
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 (*deveikut*) 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.

מַעֲלָה גְדוֹלָה כְּשֶׁאָדָם מַחֲשֵׁב תָּמִיד שֶׁהוּא
אֶצֶל הַבּוֹרָא יִתְבָּרֵךְ, וְהוּא מְקִיף אוֹתוֹ
מִכָּל צַדְדָיו, כְּמוֹ שֶׁכָּתוּב, אֲשֶׁרִי אָדָם לֹא
יִחֲשֵׁב ה' [לוֹ עֵוֹן] (תהילים לב, ב). פִּי'
כְּשֶׁרִגַע אֵינּוּ מַחֲשֵׁב בְּדַבְּיָקוֹת ה' יִתְבָּרֵךְ,
לוֹ עֵוֹן. וְיִהְיֶה דְבוּק כָּל כָּךְ שֶׁלֹּא יִהְיֶה צָרִיךְ
לְיִישֵׁב אֶת עֲצָמוֹ בְּכָל פַּעַם שֶׁהוּא אֶצֶל
יִתְבָּרֵךְ... וְיִקְיִים שׁוֹיֵתִי ה' לְנִגְדֵי תָּמִיד
(תהילים טז, ח), כְּמוֹ שֶׁכָּתוּב בְּשׁוּלחַן
עֵרוֹךְ אוֹרֵךְ חַיִּים סִימָן 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.

... שְׁעִיקָר עֵסֶק תּוֹרָה הוּא שִׁידְבֵק אֶת
עֲצָמוֹ אֶל פְּנִימִיּוֹת רוּחָנִיּוֹת אוֹר א"ס
שֶׁבְּתוֹךְ אוֹתֵיּוֹת הַתּוֹרָה, שֶׁהוּא נִקְרָא
לִימוּד לְשֵׁמָה. שֶׁבְּזֶה אָמַר ר' מֵאִיר:
כָּל הַעוֹסֵק בְּתוֹרָה לְשֵׁמָה זוֹכֵה
לְדַבְּרִים הַרְבֵּה, וּמְגַלִּין לוֹ רְזֵי תּוֹרָה,
ר"ל שִׁידַע עֲתִידוֹת וְכָל מְאוֹרְעוֹתָיו
מִתּוֹךְ הַתּוֹרָה...

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

...הַתְּפִילָּה כְּשֶׁהִיא בְּשִׂמְחָה גְדוֹלָה, בְּוודָאִי
יוֹתֵר חָשׁוּב וּמְקוּבָּל לְפָנָיו יוֹתֵר מִתְּפִילָּה
בְּעֲצָבוֹת וּבְכִיָּה. מִשָּׁל עַל זֶה: כְּשֶׁעָנִי שׁוֹאֵל
וּמְבַקֵּשׁ וּמִתְחַנֵּן לְפָנָיו מֶלֶךְ בְּשֶׁר וְדָם בְּבְכִיָּה
גְדוֹלָה, אֵף עַל פִּי כֵן אֵינּוּ נוֹתֵן לוֹ אֶלָּא דָּבָר
מוֹעֵט. אֲבָל כְּשֶׁהִשְׁרַח מְסֻדָּר לְפָנָיו מֶלֶךְ שִׂמְחָה
גְדוֹלָה, וּמִתּוֹךְ הַשְּׂבַח מְבַקֵּשׁ גַּם בְּקִשְׁתּוֹ, אִזּוֹ

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

נותן המלך מתנה מרובה, כמו שנותנים לשררות.

4. *Shivhei HaBesht*, compiled by Dov Ber of Linits, 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 Shacharit 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 צריכים לאמר הלל, שהיה ראש חודש או חול המועד של פסח, והיה רבי אברהם הנ"ל מתפלל תפילת שחרית לפני התיבה והבעל שם טוב התפלל במקומו... ובשמונה עשרה של קול רם נתרעד הבעל שם טוב רעה גדולה, והיה רועד והולך כדרך לרעוד בתפילתו תמיד, ומי שראה אותו בשעת התפילה ראה הרעידה שלו... ובא החסיד רבי וולף קיצעס והציץ בפניו, והנה בוערות כלפידים, ועיניו בולטו... כי כן שמעתי כמה פעמים מבחיריו, כי היה מנשא ראש כולם 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

אהבינו אחינו בחירי ה', אשר הולכים בדרך אבותיהם לשמור דרך ה'. הלא שמעתם אם לא ידעתם, כי חדשים מקרוב באו אשר לא שערום אבותינו, ומכנים שם חסידים. ובכל עיר ועיר עושים אגודות עיזוב בתי כנסיות ובתי מדרשות, רק פורשים עצמם מן הציבור. ותבקע הארץ לקולם (מלכים א, א, מ), קול בית תפילתם. ודתיהם שונים, בשנות את טעמם 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.

תלמוד תורה ומבלים כל ימיהם בדברי
היתול והללות....
מבזים תלמידי חכמים מפורסמין יחיד
הדור... וכל ימיהם כחגים ומועדים,
ומקבלים שכר על הפרישה מן התורה,
כאשר ידוע ומפורסם....
ועתה שמעו נא אחינו שימו על לבבכם
וראו את הנולד מכת זו... ולא די מצרות
הראשונות אשר היו מפתות כיוצא בהם,
ובעונותינו יצאו מה שיצאו, אף גם עתה
חדשה תצמח, שורש פורה ראש ולענה....
וכל השומע ורואה את דברים יאזור כנבר
חלציו להשיב מחשבתם הרעה על ראשם,
להודפם ולרודפם עד מקום שיד ישראל
מגעת, ומשם יפיצום למען לא יתחברו
במנין.

6. The First Persecution of Hasidim in Vilna, 1772 ⁴

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

וכשבאו הפתבים משקלאב כאן
לקהל קדוש ווילנא, אזי אמר הגאון
הנ"ל: "הדין עם ק"ק שקלאב,
באשר שהמשפחה הנ"ל המה
אפיקורסין, ומורדין ולא מעלין
[עבודה זרה כו ע"ב]. ובתוך הכת
הנ"ל היה ראש המאסף הראשון מו'
איסור בקוראי שמו, והשני הרב מו'
חיים, מגיד דכאן.... והשיב מו' חיים
על הגאון הנ"ל שהוא שקר ותורתו
שקר ואמונתו שקר.... והיה פסק
תיכף לגרש ולפזר את המנין של
קארלינר.... נסתלק מוהר"ר חיים מן
המגידות. ומו' חיים קיבל נזיפה
ונידוי על עצמו ומו' חיים
נסע... ואח"כ ישבו הרוזנים וגם שני
כתות דיינים והגאון אב בית דין.
והיה פסק לשרוף את הפתבים

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.

שְׁלֵחַם אֶצֶל הַקּוֹנֵ"עַ קוֹדֵם קְבֻלַּת
שַׁבָּת. וּמוֹ' אִיסָר רֹאשׁ הַמַּאֲסָף
יַעֲלֶה בְּמַעְלֵה עֲלִיוֹנָה שַׁבָּת קוֹדֵם
שׁוֹכֵן עַד, וּבְכָל בַּיִת הַכְּנֻסָּת וּבַיִת
הַמְדֻרָשׁ לֹא יִהְיֶה שׁוֹם מִנְיָן בְּכָאן,
רַק הַכֹּל יִהְיֶה בְּבַיִת הַכְּנֻסָּת וּבְבַיִת
הַמְדֻרָשׁ הַגָּדוֹל, וְיִתְנַדֵּה כְּפִי הַנוֹסַח
אֲשֶׁר יֵצֵא מִבַּיִת דִּין. וְאח"כּ יַחְרִים
הַשְּׂמֵשׁ אוֹתָם וְכָל הַנְּלוּיִם אֵלָיו.

7. Yehoshua Heschel Levine, *Aliyot Eliyahu*, 1856 ⁶

Renowned Torah scholar and Rosh Yeshiva at the Volozhin yeshiva (Lithuania and Belarus, 1812–1883). Aliyot 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.

תְּרָאָה שְׂפוּלָם בָּאוּ בְּתַכְלִית
הַחֲרִיצוֹת....קִיבַל עַל עֲצָמוֹ כָּל יָמָיו שְׁלֵא
לִישֵׁן יוֹתֵר ב' שָׁעוֹת בְּמַעַת לַעֲת....מְעוֹדוֹ
לֹא הֵלֵךְ ד' אַמּוֹת בְּלֹא תוֹרָה וּתְפִילִין,
וְלֹא שָׁח שִׁיחָה בְּטֵלָה מִיָּמָיו...וְאִם בָּא
אֶחָד מִבְּנָיו בְּגִבּוּלוֹ, גַּם כִּי הִגְדִּיל
הַשְּׂמִחָה כִּי לֹא רָאָה אוֹתוֹ שָׁנָה אוֹ
שְׁנַתִּים, אָפֶס לֹא שָׁאַל אוֹתוֹ עַל עֲנִין
פְּרֻנְסָתוֹ, וְכֹאֲשֶׁר נָח מִדְּרָכּוֹ שִׁיעוֹר שְׁעָה
אַחַת, מֵהָרַג יְמֵהֶרְנוּ שׁוֹב לְקַבּוֹעַ סֵדֵר
לִימוּדוֹ. וְכֵן אָמַר: בְּדַרְךָ, בְּטֵלָתָהּ
מִלֵּהֲשָׁלִים שִׁיעוֹר סֵדֵר לִימוּדָהּ, הוּא
יְשׁוּלָם בְּבֵיתִי.
וְרָאָה אַחִי וְהַבִּיטָהּ, מֵהָרַב טוֹב הָעוֹנֵג
וְהָעֲרֹבוֹת בְּנִפְשׁוֹת הִירָאִים הָעוֹזְבִים
דְּרָכֵי עוֹלָם הַזֶּה וְעֹסְקֵיהֶם לַעֲמוֹל בְּתוֹרָה
וּבְמִצְוֹת...לֹא קָם כְּמוֹהוּ בְּתוֹרָתוֹ בְּרִיבּוּי
חִיבוּרָיו בְּתוֹרָה שֶׁבְּכָתֵב וְשֶׁבְּעַל פֶּה
וּבְנִסְתָּרוֹת, חִיבֵר 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*, 1780 ⁷

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 שייזכה לידבק בו יתברך, כמו
שכתוב: “ובו תדבק” (דברים י,
כ)....וברבות השנים נתמעטו הלבבות
להבין ולהשפיל ע”ד הנ”ל, רק לעשות
מהתורה עטרה להתגדל בהם
ולהתפאר בהם....וכשלומד הלכה
אחת מתפאר מעט, וכשלומד יותר
מתפאר יותר....והנה התלמידי חכמים
המכתתין רגליהם לילך מעיר
לעיר....ובזה יובן: על מה תכו [עוד
תוסיפו סרה] (ישעיה א, ה), שמכתתין
רגליהם לילך בישיבה ללמוד, עוד
תוסיפו סרה להתרחק ולסור מה'
יתברך.

9. Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liady, Letter to a Supporter of Hasidism Living in the Anti-Hasidic Community of Shklov, 1787 ⁸

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 ידעתיהו ולא אכיר
מראהו, אך שמע אמן שמעתיו אשר רוח
ה' נוססה בו, שלא לעמוד בסוד
משחקים המלעיגים בחפצים לעבוד את
ה' באמת בעבודה שבלב זו תפילה
(תענית ב, ע"ב). כי ידם רמה בתורה
וגמילות חסדים, ומי יתן זה להם באמת
כל הימים. אך עתה עברו תורות חלפו
חוק בהוסדם יחד עלי לגזור גזירת שמד
על התפילה, להתפלל כמותם דווקא –
בחפזון בלי שום תנועה והרמת קול....

⁷ Jacob Joseph of Polnoyye, *Toldot Ya'akov Yosef* (Jerusalem: Agudat Bet Vielipoli, 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).

וְגַם הָאוֹמְרִים תְּפִלָּה מְדַרְבְּנָן לֹא רְאוּ
מְאוֹרוֹת מִימֵיהֶם. כִּי אֵף שְׁנוּסַח
הַתְּפִלָּה וּמִנְיַנָּה ג' פְּעָמִים בַּיּוֹם הוּא
מְדַרְבְּנָן, עֵיקַר עֲנִינָה מֵהוֹתָה הוּא יְסוּד
כָּל הַתּוֹרָה, לְדַעַת אֶת ה' לְהַכִּיר גְּדֻלוֹתָו
וּתְפָאֲרָתוֹ...לְאַהֲבָה אֶת ה' וּלְדַבְּקָה בּוֹ
וּבְתוֹרָתוֹ וּלְחַפּוֹץ מְאוֹד בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, אֲשֶׁר
כָּל עֲנִיָּן זֶה נֶעֱשֶׂה לָנוּ בְּזִמְנֵן הַזֶּה עַל יְדֵי
אֲמִירַת פְּסוּקֵי דְזִמְרָא, וּבְרִכּוֹת קְרִיאַת
שְׁמַע, לְפָנֶיהָ וּלְאַחֲרֶיהָ בְּפֶה מְלֵא וּבְקוֹל
מְעוֹרָר כְּוֹנֵת הַלֵּב....כָּל הַקְּרוֹב אֶל ה'
וְטַעַם טַעַם בְּתְפִלָּה פְּעַם אַחַת, יִבִּין
וְיִשְׁכִּיל כִּי בְלַעֲדָה לֹא יָרִים אִישׁ אֶת יָדוֹ
וְאֵת רַגְלוֹ לַעֲבוֹד ה' בְּאַמְת, כִּי עִם מִצְוֹת
אֲנָשִׁים מְלוֹמְדָה (ישעיה 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

גַּם תּוֹכֵל לְגָרוֹם לְאָדָם הַהִתְנַשְּׂאוֹת בַּלֵּב,
מֵאֲשֶׁר הוּא עוֹבֵד אוֹתוֹ ית' בְּטְהֵרַת הַלֵּב
שִׁיקֵל בְּעֵינָיו חֶסֶד וְשְׁלוֹם אִם יִרְאֶה מִי וּמִי
שָׂאִין עֲנִינֵי עֲבוֹדָתוֹ לוֹ ית' בְּמַחְשָׁבָה
טְהוֹרָה, וּמְקַיִים כָּכָל הַפְּתוּב בְּתוֹרַת ה'
בְּלֹא דְבִיקוֹת. וְכָל שָׂכֵן כְּשִׁירְאָה אִיזָה אִישׁ
עוֹסֵק בְּתוֹרַת ה' וְיִתְבּוֹנֵן עָלָיו שֶׁהוּא שְׂלֵא
לְשִׁמָּה, יִתְבַּזֶּה בְּעֵינָיו מְאוֹד חֶסֶד וְשְׁלוֹם.
וְהוּא עֲנִיָּן פְּלִילִי הֶרְחַמֵּן יִצִּילֵנוּ. כִּי
בְּאַמְת...כָּל הַמְקַיִים מִצְוֹת ה' כָּכָל אֲשֶׁר
צִוּנוּ בְּתוֹרָתֵנוּ הַקְּדוּשָׁה שֶׁבְּכַתָּב וּבַעַל פֶּה
אֵף בְּלֹא דְבִיקוֹת נִקְרָא גַם כֵּן עוֹבֵד אֱלֹהִים,
וְאֶהוּב לְפָנָיו יִתְבַּרֵךְ.
וְכֵן הָאָדָם הָעוֹסֵק בְּתוֹרַת ה' אֲפִילוֹ שְׂלֵא
לְשִׁמָּה, אִם כִּי וְדַאי עֲדִין אִינוֹ בְּמִדְרָגָה
הַגְּבוּהָ הָאֲמִיתִית, אֲמִנָּם חֲלִילָה וְחֲלִילָה

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.

לְבַזוֹתוֹ אֶפִּילוֹ בִּלְבָב, וְאֶדְרְבָּא כָּל אִישׁ
יִשְׂרָאֵל מְחוּיָב לְנוֹהֵג גַּם בּוֹ כְּבוֹד.... הָרִי
אֶפִּילוֹ הָאָדָם שֶׁעֲסָקוֹ בְּתוֹרָתוֹ יִתְבַּרְךָ שְׁלֹא
לְשִׂמְחָה כְּרְאוּי, אֶלֶּא בְּשִׁבְלֵי אִיזוֹ פְּנִיָּה
לְגַרְמִיָּה — רַק אִם אֵינוֹ לְקַנְטוֹר ח"ו, אֲשֶׁר
עָלָיו אָמְרוּ רַז"ל נוֹחַ שֶׁתְּהַפֵּךְ שְׁלֵייתוֹ עַל
פְּנָיו (ירוּשָׁלִימִי בְּרֻכּוֹת ח ע"א, רִשִׁי עַל
בְּרֻכּוֹת יז ע"א)....

הַקַּב"ה קוֹבֵעַ לוֹ שְׂכָר טוֹב שֶׁמִּגִּיעַ לוֹ הָרִי
עֲסָק תוֹרָתוֹ יִקָּר מְאוֹד בְּעֵינָיו יִתְבַּרְךָ, יוֹתֵר
מִכָּל הַמִּצְוֹת לְשִׂמְחָה בְּקִדּוּשָׁה וְטְהָרָת
הַמַּחְשְׁבָה... שֶׁהָרִי מְשַׁנֵּה שְׁלִימָה שְׁנִינוּ
"וְתִלְמוּד תּוֹרָה כְּנֶגֶד כּוֹלָם." (פֵּאָה א, א)....
לְזֹאת הַזֶּהָר נִפְשָׁד מְאוֹד, שְׂאֵל יִשְׂאֵד יִצְרָךְ
לְאִמֵּר, שֶׁעִיקָר הַכֹּל תְּרָאָה שֶׁתְּהֵא אֶדְ עֲסוֹק
כָּל יְמֵיךְ לְטְהַר מַחְשְׁבֶתִיךָ.... יֵאֵמֵר לְךָ שְׁכָל
הַתּוֹרָה וְהַמִּצְוָה שֶׁבֵּלֵא דְבִיקוּת אֵינְנָה
כְּלוּם... וְיִרְאָה לְךָ פְּנִים שְׁכָל תְּפִילָה אוֹ
מִצְוָה שֶׁנֶּעֱשִׂית בְּכוּוֹנָה עֲצוּמָה בְּקִדּוּשָׁה
וְטְהָרָה אֶף שְׁלֹא בְּזִמְנָה, הָרִי הִיא יִקְרָה
מִקִּיּוּם הַמִּצְוָה בְּזִמְנָה, שְׁלֹא בְּכוּוֹנָה.... עַד
שֶׁמִּמִּילָא יְהֵא לְךָ כִּהִיתֵר לְהַעֲבִיר מוֹעֵד
הַתְּפִילָה וְהַמִּצְוָה... וְכִי מֵאֵי נִפְקוּתָא בֵּין זֶה
לְמִי שֶׁהִיָּה תוֹקֵעַ שׁוֹפָר בְּכוּוֹנָה עֲצוּמָה
בְּלִיל רְאוּשׁוֹן שֶׁל פֶּסַח, בְּמִקּוֹם מִצְוֹת
אֲכִילַת כֶּזֶיִת מִצָּה, וְאוֹכֵל הַכֶּזֶיִת מִצָּה
בְּרֹאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה... וְאֵיָּה מִקּוֹם לְתוֹרָה?
הַעִיקָר בְּכָל הַמִּצְוֹת הוּא חֶלֶק הַמַּעֲשֶׂה.
טְהָרַת הַמַּחְשְׁבָה אֵינָה אֶלֶּא מִצְטָרְפֶת
לְמַעֲשֶׂה, וְלְמִצְוָה וְלֹא לְעִיכּוּבָא.... חֲלִילָה
וְחֲלִילָה לְנוֹ לְדַחוֹת שׁוּם פֶּרֶט מִפְּרֻטֵי
הַמַּעֲשֶׂה, אֶף דִּיקְדוֹק אֶחָד מִדְּבָרֵי סוֹפְרִים
וְכָל שְׂכָן לְשָׁנוֹת זְמַנָּה חֶסֶד וְשְׁלוֹם בְּשִׁבְלֵי
מְנִיעַת טְהָרַת הַמַּחְשְׁבָה, וְכָל הַמְרָבָה
לְדַקְדָק בְּמַעֲשָׂיו הָרִי זֶה מְשׁוּבָח.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

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