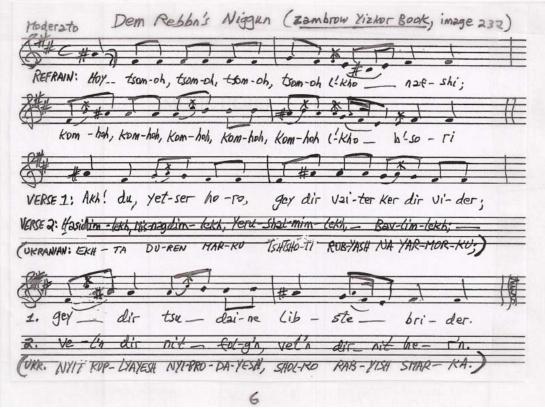
Subject: <u>Hasidim and Mitnagdim Between the Wars in Northeast Poland</u> October 20, 2009

JSM 2009's **Point/Counterpoint** articles about a comfortable symbiosis between the Hasidic and Mitnagdic communities in Vilna during the 1920s and 1930s concurs with what I read recently in an Internet *Yizkor Book* from Zambrow, in the Bialystok province of Northeast Poland. Pages 220 and 256-258 show that the Rebbe of the Habad Hasidim had earlier "Judaized" an old Ukranian folk song's mocking condemnation of a doltish peasant who neither bought nor sold anything at market. In the Rebbe's version, the ne'erdo-well becomes the *yeitser ha-ra* (evil inclination) and the general populace who shun him are Jews from various communities. The Ukranian lyrics have been replaced by a Hebrew refrain from Psalm 42:3, with Yiddish verses that unite all Jews against the allure of evil:

Neither the <u>Hasidim</u> nor the Mitnagdim— Whether dwelling in Jerusalem or Babylon Will follow you—O evil inclination— Or listen to your covetous enticement; Instead, their bodies thirst for the Holy One— Their souls yearn for the World's Radiance!

The Rabbi of Zambrow, in his 90s during the 1930s, was a Litvak (Lithuanian), but no flaming opponent of <u>Hasidism</u>. In fact he never distinguished between <u>Hasidim</u> or Mitnagdim, but gathered to him all who feared and adhered to God's word. He demonstrated this love for all Israel by singing and dancing the <u>Habad Rabbi's Niggun</u> with <u>Yeshiva bakhurim</u> on every <u>yom tov</u>.



Thanks to Cantor Joseph Levine for providing his analysis, translation and musical transcription of the music that I found in the Zambrow Yizkor Book.

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