraina-vzglyad-iz-izr/> [accessed May 1, 2021].

¹² During a conversation with one of the people she met, Tuchinskaya mentioned her relationship with Zusya of Hanipoli. See С. Тучинская, *Шмуэл Мушник – хранитель Хеврона*, in: <http://evreimir.com/94060/shmuel-mushnik-hranitel-hevrona-3/> [accessed May 1, 2021].

¹³ М. Wodziński, *Chasydyzm*, p. 127.

¹⁴ Cf. e.g. М. Buber, *Tales of the Hasidim*, transl. O. Marx, part 1-2, New York 1991.

Table 2. Galician tzadikim mentioned at least twice in the articles of the online edition of 'Yevreiski Mir' newspaper¹⁵

Tzadik	Number of mentions
Elimelekh of Lizhensk	15 (10)
Zusya of Hanipoli	8
Levi Yitshak of Barditshev	6
Tsvi Elimelekh of Dinov	4
Yehiel Mikhel of Zlotshev (Złoczów)	3
Menachem Mendel of Rimanov	2

Source: author's research based on articles posted on the 'Yevreiski Mir' newspaper's website from 2003 to 2020.

The data presented above clearly show that not only the tzadikim themselves and their teachings, but also the places in which they were active, could be important to the journalists associated with the newspaper. This is evidenced by the fact that all towns mentioned in the table, except for Barditshev, are nowadays important centers of Jewish culture (especially Dinov, Rimanov, and Zlotshev) or burial places of Hasidic leaders surrounded by religious worship (Hanipoli, Lizhensk, and Zlotshev). As a result, one may come to the conclusion that articles about Galician tzadikim published on the newspaper's website are not only the columnists' response to the cultural needs of readers, but also to their religious life. By presenting their biographies and achievements, the authors of the publications also draw a map of important sites for the Hasidic movement, inspiring their readers to travel or even go on a pilgrimage to these places.

By far the most often mentioned leader of the Hasidim in Galicia is Elimelekh of Lizhensk, which, however, may not come as a surprise, considering his contribution to the development of the movement. One of his greatest achievements is certainly outlining the role of the tzadik in the life of local Hasidic communities, which he did in his work entitled *No'am Elimelech* (Hebrew for *The Pleasantries of Elimelekh*)¹⁶. Due to the fact that his portrayal in the online edition of the newspaper in question has already been analyzed in a separate publication, a new analysis of the articles concerning Elimelekh seems unnecessary. Instead, it is important to note how the narrative concerning his character translates into the way his brother, Zusya of Hanipoli, is portrayed.

Although according to the data presented above, Zusya is the second most frequently mentioned tzadik in the articles who has connections to the Galician region,

¹⁵ In addition to the tzadikim listed in the table, the publicists of the online edition of the 'Yevreiski Mir' newspaper mentioned in individual articles, among others, Pinhas of Korets (see A. Юдасин, *Человек, который научился ничему*, in: <https://evreimir.com/190959/chelovek-kotoryj-nauchilsya-nichemu/> [accessed May 2, 2021]) or Naftali Tsvi of Ropshits (see A. Юдасин, *Отвернись и увидишь*, in: <https://evreimir.com/181090/otvernis-i-uvdish/> [accessed May 2, 2021]).

¹⁶ For more on Elimelekh, see, e.g., M. Buber, op. cit., part 1, pp. 253-264; J. Doktór, *Elimelech z Leżajska*, in: <https://delet.jhi.pl/pl/psj?articleId=14287> [accessed May 3, 2021]; M. Woźniński, *Groby cadyków w Polsce*, pp. 24-26.

7 out of the 8 articles in which he appears also feature Elimelekh¹⁷. This is due to the fact that the newspaper's columnists strove to clearly emphasize the differences in personality and teaching that existed between them. In this case, it is a competition between the spontaneity of Zusya and the pragmatism of the tzadik from Lizhensk. Of course, juxtaposing these differences in publications was not meant to suggest to the reader that there was some kind of open fight between the brothers for influence in Hasidic circles. A deeper reading of these texts allows one to come to the conclusion that the authors treat both brothers with equal affection. This can be seen in the various comparative descriptions, as exemplified by the passage quoted below.

The discipline instituted by Rabbi Elimelekh was the opposite of the spontaneity of his brother, Rabbi Zusya. Rabbi Zusya was the exact opposite of his brother. It was said of him that he could not sit down in class because during his studies he would get so excited and exhilarated by the proximity of the Almighty that it forced him to run out of the room. He embodied the lofty soul of the tzadik¹⁸.

The last sentence is crucial for this discussion. It shows that the author of the text, in this case Meir Bruk, does not judge the way in which faith in God and Judaism may be demonstrated. He treats both attitudes equally. Yudasin, on the other hand, in his profile of Elimelekh, clearly indicates that his brother played an important role in the religious development of the future tzadik of Lizhensk, because it was Zusya who was to acquaint him with their spiritual master and teacher, Dov Ber of Mezritsh, also known as the Maggid¹⁹. It seems that the goal of the columnists was rather to present to the readers two types of Jewish piety – on the one hand, careful study of the Talmud, and on the other, joyful faith combined with ecstatic experiences.

The next most frequently mentioned Galician tzadik in the online edition of 'Yevreiski Mir' is Levi Yitshak of Barditshev. Interestingly, he was also the first leader of the Hasidic community in Galicia to be mentioned on the website of the weekly²⁰. In an article from 2005, he was portrayed as a comforter of sinners.

Once Rabbi Levi Yitshak of Barditshev met a resident of his town and told him: "Moshe, I envy you." "Rabbi, you are jealous of me?! (...) I am a simple Jew. Of course, I do good deeds – mitzvos – but sometimes I make mistakes and do bad deeds." "That is why, Moshe, I envy you. Each of your transgressions is a precious stone, though not yet worked. But when you fix it, it will shine on you and everyone around you. I simply do not have such precious stones."²¹

¹⁷ The only article related to Zusya in which Elimelekh of Lizhensk was not mentioned appeared in 2006 and its author was Menachem-Michael Gitik. Cf. М. Гитик, *Когда праведники бессильны*, in: <https://evreimir.com/11400/> [accessed May 2, 2021].

¹⁸ М. Брук, *Истоки и многообразие хасидизма*, in: <http://evreimir.com/28555/> [accessed May 3, 2021].

¹⁹ А. Юдасин, *Дядя Эля из деревни Лопухи*, in: <http://evreimir.com/166618/dyadya-elya-iz-derevni-lopuhi/> [accessed May 3, 2021].

²⁰ This was in 2005, in a publication posted on the occasion of the so-called "Second Passover," or Pesach Sheni. See *Всё поддается ремонту!*, in: <https://evreimir.com/6495/> [accessed May 3, 2021].

²¹ *Ibidem*. This story is probably inspired by one of Buber's short stories entitled "Envy." Cf. М. Buber, *op. cit.*, part 1, p. 219.

This message from the Barditshev tzadik seems to be extremely important not only from the standpoint of the morality that stems from Judaism, but also to the readers of the newspaper in question. For the secularized community of former Soviet Jews, the words of the tzadik are a kind of inspiration for conversion, showing that even the abandonment or loss of Jewish identity is not for God a transgression that cannot be rectified. Moreover, the figure of Levi Yitshak may also symbolically refer to the long-standing struggle of the Jewish people in the USSR to find their own identity, for this tzadik is referred to in literature as the “defender of Israel”²². At the same time, he functions in Jewish tradition as a man who is friendly to ordinary people and extremely direct. It is quite evident that the journalists associated with the newspaper refer to this tradition, which probably results from the use of Buber’s stories in their publications.

The Rabbi of Barditshev saw a man hurrying along the street, looking neither right nor left.

“Why are you rushing so?” he asked him.

The man replied: “I am after my livelihood!”

“And how do you know,” continued the rabbi, “that your livelihood is running on before you, so that you have to rush after it? Perhaps it is behind you, and all you need do to encounter it is to stand still – but you are running away from it...”²³

This story, although the author himself did not include any information about it, comes from Buber’s book entitled *Tales of the Hasidim*. In the English version it is entitled *In a hurry*²⁴, while the Russian version reads literally as follows: *Hurry is harmful*. The same procedure was used by Nahum Purer, among others, when, in one of his articles, he recalled the story of rest after a long study of tzadik Shmelke of Nikolsburg²⁵. As one can tell from the reading, Elimelekh also played an important role in this story.

When Rabbi Elimelekh visited him and recognized the power of the holiness that was still locked within him, he prepared a couch for him and with great difficulty persuaded him to lie down for a little while. Then he closed and shuttered the windows. Rabbi Shmelke slept until broad daylight. (...) It did not take him long to notice this, but he was not sorry he had slept, for he was filled with a hitherto unknown sunny clarity. Later Shmelke said to Elimelekh: “Not until this day did I know that one can also serve God with sleep.”²⁶

Similar stories often inspire religious columnists associated with the editorial board, which probably has something to do with the fact that they are pleasant to

²² *Hasidism: A New History*, p. 108.

²³ *Грустное и смешное рядом*, in: <https://evreimir.com/8471/> [accessed May 4, 2021].

²⁴ Cf. M. Buber, *op. cit.*, part 1, p. 226.

²⁵ Currently Mikulov.

²⁶ Н. Пурер, *Место и время*, in: <http://evreimir.com/24529/> [accessed May 4, 2021]. In Buber’s book, the cited story is entitled *Sleep*. Cf. M. Buber, *op. cit.*, part 1, pp. 187-188.

read, short, and at the same time moralistic. For readers who practice Judaism, these stories encourage them to reflect on the teachings of the tzadikim, while for non-religious readers they may appear to be stories with moral or life lessons.

When analyzing references to other Galician leaders of the movement, the situation is much more complicated. This usually results from the fact that they are often portrayed as a kind of collective hero. This is usually the case in articles in which the teachings of tzadikim provide evidence to support the theses of the columnists, or when the threads of the mentioned figures are connected in some way. As a result, the reader receives not only a portrait of the Hasidic community, but also of the complicated interpersonal relationships that some tzadikim often shared. There are as many as 8 such articles. By far the largest number of Hasidic leaders is mentioned in Aryeh Yudasin's 2019 article, which is paradoxically dedicated to the founder of the Jewish Frankist sect, Jacob Frank, who was active from the second half of the eighteenth century until about 1820. The names of at least 9 tzadikim associated with the Galician area appear there. The following excerpt is the best proof of how rich in content the above-mentioned text is.

It is believed that he [Tsvi Hirsh of Zhydachiv – note K.P.] became Hasidic under the influence of his younger brother, Rabbi Moshe, who introduced him to the Seer of Lublin. His teachers were, in addition to his father, numerous leaders of that generation: Rabbi Moshe Leib Erbllich of Sasov (1745–1807), Menachem Mendel of Rimanov (1745–1815), Rabbi Israel, Maggid (...) of Kozhenits (1737–1814), and above all the Seer of Lublin, Ya'akov Yitshak Horowitz-Sternfeld (1745–1815). Most of the Hasidic tzadikim of the time in Poland, Galicia, and Hungary were disciples of the Seer of Lublin²⁷.

In principle, one may wonder whether this and other articles in a similar style pose too great a challenge for the average reader. Both the subject matter and the amount of information presented by the journalists require their concentration and, at the same time, some knowledge of Hasidism. Due to the fact that the quoted text comes, as already mentioned, from the year 2019, it should be assumed that the vast majority of its recipients have probably already had the opportunity to read other texts by Yudasin and other columnists of the newspaper. In this case, the articles posted in the online edition of the weekly are, in a way, a course in Jewish spirituality, part of which its creators also consider to be the achievements of the Hasidic community of Galicia. The words of Zusya of Hanipoli, who after Elimelekh's death was to define his and, among others, Menachem Mendel of Rimanov's, position in comparison with other tzadikim, are significant here.

“And the river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became into four heads.”²⁸ The Torah is eternal for all generations,

²⁷ А. Юдасин, *По лезвию чёрного меча*, in: <https://evreimir.com/180804/по-лезвию-чёрного-меча/> [accessed May 4, 2021].

²⁸ Translation of words from Genesis (Genesis 2:10) based on the King James Bible. Cf. *The Holy Bible: Containing the Old and New Testaments*, at: http://www.gasl.org/refbib/Bible_King_James_Version.pdf [accessed May 4, 2021].

so we can find a hint in it that applies to our times as well. "Eden" is our holy teacher Ba'al Shem Tov. "It went out of him," the Maggid of Mezritsh, Rabbi Dov Ber. The man who "waters the garden" is my brother, Rabbi Elimelekh. "From thence it was parted, and became into four heads" – they are [in turn – note K.P.] his holy disciples: the Seer of Lublin, the Maggid of Kozhenits, Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Rimanov and the Rabbi of Apta [Abraham Joshua Heschel of Apta – note K.P.]²⁹.

This statement clearly shows that both in the Hasidic tradition and in the opinion of the Russian-speaking Jewish publicists who used these words, Galicia was an area where, thanks to the activity of the local tzadikim, the spirituality of the Hasidim, but also of all Jews practicing Judaism, developed. For this reason, references to Galician Hasidic leaders in media such as the 'Yevreiski Mir' should be regarded not only as a manifestation of the memory of the history of Jewish religious life, but also as a continuation of the tradition rooted in the authors' consciousness.

Summary

The teachings of the Galician tzadikim occupy an important place in the consciousness and message of Russian-speaking Jewish journalists and associated media. In fact, it seems that as former Soviet Jews and their descendants continue to discover their Jewishness, interest in their teachings in this group continues to grow, as the data presented in this discussion clearly indicate (Chart 1.). Columnists with close ties to Judaism in particular have played and continue to play a huge role in this. Those who were and are associated with the online edition of the weekly, 'Yevreiski Mir', were able to take advantage of the growth of the newspaper to attract new audiences for their content relating to the Hasidim and their history. In this way, the authors of these texts became religious authorities for the entire Russian-speaking Jewish community.

Publications and references to leaders of Hasidic communities, however, do not fulfill exclusively religious functions. Sometimes, they take the form of sentimental "journeys" into the past, as seen in the text by Briman, who, while describing the Zlotshev area and its surroundings, reminds readers of the presence of Yehiel Mikhel there. Sometimes, information about tzadikim can also be an opportunity for authors to show their own roots to readers. This, in turn, can be seen in a publication by Sonya Tuchinskaya, in whose family the memory of the relationship between its members and Zusya of Hanipoli survived.

A very important aspect of the presentation of the profiles of Galician tzadikim by editors of Russian-language Jewish press is their moralistic dimension. Due to this aspect, they become attractive both to audiences with strong ties to Judaism and to those who are completely secularized. For the latter, reading stories about the alleged accomplishments of Elimelekh, Zusya or Levi Yitshak of Barditshev may be an occasion for reflection and an incentive to change their current lifestyle.

²⁹ А. Юдасин, *Дядя Эля*.

Importantly, these stories are most often taken from the works of, among others, Martin Buber, though the authors themselves tend not to mention this. Such borrowings from the realm of literature, however, seem to be a positive phenomenon, since they contribute to the dissemination of traditionally established patterns of Jewish spirituality, without forcing readers to undertake a laborious search on their own. This makes the articles analyzed in this study not only journalistic materials, but also “lectures” on Jewish history and culture, which contribute to restoring to the Russian-speaking Jewish population its own identity.

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Abstract

Galician Tzadikim in the Light of Russian-language Jewish Press. On the Example of the Online Edition of the „Yevreiski Mir” Newspaper

The aim of this article is to analyze publications about the leaders of the Galician Hasidic communities published in the online edition of the American Russian-language newspaper „Yevreiski Mir”. The analysis of articles about Galician tzadikim allows us to see how their profiles and teachings are used by journalists from the former Soviet Jewish community in the United States. The presented results of statistical research clearly show that the vast majority of texts dedicated to Galician tzadikim were written by columnists directly connected with the Jewish spiritual sphere. Their publications contribute to the popularization of knowledge about Hasidic spirituality among the secularized Russian-speaking Jewish population. Sometimes the journalistic materials mentioned in the article are also an inspiration to discover

one's own origins. This is shown by an analysis of the publications of Shimon Briman and Sonya Tuchinskaya cited in the article.

The profiles of Galician tzadikim, posted by columnists of Russian-language Jewish media, have a moralistic dimension. As a result, stories about the alleged achievements of Elimelekh of Lizhensk, Zusya of Hanipoli or Levi Yitshak of Barditshev may stimulate readers to reflect on their own lives and encourage them to work on their own personalities. Importantly, most such stories seem to be drawn from the works of, among others, Martin Buber, although the authors themselves tend not to mention this. Paradoxically, however, this procedure contributes to the dissemination of traditionally established models of Jewish spirituality without forcing readers to search for them on their own.

Keywords:

Hasidism, Yevreiski Mir, media, memory, Russian-speaking Jews.