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סב אל

Dear Rabbi Lamm: אל רב ודרכה

Though אילו לא תצטאני חצי, and thus I take the liberty of writing you.

Reading through the recent issue of Tradition I note that you continue to pursue your interest in Chassidism and are presently engaged in compiling an anthology of Chassidic teachings. I myself recently started work on a similar project, but who knows when I will be able to finish it. (Incidentally, Louis Jacobs from London informs me that he has just completed a similar anthology for Behrman House). In any case, it is important that people who understand and appreciate Chassidism positively will finally take over the "academic field" of it to negate the distortions and misrepresentations of people like Buber and Scholem et alii, so my best wishes that תגיד לי דרך גאומאני דקלוק.

Though you do not know me, and I do not know you personally, I have read many of your articles with approval, and with מקצת אהבה דפניו note that in the ever-expanding field of publications in Judaica you are one of the very few who write קטע ופזמ with authenticity of content and presentation. As such I thought you may be interested in two of my recent publications in the area of Chassidism, which I take pleasure in sending you herewith with my compliments and best wishes. (I would very much appreciate, though, if you would be so kind and take the time to let me know your frank opinions and appraisals of both.)

אזענן, some time ago I obtained the Mirsky Memorial Volume and read with interest your article on 'Study and Prayer.' I meant to write you some observations I marked down in the margins but never got around to it, so this occasion provides an opportunity to do so now. With your permission they are mostly comments re passages that seem to me to require correction:

p. 38f. You distinguish between RCV and RSZ re the origin of Torah and conclude that RSZ does not go as far as RCV, for unlike the latter he considers Torah to have originated in חכמה (אצילות) but not beyond it, and you refer to I.H. XXVI. Obviously you refer to the oft-quoted phrase זאור"גא חכמה נפקה. However, you fail to note that this is a direct quote from the Zohar (see there II:121a; and cf. ibid. 85a and III:81a): זאור"גא חכמה נפקה זאורי קבל ורגמא נפקה מאג

דראשית) which has its clear parallel in the Midrash (זאורי קבל, זאורי חכמה נפקה מאג). Moreover, this is but a partial reference, and as RSZ writes explicitly in I.H. I (!), p. 204: תושבעם שגיו דא' אל' רבב' זאור"גא חכמה קי' זאורי אל' מקויה ורגמא קא! זאורי חכמה נפקה, והוא נפק קב' זאורי!

Thus, as indicated in aforementioned quote from the Zohar, Torah acc.

to RSZ, originates in כח נצח - a source exceedingly transcending אין!  
 (Whether now to identify it directly with the אין depends on  
 the ancient dispute among Cabbalists, and is relative to the perspective  
 of the discussion - according to Arizal in his discussion of the dispute.  
 But in any case, your statement re RSZ is incorrect; cf. also I.H.  
 sect. XIX and XXIX, and my notes in the English edition thereof ad loc.)  
 Thus it follows that Torah is a "product of Hishtalsheluth" only in  
 its present הגשמות (as we have it in its present form) but not  
 as it is per se, for its מקור is אין, and as you  
 yourself quote on p. 44 (without reading the implication) that it re-  
 presents the supernal Will of Gd! In effect, then, your distinction  
 between RSZ and RCV is incorrect.

p. 39f., in your distinction between אין and אין you missed the signifi-  
 cant point elaborated in I.H. XX (p. 261ff) which distinguishes again  
 between Torah in its present state (אין, אין) and Mikzvoth in their  
 present state (אין, thus below Torah), and as they are in their  
 origin כח נצח (see there, too, my notes in the English ed.).

p. 43, re the polarity of Torah and prayer, you do not mention that  
 Chassidism bases itself here on an explicit ruling of Arizal (see Tanya,  
 Kuntres Acharon IV and VIII, and my The Great Maggid, p. 188 note 22)-  
 a most significant point, I would think.

p. 44. Your quote and reading from Tzavaath Harivash is incorrect, due  
 to a faulty and misleading (actually nonsensical in most editions) print.  
 See my enclosed edition sect. 30 (and the variant version in Likutim  
 Yekarim, quoted in the margin; cf. also the preceding section -29- and  
 the variant in the margin which clearly substantiate my point).

p. 45. "he decides halakhically... need not interrupt" etc., and you  
 refer to Siddur HaRav. I find neither the statement nor the reference  
 comprehensible - when this is clearly counter to every explicit ruling  
 of all Halacha, as you are aware from your reference ad loc. to RSZ's  
 Hilchoth Talmud Torah (where the rulings stated are substantiated by  
 explicit references to their sources). All RSZ does in the Siddur is  
 to refer in the context of a Chassidic discourse (!!; no Halachic ruling  
 or discussion whatsoever!!) to the well-known Talmudic statement.  
 Also, the distinction in the note between Siddur and Hil. T.T. ("he  
 modifies") is incorrect, as the Shulchan Aruch was written before the  
 Siddur, and the Halachoth in the later Siddur follow the Cabbalists  
 (as they do also in the revised ed. of the Shulchan Aruch of which  
 we have only a few sections); see Sha'ar Hakolel on the Siddur, beg.

p. 49, re historical changes, you refer only to RSZ's emphasis on the  
 change in the declining generations vs. RCV distinction between before  
 and after אין. But this latter distinction is to be found in RSZ  
 no less - in the general context that since אין the אין is  
אין, and in particularly in the distinction between  
אין and the abrupt and climactic change in such a  
 possibility after אין (see Torah Or, Lech Lecha, Yithro, and other  
 places).

These are the major comments I noted on passages which require revision.  
 I'm sure you do not mind my critical remarks as they are offered in  
 a spirit of friendship and pursuit of knowledge. In fact I would very  
 much welcome equally frank criticism where I erred in my writings, and  
 hope you will be generous enough to offer such where applicable. Please

let me know your reactions to my comments above if you feel that I am not correct, 'a u'le pkl .

Perhaps I may also be so presumptuous to ask you, if possible, to review the enclosed works in some journal or periodical to which you have ready access (e.g. Tradition, or the like).

Looking forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience, I remain

Yours truly

J. Schuchman

P.S.: Incidentally, have you seen Bauminger's edition of The Ashit's letter you translated in Sefer Margolius (Jerusalem '73 — also containing a further dispute between Bauminger and Rubinstein)? You did not mention it in your article in Tradition.