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Excerpts for Lectures

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1. From The Zohar to Exodus
2. On the Study of Torah
3. From "The Last Will of R. Israel Baal Shem"



From The Zohar to Exodus (Mishpatim)

(Trans. Sperling, Simon  
and Levertoff)

When the ancient one had reached this point he paused, and the two rabbis prostrated themselves before him, wept and said: 'Had we come into this world only in order to hear these thy words from thy mouth it were sufficient.'

Said he: 'Associates, I did not begin to speak to you merely in order to tell you what I have told you up till now, for surely an old man like myself would not limit himself to one saying, making a noise like a single coin in a jug. How many human beings live in confusion of mind, beholding not the way of truth whose dwelling is in the Torah, the Torah which calls them day by day to herself in love, but alas, they do not even turn their heads.'

It is indeed as I have said, that the Torah lets out a word, and emerges for a little from her sheath, and then hides herself again. But she does this only for those who understand and obey her.

She is like unto a beautiful and stately damsel, who is hidden in a secluded chamber of a palace and who has a lover of whom no one knows but she. Out of his love for her he constantly passes by her gate, turning his eyes towards all sides to find her. She, knowing that he is always haunting the palace, what does she do? She opens a little door in her hidden place, discloses for a moment her face to her lover, then swiftly hides it again. None but he notices it; but his heart and soul and all that is in him are drawn to her, knowing as he does that she has revealed herself to him for a moment because she loves him.

It is the same with the Torah, which reveals her hidden secrets only to those who love her. She knows that he who is wise of heart daily haunts the gates of her house. What does she do? She shows her face to him from her palace, making a sign of love to him, and straightway returns to her hiding place again. No one understands her message save he alone, and he is drawn to her with heart and soul and all his being. Thus the Torah reveals herself momentarily in love to her lovers in order to awaken fresh love in them.

Now this is the way of the Torah. At first, when she begins to reveal herself to a man, she makes signs to him. Should he understand, well and good; but if not, then she sends for him and calls him "simpleton," saying to her messengers: "Tell that simpleton to come here and converse with me," as it is written: "Who so is a simpleton let him turn in hither" (Prov. IX, 4). When he comes to

her she begins to speak to him first from behind the curtain which she has spread for him about her words suitable to his mode of understanding, so that he may progress little by little. This is called "Derasha." Then she speaks to him from behind a thin veil of a finger mesh, discoursing riddles and parables -- which go by the name of "Haggadah." When at last he is familiar with her she shows herself to him face to face and converses with him concerning all her hidden mysteries and all the mysterious ways which have been secreted in her heart from time immemorial. Then such a man is a true adept in the Torah, a "master of the house," since she has revealed to him all her mysteries, withholding and hiding nothing. She says to him: "Seest thou the sign, the hint, which I gave thee at first, how many mysteries it contains?" He realizes then that nothing may be added to nor taken from the words of the Torah, not even one sign or letter.

Therefore men should follow the Torah with might and main in order that they may become her lovers, as has been described.



## On the Study of Torah

from "Tanya" by R. Shneur Zalman  
of Lodi, Chapter 5

Every intellect, when it conceives and comprehends with the intelligence any concept, it grasps and encompasses this matter with the intellect, and this concept (in turn) is grasped, enveloped, and clothed within the mind that has comprehended and conceived it.

The mind, for its part, is also clothed in the concept at the time it comprehends and grasps it with the intellect. (This point is demonstrated by the fact that when the mind is preoccupied with one thing, it cannot at the same time engage in another.) For example, when a person understands and comprehends, fully and clearly, any halakhah (law) in the Mishnah or Gemara, his intellect encompasses it and, at the same time, is clothed in it. Consequently, as the particular halakhah is the wisdom and will of G-d -- for it was His will that when, for example, Reuben pleads in one way and Simeon in another, the verdict as between them shall be thus and thus; and even should such a litigation never have occurred, nor would it ever present itself for judgment in connection with such disputes and claims, nevertheless, since it has been the will and wisdom of the Holy One, blessed be He, that in the event of a person pleading this way and the other (litigant) pleading that way, the verdict shall be such and such -- now therefore, when a person knows and comprehends with his intellect such a verdict in accordance with the law as it is set out in the Mishnah, Gemara, or Posekim (Codes), he has thus comprehended, grasped, and encompassed with his intellect the will and wisdom of the Holy One, blessed be He, Whom no thought can grasp, nor His will and wisdom, except when they are clothed in the laws that have been set out for us. (Simultaneously) the intellect is also clothed in them (the Divine will and wisdom).

This is a wonderful union, like which there is none other, and which has no parallel anywhere in the material world, whereby virtual oneness and unity, from every side and angle, could be attained.

Hence the special superiority, infinitely great and wonderful, that is the commandment of knowing the Torah and comprehending it, over all the commandments involving action, and even those relating to speech, and even the commandment to study the Torah (as distinct from knowledge of the Torah), which is fulfilled through speech. For, though all the commandments involving speech or action, the Holy One, blessed be He, clothes the soul and encompasses it from head to foot with



the Divine light. However, with regard to knowledge of the Torah, apart from the fact that the intellect is clothed in Divine wisdom, this Divine wisdom is contained in it, to the extent that his intellect comprehends, grasps and encompasses, as much as it is able so to do, of the knowledge of the Torah, every man according to his intellect, his knowledgeable capacity, and his comprehension in Pardes.

Since, in the case of knowledge of the Torah, the Torah clothes itself in the soul and intellect of a person, and is absorbed in them, it is called "bread" and "food" of the soul. For just as physical bread nourishes the body as it is absorbed internally, in his very inner self, where it is transformed into blood and flesh of his flesh, whereby he lives and exists -- so, too, it is with the knowledge of the Torah and its comprehension by the soul of the person who studies it well, with a concentration of his intellect, until the Torah is absorbed by his intellect and is united with it and they become one. This becomes nourishment for the soul, and its inner life from the Giver of life, the blessed En Sof, Who is clothed in His wisdom and in His Torah that are (absorbed) in it (the soul).

This is the meaning of the verse. "Yea, Thy Torah is within my inward parts."

From "The Last Will of R. Israel Baal Shem"

1. The most important thing is -- to study every day from devotional works, whether much or little, and to be wholehearted in His service... and to cause one's self to cleave to good character and honorable actions, and not to neglect any mitzvah, whether it seems important or trivial.

2. Whatever happens, let it all be the same to you: whether you are praised by people or insulted, etc. ... Whatever occurs to you, say: "this comes from God, and if it satisfies Him to do so, it is good enough for me." Let all your thoughts be for the sake of Heaven; insofar as you yourself are concerned -- it should make no difference. This is indeed a high level. Every man must serve God with all his strength... for the blessed Lord desires that we serve Him in many ways.

3. Never think that you are greater than your friend because you serve God with greater devekut; for you are like any other creature created for His service. God has not given your friend the same understanding He has given to you. In what way, therefore, are you more worthy than the worm which also serves its Creator with all its strength and understanding?

4. His soul told him (the Baal Shem Tov) that the reason he was privileged to have revealed to him celestial secrets was not that he studied much Talmud and Posekim, but because of prayer; for he always prayed with great kavvanah.

5. Before praying, you must meditate on your readiness to expire because of great kavvanah.

6. Sometimes the Evil Urge deceives a man and tells him that he sinned a great sin, whereas it was only a mere stricture, or perhaps not a sin at all. The intention of the Evil Urge is to cause man sadness thereby, so that as a result of sadness man will neglect the service of God. Man must understand this deception, and say to the Evil Urge: I don't care about that stricture, for all you want is to dissuade me from the service of God. You are lying. And even if it be true that I transgressed in some measure, I will cause more satisfaction ("nachat ruach") for my Creator by not concerning myself with that stricture, whereby you intend to induce sadness in me. On the contrary, I shall serve Him in joy -- for this (service of the Lord in joy) is a great fundamental.

7. Everything in the world is filled with the blessed Creator. All that which is done in the world as a result of man's thoughts, no matter how trivial, all results from divine Providence. Therefore, let there be no difference to you whether something you want is granted or not, since all issues from the Creator, and He knows what is best for you.



8. If you see, perchance, a beautiful woman, think thus: from whence does she derive this beauty? If she were dead, she would not have the same face, but would be very ugly. Obviously, it comes from the divine power that is immanent in her; it is that which grants her this capacity for beauty and freshness. Therefore, the root of the beauty is the divine power. Why then shall I pursue the branch (or: derivative)? It is better for me to cling to the Source and Root of all the worlds where reside all forms of beauty. The same holds true for all material objects: whether it be a beautiful vessel, or delicious food, etc. ... consider that it is all kept in existence by its spiritual roots.



# FIRST LECTURE:

## "MYSTICISM"

### I. Definitions:

A. Rufus Jones: "type of Rel. which puts emphasis on immediate awareness of Divine Presence".

Aquinas: "cognitio dei experimentalis"

David: Taamu u-re'u ki tov Ha-Shem

BUT: Good; but This is true of all Rel. experience, not specif'ly mystical

B. Scholem: great historical Rel's: bipolar<sup>ri</sup> God and Universe, unbridgeable gap; crossed only by VOICE.

Mysticism: quest for secret to span abyss. Scene: soul of man.

Characteristic feature: direct contact bet. man and God.

Thus: Revel'n Sinai - a historical event; also: recurring act; so: Exodus

C. Must speak of specific kinds of Myst. - as J, Chr, Moslem

D. Kabbalah -- tradition; body of knowledge, doctrines.

Rudolf Otto: Heilinteresse and Wissenschaft. Plato's Cave. Synthesis of Kab's.

Long History - from before R. Akiba (4 enter Pardes) to Kook.

Printed texts: over 3000. Many more Mss.

Schools: Merkabah - Prophetic Kabism - Zohar - Safed - Has'm.

Common features: Attributes of God (Olam ha-sefirot); symbolic meaning of Torah; Respect and acceptance of Halakhah.

E. Zohar: first circulated in Castile by Moses de Leon after 1275 pseudepigraphic -- form of a mystical novel, a Kabb'ic Midrash.

Ascribed to R. Simeon b. Yohai. Controversy on authorship. Scholem Language. Difficulty in study. Not for laymen (story: Raza de'razim... Rabbi doesn't know)

### II. OLAM Ha-Sephiroth

A. 2 aspects of God:

1st G-d in Himself, Absol. and Infinite: "Ein Sof" -- Deus Absconditus"

Nothing can be said of Him directly

2nd: God as He makes self known, God of Attributes.

B. These = Sephirot, the aspects under which God reveals Self to man. Sephirot = spheres, emanations. Neo-Platonists; "sapphires"

→ dialectic contradictions, resolutions.

Sephirot animated by Ein-Sof.

Malkhut = shekhinah. Its exile. Disruption between 1st 9 sephirot (vitalized Ein Sof -- and called Tifereth or K.B.H.) and Shekhinah. Olam ha-Yihud. Alma de'piruda.

Unity Theme. Man's responsibility for God's fate.

Sabbath and Unity Theme: Sha-Bath; Onah (and eroticism). Seudata di-mehamanuta.

Relation of Tifereth to Shekhinah; of Ein Sof to Sephiroth; of Sephiroth to each other; of the effects of these on man, and man's effect on them -- bulk of Zohar.



III. Torah - Symbolic meaning.

\* READ TEXT FROM ZOHAR

(for modern variety of interp's and eternal relevance though not infinitely elastic)

IV. Luria - Safed Mystics

A. Expulsion Spain 1492 -- end Spanish period.

B. Isaac Luria (Ari Ha-Kadosh) - d. 1572, age 38. Saint-legends. Writings of students, as Hayyim Vital. Tremendous originality, spirit, creative urge

C. "Breaking of Vessels"

By-product of of Gevurah is: evil, "kelipoth"  
To prevent intermingling of evil w. Sephiroth, had to give independent existence to Kelipoth, separate from divine spheres.  
Creation, like birth, involves convulsive "break-through". Sparks of divinity fall into kelipoth, give evil existence.  
Thus: evil vitalized by divine Sparks.

D. "Tikkun"

Hence, purpose of existence: restore harmony of before Breaking, restore Sparks, redeem them.  
Every act of man -- Mitzvot, Prayer -- is an act of Tikkun.  
every individual has specific function, in world-process of Tikkun. (No Jews = no. words Torah)  
Kavvanoth -- inward mystical meditations. (Requires long, patient training)  
Coming of Messiah = culmination of Tikkun. or: historical redemption is result of spiritual redemption

V. Sabbatianism - Anti-Halakhah

A. Spoke of Messianism as culmination of Tikkun-process

Chaim of Volozhin (1648-9) (Chmelnitzker) Prepared soil for pseudo-Messianism.  
SZ (1625-1676) (early <sup>persecuted</sup> ~~presentation~~ <sup>bec.</sup> of bizarre Kabbalim) and Nathan of Gaza (1644-1680). (Jerusalem Youth of 20)

Differences in character. SZ - manic depressive; NG - "Paul"

B. History: SZ's proclamation as Messiah - wild-fire spread of sect entire Diaspora - tide of emotion - 1665 - Smyrna (Turkey) to Germany to Poland: ascetic excesses and festivities in honor of Messiah - In London bets 10-1 that SZ anointed King Jerusalem in 2 years - preparations of masses to emigrate to Palestine - SZ sail for Constantinople to get homage of Sultan - arrested - another Messianic pretender informs on him to Sultan - Sultan demands SZ's conversion to Islam - 1666 - Disheartened, masses frustrated (except for die-hards) - sense of shame: documents destroyed, ancestry of Sabb'n families denied.



C. Ideology,

Messianism: whereas Luria: moral improvement leads to national redemption, individual Tikkun to Messianic redemption, SZ separates motifs and reverses: only by Messiah hurling self into Kelipoth will redemption of all crime and evil disappear as he elevates Sparks

Holy Sin: bizarre, anti-halakhic acts (esp. in manic exuberance): good intention converts sinful act (Tikkun) of Sparks in Shells so not sin but mitzvah; "averah lishmah" -- antinomianism (Barukh...matir assurim); (appealed to Marranoes); thus - Torah subverted

Thus, overemphasis on person of Messiah; antinomianism (anti-Halakhah); and PREMATURE ANTICIPATION OF REDEMPTION accounted for SZ heresy.

His apostasy disappoints moderates, but regarded by radical as the ultimate descent by Messiah into Kelipoth.

Leader Radical Sabbatians -- Jacob Frank and Catholicism

Summary - Colleague, superficial insight into a strange but immensely powerful world

gave Jsm its best -- and its worst. Like all else, opportunity for greatness includes: for evil.

essential break: on Halakhah. SPEAK OF HALAKHAH AS CRITERION, THE CONSTANT.  
When Kab. divorced from, opposed to Hal. -- source to Islam, source to Catholicism.  
(Scholem on SZ as origin Reform)

But with Hal -- elevates man, heightened experience

Will see tomorrow: Kab. (not anti-Halakhic) given new impulse, orientation to become greatest rel. movement all times.



Hasidism

I. Background:

- A. Spiritual Devastation of Polish Jewry by Sabbatian disaster
- B. Dr. Cooper's lecture on legends origin Besht (d.1760)

II. Reaction to S.Z.

A. "Neutralized" Messians<sup>im</sup>, restored to original position. Deemphasized the eschatological. Toned down Messiah aspect of ikun - Sparks: Spark-uplifting is by human effort, Messiah by divine grace.

B. Hasidism originates in Poñolia and Voholinia - scene of most tragic Sabb'n failure. Need for security, certainty, leaders.

C. But Has'im much more than reaction to Sabb'n or dry Talmudism.

III. Immanentism

A. Lurianic Doctrine of Sparks -- "Memalef kol Olmin" -- where SZ: by intending good; Besht: redirecting (Freud: sublimation)

B. Besht-Kotzk: "Lo yihyeh bekha El zar"

C. <sup>niko</sup> "Adiaphora": classical Rabbinism: only Mitzvah and Issur; (SZ -- nothing); Has -- sanctify all life (Kook -- before Buber! -- the holy and the not-yet holy).

"Be'khol derakekha da'ehu" -- hence: eating, working, tying shoes; Enoch - cobbler -- awl: unify Name, raise Sparks

D. R. Lebellé Eger: Before I believed there's a God; now I know.

IV. Devekuth:

Ecstatic, emotional. Constant communion -- not by withdrawal, but by involvement.

Berditchever on "Xaffah Torah in derekh eretz" (contrast R.H.Volozhiner)

Requires SIMHAH; external stimulus. (Story: Ropshitzer - why Has'on drink Schnapps - "she'ha-kol"); dance; song; banish "Ye'ush", worry.

V. Simplicity (Temimut)

cast lot on God - no worry.

not Shy before God

Koznitzer: "envy them: they're already simple, I'm trying"

Hence: deemphasis Luria; anti-philosophic. Bratzlaver: greatest "Hokhmah" to know



there is more before Him.

Hence: DEMOCRATIZATION: Dignity and status even to Am Haaretz. Story of prayer by whistle.

VI. Spontaneity

in Drush (R. Barukh Medzibozer: may I be struck dumb before I speak "beautifully")

in Prayer: Hatlahavut. (although often overdone. Tanya and Abr. Kalisker); gets emotional factor essential; "Degel" name Besht: violin player, dancers, and deaf man. *Besht: refused enter shul - "prayer without wings"*

in all life. <sup>essential</sup> What most important in your Rebbe's service? -- "whatever he happens to be doing" (immanentism).

in Rebbe vs Rav

VII Beshtian Teaching

source of the Hasidic literature.

\* READ from TEXT - BESHT'S "WILL"

VIII. Zaddikism

idea of a sacred community

a teacher by example. Spiritual kinship.

(Story: Salanter: Has-Mitn both wrong: need Rebbe; have one)

integral part Has'im -- otherwise would have remained esoteric coterie. "Kabbalah turned ethos"

Maggid (Dov Ber of Mezeritch). Some of his students.

IX. Has and Mitnagdim

slight tendency antinomianism -- as late prayers.

But Kept in check -- only a manifestation of Hatlahavut

Prayer over study of Torah.

Joy and Intention essential for act.

Bitter battles: Mitnagdim. Gaon. Avigdor. But: R.H.

Reconciler: R-SHNEUR ZALMAN. THE TANYA.

\* READ TEXT -- TANYA ON TORAH

X. Love

Ahavat ha-Shem ahavat Re'im (Story: smoke, cigarette; story: le'varekh...be'ahavah)

Domestic Love; Komarno -- Shekhinah and wife. Even later.

Ahavat Yisrael. Berditchever and Kook.



Berditchever:

- \* wagoner oiling wagon in Talith and Tefillin
- \* G-d: why not like Jew, drops Tefillin picks up. Your tefillin: Israel One
- \* Rosh Hash: You command once, we blow 100 sounds. Now we one request: blow only once "be'shofar gadol le'herutenu"
- \* pre-Kol Midre: Mitzvah eat and drink then fast, yet looked, and haven't found one "Shikkur" in Shul. If had told that mitzvah to goyim -- no Minyan for K.N.! Why, then....?

XI Conclude -

Need those qualities: a broadening of Relig. to cover all life -- anti-secularism; a practice of Torah and Halakhah with joy, simplicity, less shyness, and more spontaneity, less pretense and more emotional warmth, above all: more love.

what was contribution of Has'm? - not mind as much as heart.

R. Pinhas of Koretz on why naem Baal SHEM Tov: When person faints, revive by whispering his name in ear. So: Jewish people was prostate. And Besht whispered to J. heart: AWAKE -- You're a JEW!....