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SPIRITUALITY—from the PURE to the SPURIOUS
(Rabbinical Council of America—May 14, 2001)

1. The pendulum swings: >long period sp'l drought, we now witness explosion oif interest in "sp'y". In Israel, >army service—off to India for "elighntenment." In USA—"BuJus"; ST—"Sheldon, come home!"

2. Yet, despite apparent honesty of search, new interst Sp'y & various paranorml phenomna=deluge suprfclty! "**KABBALH**"--Roseanne & Madonna—is it genuine? I conclude: for most part=simple. עם הארצות. **NEW AGE** spy=self-fulfill't, an "exprmc". Heb, word f "spirit"=--רוחspirit/wind...

3. Yet, will not do t simply dismiss it. There is a metaphysical hunger not being satisfied by classical trad religions, feeling innr emptness, wht **Viktor Frankl** = "noogenic vacuum", aching hollwnss of mnng. Means: we're not satsy'g the hungr/thirst, s looks f junk-food Spy. *Is largely our fault—if come into our noisy shuls, devoid of earnestness, search, real piety.* wht=**diff'ce** betw j/seclr, N-Age sp'y?

4.1st: what is "JSp'y"?=**Amos** (ch. 8)--אלקים ה' נאם ה' אלקים-- והשלחתי רעב בארץ לא רעב ללחם ולא צמא למים כי אם לשמע את דברי ה'

NOTE: no concern f slf (מים, ללחם, מים): God.

5. NEW-AGE: Sp'l hedonsm--lk massage of soul /shvitz of spirit; spurious/ersatz /transient fad bec no depth/histry/duties/no torah, just form self-indulgence. **JSM**=theocentric; objtv, not subjtv; involvs ethereal/immaterial aspects of exist'ce; speaks of **transcendence**.

6. **Current spy fad**=divorced fr "relig." (Even **Scholem**: Sp'y which=seculr, non-theistic: a delusion!) Mysticism--esp Sp'y--w-o God=just a "**feel-good**" exrcise which=no inhernt value. Such spy=> a feeling of Sp'y.

If there is nothing transcendt t material wrld, if corpor'y exhausts humn exper'ce, wht in heaven's name is "sprt"/ "Sp'y"?

7. Current sp'y kick is search f "enlightnmnt." BUT can hv that too in Jsm!

See letter-t-editor in att'd xcc of Jer. Port...

8. J SPY is more selfless/deeply relig/way of expnrcg Div Prsnc:
 BUT is not simple; no one type
 לְשִׁמְעָה אֶת דְּבָרֵי ה'.

9. SO, MORPHOLOGY OR TYPES OF JEWISH SPIRITUALITY:

- ♦ **Normative:** Classical rabb'c Sp'y=--כְּוֹנֶה as in my **Shema**. Evn if hal'y
 Little/no display emotion, bt worshippr certainly
 caught up in Gd-awareenss. R.H. Brisker: עומד לפני השכינה.
- ♦ **Kabblistc** Spy: **contemp'n**...via meditations on
 And also study! For adepts only (until Hasm)
 מלאכים, ספירות, שמות.
- ♦ **Philos'** Spy: **Rambam** end Guide--& **התפשטות הגשמיות**
 Held: halc **act/observnc mitzvot**→leads t piety (ר"ש),
 but **contemp'n** on level of **התפשטות הגשמיות**
 (Read passages in **SHEMA** p.86)
- ♦ **Hasidic** Spy: -- **var'y**g definitions ; **ecstasy** (**TRTH**), etc.
 (TL)--עליות נשמה, גילוי אליהו (Also) ט-יכול למות ב' ג' פעמים תפילה.

Has: genuine Spy defin'd as self-abneg'n, **Maggid** **ביטול היש**.
Sp'y = self-transcendence, not self-fulfillment or self-expression
Bratzlaver: השתפכות הנפש

For Has'm, emotion is **accompaniment** of spirit, not **substitute** for it.
 Beginnng→extmres: **Tolker** (5530-1770), attackd by **RSZ**.

(**BUT:** can also→**fake ecstasy**...*spurious Sp'y*—See R. **Dov Ber's**
 Louis Jacob's translation, *Tract on Ecstasy*...)
 Highest/most admrbl level J spy not, **ביטול היש**, השתפכות הנפש,
 not "enlight", bt spy done w pvt, **צניעות**,
 nn-demonstrtv.

Kotzk also critical suprfcl ecstasy: וינועו העם ויעמדו מרחוק.
Kotzk also: ובפני ישרים... ובשפתי צדיקים.. ובלשון חסידים

10. Now Q: IS THERE J SPY UNRELATED TO HALAKHA?

A) Dealt w by **גר"א** and **Berditchvr** (לוי יצחק)
גר"א - עליית נשמה כמעט כל לילה-אליהו, משה, יעקב.
So-rich spl If
 BUT 3 caveats: 1) must be relatd t Tor; נפשו; הגלויים אשר בלא תורה,
 בחלה בהם;
 2) psycholgcI-must be healthy...**CLAIRVOYNT** (from לפי חלום)
 הגר"א על ספרא דצניעותא

3) **Not tied t Halakha!** (ST: R. Zelmele...)

B) **Berditchever:** (*Read/refer to TRTH, p. 383ff.*)

Idea: affirms spy, but no lasting effect unless linked t Halakha.

If 1st reqrmnt=Rise beyond self, 2nd=Social-National dimension. Not just abstract "world peace" but deep familial love f fellow humans as indivls.

Must be **inclusive**. (*READ fr SHEMA—ל"מרהר"ל pp. 105-106*)

3rd reqrmnt: **MORAL ELEMENT**. Not just be/do good, but sp'y should→ deep introspection. Not self-express'n, but express'n of sprt on self...

ST: Satmarere—Purim Rebbe—"maybe I'm role-play'g all my life., maybe I always in disguise..."

11. WHERE DO WE GO FR HERE? Relig climate today fosters ersatz Sp'y representd by a flirtation w myst'm that=immature and peddled by ppl who know nt whereof they spk: mov'g to highly subjctv religiosity, a pseudo-myst'm--state of mind tht fails t appreciate *objec've* elmnts Kab &, o-c, practicl restrictions/behavior of Hal. Moreover, will highlight indiv'l, weakn bonds of commy.

12, In JSM I detect confr'n betw strong focus on Hal/growing emphasis on Sp'y w its subject'y, individ'sm, & emphasis on emotion> reason.

. וקרליבך. ברצלב קוק--וקרליבך. Overemphasis on Sp'y→ JSM overly subjec've. Hasc communts will retain structrl intrgty, bt pseudo-Hasm--out!

Bt in few yrs, I expect **Sp'y/Hal will reach dynamic equilibrium**

The present phase will then begn t spend itself: Lk everythg else in If, Relig too laws pendulum. Will eventually give wy t mr balancd view, equal credence both t Sp'y & mr structurd relig If basd on condct/behavr in ritual/ethicl/morl/soc realms; i.e., as Berditchvr--link spy t הלכה, at least in requir'g good backgrnd...)

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Whn tht tm comes, will hv filled in vacuum many of us nw in non-Has'e commy feel, & excesses of current period wll hv been counterd by a new balance--which will turn out t b jst wht sacrd Mesorah alwys demandd of us. We will infuse our חז"ל כוונה ממצוות or othr forms; and base our spy on solid ground of חז"ל

והשלחתי רעב בארץ לא רעב ללחם ולא צמא למים כי אם לשמע את דברי ה'

13. Dorothy Parker: "On the surface, is very profound; but deep down=quite shallow"

14. R. Bald (Lviv) asked child at Seder wht wants f Afikomen: "I already obsrv want deep feelg tht should go w it".

15. Alte of Slobodka (why followd unconventional path): Jac's dream סולם—^{Neurology}addr effectv only at slant, nvr straight

16. Non-theistic spy: I: דורשין לשבח/גנאי. both

17. Article *Newsweek* (5/7/01): "Neurotheology". Shows neurolog's results meditation. No conclusion if brain→theology or reverse. "In mystcl experncs, th content of mind fades, sensory awarncss drops out, s y are left w pure conscnss. This tells y tht conscnss doesn't need an object, & isn't mere byproduct of sensory action"

18. Re: tryg tto hard t b "sprtl": R> Menachm Mendl of Vitebsk: מנחם's mind during תפילה bec tryg t attain lvs beyond him. Proof—whn talkg friend, מנחם nvr interrupt convrstn; bec speech=natrl .: abl concntrt properly. S, whn try too hard rise abv natrl lvl in prayr. מנחם--

19. KOTZK: — קודש תהיו לי— holy PPL—Gd has plenty angels; wants us t b "ppl". Amital: "we mustnt lose our humn senses. Some ppl try t ignore feelings sorrow; evn whn faced, e.g., w loss of dear one, thy try t find some bnefit in the loss say ישראלי gained some's etc. Such bhavior simply nt legit" (Terumah '97).

20. Spirituality & Science: On TV (CNN), to celebrate millennium, interviewed a Dr. Clark who had some'g t do w Kubrick's "2001." Askd wht h thought of future of religions: "I don't blv in Gd and I don't disblv in her. I blv future belongs t Science & Spy." In a way, this glib answ by reputd intellect reveals someg of mind-set of mny ppl as we go into new century. Phenom'l advances of technlgy reinforce rel of Scientism, which=as valid as that of any other superfc'ly sophistd cult. Sci-as-rel=idolatry. And idolatry=related to question of spy--as Clark rightly juxtaposed them.

How? Scientism denies the metaphysal. Fact that sci, as a method, simply doesnt deal w wht is beyond the measurabl/quantifbl

here-and-now, is transmuted into a postv denial of existence of anything beyond the material. But materialism, while it must be met on its own grounds, is not necessarily "proven" by sci! Scientism is .∴ atheistic--not even agnostic, even tho Clark, in above statemt seemed to imply that he is agnostic, probably pandering to the world-wide TV audience.

Spy, the way it is now understood, is divorced fr "rel." (Even Scholem, in his later yrs, played around w this idea.) To my mind, mysticism--and esp spy--w-o Gd=just a "feel-good" exercise which should be of no interest save t therapists & patients in need of relaxation-w-o-side-effects. If there is nothing transcendent to the material world, if corporeality exhausts the human experience, what in heaven's name is "spirit" or "spirituality?"

I am not against the use of even a Godless "spirituality" if it helps those in need. But this is therapy, not religion, not mysticism, not philosophy--and, really, not spirituality!

Also, when technology encroaches on theology, we have a replay of the דור ההפלגה

Maimonides held that the halakhic act--observance of the mitzvot--leads to piety (התפשות), but contemplation on the level of אהבת ה' leads to the highest.

Kab/Hasm emphasized תורה; (esp תו"י) decried Moment it does→ שבטאות. כפירה, שבתאות.

בעש"ט: מלמד שכפה עליהם הר כגיגית. והלא כבר אמרו נעשה ונשמע? אלא ללמד לימי הקטנות...

21 20 Sara Rigler writes, in a Letter t the Editor (Jer.port 4/9/01) that she lived for 15 years in an ashram, made four extensive trips to India, taught Vedanta philosophy and meditation for 13 years, etc. "Jews," she concludes, "who search for spirituality in the East have yet to really plumb the depths of what Judaism offers...Instead of taking the time and effort involved in journeying to India, come to Jerusalem and study with a teacher who can match, in spiritual profundity and personal illumination, any of the mahatmas of India. Hundreds of Jews who spent years in the East (including one popular guru) are now living as Orthodox Jews in Jerusalem.

21. Another letter in the same issue tells us that he spent years learning Buddhism in Tibetan monasteries, and concluded that, "Its essence is: 'Life is suffering, so let's escape to Nirvana

— nothingness.' ... Buddhism is for people who can't handle reality and have a psychological need to escape." He was repelled by its belief in demons. "It's a mixture of shamanism, black magic and idol worship. remember being overwhelmed by a clear thought: 'The King has no clothes!' That very day I left the monastery and never looked back at Buddhism with its idol worship and narcissistic non-answers.

22. Late Satmarer Rebbe—Purim Rebbe—imitates—crowd enjoying—suddenlome notice (real) Rebbe, but Purim Rebbe not notice, continues fabulous imitation... Suddenly sees Satmarer—who'sg. Hasid overcome, begs forgiveness. Rebbe: No, not offended. Just that I began t think: maybe I too a Purim Rebbe, just role playing, perpetual disguise..."
Now that's result of spy!

23. "dysphoria"—loss of meaning, sense of emptiness, a hollow

24. KARASU: "soul" (= (שׁוּל) seat emotions/sentimnts. Immaterial, bt involvd in body, ego.

"Spirit" (= (רוּח) ascent/transcendent... Unity... undifferentiated fr outside world... (*oceanic—regression to infancy??*)

"This [transpersonal/spi] Love is not possessing, not capturg, it isn't *doing* someg. Love is a way of existing..." (*I: No. ,תתן ונתת = תתן giving...*)...

(Karasu's "sp therapy" is immanentistic—perhaps pantheistic. Dispenses w notion of Gd.) Criticzs Nw Age therapy as nvr gettg beyod the self... self-actualzn/protc'n/love///"quick & easy answers tht derive fr pleasure nt insight/enlgthnmnt... selfish, nvr selfless. (*Bt despite love talk, involvmnt others—no clear obligations, deeds...*)

25. Yossi KLEIN HALEVI reports on a group of &~ thousands of young Israeli "sp seekers" this past Passover on a beach north of Gaza—a replay of America in the crazy '60's. People "with dreadlocks and shaved heads and painted faces gather to celebrate existence... dance to trance music and Israeli rock... They meditate on the shore, imagining expanses beyond this land of tightening siege." Many of these are "the graduates of India," the post-army backpackers who seek respite from the Middle East in a more benign Far East. Their message is clear: "We are not a nation ready for war." "Foreign teachers of Eastern mysticism draw devoted crowds; Israeli-born masters and gurus are beginning to appear... Among working-class Sephardim, the search has led to ultra-Orthodox Shas; among middle-class Ashkenazim, to New Age.

26. Separate Mysticism fr Hal and → exaggerated and harmful individualism

27. HaBaD on spy: Opposed exclusive emphasis on emotion (R. Avraham Kalisher). Rather: contempl'n (=התבוננות) & this→ ecstasy (=התפעלות). Some in name RSZ: התבוננות alone OK. Most: must→ecstasy. R. DOV BAER (קונט' ההתפעלות)—wary of spurious ecstasy (where ego involvd; יש). 2 types: a) postur'g, no prior contempl'n, just "exprncg exprnc". b) contrivd ecstasy—enters contempl'n i-o→ecstasy; "thrill". Too much יש. No אין. Rival: R. AARON STAROSELYER also vs emotnlsm, but less strict. Even shamecstasy>no ecstasy