
BEYOND DISPUTE

DEBATES THAT SHAPE JEWISH LIFE

UNIT 8

IS JUDAISM A RELIGION OF THE HEART OR THE MIND—AND WHO DECIDES? HASIDISM AND ITS OPPONENTS

Dr. David E. Fishman

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1. Rabbi Israel Ba'al Shem Tov, *Keter Shem Tov* 1:169, on *D'veikut*

Also known as the Besht; founder of Hasidism (Poland, c. 1700–1760). *Keter Shem Tov* is a collection of his interpretations of the Torah published in 1794.

It is a great thing to keep in mind always that you are with the Creator, and that He surrounds you on all sides, as it is written, “Happy is the man who, when he thinks not of God, [this is considered] to him as a sin” (Psalm 32:2). This means that the instant you stop thinking of your attachment (*dveikut*) to God, you incur a sin. You should be so attached (*davuk*) to God that you won’t need to reconsider from time to time that you are with Him....You should fulfill the verse “I have set the Lord always before me” (Psalm 16:8), as stated in *Shulhan Arukh*, *Orah Hayyim*, section 1.

מעלה גדולה כשהאדם מחשב תמיד שהוא אצל הבורא יתברך, והוא מקיר אותו מכל אצדיו, כמו שכתוב, אשרי אדם לא יחשב ה' [לו עוזן] (תהילים לב, ב). פי' פשׁרגע איןנו מחייב בדבקות ה' יתברך, לו עוזן. ויהיה דבוק כל כף שלא יהא צריך לישב את עצמו בכל פעם שהוא אצלו יתברך... ויקיים שוויתי ה' לנגיד תמיד (תהלים טז, ח), כמו שכתב בשובלchan ערוץ אורך חיים סימן א'.

2. Rabbi Israel Ba'al Shem Tov, *Keter Shem Tov* 1:96, on *Torah Lishmah*

The main point of studying Torah is to attach (*yidbak*) oneself to the inner spiritual light of the Infinite One, which is contained in the letters of the Torah. That is what is called “study for its own sake.” Regarding this Rabbi Meir taught: “Whoever studies Torah for its own sake merits many things, and the Torah’s secrets are revealed to that person” (Pirkei Avot 6:1). This means that such a person will know the future and all that will happen to him from within the Torah.

... שעיקר עסק תורה הוא שידבק את עצמו אל פנימיות רוחניות אוצר א"ס שבתווך אותיות התורה, שהוא נקרא לימוד לשמה. שבזה אמר ר' מאיר: כל העוסק בתורה לשמה זוכה לדברים הרבה, ומגין לו רזי תורה, ר' ל' שידע עתידות וכל מאורעוטיו מתוך התורה...

3. Rabbi Israel Ba'al Shem Tov, *Keter Shem Tov* 1:229, on *Simhah*

Prayer that is said with great joy is certainly more worthy and desirable to God than prayer said with sadness and weeping. A parable for this: When a pauper asks, requests, and pleads before a human king, with great weeping, the king only gives him a small amount. But when a nobleman arranges for a king a great celebration, and in midst of his praises also

התפילה כשהיא בשמחה גדולה, בזודאי יותר חשוב ומקובל לפניו יותר מתפילה בעצבות ובכיה. משל על זה: כשהעני שוזאל וمبקש ומתחנן לפני מלך בשר ודם בכיה גדולה, אף על פי כן אינו נותן לו אלא דבר מועט. אבל כשהשר מסדר לפני מלך שמחה גדולה, ומתוך השבח מבקש גם בקשתו, אז

makes his request, the king gives him a large gift, as is fitting for a nobleman.

נוֹתֵן הַמֶּלֶךְ מִתְּנָה מְרוּבָה, כְּמוֹ שְׁנוֹתָנִים
לְשָׂרִוָּת.

4. *Shivhei HaBesht*, compiled by Dov Ber of Linitz, 1815¹

Also known as the Great Magid of Mezritsh; disciple and successor of Rabbi Israel Ba'al Shem Tov (Poland, Belarus, and Ukraine, 1704–1772).

Once they had to say Hallel, since it was either the first day of the Hebrew month or one of the intermediate days of Passover. Rabbi Abraham was reciting Shaharit before the ark, and the Besht was praying in his usual place...During the voiced eighteen benedictions [i.e., the repetition of the Amidah], the Besht trembled greatly as he always did while praying. Everyone who looked at the Besht while he was praying noticed this trembling... Rabbi Wolf Kotses, the Hasid, looked at his face. He saw that it was burning like a torch. The Besht's eyes were bulging ... I already knew from his best disciples that he used to utter a great cry and pray louder than anyone else.

פעם אחת היו צרייכים לאמר הילל, שהיה ראש חודש או חול המועד של פסח, והיה רבי אברהם היל מתפלל תפילה שחרית לפני התיבה והבעל שם טוב התפלל במקומו....ובשמונה עשרה של קול רם נתרעד בעל שם טוב רעה גדולה, והיה רוזע והולך קדרפו לרעוז בתפילה תמיד ומישראה אותו בשעת התפילה ראה הרעידה שלו....ובא החסיד רבינו וולף קיצען והציא בפנינו, והנה בוערות כלפידים, ועיניו בולטו...כפי כן שמעתי כמה פעמים מבחרינו, כי היה מנשיא ראש פולס והיה מתפלל בזעקה גדולה.

5. Ban of the Hasidic Movement in Vilna, 1772²

To our beloved brethren, the chosen of God, who follow the ways of their ancestors and observe the way of the Lord. You have surely heard that a new group has arisen, not imagined by our ancestors, who call themselves Hasidim. In every city they form an association of those who leave the [established] synagogues and houses of study, separating themselves from the community [see Avot 2:4]. “And the earth was split open by their uproar” (I Kings 1:40), the uproar of their house of prayer. Their practices are different, they have changed the liturgy coined by our sages....They

אהובינו אחינו בחيري ה', אשר הולכים בדרכי אבותיהם לשמר דרך ה'. הלא שמעתם אם לא ידעתם, כי חדים מקרוב באו אשר לא שערום אבותינו, ומכנים שמות חסידים. ובכל עיר ועיר עושים אגדות夷זוב בתיהם כנסיות ובתי מדרשות, רק פורשים עצם מן האיבור. ותבקע הארץ לקובלים (מלכים א, א, מ), קול בית תפילהם. ורתויהם שזונים, בשנות את טעםם מטבע שטבעו חכמים...בטלו

¹ *In Praise of the Ba'al Shem Tov*, ed. and trans. Dan Ben Amos and Jerome M. Mintz (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1972), 50–51.

² In Mordechai Vilensky, *Hasidim u-Mitnagdim* (Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik, 1970), 62–63.

have abandoned Torah study and spend all their days in frivolous speech and debauchery.... They dishonor the famous and extraordinary Torah scholars of our generation.... All their days are like holidays, and [they believe] they are rewarded for refraining from Torah study, as is well known.... Now please listen, brothers; take to heart and see the consequences of this sect... Aren't the earlier troubles we had from such sects enough?³ Now a new one has sprung forth, "a stock sprouting poison weed and wormwood" (Deut. 29:17).... Whoever hears and sees these words should gird his loins like a man, and turn their evil intention against them, to fight them off and pursue them, as much as Jews have the ability. And from there we must disperse them so that they not gather in a minyan.

תַּלְמֹד תּוֹרָה וּמִבְּלִים כֵּל יְמִיהם בְּדָבָר
הַיִּתְוֹل וְהַלְלוֹת....
מִבְּזִים תַּלְמִידִי חֲכָמִים מִפּוֹרְסָמִין יְחִידִי
הַדּוֹר... וְכָל יְמִיהם כְּחִינִים וּמוֹעֲדִים,
וּמִקְבְּלִים שֶׁכֶר עַל הַפְּרִישָׁה מִן הַתּוֹרָה,
כַּאֲשֶׁר יַדּוּ וּמִפּוֹרְסָם....
וְעַתָּה שֶׁמְעוֹנוֹ נָא אֲחִינוּ שִׁימֹו עַל לְבָבָכֶם
וּרְאוּ אֶת הַגּוֹלֵד מִכֶּת זו... וְלֹא דִי מִצְרוֹת
הַרְאָשָׁוֹנֹת אֲשֶׁר קִיּוּ מִקְתּוֹת כִּיוֹצָא בָּהֶם,
וּבְעֻנוּזָתֵינוּ יֵצְאוּ מִהַּשִּׁיצָאוֹ, אֲךָ גַם עַתָּה
חֲדָשָׁה תִּצְמַח, שׂוֹרֵשׁ פּוֹרָה רָאשׁ וּלְעֵנָה....
וְכָל הַשׂוֹמֵעַ וּרְזֹאָה אֶת דִּבְרִים יָאֹזֵר גַּגְבָּר
חַלְצָיו לְהַשִּׁיבָה מִחְשְׁבָתָם הַרְעָה עַל רָאָשָׁם,
לְהַזְּדִיפָם וּלְרוֹזְפָם עַד מִקּוֹם שִׁיד יִשְׁרָאֵל
מִגְּעָת, וּמִשָּׁם יִפְּרֹצּוּ לְמַעַן לֹא יִתְחַבְּרוּ
בְּמַנְיוֹן.

6. The First Persecution of Hasidim in Vilna, 1772⁴

And when letters came from Shklov to us, the holy community of Vilna, the Gaon [Rabbi Elijah, the Vilna Gaon (1720–1797)] declared: "The holy community of Shklov is right. This clan, they are heretics. They should be thrown into a pit and not lifted out of it" [Babylonian Talmud, Avodah Zarah 26b].

And the main organizer of this sect [in Vilna] was one named Isser, who is like his name,⁵ and the second was one named Hayyim, who was the preacher of the community.... This Hayyim said of the Vilna Gaon: "He is false, his Torah is false and his faith is false....

[In response,] there was a ruling to expel and disperse the minyan of the Karliner Hasidim... Hayyim was fired from his position as preacher. He was excommunicated for a thirty-day term. And Hayyim left the city....

Afterwards, the communal elders convened, with two sets of rabbinic judges and the communal rabbi. They ruled to burn their writings, near the manacles [in the

וַיַּשְׁבָּאוּ הַכְּתִבִּים מִשְׁקָלָב כֹּאן
לְקַהֵל קָדוֹשׁ וּוַיְלָנָא, אַזִּי אָמַר הַגָּאוֹן
הַנֶּל: "הַדִּין עַם קְקָשָׁלָב,
בַּאֲשֶׁר שְׁהַמְשִׁפְחָה הַנֶּל הַמָּה
אַפִּיקּוֹרְסִין, וּמוֹרְדִּין וְלֹא מַעֲלִין
[עֲבוּדָה זָרָה כּו עַבְּרָב]. וּבְתוֹךְ הַבָּתָּה
הַנֶּל הִיה רָאשׁ הַמַּאֲסָף הַרְאָשָׁוֹן מוֹרֵ
אִיסּוּר בְּקוֹרְאֵי שָׁמוֹן, וּהַשְׁנִינִי הַרְבָּ מָוֵר
חַיִּים, מָגִיד דְכָאָן.... וְהַשִּׁיבָה מוֹרֵחִים
עַל הַגָּאוֹן הַנֶּל שְׁהָוָא שְׁקָר וְתוֹרָתָו
שְׁקָר וְאַמְוֹנָתוֹ שְׁקָר.... וְהַיְהָ פְּסָק
תַּיְכֵף לְגַרְשָׁן וְלִפְזֵר אֶת המַנִּין שֶׁל
קָאָרְלִינְרָ... גַּסְטָלָק מָוֹהָרָר חַיִּים מִן
הַמְגִידּוֹת. וּמוֹרֵחִים קִיבְּלָן נְזִיפָה
וְנִידּוֹי עַל עַצְמוֹ וּמוֹרֵחִים
נְסֻעָ... וְאַחֲכָב יִשְׁבּוּ הַרְזּוֹנִים וְגַם שְׁנִי
כְּתוֹת דִּינִים וְהַגָּאוֹן אָב בֵּית דִין.
וְהַיְהָ פְּסָק לְשָׁרֶזֶף אֶת הַכְּתִבִּים

³ "Sect" is a polemical term. Here they are likely referring to Frankist and Sabbatean messianic movements.

⁴ In Mordechai Vilensky, *Hasidim u-Mitnagdim* (Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik, 1970), 64–65.

⁵ A pun between the Yiddish name "Isser" and the Hebrew word *issur*, meaning "prohibition."

great synagogue] before the beginning of Kabbalat Shabbat services. And [they ruled] that Isser, their main organizer, should go up to the top step [in front of the ark in the great synagogue], before *Shokhein Ad* [the beginning of the Shabbat Shaharit service], and no minyan will gather in any other synagogue except for the great synagogue [on that Shabbat]. There, he will recite the confession as composed by the rabbinic court. And the *shamash* [synagogue administrator] will excommunicate them, and all who joined him.

7. Yehoshua Heschel Levine, *Aliyat Eliyahu*, 1856⁶

Renowned Torah scholar and Rosh Yeshiva at the Volozhin yeshiva (Lithuania and Belarus, 1812–1883). Aliyat Eliyahu was the first book written about the Vilna Gaon and is the source of much of what we know about him.

All his virtues were the consequence of his diligence...He took upon himself never to sleep more than two hours in a single day....He never walked four cubits without [a book of] Torah and Tefilin, and never engaged in idle conversation....If one of his sons [who lived in other cities] came to visit him, he would greatly rejoice, not having seen him for a year or two, but he would not ask him about his material welfare. After he [the son] rested from his journey for an hour, he [Rabbi Elijah] would hasten him to return to his studies, and would say: "On the road, you were idle from study; you will make it up in my house."

Behold my brother, how great is the spiritual delight and sweetness of the God-fearing, who leave the ways of this world and its affairs to labor in the [study of] Torah and the commandments! There did not arise like him in his [explication of] Torah, in his numerous compositions on the written Torah, the Oral Torah, and the secrets of the Torah. He composed more than seventy volumes.

שְׁלָהֶם אֶצְל הַקּוֹנְעַד קָוְדָם קִבְּלָת שְׁבָת. וּמו' אִיסְרָר לְאֵשׁ הַמְּאַסְף יַעֲלָה בְּמַעַלָה עַלְיוֹנָה שְׁבָת קָוְדָם שׂוֹכוֹן עַד, וּבָכֶל בֵּית הַכְּנִיסָת וּבֵית הַמְּדֻרְשׁ לֹא יְהִי בֵּית הַכְּנִיסָת וּבֵית הַמְּדֻרְשׁ הַגָּדוֹל, וַיְתַוְּדָה כַּפִּי הַנוֹּסֶח אֲשֶׁר יֵצֵא מִבֵּית דִין. וְאַח"כ יְחִרְיִים הַשְׁמָשׁ אֹתָם וְכָל הַגְּלוּיִם אָלָיו.

תְּרָאָה שְׁפּוֹלָם בָּאוּ בַתְכִילָת הַחֲרִיצוֹת....קִיבְּלָה עַל עַצְמוֹ כֹּל יָמִיו שֶׁלָא לִישֵן יוֹתֵר ב' שָׁעוֹת בָּמַעַט לְעֵת....מַעֲזֹזָן לֹא הַלֵּךְ ד' אַמּוֹת בְּלֹא תּוֹרָה וְתִפְילִין, וְלֹא שֶׁחָשֵׁחָה בְּטַלָה מִימִיו...וְאַם בָּא אָחֵד מִבְנֵיו בְּגַבּוֹלָו, גַּם כִּי הַגְּדִיל הַשְׁמַחָה כִּי לֹא רָאָה אָתוֹתָו שְׁנָה אָז שְׁנָתִיִּים, אָפֵס לֹא שָׁאל אָתוֹתָו עַל עֲנוֹן פרָנֶסֶתּוּ, וְכַאֲשֶׁר נִחְמַכְתּוּ שִׁיעִיר שְׁעָה אַחֲת, מַהְרִי מְהֻרָנוּ שׁוֹב לְקִבּוּעׁ סִדְרָה לִימּוֹדָו. וְלֹא אָמָר: בְּדָרְךָ, בְּטַלְתָּה מַלְהַשְׁלִים שִׁיעִיר סִדְרָה לִימּוֹדָה, הַוָּא יְשּׁוּלָם בְּבִיתִי. רַיְאָה אֲחֵי וְהַבִּיטה, מַה רַב טוֹב הַעֲוֹנָג וְהַעֲרָבוֹת בְּנִפְשׁוֹת הַיְּרָאִים הַעוֹזִיבִים דָרְכֵי עַולָם הָזֶה וְעַסְקִיתָה לְעַמּוֹל בַתּוֹרָה וּבְמִצּוֹת...לֹא כָם כִּמְזוּהוּ בַתּוֹרָתָו בְּרִיבָוי חִיבּוּרָיו בַתּוֹרָה שְׁבָכְתָב וְשְׁבָכְעָל פָה וּבְנִסְתָּרוֹת, חִיבּוּר יוֹתֵר מִשְׁבָּעִים כְּרָכִים.

⁶ Vilna, 1871; accessible at: <http://hebrewbooks.org/14220>, 14, 15, 17, 25.

8. Rabbi Ya'akov Yosef of Polnoye, *Toldot Ya'akov Yosef*, 1780⁷

Disciple of Rabbi Israel Ba'al Shem Tov and author of the first published Hasidic book (Ukraine, 1710–1784).

The purpose of the entire Torah and the mitzvot, the reason they were given, is in order that one can have the privilege of attaching oneself to God, may He be blessed, as it is written “to Him shall you hold fast” (Deuteronomy 10:20). But with the passing of the years, hearts have grown smaller, and people fail to understand this matter. Instead they make the Torah into a crown with which to aggrandize themselves (see Avot 4:5), and to glorify themselves.... When one learns a single law, one glorifies oneself a bit, and when one learns more, one glorifies oneself more.... Behold the Talmudic scholars who break their footsteps going from city to city [to study Talmud].... This explains the verse “Why do you break, and stray even further: (Isaiah 1:5). The more they break their footsteps to go to a yeshiva to study, the more they stray and distance themselves from God.

תכלית כל התורה והמצוות, לא ניתנו אלא כדי שיזכה לידך בו יתרה, כמו שכותב: ”ובו תזבק“ (דברים י, כ)... וברבות השנים נטמעתו הלבבות להבין ולהשכיל עד הניל, רק לעשות מהתורה עטרה להתגדל בהם ולהתפאר בהם.... וכשלומד יותר אחת מטארכ מעט, וכשלומד יותר מתפאר יותר.... וננה ה תלמידי חכמים המכתחין רגיליםם לילך מעיר לעיר.... ובזה יובן: על מה תפכו עוד תוספי סרה] (ישעה א, ה), שמכתחין רגיליםם לילך בישיבה ללימוד, עוד תוספי סרה להתרחק ולסור מה' יתרה.

9. Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liady, Letter to a Supporter of Hasidism Living in the Anti-Hasidic Community of Shklov, 1787⁸

Founder of Chabad Hasidism (Lithuania and Russia, 1745–1813).

While I don't know you, and have never seen you, I have heard about you—that the spirit of the Lord moves you, and that you did not join the laughers and mockers of those who wish to serve the Lord truly, with “service of the heart—that is prayer” (Babylonian Talmud, Ta'anit 2b). Their hands are uplifted with regard to Torah [study] and acts of kindness, and I truly wish this for them forever. But they transgressed teachings and violated laws by gathering together to issue a decree banning prayer different from their own—that one should pray in haste, without any movement or raising of the voice....

הנה אף כי לא ידעתהו ולא אכير מראהו, אך שמע און שמעטיו אשר רוחה נוססה בו, שלא לעמוד בסוד משחקים המליעיגים בחפצים לעבוז את ה, באמת בעבודה שבבל זו תפילה תענית ב, ע"ב). כי ידם רמה בתורה וגמilot חסדים, וכי יתנו זה להם באמת כל הימים. אך עפה עברו תורות חלפו חוק בהונדים יחד עלי לגוזר גזירת שמד על התפילה, להתפלל כמותם דזוקא – בחפazon בלי שום תנועה והרמת קול....

⁷ Jacob Joseph of Polnoye, *Toldot Ya'akov Yosef* (Jerusalem: Agudat Bet Vilipoli, 1973), Vol. 1, 124.

⁸ In Mordechai Vilensky, *Hasidim u-Mitnagdim* (Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik, 1970), 299–300.

Those who say that prayer is [merely] a rabbinic commandment [i.e., not a commandment from the Torah] have never seen light. For while the wording of the liturgy and its recitation three times a day are indeed rabbinic commandments, the matter of prayer is the foundation of the entire Torah.

Namely, to know God, recognize His greatness and splendor...to love God, to attach oneself to Him, and to His Torah, and to desire His commandments. This objective is achieved in our times through the recitation of the morning Psalms, the Shema, and the blessings before it and after it—out loud, and with a voice that arouses intention of the heart....Anyone close to God, who has tasted the flavor of prayer a single time, will understand that without it, you cannot even begin to serve God truly, instead [your service] will be “a commandment of human beings, learned by rote” (Isaiah 29:13).

וּגְם הָאוֹמְרִים תְּפִילָה מַדְרְבֵּן לֹא רָאוּ
מְאוֹרוֹת מִמֶּהָם. כִּי אֲף שְׁנוּסָח
הַתְּפִילָה וּמְנִינָה ג' פָּעָמִים בַּיּוֹם הָוֹא
מַדְרְבֵּנוּ, עַיקָּר עֲנִינָה מְהוֹתָה הָוֹא יִסּוֹד
כָּל הַתּוֹרָה, לְדֹעַת אֲתָה ה' לְהַכִּיר גְּדוּלוֹתָו
וְתְּפַאֲרָתוֹ...לְאַחֲבָה אֲתָה ה' וְלִדְבָּקָה בָּו
וּבְתוֹרָתוֹ וְלִחְפֹּזֶץ מִאָז בְּמִצּוֹתָיו, אֲשֶׁר
כָּל עֲנִין זֶה נָעֹשֶׂה לָנוּ בָּזְמָן הַזֶּה עַל יְדֵי
אִמְרִית פָּסּוֹקִי דִּזְמָרָא, וּבְרָכוֹת קָרְיאָת
שְׁמֻעָה, לְפָנֶיהָ וְלְאַחֲרֶיהָ בְּפִיה מְלָא וּבְקוֹל
מְעוֹרֵר פְּנוּתָה הַלְּבָב....כָּל הַקְּרוּב אֶל ה'
וּטּוּם טָעַם בַּתְּפִילָה פָּעַם אַחַת, בֵּין
וַיְשַׁכְּל כִּי בְּלָעָדָה לֹא יָרִים אִישׁ אֲתָה יְדוֹ
וְאַתָּה רָגַלְוּ לְעַבּוֹד ה' בָּאֶמֶת, כִּי עַם מִצּוֹתָה
אָנָשִׁים מַלּוּמָדָה (ישועה כט, יג).

10. Rabbi Hayyim of Volozhin, *Nefesh Ha-Hayyim*, Introduction to Gate 4, Chapters 2, 4, 6⁹

Prime disciple of the Vilna Gaon and founder of the Volozhin yeshiva (Belarus, 1749–1821).

A person's worshiping God with a pure heart can lead him to arrogance. He will look down at someone who does not pray with pure thoughts, who keeps all the commandments written in God's Torah, but without *deveikut*. All the more so, if such a person sees someone studying Torah, and thinks that he is not learning for its own sake, he will sneer at him. Such an attitude is a grave sin. For truly...anyone who performs mitzvot as God commanded us in the Written and Oral Torah, even without *deveikut*, is called a servant of God, and is beloved by Him.

The person who studies God's Torah, not for its own sake—although he has not reached the highest level, should not be disdained, even in one's heart. On the contrary, every Jew should show him respect....Even a person whose Torah study is not for its own sake, but for some ulterior motive, will be rewarded by God. As long

גַם תּוֹכֵל לְגַרְוּם לְאָדָם הַהְתִּנְשָׁאֹות בַּלְבָד
מְאָשֵׁר הָוּא עֹבֵד אָזָה יְתָ' בְּטוֹרָת הַלְבָד
שִׁיקָּל בְּעִינֵינוּ חַס וּשְׁלוּם אָם יַרְאָה מֵיָּמִי
שְׁאַיִן עֲנִינִי עֲבֹדָתָנוּ לוּ יְתָ' בְּמַחְשָׁבָה
טָהָרָה, וּמִקְיָּם כָּל הַכְּתוּב בְּתוֹרָת ה'
בְּלֹא דְבִיקּוֹת. וְכָל שְׁכַנְוָן כְּשִׁירָאָה אַיִּזה אִישׁ
עוֹסָק בְּתוֹרָת ה' וַיִּתְבֹּגֵן עַלְיוֹ שֶׁהָוָא שְׁלָא
לְשָׁמָה, יִתְבֹּזֶה בְּעִינֵינוּ מִאָז חַס וּשְׁלוּם.
וְהָוָא עֲנִין פְּלִילִי הַרְחָמָן יָצַלְנוּ. כִּי
בָּאֶמֶת...כָּל הַמְקִיִּים מִצּוֹת ה' כָּל אֲשֶׁר
צִוָּנו בְּתוֹרָתנו הַקְדוּשָׁה שְׁבַכְתֵּב וּבָעַל פָּה
אָף בְּלֹא דְבִיקּוֹת נִקְרָא גַם כִּן עוֹבֵד אֱלֹהִים,
וְאַהֲבָה לְפָנֵינוּ יִתְבֹּרֶךְ.
וְכָנְהָאָדָם הַעוֹסָק בְּתוֹרָת ה' אַפְּיָלוּ שְׁלָא
לְשָׁמָה, אָם כִּי וְדֹאי אַדִּין אִינוּ בְּמִקְרָגָה
הַגְּבוּהָה הָאָמִיתִית, אִמְנָם חַלִּילָה וְחַלִּילָה

⁹ Reprint of Vilna 1874 edition (accessible at: <http://hebrewbooks.org/14565>), 85–88, 90.

as it is not done for the sake of strife, about which our Sages said “It would have been better had his placenta strangled him and he had not been born” [Talmud Yerushalmi 8a; Rashi on Berachot 17a]....

God gives him [a person who studies Torah for an ulterior motive] his just reward for the study of Torah is precious in the eyes of the Lord, more precious than all the commandments, [even if] performed for their own sake with holiness and pure thoughts....For it is an explicit mishnah: “and the study of Torah is equal to all of them” (Peah 1:1)....

Be cautious and do not let the evil temptation beguile you by telling you, “The main thing is to occupy yourself at all times with purifying your thoughts.” ...Evil temptation tells you “Torah and mitzvot without *deveikut*, attachment to God, is worthless.” ...It will make you believe that a prayer or mitzvah done with great devotion, holiness and purity—even after its set time has passed—is more precious [to God] than a mitzvah performed at the proper time without devotion....You will end up considering it permitted to disregard the time of a prayer or mitzvah....This is no different that someone blowing the shofar with profound devotion on the first night of Passover instead of eating the prescribed amount of matzah, and eating the prescribed amount of matzah on Rosh Hashanah!...Then, what will be with the Torah? The essential part of every mitzvah is its performance. Purity of thought is something one adds to the performance. It enhances the mitzvah but is not an indispensable condition....God forbid that we should reject a single detail of performing a mitzvah, even the fine point of a rabbinic enactment, let alone change the time of a mitzvah, because of the absence of pure thoughts. And anyone who increases his stringent performance of mitzvot, behold he is praiseworthy.

לְבָזֹותו אֲפִילו בַּלְבָד, וְאַדְרָבָא כֵּל אִישׁ
יִשְׂרָאֵל מְחֻזֵּב לְנֶהֶג גַּם בּוֹ כְּבוֹד....הָרִי
אֲפִילוּ הָאָדָם שָׁעַסְקֹו בְּתוֹרָתוּ יִתְבָּרֵךְ שֶׁלֹּא
לְשָׁמָה כְּרָאוּי, אֶלָּא בְּשִׁבְלֵל אִיזוֹ פְּנִיה
לְגַרְמָמָה — רַק אִם אִינוֹ לְקַנְטוֹר ח'וּ, אַשְׁר
עַלְיוֹ אָמְרוּ רַזְ"ל נָזֵח שְׁתַהְפֵךְ שְׁלִיחָתוֹ עַל
פְּנִיוֹ (יְרוּשָׁלַמִּי בְּרִכּוֹת ח' ע"א, רַשִּׁי עַל
בְּרִכּוֹת יְזִי ע"א)...
הַקְּבָ"ה קֹזְבָּעַ לוֹ שְׁכָר טוֹב שְׁמָגִיעַ לוֹ הָרִי
עַסְקָ תּוֹרָתוּ יִקְרָא מְאֹוד בְּעַיְנָיו יִתְבָּרֵךְ, יוֹתֵר
מִכָּל הַמְּצֹוֹת לְשָׁמָה בְּקַדְשָׁה וְטָהָרָת
הַמְּחַשְּׁבָה...שְׁהָרִי מְשֻׁנָּה שְׁלִימָה שְׁנִינָה
וְתַלְמוֹז תּוֹרָה בְּנֶגֶד כּוֹלָם". (פָּאָה א, א)...
לֹאֶזְעָת הַזָּהָר נְפָשָׁךְ מְאֹוד, שָׁאַל יִשְׁיָּאָךְ יִצְּרָךְ
לְאָמֵר, שְׁעִיקָּר הַכָּל תְּרָאָה שְׁתַהְאָא אֶחָד עַסְוֹק
כֵּל יִמְיַיךְ לְטַהָּר מְחַשְּׁבָתִיךְ....יִאמֵּר לְךָ שְׁפֵל
הַתּוֹרָה וְהַמְּצֹוֹת שְׁבֵלָא דְּבִיקּוֹת אִינְגָּה
כְּלּוּם... וַיַּרְאָה לְךָ פְּנִים שְׁבֵל תְּפִילָה אוּ
מְצֹוֹה שְׁנָעֵשִׁית בְּכוֹנוֹה עַצְוָמָה בְּקַדְשָׁה
וְטָהָרָה אָף שְׁלָא בְּזַמָּנָה, הָרִי הִיא יִקְרָה
מַקְיָוָם הַמְּצֹוֹה בְּזַמָּנָה, שְׁלָא בְּכוֹנוֹה....עַד
שְׁמַמְפִּילָא יְהָא לְךָ כַּהֲיִתְרָה לְהַעֲבִיר מַזָּעַד
הַתְּפִילָה וְהַמְּצֹוֹה...וְכֵי מָאִי נְפֻקּוֹתָא בֵּין זה
לִמֵּי שְׁהָרָה תּוֹקֵעַ שׁוֹפֵר בְּכוֹנוֹה עַצְוָמָה
בְּלִיל וְרָאשׁוֹן שֶׁל פָּסָח, בָּمִקּוֹם מְצֹוֹת
אֲכִילַת כְּצִיָּת מְאֹה, וְאַוְלֵל הַפְּזִינָה מְאֹה
בְּרָאֵשׁ הַשָּׁנָה....וְאֵיה מָקוֹם לְתּוֹרָה?
הַעֲיקָר בְּכָל הַמְּצֹוֹת הוּא חָלֵק הַמְּעָשָׁה.
טָהָרָת הַמְּחַשְּׁבָה אִינְהָא אֶלָּא מַצְטָרָפָת
לְמַעַשָּׁה, וְלִמְצֹוֹה וְלֹא לְעִיכּוּבָא....חֲלִילָה
וְחֲלִילָה לְנוּ לְדַחֹזָת שָׁוָם פָּרֶט מְפָרֶטִי
הַמְּעָשָׁה, אָף דִּיקְדוֹק אָחֵד מִדְבָּרִי סּוֹפְרִים
וְכֵל שְׁכֵן לְשִׁנוֹת זָמָנָה חַס וְשִׁלוּם בְּשִׁבְלֵל
מְנִיעַת טָהָרָת הַמְּחַשְּׁבָה, וְכֵל הַמְּרַבָּה
לְדַקְּדַק בְּמַעַשְׁיו הָרִי זֶה מִשּׁוּבָח.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

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