

## ***Study and Prayer: Their Relative Value in Hasidism and Mitnagdism***

NORMAN LAMM

One of the principal issues on which the Hasidic-Mitnagdic controversy turns, in its concern with substantive theological matters, is the question of the relative weight to be assigned to the study of Torah and prayer. It is the purpose of this essay to compare the manner in which each of these two movements treated the problem, using as the spokesmen for these groups two distinguished rabbinic scholars and thinkers: the Hasidic teacher and founder of the *HaBaD* movement, R. Shneour Zalman of Ladi, and the founder of the Volozhiner Yeshiva and disciple of the Gaon of Vilna, R. Hayyim of Volozhin. Both were commanding personalities and ideologists of their respective viewpoints, and yet were moderates, in a period of almost unrelieved, bitter polemics at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries.

The question of Torah vis-à-vis *Tefillah* is a special case of the larger problem of study vs. practice (of the *mitzvot*) as such; indeed, the relative evaluation of Torah and prayer is the most sensitive barometer for the axiological preference for study over practice or vice versa. It is unnecessary to add that Judaism affirms both study and worship as major values, and a preference for one by no means implies the exclusion of the other. The corpus of a living Judaism is incomplete, indeed inconceivable, without either the head or the heart. Yet it is a question of no little import whether primary emphasis should be laid on the study of Torah, giving Judaism a rigorously intellectualist bent with corresponding educational and social consequences, or on worship, thus stressing the existential and experiential rather than the purely cognitive themes of Jewish religious existence.

R. Hayyim accorded the highest possible significance to the study of Torah.<sup>1</sup> Alone amongst all others in the Lurianic tradition, he assigned the origin of the preexistent, hypostatic Torah to the loftiest realms within God Himself: the Unnameable regions beyond the World of *Atzilut* (in the Kabbalistic cosmogony, the highest of the quaternity of stages of divine self-revelation) where perfect unity prevails between God and His attributes. "The upper root of the holy Torah is in the highest of the worlds, called 'the Worlds of the *En-Sof*.'" <sup>2</sup> This is a remarkably bold assertion. Accordingly, the inner essence of Torah *precedes* the revelation of God, not only the historical revelation to Abraham or at Sinai, but even His self-disclosure in turning out of the infinite recesses of His absoluteness to begin the elaborate process whereby this world was ultimately brought into being. "The truth is that Torah preceded, if it can be said so, even the blessed World of *Atzilut*."<sup>3</sup> Torah is thus conceived of as an aspect of God Himself, in His absoluteness and transcendence.

R. Shneur Zalman, while granting a most exalted origin to Torah, does not go quite as far as R. Hayyim. He considers Torah to have originated in the highest of the *Sephirot* (according to his system), *Hokhmah*, within the World of *Atzilut*<sup>4</sup> — each of the Four Worlds consists of Ten Sephirot — but not beyond it.

For the Hasidic teacher, Torah, no matter how lofty its origin, is the product of divine emanation — *Atzilut* is the stage in which God has already left His inner being and turned outwards — and hence removed from His essence. Torah thus shares with the rest of the created world, albeit to a different degree, the nature of a disguise in which God appears in the world. For the Mitnagdic leader the source of Torah is in God before the beginning of the emanative processes, whereby God's will is realized and which mediate between God and His infinitude and mortal man and his physical universe. Torah is a direct facet of the Divinity, not merely

1. A more elaborate and documented discussion may be found in my doctoral dissertation, *The Study of Torah Lishmah in the Works of Rabbi Hayyim of Volozhin* (unpublished, Yeshiva University, 1966), chaps. III and IV. The present essay is largely based upon chap. IV of that work.

2. *Nefesh ha-Hayyim* (hereinafter: NH) 4:10.

3. *Ibid.*

4. *Iggeret ha-Kodesh* (hereinafter: IHK), chap. XXVI, pp. 287 ff.



a product of *hishtalshelut*, and in it and through it one can experience God's presence immediately and without interference. Unlike Nature, which is only symbolic of God, Torah is in true unity with Him. (Halakhically, therefore, Nature does not possess the quality of holiness, whereas Torah does.)

Following from this difference in their conception of the mystical origin of Torah, R. Shneour Zalman and R. Hayyim diverge in their evaluations of the study of Torah as compared to the practice of the (other) commandments. The principle that emerges from the writings of R. Shneour Zalman<sup>5</sup> is that, on the one hand, study is superior because it is a cognitive activity, and the intellect (*Sekhel*, the three highest of the *Sephirot*, known as *HaBaD*, i.e., *Hokhmah*, *Binah*, and *Daat*) is higher than the world of affect or deed (the *middot*, the seven lower *Sephirot*).<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, in this very abstractness or intellectuality lies its weakness; for the purpose of life is the transformation or sublimation (*it'hapkha*) of the material world, and here the incorporeal, noetic quality of Torah is not nearly as efficacious as the practical commandments, the *mitzvot maasiyot*.<sup>7</sup>

In yet another way does R. Shneour Zalman indicate his ascription of superior value to the *mitzvot* over Torah. Torah issues from the differentiated immanence of God as He vitalizes every existing object according to its rank in the chain of being,<sup>8</sup> for Torah is by its

5. R. Shneour Zalman, as Dubnow has already noted (*Toledot ha-Hasidut*, p. 239), is highly ambivalent where Hasidic doctrine tends to diverge from the accepted Rabbinic norms. This apologetic strain is especially evident in the study-worship problem. Thus, most of his remarks in his *Likkutei Amarim* (hereinafter: *LA*) imply the superiority of the study of Torah over the observance of the other commandments. In the *IHK*, however, an epistle in which he speaks more directly to his disciples personally, he implies the reverse and stands in the developing Hasidic tradition. The one chapter (XXXVII) in *LA* in which he advocates the supremacy of the practical *mitzvot* is so hedged about with praises of Torah study that the critical Mitnagdic reader will barely notice the subtle departure from his own values.

6. *LA*, chap. V; chap. XXIII.

7. *IHK*, chap. V, p. 216 f.; *Shaar ha-Yihud ve'ha-Emunah*, chaps. XI, XII; *Likkutei Torah* (hereinafter: *LT*) to *Re'eh*, p. 66; *LA*, chap. XXXVII (see, on this, *supra*, and n. 5).

8. *LT* to *Re'eh*, s.v., *Ani le'Dodi*. This is the aspect of *memalei kol olmin* where Godliness is revealed (*behinat galuy*) by the variety of the levels of His immanence.

nature pluralistic in its judgments and valuations. The other commandments, however, derive from divine transcendence, His uniform, undifferentiated and self-sustained leadership of the world,<sup>9</sup> for each *mitzvah* is by itself a single univalued act which surrounds man with holiness and becomes, as it were, a garment for his soul. Now, for R. Shneur Zalman, the uniform transcendence of God (*sovev kol olmin*) is of a higher order of divinity than His differentiated immanence (*memalei kol olmin*);<sup>10</sup> in more homely fashion, as he puts it, "clothing" (*mitzvot, sovev*) is superior to "food" (*Torah, memalei*). Hence, he concludes explicitly, practice is superior to the study of Torah.<sup>11</sup>

For R. Hayyim, the unequalled emphasis he places on Torah quite expectedly leads him to esteem it more than practice. In his epistle announcing the formation of the Yeshivah of Volozhin he already stresses the supremacy of study over all other precepts,<sup>12</sup> cementing this judgment, as it were, into the very foundation of the academy that was to signal the renaissance of Jewish learning for the next century in Lithuania.

Perhaps the most succinct expression of R. Hayyim's views consists of a double entendre of a key word in a famous passage in *Avot*: "R. Meir said, everyone who is occupied with Torah for its own sake is worthy of many things," and here follows a list of felicitous consequences of the selfless enterprise of Torah study, the concluding and climactic of which is, "it makes him great and lifts him above all things."<sup>13</sup> This last word is, in the Hebrew, *maasim*, which

9. *Ibid.* This is the aspect of *sovev kol olmin* in which, because of its remoteness and uniformity, Godliness is concealed (*behinat hester*); cf. *op. cit.* to *Korah*, s.v. *Va-yikah Korah*.

10. Cf. *op. cit.* to *Va-et'banan*, s.v., *Ve'yadata*, where *memalei kol olmin* is subject to knowledge, whereas the transcendent *sovev kol olmin* requires the superior virtue of faith. Thus too, the former is expressed by the Name *Elohim*, whereas the latter is implied in the Tetragrammaton, Whom we cannot know but only believe in; cf., R. Menahem Mendel of Lubavitch, *Derekh Mitzvotekha* (*Mitzvat Haamanat Elokut*).

11. *Op. cit.*, *Re'eh*, s.v. *Ani le'Dodi*.

12. The best text of this document is that of Prof. Samuel Mirsky, in *Yeshivat Volozhin*, in the volume edited by him, *Mosedot ha-Torah b'Eiropa be'Vinyanam u-ve'Hurbanam* (New York: 1957), p. 4.

13. *Avot* 6:1.



in this context means, "things," but which can also mean "deeds," i.e., sacred deeds or practical *mitzvot*. It is this meaning that is preempted by R. Hayyim: "That is to say, [it makes him great and lifts him] above all the deeds of *mitzvot*."<sup>14</sup>

All the other *mitzvot* together, R. Hayyim maintains, do not have the value of one word of the Torah.<sup>15</sup> Torah, even if it is studied not for its own sake but for some ulterior motive (*she'lo lishmah*), is superior to the practical precepts performed for their own sake.<sup>16</sup> R. Hayyim appeals to the earliest source for the supremacy of Torah, the Tannaitic assembly in Lydda during the Hadrianic persecutions.<sup>17</sup> The question of study vs. practice was there decided in favor of study.<sup>18</sup> Halakhically, the study of Torah has a double function: it instructs in the performance of the other precepts, and it is in itself the fulfillment of a commandment. Moreover, Torah is not only more significant functionally or halakhically, but it is totally inclusive. Torah is the whole of which the *mitzvot* are the individual parts. The commandments are the individual organs; Torah is the hypostasized mystical organism.<sup>19</sup> The *mitzvot*, therefore, have no autonomous significance; they derive their sanctity from the fact that they are inscribed in the Torah.<sup>20</sup> Torah, in turn, has a significance over and above the combined and cumulative sanctity of its various *mitzvot*; the whole is greater than its parts.<sup>21</sup>

It is in the context of their disagreement on the problem of study vs. practice that the divergence of views between R. Shneur Zalman and R. Hayyim on study vs. worship must be studied.

The question of Torah and *Tefillah* is, of course, an old one in the Jewish tradition. We shall here mention only the major source

14. NH 4:30.

15. J.T., *Peab*, chap. I, cited in NH pre-4:2. Cf. *Sotah* 21a; NH 4:29.

16. NH pre-4:2. Cf. *Infra*, n. 37, end.

17. *Sifre* Deut. #41 (ed. Finkelstein); *Mechilta de'R. Simeon b. Yohai* (ed. Hoffmann), 19:17, p. 100; *Kid.* 40b; *B.K.* 17a. Cf. *She'eltot* (ed. Mirsky) #7, *Lekh Lekha*.

18. R. Shneur Zalman confines this decision to "those days" when scholarship and piety abounded, but "in our days" of spiritual impoverishment Practice is supreme; *IHK*, chap. IX.

19. NH 1:6 and 4:30, end.

20. NH 4:29.

21. NH 4:30.

in the Talmud for purposes of sketching in the necessary background of the Hasidic-Mitnagdic differences, and omit the considerable material in medieval sources, especially the philosophic literature.

The Mishnah teaches that those engaged in certain kinds of activity must interrupt what they are doing for the reading of the *Shema*, but need not do so in order to pray.<sup>22</sup> The Babylonian Talmud explains the Mishnah according to a *Baraita*, the result of which is to refer the discussion to the activity of the study of Torah, and to reserve the right not to interrupt study, for the purpose of prayer, to full-time scholars:

R. Johanan said, this was taught only in the case of such as R. Simeon b. Yohai and his colleagues whose sole occupation was the study of Torah; but such as we must interrupt our studies both for the *Shema* and for *Tefillah*.<sup>23</sup>

The assumption of the Gemara is that R. Johanan and R. Simeon are in essential agreement, and differ only because of changed circumstances. The Jerusalem Talmud, however, views the problem differently.<sup>24</sup> After quoting R. Johanan's distinction between R. Simeon and his colleagues who were constantly immersed in scholarship (and therefore not required to interrupt their studies even for the *Shema*) and himself and his contemporaries who do not devote their full time to the study of Torah (and hence must interrupt their studies even for prayer), the Jerusalem Talmud adds, significantly, that R. Simeon and R. Johanan are of fundamentally different opinions regarding the relative values of Torah and prayer.<sup>25</sup> R. Simeon considered the study of Torah so superior to all else, prayer included, that he would have asked God for two mouths, one for Torah and the other for all else.<sup>26</sup> R. Johanan, however, is consistent in the

22. *Shabbat* 1:2.

23. *Shabbat* 11a.

24. J.T. *Ber.* 1:5; also *Shab.* 1:1, end. L. Ginzberg (*Perushim ve'Hiddushim be'Yerushalmi*, vol. I, p. 129 f.) maintains that the two Talmudim are divided both over their interpretation of the text and in their halakhic conclusions.

25. J.T., *loc. cit.*

26. *Ibid.* See too *Ber.* 35b; *Avot de'R. Nathan (editio princeps)*, chap. XII. On R. Simeon's rather negative attitude to prayer, see *Hiddushei Rabbenu Yonah al Ha-Rif* to *Ber.* chap. I, that R. Simeon would pray



high value he places on prayer: "Would that man prayed all day!"<sup>27</sup> The same division of opinion continues into later Amoraic times.<sup>28</sup>

In the late eighteenth century, with the advent of Hasidism, the polarity of Torah and *mitzvot*, or study and practice, became increasingly a question of scholarship and prayer. Of all the *mitzvot* it was prayer which was most naturally conducive to the ecstatic piety and spiritual spontaneity preached by the Baal Shem. Thus, the interesting statement by the Besht that he reached greater spiritual heights through prayer than through the study of Halakhah.<sup>20</sup> Prayer, more than any other institution, certainly more than Talmudic scholarship, lent itself to a mass religious movement which emphasized heart over mind and the charismatic personality over abstruse dialectics.

It is for this reason that R. Hayyim, in reasserting the supremacy of Torah study, often singles out prayer from the other *mitzvot* as the foil for Torah. Certainly he grants it importance, devoting a whole fourth of his *Nefesh ba-Hayyim*, Part II, to the theme of *tefillah*. Indeed, this was a section that was much treasured by his most devoted disciples. His student, R. Joseph Zondel of Salant, prepared a digest (*kitzur nimratz*) of this Part II of his master's work for his personal perusal and meditation.<sup>30</sup> Yet he ever remains the champion of Torah study over all else, including prayer.

It is interesting to note that whereas Hasidism transformed Torah study into a form of worship, R. Hayyim often treats prayer as a kind of intellectual Torah exercise. Thus, the Besht counseled con-

only once a year. The source for this statement is unknown. Ratner (*Ahavat Tziyon viYerushalayim*) conjectures that such may have been R. Jonah's reading in his text of *J.T. Ber. 1:5*.

27. *Ibid.*, also B.T. *Ber.* 21a, *Pes.* 54b. R. Johanan, of course, enormously loved and revered the study of Torah (*Shab.* 114a, *Pes.* 3b, *Meg.* 32a, and *Lev. R.* 30:1, *inter alia*. V. *Taanit* 21a). Yet he held prayer to be extremely important, and correspondingly esteemed the synagogue and public worship; see *Ber.* 6b, 15a, 28b, 61a, and *J.T. Ber.* 5:1.

28. *Shab.* 10a; *R.H.* 35a.

הנשמה אמרה להרב שמה שזכה שנתגלו אליו תצאואת הריבאש 29. הדברים העליונים לא מפני שלמד הרבה ש"ס ופוסקים הרבה רק משום תפילה שהיה מתפלל תמיד בכוונה גדולה ומשם זכה למעלה עליונה.

30. This Ms. was found amongst his papers and published by Eliezer Rivlin in his *Ha-Tzaddik Rabbi Yosef Zondel mi-Salant ve'Rabotav* (Jerusalem: 1927), pp. 54-58.

centration upon *devekut* during study,<sup>31</sup> while R. Hayyim made the quality of *devekut* during prayer conditional upon one's conduct and especially his study during the entire day, and recommended careful, and presumably intellectual, self-training in maintaining the proper intentions during worship.<sup>32</sup>

The Mitnagdim who polemicized so vigorously, even violently, against the Hasidim for the latter's downgrading of Talmudic learning and their irreverence towards and assaults upon Talmudic scholars, also complained about the Hasidim's excessive preoccupation with prayer. During the 1772 controversy, we find the Hasidim accused by their adversaries of favoring prayer over the study of Torah.<sup>33</sup> The Mitnagdim's criticism of the Hasidic habit of ignoring the stipulated times for the various prayer, in which R. Hayyim joined and in fact led the Mitnagdim, and their objection to the Hasidic intemperate, revivalistic, physical actions — shouting and shaking — during prayer,<sup>34</sup> is of the same cloth as the animadversion mentioned above; for these latter two phenomena are outgrowths of the great stress on prayer, as opposed to the intellectual discipline of Talmudic scholarship, as the very fountainhead of all Judaism, tending to emphasize prayer as an ecstatic, spontaneous, and potentially antinomian emotional experience.

The apparent ambivalence of R. Shneur Zalman on the subject of the relative values of Torah and *mitzvot* applies to prayer as well. Thus, on the one hand, the study of Torah is declared superior to prayer because Torah represents the clearly revealed, unmediated supernal Will of God, whereas prayer merely serves to unify the

31. Cf. *Tzavaat ha-Rivash*. בעת הלימוד צריך שלא לחשוב מחשבה אחרת רק דביקות הבורא ומחשבות הלימוד כל אדם לפי כח טהרת לבו ומחשבתו... יוכל לדבק. See too *infra*, n. 50.

32. *NH* 2:15. את כל נפשו מגודל האהבה והתשוקה לו ית"ש... ועיקר ההכנה לזה הוא לפי הנהגתו כל היום והלילה בתלמוד תורה ובמצוות אלא שצורך חינוך להרגיל (proper *kavvanot*: concerning the severe demands of proper *kavvanot*: *ibid.*).

33. הולכים בדרך לא סלולה בתפילת עם ה' עד חצי היום.

34. For instance, the letter of the zealous Mitnaged, R. Abraham Katzenellenbogen, to the Hasidic zaddik, R. Levi Yitzhak of Berdichev: והמה ככפירים שואגים לטרף... להרעיש עולם ומלואו ולהכהיל את הקולות... וביותר שהם משתגעים ומתהוללים בתנועותיהם לפשוט ולרקד ולדלג כאיל ולנשות ימין ושמאל (Dubnow, Vol. I, p. 154).



upper spheres (in which God is "hidden" rather than revealed"),<sup>35</sup> and therefore he decides, halakhically, that one who is engaged in halakhic study need not interrupt his work in order to pray.<sup>36</sup> On the other hand he writes in a letter to R. Alexander of Szklow that prayer is the foundation of all Torah and is utterly indispensable:

Also, those who say that the commandment to pray is only Rabbinic, have never seen the light. For while the text of the prayers and their structure made for recital thrice daily may be Rabbinic, the essential idea and content is the foundation of all the Torah. . . . For R. Simeon b. Yohai and his colleagues it was sufficient merely to recite the *Shema*, for they were able to acquire at first glance, in proper humility and loyalty to the Covenant, the content of the prayer. But nowadays, whoever is close to the Lord and has even once tasted prayer, will understand and know that without prayer one cannot begin to serve the Lord in truth, but only by rote. . . .<sup>37</sup>

R. Hayyim, however, is completely unambiguous and unequivocal in his evaluation. The study of Torah remains supreme over prayer as well as the other precepts of Judaism. On the Mishnah which states, "when you pray, do not make your prayer regular,"<sup>38</sup> R. Hayyim adds, "for all else is temporary compared to Torah,"<sup>39</sup> i.e., even

35. *LA*, chap. XXIII.

36. *Siddur ha-Rav*, *Shaar Keriat Shema*. However, he modifies his decision in his *Shulhan Arukh*, Laws of the Study of Torah, 4:4, 5. Cf. Chaim Tchernowitz, *Toledot ha-Posekim* (New York: 1947), p. 267 f.

37. Letter of R. Shneur Zalman, cited by A. S. Hielmann, *Bet Rabbi*, p. 38 f. Cf. also his conclusion in his *Kuntres Aharon*, pp. 307-309, that prayer with *kavvanah* is superior to the study of Torah which is neither consciously motivated *lishmah* nor consciously profaned by selfish concerns. This latter middle or neutral category of unmotivated study is, in turn, superior to prayer without *kavvanah* which, finally, is superior to Torah studied for base purposes of self-aggrandisement.

38. *Avot* 2:13. וְכִשְׁמַתָּה מִתְפַּלֵּל אֵל תַּעֲשֶׂה תְּפִלָּתְךָ קֶבֶעַ i.e., prayer should be meaningful and not perfunctory. See next note.

39. *Ruach Hayyim* (on 2:13): *ki ha-kol arai negged ha-torah*. R. Hayyim interprets *keva* as meaning fixed, constant, and permanent, the antonym of which is *arai*, transient, variable, and subordinate. Thus, only Torah and not prayer is to be considered *keva*.

prayer is secondary to the study of Torah. The dependence of all the worlds for their existence upon Torah, the result of its supernal origin, does not apply to any other *mitzvah*, even prayer. Whereas if at a given moment no Torah were to be studied anywhere in the world, the entire universe would revert to primordial chaos, this does not hold for prayer; if all Israel were to cease praying, the existence of the cosmos would not be jeopardized.<sup>40</sup> The efficacy of prayer is confined to augmenting the holiness and light in the upper worlds only at specific times set aside for them to receive this spiritual sustenance. Torah, however, is not merely a matter of an increment in holiness; it is the very source of the life and existence of the worlds, and hence is continuous and unlimited in time.<sup>41</sup>

Even as R. Hayyim considered all the other precepts totally dependent upon Torah study, which comprehends them, so with prayer. What, however, of the famous statement in the Mishnah that the world stands on three things: Torah, worship, and acts of kindness?<sup>42</sup> Does this not place prayer and good deeds on a par with study?

R. Hayyim, in interpreting this Mishnah, maintains that the equality of these three institutions, as separate entities, held true only for the times before the Sinaitic revelation. Once the Torah was given, however, prayer and good deeds lost their autonomy and derived, as does all else, from Torah, the repository of that revelation. The very same acts which, as parts of worship and good deeds, were the equivalents of Torah as pillars of the world, are, since Sinai, inauthentic, even prohibited.<sup>43</sup> Hence, natural expressions of piety and ethics are invalid unless they issue from Torah. The study of Torah is, therefore, indispensable to both worship and social ethics. "No act may be regarded as proper unless it is written in the Torah [and is the result of] diligent study."<sup>44</sup> Torah entails many subtleties that require disciplined study and intensive cogitation; an ignorant error

40. *NH* 4:26.

41. *Ibid.*

42. *Avot* 1:2.

43. *Ruab Hayyim*, *ad loc.* ח רק אחר מתן תורה אין העבודה וגמ"ח של קודם מתן תורה כלום. הקרבנות יהיו שחוטין חוץ ויתחייב עליהם כרת. וכן גמ"ח שקודם מתן תורה הנה להלוות רבית ג"כ טובה היא וכמ"ש הט"ז ביו"ד (סי' ק"ם א' ע"ש) ועכשיו ענשו שלא יעמד בתחא"מ.

44. *Ibid.*



can be catastrophic. What was legitimate in pre-Sinaitic days is no longer so now. Personal, intuitive religion had validity at one time; since the revelation at Sinai, however, it is incorporated in Torah which remains the sole source of religion, the solitary "pillar" replacing the previous three.<sup>45</sup> Torah is supreme only when it is conceived of as halakhically defined, objective, conceptually consistent, and binding; when it is subject to the caprice of the intuitive and the experiential, it loses this supremacy.<sup>46</sup> This denial by R. Hayyim of spontaneous, subjective religiousness, and the restriction of all religion, including prayer and ethics, to revelation, follows naturally from his theory that Torah is the source of all the *mitzvot* comprehended in it, and that all these precepts are therefore wanting in autonomy.

The difference in conception between the Hasidim<sup>47</sup> and Mitnagdim is best illustrated by comparing their views on three specific points.

A) R. Hayyim, as we have seen, denies any validity to prayer except as it issues from the matrix of Torah. R. Shneur Zalman dwells upon the greatness of Torah study, but regards it as, spiritually, comparatively impotent without prayer. The seed of Torah, which has come down to us in myriads of descensions until it has obtained its present mundane form, cannot sprout and fulfill its spiritual destiny until, like a physical seed, the rotting and decaying takes place; the equivalent of this process is the annihilation of the self and its abandonment to death — which, in Lurianic terms, is intimately associated with and an integral part of prayer.<sup>48</sup> Only thus can the inner essence

45. *Ibid.* ולכן אחר מתן תורה שכל ענין נעשה במדרגה היותר גבוה. וא"א לנו לעשות העבודה וגמ"ח רק כפי התורה, לזאת הנה התורה איננה עתה עמוד שלישי לבדנה כ"א היא כל השלשה עמודים ביחד כי בלעדנה לא יכונן מאומה.

46. R. Hayyim's student, R. David Tevel, repeats this theme of his teacher and applies it specifically to R. Simeon b. Yohai and his colleagues who, preoccupied with Torah, did not interrupt for prayer. They did not do so because Torah now comprehends the other "pillars," prayer and good deeds, and by the study of this Torah one thereby includes his observance of the other two. (*Beit David*, No. 9).

47. Cf. Solomon Schechter, "The Chassidim," in *Studies in Judaism: 1st Series* (J.P.S.-Meridian: 1958), pp. 174-175.

48. *LT* to *Be'har*, pp. 79-80.

of Torah, in all its sublimity, stand revealed for man, beyond its outer facade of law:

Thus will the intelligent understand that his study must be in such a manner that it be regarded as the abandonment of the soul to annihilation or death, and thus he will not consider that which is secondary to be primary, that is, he will not set as his final purpose the study of Torah in its present mundane dress alone; "for he who says I possess only [the study of] Torah, does not possess even that." Rather, one ought to set his heart to the inner Godliness that inheres in it... then his study too will come under the category of the abandonment of his soul [in that his soul, or intellect] will be nullified in His wisdom, may He be blessed, and become virtually one.<sup>49</sup>

It is thus prayer which enhances study and orients it to its proper ends.

Prayer, in a succeeding metaphor, is symbolized by baking, the heat source being the passionate love of God, without which the food (Torah) would not be digested (in the mystical body of the King). Without prayer, Torah is spiritually indigestible.<sup>50</sup>

49. *Ibid.*

50. *Ibid.*, p. 80b. A far more radical statement of the superiority of prayer over the study of Torah is made by R. Nachman of Bratzlav who recommends that Torah itself, whether one has studied it personally or heard its teachings from some scholar, should be transformed into prayer. גם טוב לעשות מהתורה תפילה. דהיינו כשלומד או שומע איזה מאמר תורה מצדיק האמת. אזי יעשה מזה תפילה. דהיינו לבקש ולהתחנן לפניו ית' על כל מה שנאמר שם באותו המאמר. מתי יזכה גם הוא לבא לכל זה. וכמה הוא רחוק מזה. ויבקש מאותו ית' שיזכהו לבא לכל הנאמר שם באותו המאמר. והמשכיל והחפץ באמת יוליכו ה' בדרך אמת ויבין בעצמו דבר מתוך דבר איך להתנהג בזה. באופן שיהיו דבריו דברי חן. ומענות נכונות לרצותו ית' שיקרבו לעבודתו באמת. וענין השיחה זו עולה למקום גבוה מאד. ובפרט כשעושה מתורה תפילה. מזה נעשה שעשועים גדולים מאד למעלה. ('לקוטי מוהר"ן", תנינא, כ"ה)

This theme runs through the works of R. Nachman. For a similar statement, but more moderate, see R. Zechariah Mendel of Jaroslow in *Iggeret ha-Kodesh*, addendum to *Noam Eli melekh*: והם תמיד עומקים בתורת ה' לשמה... כדי יוכלו להתפלל בלי שום מחשבה זרה כלל. So too, see Ch. Y. Berl, *Rabbi Yitzhak Izak mi-Komarno* (Jerusalem: 1965), p. 256.



Hence, while for R. Hayyim prayer is invalid without Torah, for R. Shneour Zalman Torah's ultimate function is frustrated without prayer.

B) According to both R. Hayyim and R. Shneour Zalman, an irreversible change occurred in historical time that profoundly affected the nature of prayer and its relationship to the study of Torah. These historic occurrences are not apposite; for R. Hayyim it is a sharp and traumatic event that gives birth to a new spiritual reality, whereas for R. Shneour Zalman it is a gradual deterioration of the human spiritual capacity. But the results are, in each case, opposite: for one the elevation of prayer, for the other — the new prominence of Torah.

For R. Hayyim, as we have seen, the abrupt and climactic event was that of the revelation at Sinai which, as it were, transformed the nature of prayer (and good deeds) and after which only Torah remained as the exclusive legitimate source of religion, ethics, and morality.

R. Shneour Zalman also speaks of a historical change, but one much less drastic in nature and consequence, occurring much later, more gradually, and with exactly the contrary results: the change is the one referred to by R. Johanan comparing conditions in the days of R. Shimeon b. Yohai, when he and his colleagues were able to devote themselves wholly to Torah, and those of his (R. Johanan's) days when such intensive concentration was no longer the case. What for R. Johanan is merely an indication of changed conditions between two different epochs, with no philosophic consequences per se, and for the Jerusalem Talmud is simply a dialectical maneuver to avoid a direct confrontation between an Amoraic and Tannaitic halakhic opinion (hence, ultimately, *dein k'daateih ve'dein k'daateih*), is for R. Shneour Zalman a turning point in the history of the value-equilibrium between study and worship. The letter by R. Shneour Zalman to R. Alexander of Szklow, referring to this,<sup>51</sup> begins by complimenting his correspondent for braving the ridicule of the opponents of Hasidism and determining to engage in true worship:

51. *Supra*, n. 37.

And there is no proof [of the contention that study takes precedence over prayer] from the righteous of the early days, for they were greater than the ministering angels, whereas we are the orphans of orphans; those who dare to compare themselves to them do so only because of the evil of their hearts, and falsehood is at their right hand.<sup>52</sup>

The former saints were angels; we are orphans. Hence, for them Torah was dominant and they were able to satisfy their natural and mystical need for prayer by means of the study of Torah. That is why the Rabbis of the Talmud had no need for lengthy meditations in prayer.<sup>53</sup> We, however, who are so much inferior spiritually, need prayer itself, and we need to meditate in it properly.

The break that occurred in the spiritual history of Israel, and which thus necessitated a reorientation in the study-prayer balance, was preceded by a general decline over a long period of time. Thus, during the days of the First Temple, when clear spiritual vision was abundant, only the *Shema* and not too much prayer was necessary. As the spiritual level fell, the Men of the Great Assembly, at the beginning of the Second Commonwealth, ordained a full text of prayers and blessings.<sup>54</sup> This intellectual-spiritual clarity of earlier times allowed them to dispense with prayer altogether.<sup>55</sup> Teitelbaum correctly assumes that this applies not only to scholars and saints of bygone days, but to ordinary folk as well; the context bears this out.<sup>56</sup>

Both R. Hayyim and R. Shneur Zalman agree, then, that a significant change occurred in the relationship between study and prayer; but for R. Shneur Zalman the change resulted in the new prominence of prayer, whereas for R. Hayyim the change gave the study

52. *Ibid.*

53. *LT* to *Va'er'hanan*, p. 12b.

54. *Op. cit.* to *Behaalotkha*, p. 32d.

55. *Torah Or to Shemot*, p. 101a. s.v. *Kol Dodi*. A contemporary of R. Hayyim of Volozhin, R. Hayyim of Chernowitz (d. 1813), a leading Hasidic thinker, also implies the independence of prayer from the study of Torah. Like R. Shneur Zalman, he assumes that initially the study of Torah was superior to prayer. See his *Shaar ha-Tefillah* (Jerusalem: 1962), pp. 1b and 2a.

56. M. Teitelbaum, *Ha-Rav mi-Ladi u-Miflegget Habad*, Vol. II, p. 218.



of Torah complete spiritual hegemony in Judaism, and made prayer a handmaiden of the study of Torah.

C) Whereas R. Hayyim considers prayer an aspect of Torah, R. Shneour Zalman regards it as an independent source of "revelation." This term is used by R. Shneour Zalman more in the affective than in the cognitive sense, as an ecstatic activation of the love and fear of God latent in man's heart, rather than as a clearly formulated message from God to man. A fundamental thesis of R. Shneour Zalman is that the love of God preexists in the Israelite as a "natural, concealed love," and "revelation" or *hitoalut* therefore means the revealing to and in one's own consciousness of his inner, congenital spirituality.<sup>57</sup> The idea nevertheless does entail the conceptual process as part of this "revelatory" experience, in the sense that contemplation accelerates the revelation and ignites the latent spiritual ecstasies and delights. Granting Hasidic immanence, it becomes quite legitimate to speak of the disclosure of the Godly within man in the same terms that we use to describe the appearance of God who speaks to man out of His transcendence. And this revelation, since the days of the Tannaim and Amoraim, occurs principally through prayer.<sup>58</sup> "The revelation of divinity through the intellectual and emotional attributes [i.e., the Ten *Sephirot* through which, in R. Shneour Zalman's Kabbalistic psychology, the soul expresses itself] is through prayer."<sup>59</sup> The attainment of this revelation is one of the major purposes of prayer.<sup>60</sup> This revelatory function of prayer was necessitated by and predicated upon the failure of the intellect (in post-Talmudic times), for in those earlier days a sublime conception of God was possible without the medium of prayer.<sup>61</sup> Hence, while R. Hayyim reserves for the study of Torah the transformation of the human spirit and man's initiation into the "mysteries of the Torah," R. Shneour Zal-

57. See Introduction to his *Shaar ha-Yihud ve'ha-Emunah*, p. 150f.; *LA*, Chap. IX, XLIII, and L; *IHK*, Chap. XVIII; and *Torah Or* to *Vayigash*, s.v. *va-yelakket*. R. Shneour Zalman's analysis of the love of God is quite complex, especially since he creates his own vocabulary for the various categories. The last two references are especially relevant to the present context.

58. *Siddur ha-Rav*, *Shaar ha-Tefillah*, p. 23a.

59. *Ibid.*, p. 22b.

60. *Torah Or* to *Shemot*, p. 101b.

61. *Ibid.*, and *LT* to *Va-et'hanan*, pp. 12b, c.

man considers man's present intellectual equipment unequal to the task and grants to prayer this spiritual potency.

In fine, then, R. Hayyim's reaction to the disturbance in the study-practice (and study-prayer) equilibrium by the Hasidic initiative, was to endow study with a value greater than ever attributed to it before. R. Hayyim's affirmation of the supremacy of the study of Torah is far more radical and far-reaching than the stress on practice (and worship) at the expense of study by the most extreme of the Hasidic teachers; especially more than the comparatively mild displacement of this equilibrium away from study by R. Shneur Zalman of Ladi. Not only does he grant Torah study more weight than all the other recepts combined, prayer included;<sup>62</sup> not only does he make it the single most comprehensive institution in all of Judaism; but he considers conditional upon Torah the very sanctity of the other precepts, making Torah autonomous in the sense that its sanctity is unconditioned, and all other commandments (including prayer and good deeds) heteronomous in the sense that they derive their very existence, their holiness, and their obligatory character, from Torah.

62. Cf. Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *Ish ha-Halakhah*, in *Talpiot* (Vol. I, Nos. 3-4), p. 705 f.