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PSYCHOLOGICAL, LITERARY AND THEOLOGICAL ASPECTS
OF THE TANYA

YOSEF ZYLBERBERG

Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of
Requirements for Ordination

Hebrew Union College--Jewish Institute of Religion
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Referee: Professor Stanley Nash

I would like to dedicate this work to those who have helped me grow intellectually and emotionally in the last few years. Rabbi Myron Kinberg served as a role model for me as I began my rabbinic studies. He taught me that the most important thing is to be a "mensch." He also first suggested the Tanya to me as a thesis topic. Rabbi Ephraim Rottenberg, by his personal example, showed me that Hasidic life could be lived with holiness and gentleness. I would most like to thank my life mate, Esther, who has helped me grow through enhancing my sensitivity and challenging me to search deeper into the meaning of things while giving me unconditional love. I hope I can live up to the trust these people have given me and enhance the quality of life as they have taught me through their example.

Yosef Zylberberg

March 28, 1984

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I would like to thank Dr. Nash, my thesis advisor, for having undertaken the guidance of this work in an area that in some ways is controversial. He challenged my assumptions and forced me to prove my points more effectively than I would have done otherwise.

Note on Transliteration

Transliteration of Hebrew words can be problematic. An attempt has been made to follow standard Encyclopaedia Judaica whenever possible. Exceptions are made when a word appears in a quotation from another work, especially when quoting from the English translation of the Tanya.

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CHAPTER ONE: THE PSYCHOLOGY OF THE TANYA

INTRODUCTION

When faced with the persistence and growth of Habad Hasidism, some Jews outside of its influence are perplexed or even repulsed by its existence. Habad resists our picture of what a Twentieth Century Western institution should look like. Some critics attempt a quick analysis of Habad's continuation by referring to the attraction of cults, alienation, and the need for identification in modern secular society. What is true of most such analysis is a condescending and prejudiced attitude to what is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon. What is sorely needed is a serious attempt to wrestle with the psychological, philosophical structures and attractions inherent in the thought of Schneur Zalman without any preconceived opinions or sectarian agendas.

This is a modest attempt to undertake such a study. I come to this task without a distaste for non-normative groups or their thought and without the repulsion for non-rationalist religious practice which often typifies liberal religious thinkers. I, if anything, am sympathetic to and curious about those groups which are attracted to an unworldly perspective. While my perspective is sympathetic it is not without reservations. One can find useful concepts in different systems without entirely embracing those systems and claiming they are ultimately true.

But what is the attraction that sustains a system of thought such as Habad Hasidism? Very few outside the "initiated"

have seriously bothered to consider this question. One who has is Dr. Edward Hoffman, who in a 1981 study of the conjunction between Jewish mysticism and modern psychology (The Way of Splendor), briefly touched on the attraction of Schneur Zalman's thought, from a psychological perspective. Hoffman claimed that Schneur Zalman emphasized individual inner growth and free will in determining our lives and that he especially stressed the need for activity as a cure for depression. According to Hoffman, Schneur Zalman was very aware of and took into account the arduous step by step climb to the Divine. In this struggle, one has to battle various emotions such as fear, anger, and sadness. The cornerstone of his thought is the belief that within us is a natural urge of our soul to leave the body and return to God. Hoffman claimed that within Schneur Zalman's thought is a perspective which parallels Eastern thought in its stress on individual contact with the divine.

THE SOULS OF MAN

Dr. Hoffman is correct in his analysis of Schneur Zalman's psychological perspective. The Tanya's main foci are how the average Jew can achieve union with God and the step by step struggle to overcome obstacles. These issues are the heart of the book and constitute its enduring value.

In Schneur Zalman's view of the individual's psychological makeup, he postulated that a Jew (non-Jews are in a different category) is composed of two souls.¹ The first soul is a divine one which comes from God,² the second soul (which non-Jews have) comes from the kelippat nogah and the

sitra ahra³ (the non-God present side of reality). These two souls are in competition for control of our behavior in this world. The divine soul does not readily have a source for its power on earth while the vitalized animal soul (the second soul) can easily draw on energy in this world (it is encased in the blood⁴ and in the left side of the heart.⁵) These forces are very powerful and would seem to be insurmountable if not for God.⁶ An individual, or rather his divine soul, can draw on the light of the Ein Sof through love of God and thereby tip the balance of power in the body.

BATTLE WITH EVIL

But is this some sort of Jewish dualism, a battle of the forces of light with darkness? There is some truth in that description. The author saw a mind/body duality in that the body is in the realm of the 'elippot (as is all this world), and only the powers of the mind are sufficiently strong to overcome the evil of the left side.⁷ Schneur Zalman, however, did not postulate a world or a universe in which God and the sitra ahra were polar or competing forces. The sitra ahra is not a separate entity but is the absence of holiness.⁸ All energy that goes to the sitra ahra does not come from the inner essence of God "but from 'behind its [God's] back,' as it were, descending degree by degree."⁹

The individual who wishes to be joined with God must overcome and destroy his evil side (which comes from his animal soul).¹⁰ By doing this he becomes "a completely righteous man in whom evil has been converted to goodness."¹¹ He

must despise the pleasures of this world which are merely gratifying the physical appetites.¹² As long as the individual does not completely reject evil he is not truly righteous even if his evil urge is controlled.

The author spent much time outlining the various categories of sin and their gradations ranging from major sins to turning away from Torah study.¹³ Repentance of sin is a method or process in the individual's internal struggle.

The individual could theoretically become a zaddik, one who has totally destroyed his evil side, but Schneur Zalman does not pretend that this state can be achieved by most people. Most people, however, can attain the level of the benoni. The benoni is one who does not sin and can control his evil urge and aspire to contact with God.¹⁴

The power we have to overcome the sitra ahra and join with God is "because the brain rules over the heart by virtue of its innately created nature."¹⁵ Through our will power and intelligence we can control our lusts and keep them "from expressing themselves in action, word or thought, and divert [our] attention altogether from the craving of his [the individual's] heart toward the completely opposite direction particularly in the direction of holiness."¹⁶

Prayer¹⁷ is especially important in the struggle against evil if it is done in a spirit of meditating on the greatness of the Ein Sof because through that process man can overcome, at least temporarily, his lusts. Other important methods deal with loving God ecstatically¹⁸ and setting aside

time to commune with one's soul in order to cultivate the abhorrence of evil.¹⁹ Schneur Zalman said, "habitude [**היטב**] reigns supreme in any sphere and becomes second nature. Therefore if he accustoms himself to despise evil, it will to some extent become despicable in truth."²⁰

Schneur Zalman suggested that even breaking one's heart through contriteness²¹ may be necessary to separate one from the sitra ahra. Actions such as thought, meditation, and speech on the Torah draw down the light of the Ein Sof and serve God.²²

Schneur Zalman claimed that our nature, which wishes to join with God, is not in the realms of reason, comprehension, knowledge, and intelligence; it cannot be grasped and understood through a reasoning process. The nature that can aid us in joining God is the Hokhmah (wisdom) in the soul where there is light from the Ein Sof.²³ In wicked individuals, Hokhmah is dormant but when there is a test in a matter of faith which transcends knowledge, when an issue touches the very soul, then this latent **היכל** is aroused and exerts its influence.²⁴ The Tanya therefore presents us with an inspiring belief. Almost everyone has something embedded so deeply in him, if faced with an extreme challenge to his morality, this challenge would force him to turn from evil and seek good.

STUMBLING BLOCKS AND SOLUTIONS

Schneur Zalman was very aware of the reality of stumbling blocks to an individual's pursuit of unity with

God. It is impossible to overcome evil if one is overcome by laziness or heaviness of heart. These "originate in sadness and in a heart that is dulled like a stone."²⁵ Evil can be overcome "with alacrity which derives from joy and from a heart that is free and cleansed from any trace of worry and sadness in the world."²⁶ This does not contradict his belief in the power of "breaking the heart" which aims at overcoming complacency and pursuit after lust. Schneur Zalman emphasized that "Sadness itself has no virtue."²⁷ My interpretation of this issue is that Schneur Zalman, quite rightly, drew a distinction between the need to repent, to crush self-righteous complacency and on the other hand the spirit of despair and continual self-deprecation because of past sins. One needs to break with pride and make teshuvah but Schneur Zalman urged his readers not to sink into depression.

Schneur Zalman urged the benoni to move forward from contriteness and repentance to renewed struggle and sanctification. He suggested that "in the case of things that are permissible, the more of his [the individual's] impulse that a man sacrifices, even if only for a while, with the intention of subduing the sitra achra ... even in the least way ... the glory and holiness of the Holy One ... issues a sublime holiness on man below."²⁸ Schneur Zalman suggested two practical examples of how this could be done: A) postponing a meal for a time to study and B) restraining oneself from uttering words that one longs to say concerning mundane

matters. These and other methods help one expel the sitra ahra from one's heart little by little.

Although abstinence, repentance, and struggle are stressed these actions should be done in a spirit of joy.

"As for the sadness which is connected with heavenly matters [failure in matters of the spirit], one must seek ways and means of freeing oneself from it, to say nothing of the time of Divine Service, when one must serve G-d with gladness and a joyful heart."²⁹ One must struggle with the sitra ahra in the spirit of Psalm 51:10,14: "Make me hear joy and gladness ... Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation and uphold me with Thy generous spirit."

Schneur Zalman also pointed out that sadness could be caused by concerns other than the knowledge of one's past sins. After all, Schneur Zalman encouraged man to become joyful. But what about the knowledge that evil thoughts crop up all the time in prayer and during mundane affairs? The individual should not become despondent but rejoice that he was tested and averted evil behavior.

'That ye seek not after your own heart and your own eyes, after which ye go astray.' The verse does not speak of the righteous, to refer to them as 'going astray,' G-d forbid, but of 'Intermediates' (benonim) like him, in whose mind do enter erotic thoughts whether of an innocent nature ... when he averts his mind from them, he is fulfilling this injunction.³⁰

Another pitfall to the seeker of the Lord was cited in the above mentioned quote: The individual who has repented, has thought an impure thought, becomes sad realizing that he is not a zaddik, nay, is far from it. Why even try?

Schneur Zalman was aware of this type of argument and answered it in the Tanya. Individuals could say that the discipline was too strict and the goal so far away from them (being a zaddik) that it was impossible to achieve. Their effort was futile and doomed from the outset. But the speaker is not called upon to be a zaddik but a true benoni which he can achieve; his resignation is misplaced. "On the contrary, such sadness is due to conceit in that he does not recognize his position."³¹ Schneur Zalman claimed that the benoni who suppresses his lusts and brings great joy to God by glorifying Him in such a manner³² also thrusts away temptation in this world and on a higher level causes the sitra ahra above to be suppressed. This suppression causes G-d's glory to rise "more than by any praise, and this ascent is greater than all else."³³ Therefore, one should not be depressed even if it seems that he is troubled or in continual conflict. Perhaps for this purpose was the individual "created and this is his service--constantly to subjugate the sitra achra."³⁴ The benoni cannot completely destroy his sitra ahra. Only a zaddik can do that. But God receives pleasure from both of their efforts.

Schneur Zalman continued his examination of other aspects of the psychology of the benoni and his struggle with the sitra ahra. What happens when a person is praying, and stray or lusting thoughts go through his mind? He should try to avert his mind from such thoughts but refrain from the effort of raising up (a form of sublimation, ד'כ'ח'ח')³⁵

of the middot (the mental states, dispositions, and affects of the animal soul) contained in these stray thoughts. That is beyond a benoni's ability. He should redouble his effort in prayer or study. His effort is not worthless. The battle is between his two souls: the divine and the animal.

Schneur Zalman appealed to the benoni not to wage war with the foreign thought because "he who wrestles with a filthy person is bound to become soiled himself."³⁶ The benoni is not strong enough to elevate such thoughts. Schneur Zalman advised instead, that one should put the stray thought out of his mind and concentrate on God. If the benoni feels overcome, he should pray to God for His compassion. Supplication is the correct approach.

Another aspect of the benoni's psychological difficulties, which was mentioned earlier, could be "dullness of the heart" (לֵב טָמֵן).³⁷ The individual may frequently be unable (despite effort) to open his heart to prayer or be unable to struggle against the evil impulse. Perhaps even worse is that the individual may be unable to arouse enough energy to "sanctify himself in the things that are permissible because of the heaviness (כבדות) that is in his heart."³⁸ When faced with this challenge, to open his heart, the author explained that the cause of this difficulty was the coarseness of the body (חומריות גסה). The Light of his intellect alone cannot overcome it. One must set times to humble oneself, in this way the sitra ahra will be humbled. This humbling can be done by contemplating

the sins of his youth. One should keep a "reckoning with his soul [לעדן פי ידען לעד] regarding all the thoughts, utterances of his life [a diary?] ... [to see] whether they all came from the direction of holiness or from the direction of impurity."³⁹ Schneur Zalman also declared dreams to be "vanity and affliction of the spirit"⁴⁰ originating from the evil side and tormenting him in his dreams. Reflection and study will help one humble oneself as well as suppress the sitra ahra which cannot stand the light of such self-scrutiny (perception and cognition).

If the seeker begins to doubt his faith he should realize that these doubts are the empty words of the sitra ahra. "Israelites themselves are faithful."⁴¹ These doubts are mere confusion and should be rejected. They serve only the sitra ahra.

This concept of humbling oneself goes beyond prayer, supplication, and self-inventory. Schneur Zalman restated the classical Jewish concept of an individual being humble before all men "even in the presence of the most worthless of worthless men."⁴² The author cited Avot 4:10 "Judge not another until you are in his place," and interpreted it to mean that the "place" causes the individual to sin (professions force him into the marketplace with its different temptations). Different people have different circumstances. People follow diverse professions and live in a variety of environments, and these differences make comparisons unfair.

Even more than these environmental situations, one must take into account that individuals are distinguished by different temperaments. Some are more passionate than others. But sinning is another matter. If one has no dread of God before his eyes, he is termed a rasha gamur.⁴³ One must try to control one's impulses.

The process is an arduous one. Schneur Zalman stated that, "it is indeed a great and fierce struggle to break one's passion."⁴⁴ Each person, according to his place and rank, must weigh and examine his position and do this with Kavvanah to the point of exhaustion of the soul (ענין).

While dejection can come from the kelippat nogah, bitterness is derived from the attribute of Gevurah (severity). Joy, however, is from the attribute of Hasadim (kindness), and both, Gevurah and Hasadim, qualities are in the heart. "A person should always excite the good nature."⁴⁵ This should be done when one is troubled by mundane worries or when one is just in a state of non-specific sadness. One should reflect (with appropriate joy) that "Yet there is within me a veritable part of G-d... a spark of veritable G-dliness which is clothed in it and animates it."⁴⁶ If the benoni is able to liberate his soul and send that soul to God by destroying the evil side then he has become a zaddik. But even if he cannot destroy his evil side the benoni can still suppress it.

What is important to stress at this point is that the

process is not one method or the other but both. Humbling oneself is only one method of dealing with psychological need. Cultivating joy and self worth is a necessary complement to humbling oneself. Contemplation is not the end all: fulfilling commandments, study, and prayer must be done as well. Repentance, charity and good deeds are required.

Schneur Zalman's view of mystical behavior is not set in seclusion and in numerous places he laid stress on the social aspect in the search of the benoni. I have already mentioned that the author urged the reader to consider the differences of environment and temperament. He urged the reader not to be quick to judge. He must "view one's body with scorn and contempt, and find joy only in the joy of the soul alone."⁴⁷ From this point the author extended his argument much further. How can anyone know the soul and spirit of another? How can we measure these souls and their value since they are from an unknowable God? All have the same Father and so all Israel are brothers bound together in kinship. Only our bodies are separate.⁴⁸

The whole basis of the Torah is to reject the transitory and to raise and exalt the soul, to reach God so that Israel can have the light of the Ein Sof and thereby be joined with the One. If Israel suffers from disunity then this process cannot happen, hence harmony between Israelites was stressed by Schneur Zalman.

But this leads to a practical problem. What is one

to do if a friend sins? That individual can be rebuked: "Him who is with thee in Torah and precepts."⁴⁹ That apparently only applies to an individual who accepts the others' world-view, in other words, becomes a member of the denomination. The individual who is not a colleague (חבירו) or is not on intimate terms with the true believer must not be rebuked "one must attract them with strong cords of love perchance one might succeed in drawing them near to the Torah and Divine service. If one fails, one has not forfeited the merit of the precept of neighbourly love."⁵⁰ Even the one that is to be rebuked must also be loved. One may rebuke for shock value but also simultaneously love, in order to draw the recalcitrant person back. There is hidden good in the rebuked one and this rebuke can arouse the hidden Divine spark. Compassion, however, is the method that destroys hatred and awakens love.⁵¹

Schneur Zalman stressed that this process, awakening love, is the true joy of the heart, and that at appropriate times one must purify and illuminate the soul with gladness of the heart by concentrating on God's unity and light which are encased in this world. If one realizes that uniting with God (by doing commandments) is a Jew's whole purpose, his joy will motivate him to action.

Every time a person thinks holy thoughts he becomes a Merkabah (Chariot), for a time, for the heikhalot of God's holiness. The patriarchs and Moses were able to bind themselves unceasingly to God. That is why they became examples

and are called the Chariot.⁵² But Israel could not bear this closeness; a person must realize his limited capacity to be such a "Chariot." He can make himself a tabernacle or habitation for God by engaging in Torah study and doing righteous acts by giving charity, distributing a fifth of one's income, and by good intentions.

EFFECTS OF ACTIONS

The Messianic Era and Resurrection depends on our actions and service during the Galut⁵³ and we are rewarded for doing a commandment now by having a flood of light from the Ein Sof descend on us during the performance of that act.

This can explain the invigoration that people experience during righteous action. Meditation cannot take the place of action (speech).⁵⁴ Charity itself, the donating of the toil of human hands, brings redemption nearer when given to God with one's whole soul.

Schneur Zalman seemed to be of two minds on the issue of action and study. He agreed with the rabbis that, "Not learning but doing is the essential thing." But if another could do the act one should not interrupt Torah study, because study draws down the Blessed Ein Sof. This drawing down of the Ein Sof is referred to as calling on a friend, or a father, so that one is not alone.⁵⁵

Now we come to the issue of intention. Schneur Zalman stressed intention and purpose repeatedly in the Tanya. For instance, if one has said the Shema without intention, one

must repeat it.⁵⁶

This kavvanah is not limited to prayer; devekut (cleaving to God) must also occur in other positive commandments. There are two types of kavvanah: one is animal-like (non-conscious fear and natural love) and the other is human kavvanah (consciously doing right, studying and prayer). We need both forms of Kavvanah. Humans, as creatures of intellect, enjoy what they conceive and understand. At the same time animal kavvanah is necessary to break the power of the sitra ahra and allow our souls to ascend.⁵⁷ Passion is necessary.

YETZER HA-RA (See also Chapter 3 pp. 56-60)

At this point it may be important to discuss the concept of the yetzer ha-ra' or the yet er in connection with the Tanya and Schneur Zalman's thought. Although the term appears numerous times and is described as a power or force connected with the body (Chapter 29) it is not synonymous with the body. In Schneur Zalman's Torah Or he clarified the issue by claiming that the power of the yetzer ha-ra' stems from the middot of the animal soul. This question of the middot is a bit complicated and will be dealt with later in this chapter. At this point though, it is important to state that the concept of yetzer ha-ra' is not of central importance in the Tanya's concepts such as animal soul, middot, sitra ahra; and kelippot take center stage in the drama of the soul.

MORE METHODS FOR UNITING WITH GOD

Both one's ability to join with God and even the occasions to do so are limited. Certain people can only grasp onto God during the Amidah or when they genuflect, because that symbolizes self-nullification.⁵⁸ This self-nullification is tied up with Schneur Zalman's concept of the importance of fear (or reverence) and love יחידות
יחידות.⁵⁹ Without this fear the inherent love of our heart cannot naturally enter the conscious mind or connect with God.⁶⁰ The same is true of habitual prayer. A fearful awareness of God is essential.

If one, however, has no ulterior motive for these actions but cannot raise up the proper kavvanah, hard as he may try, Schneur Zalman believed that as long as the individual has no ulterior motive, the action is for its own sake and does indeed rise to God.⁶¹ Fear and love are described as our "wings" in the Tanya.⁶² These "wings" are the devices that help humans rise to God. But an individual does not necessarily need the "wings" since without wings a bird is still kosher. The analogy is interesting between the bird without wings and the person without fear and love. Just as a wingless bird can be kosher (acceptable) so to can an individual be acceptable to God, and reach God without fear and love.

The Torah and the commandments are what is essential for Jews to connect with God. The consumation of love is service out of love. Love without service is a love of

delight but is not rewarding. The process of service through the joy it unlocks and through actual contact with God is the reward. Schneur Zalman described the lover who cannot achieve consummation of his love (through service) as one parched with thirst from love, who wanders about crying for water. Since he could receive relief, why does he not drink from the waters of Torah? The implication is that he should drink and seek the reward he could receive through proper service (Torah and commandments).⁶³

This fear, which is the core of service, causes one to depart from evil and do good⁶⁴ but it is not sufficient to awaken love. One should concentrate on God's greatness which fills the world and rests on the individual. This meditation should be done before putting on the tallit and tefillin. By putting them on, one should think that one is drawing the blessed light upon oneself. The Shema and the וידבר אלך יהוה should be said while concentrating on Hesed (fear and kindness of the soul) and Gevurah (sternness and love of the heart). Fear should descend upon the individual after this. If higher fear from God does not descend through love, at least a lower form of fear, man made, has descended.

Fear, which is the key, has two gradations: higher and lower fear. The first fear is derived from shame (אשם) and is an inner fear from God. It is the knowledge that God created the world from nothingness and I feel it constitutes a sense of awe. The lower fear is directed toward fulfilling God's commandments. This lower fear has

one central aspect which is the contemplation that God fills all the worlds and this causes the fear of rebelling against such a power.

The author stressed that the individual should be doing the commandments, prayer, and study of Torah for his own sake not for his private benefit.⁶⁵ The desire of a member of Israel is "to cleave to God and not, under any circumstances, to be parted or sundered or separated ... from his blessed Unity and Oneness, even at the cost of his very life."⁶⁶ To do this one should immerse one's mind in the greatness of God until thought is bound to God.⁶⁷ To do this, fear (יִרְאָה) is required by God, we must weary the flesh and crush the body so that the light within us is not obscured.

By doing this and by exerting the soul's power, a benoni can make ready so that his service will not be burdensome to himself. Here Schneur Zalman seemed to speak to an essential problem, in other words, the heart is willing but the body is weak. There is no easy way to unite with God; the benoni must exert himself. People are different and the time necessary for meditation and exerting a person's soul will vary. The path to God must come from the heart to the brain and from the potential for action itself.

There is a binding of forces necessary for this spiritual success. Fear leads to fulfillment of commandments and to arousing the heart's hidden understanding. With this arousal, thought rises in the brain and Da'at (concentration

of knowledge) binds the heart and mind together. Faith is necessary to habituate oneself to this process. (Chapter 42)

Love also have two gradations: ahavah rabbah (great love) and ahavat olam (eternal love). The first love is an ecstatic love and a gift from God. This love comes only through fear. The eternal love comes from contemplating God in the world. The first love sometimes can come before fear because the light of Torah can arouse love and love is greater numerically (in Hebrew) than light.⁶⁸

But the individual should not count on this type of miraculous intervention. If one accustoms oneself to His thought through prayer, speech, and intention of the heart, then he can succeed. It is important to stress that for the Tanya "habit will become nature."⁶⁹

Schneur Zalman can become repetitious in drumming home his point. The benoni may be unaware of it but God is bending over him in a way, kissing and drawing the searcher up to Him. He is present in a Jew's soul (the divine spark) and when he performs a mitzvah, he dwells in his soul for a time.⁷⁰ Though this sounds homiletical, I believe it can be effective in making an individual aware of his actions and believing that he and his actions are highly valuable and of universal import. This could produce a feeling of a real connection with a personal God. Only man's will holds him back from God. To join with God, one has to be willing to renounce one's wife and child, "to overcome anything that deters from the love of G-d."⁷¹ The searcher should, however,

remember that he is of this world and is to serve God here through his body.⁷² It is a matter of proper intention and method not escapism.

A person can best serve God through reason and actions. That is why the latter part of the Tanya (Likutei Amarim) explores the spiritual dimensions of the material world and why the Tanya states that the categories of Habad and its "reasons and interpretations of the halachot, are clothed and hidden within the laws themselves and are not in a revealed form, while the elements of the halachot [themselves], which are in a revealed form, are the very reflection of the attributes of the blessed En Sof in their revealed form."⁷³ In other words, God is with us in this world through the commandments. Through fear, love, prayer, and action, mortals can join with God on earth. The point is to transform the animal soul so that the individual can join with God in conscious action and contemplation.

Notes to Chapter One

¹Schneur Zalman, Likutei Amarim-Tanya, trans., and annot., from 1814 Shklov Ed. by Nissan Mindel, Z. Posner, and J. Schochet, (London: Kehot Publication Society Bilingual Ed., 1973), p.3.

²Ibid., p. 5.

³Ibid., p. 3.

⁴Ibid., p. 3.

⁵Ibid., p. 35.

⁶Ibid., p. 55.

⁷Ibid., p. 47.

⁸Ibid., p. 23.

⁹Ibid., p. 23.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 39.

¹¹Ibid., p. 39.

¹²Ibid., p. 41.

¹³Ibid., ch. 11.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 47.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 49.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 49.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 47.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 61.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 61.

- ²⁰Ibid., p. 63.
- ²¹Ibid., p. 73.
- ²²Ibid., p. 79.
- ²³Ibid., p. 79.
- ²⁴Ibid., p. 81.
- ²⁵Ibid., p. 111.
- ²⁶Ibid., p. 111.
- ²⁷Ibid., p. 111.
- ²⁸Ibid., p. 119.
- ²⁹Ibid., p. 113.
- ³⁰Ibid., p. 115.
- ³¹Ibid., p. 117.
- ³²Ibid., p. 117.
- ³³Ibid., p. 117.
- ³⁴Ibid., p. 117.
- ³⁵Ibid., p. 122.
- ³⁶Ibid., p. 123.
- ³⁷Ibid., p. 123.
- ³⁸Ibid., p. 123.
- ³⁹Ibid., p. 127.
- ⁴⁰Ibid., p. 129.
- ⁴¹Ibid., p. 133.

- ⁴²Ibid., p. 133.
- ⁴³Ibid., p. 135.
- ⁴⁴Ibid., p. 135.
- ⁴⁵Ibid., p. 139, Talmud Berakhot 5a.
- ⁴⁶Ibid., p. 141.
- ⁴⁷Ibid., p. 145.
- ⁴⁸Ibid., pp.145-46.
- ⁴⁹Ibid., p. 147.
- ⁵⁰Ibid., p. 147.
- ⁵¹Ibid., p. 147.
- ⁵²Ibid., p. 153.
- ⁵³Ibid., p. 167.
- ⁵⁴Ibid., p. 169.
- ⁵⁵Ibid., p. 179.
- ⁵⁶Ibid., p. 179.
- ⁵⁷Ibid., pp.189-91.
- ⁵⁸Ibid., p. 193.
- ⁵⁹Ibid., p. 194.
- ⁶⁰Ibid., p. 195.
- ⁶¹Ibid., p. 197.
- ⁶²Ibid., p. 201.
- ⁶³Ibid., pp.203-05.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 205.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 211.

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 213.

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 219.

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 231.

⁶⁹Ibid., p. 235.

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 235.

⁷¹Ibid., p. 259.

⁷²Ibid., p. 265.

⁷³Ibid., p. 275.

APPENDIX TO THE PSYCHOLOGY CHAPTER

In this process of transformation there are many factors that are alluded to in the Tanya which are passed over without a full explanation. In Chapter Two, the terms nefesh, ru'ah, and neshamah are mentioned but all that is said of them is that every soul consists of them.¹

NEFESH, RU'AH AND NESHAMAH

"Now, each distinction and grade of the three-nefesh, ruach, and neshamah- consists of ten faculties, corresponding to the Supernal Ten Sefirot (Divine Manifestations)."² In the psychological process these ten faculties of the two souls interact. I am not at this time going to attempt an analysis of the Kabbalistic tree or how the Sefirot interact with each other. If I did that, this chapter would be overwhelmed with the Kabbalistic material and unfortunately Schneur Zalman did not clearly state how the faculties interacted (at least not in the Tanya). But I would be remiss in my duty of outlining the psychological aspects of the Tanya if I did not explain the inner workings of the souls (and the nefesh, ru'ah, and neshamah) to some extent.

THE TEN FACULTIES OF MAN

Each of the two souls, divine and animal, are composed of ten faculties³ which correspond, but cannot truly be compared with the ten Sefirot of the indescribable God. These faculties are subdivided into two groupings: sekhel (intellect) and middot (emotional attributes). The intellect

consists of three faculties: Hokhmah, Binah, and Da'at (HaBāD), from which the movement Schneur Zalman founded took its name. The intellectual faculties are considered the "mothers" or the source of the middot in the human soul. Schneur Zalman used a play on words to define the power of Hokhmah. חכמה was read חכמה "the 'potentiality' of 'what is.'" ⁴ When one takes the potential thought and causes it to become actual, that intellectual quality is called Binah. Hokhmah and Binah together cause love, awe, and dread of God. Da'at's qualities could be described as dealing with attachment, union, and binding. When one firmly binds his thoughts on the greatness of God, these thoughts produce true love and fear in his soul. Da'at is seen as the basis (בסיס) of and source of power for the middot. Two of the central middot are Hesed and Gevurah which can be defined as love and fear. In the animal soul, the middot precede sekhel to show the power of passions in that soul.

In the divine soul the middot's qualities consist of love, dread, and glorification of God and other positive attributes. In the animal soul the middot's qualities are negative passions such as boasting, anger, and vexation. ⁵ Hesed and Gevurah are called the 'servants of the Lord' ⁶ of the right and left side respectively. Hesed is the attribute of grace and the extension in the service of God (expansion). This faculty is characterized by lack of limitation, of generosity in charity, study of Torah, and commandments. Gevurah is the attribute of contraction and

limitation in the service of God. What this means in practice is that the Gevurah is the tendency to do the minimum required by law while Hesed is the urge to do the extreme and to love. "Now everyone of Israel needs to comprise both these traits for 'There is no thing that has not its place.'" ⁷ Schneur Zalman compared Beth Shammai to the attribute of Gevurah and Beth Hillel to the attribute of Hesed. ⁸ While Beth Shammai usually made his decisions in a stringent manner, and Beth Hillel tended to be lenient, they both sometimes decided issues that contradicted this stereotype because each school had within it the other's tendency as well. "For, as known of the mode and attributes of the kodesh ha'elyon there is no cleavage and division there ... all the traits compound each other. Thus, they are united one with the other, as known to the Cabbalists." ⁹ In fact, Hesed and Gevurah are complements to each other. They balance each other so that humans can remain psychologically balanced. Too much kindness, benevolence, and giving can be dangerous and that is also true of restraint and sternness. Rahamim (or Tiferet), the sixth attribute, mediates the qualities of Hesed and Gevurah with a stress on "pity[ing] whoever is in need of compassion." ¹⁰

The next three attributes are a triad as is the case of the six that preceded them. Nezah and Hod deal with the application of the energy of the three attributes just above them. Nezah and Hod are described as "grindstones" because "They pound the manah for the righteous." ¹¹ These two

attributes are described as taking intellectual concepts and putting them into simple effect. Nezah has an aspect of prevailing over obstacles. It attempts to restrain Gevurah and to put Hesed's feelings into effect. Hod, on the other hand, tries to restrain benevolence from pouring out of the soul. The ninth attribute, Yesod, attempts to bind God and man through love, desire, and delight.¹² Yesod is also a mediating attribute. It is seen as blending the energies of the other attributes.

The tenth attribute, Malkhut, is not described clearly by Schneur Zalman. At one point it is stated, "the attribute of malkhut [causes one] to receive upon himself the yoke of His sovereignty and of His service... out of awe and fear."¹³ Malkhut is that shadowy attribute connected with the Shekhinah and the lowest attribute from which potential can become actual.

In Schneur Zalman's psychology of man the three top attributes are the source of all the others. These Habad attributes are the most important. Hokhmah is the source of intellect which apprehends God. Binah is involved in contemplation and true apprehension (understanding) and through such thought, love and awe are created. From Binah the other attributes derive.¹⁴ But only through the attribute of Da'at can man apprehend "some aspect of the greatness of the Lord whereof some trait of these attributes is born in (the soul)."¹⁵ The other attributes (middot) are the mechanisms for acting out the fear and love of God

through action.

THE FIVE "REALMS" OF CONSCIOUSNESS

There are five "worlds" or realms of consciousness mentioned in the Tanya. These realms of consciousness are not clearly delineated and are often involved with complex Kabblistic speculation but they do pose interesting psychological frameworks. The highest realm has been called Adam Kadmon or Realm of Keter Elyon and tzachtzachot. It is pure Sefirah which is concealed and hidden. In the Tanya it is known only as tzachtzachot.¹⁶ Man can only come in contact with this realm through a ray (I'SH) descending through levels to earth or through an experience such as Moses had when he entered the Lord's cloud. But this world seems to be extremely above the human realm and man cannot reach it without risking physical nullification.

The next realm, called Azilut, is beyond the comprehension and understanding of a created intellect. Only great zaddikim who can transcend even the qualities of fear and love can rise to this psychological realm.

The third realm, Beriah, is the "world" where Hokhmah, Binah, and Da'at are dominant. Those who have souls which are defined as righteous and serve God with fear and love can reach this Supernal Garden of Eden. But only the neshamah (the cognitive, highest aspect of the soul) can go up to this level. The ru'ah can only ascend on Shabbat and New Moon temporarily.¹⁷ Human intellect can gain its enjoyment

only through understanding and apprehending the Ein Sof whose light comes from the realm of Beriah. Only if the sitra ahra in the body is subdued can one raise one's psychological consciousness to the Beriah level.

Yezirah, the fourth realm, is characterized by the middot of the Ein Sof which are governed by emotions. The emotions involved in this realm are love, dread, and fear of God. The six Sefirot "nest" in Yezirah,¹⁸ and the "angels" are said to be in this realm.

The lowest realm is the world of Asiyyah, the sphere of action and corporeality. This realm is our world. While the Shekhinah is in all realms she is very connected with this realm because it is where God's benevolence in creation is actualized. Malkhut is connected with this world through God's kingship and the Shekhinah. Here in this world which seems to be totally material and without the presence of God we still have access to Him through the light of the Ein Sof which "has clothed itself in material things, namely, the 613 commandments of the Torah."¹⁹ The world of Asiyyah is one of action. Doing mitzvot is very important in this world as Schneur Zalman cited from the teachings of Issac Luria by stating that, "every person needs to become reincarnated until he has actually observed all the 613 commandments."²⁰ For Schneur Zalman, the reasons and interpretations of the halakhot are the hidden HaBaD categories while the revealed laws are the reflection of the attributes of the Ein Sof.²¹ When we do the mitzvot in this world of Asiyyah (action) we

connect with the Shekhinah by annihilating the animal soul when performing the mitzvot.

CONCLUSION

As one can see, the psychological aspect of the Tanya is complex and multifaceted. Much of it has to do with states of consciousness and concentration which are described in classic Kabbalistic terminology. Whether Schneur Zalman was describing "worlds" or aspects of the soul, he was attempting to guide the reader to conscious Jewish practice of the mitzvot, Torah study, and prayer by concentrating the Jews' attention on fear and love of God and self-nullification. He knew full well there were always obstacles (guilt, sin, mundane affairs, and pride) which could cause someone to fail in his search for God. If one could concentrate on Schneur Zalman's advice, the benoni could achieve the joy of uniting with God which the author felt was inherent in his readers.

Notes the the Appendix of Chapter One

¹Schneur Zalman, Likutei Amarim-Tanya, trans., and annot., from 1814 Shklov Ed. by Nissan Mindel, Z. Posner, and J. Schochet, (London: Kehot Publication Society Bilingual Ed., 1973), p. 7.

²Ibid., p. 9.

³Ibid., ch.6.

⁴Ibid., p. 11.

⁵Ibid., p. 21.

⁶Ibid., p. 457.

⁷Ibid., p. 457, Avot 4:3.

⁸Ibid., p. 457.

⁹Ibid., p. 459.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 469.

¹¹Ibid., p. 471.

¹²Ibid., p. 473.

¹³Ibid., p. 475.

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 475,477.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 477.

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 575-85.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 189.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 189.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 273.

²⁰Ibid., p. 495.

²¹Ibid., p. 275.

CHAPTER TWO:
SCHNEUR ZALMAN'S USE OF SELECTED MOTIFS
IN LIKUTEI AMARIM-TANYA

INTRODUCTION

Schneur Zalman, as any writer, drew upon motifs and images to make his writing more compelling and his points more memorable. But unlike a *durshan* or his fellow Hasidic "rebbe" his main text, the Tanya, was not filled with encapsulated parables and allegories. When one reads the Tanya it is very easy to be unimpressed with his images. But a second, closer look can draw out a system of motifs which are developed separately and then blended together with some evocative power. The central motifs that Schneur Zalman utilized could be generally classified in the following manner: light (including candles, sun, and fire), garments and clothing, images of encompassing, cleaving, and uniting and other, infrequently used images such as food, water, mirrors, and birds. This chapter's aim is to show how the author of the Tanya used these motifs and to a limited degree, where he drew on them and how effective the images were in expressing his ideas.

LIGHT IMAGERY

The first image we will discuss is the image of light. Schneur Zalman would not have to look far for the inspiration or idea of light as an effective religious device. The Bible is filled with references to light ranging from Genesis 1:3, "let there be light," to Psalms 27:1, "The Lord (is) my light and my salvation," Psalms 97:11

"Light is sown for the righteous," and Isaiah 60:22 "The Lord shall be thine everlasting light." Pesikta Rabbati 36:1 has a comment on what light Israel is looking for: "It is the light of the Messiah, of which it is said, 'God saw the light and it was good.' God looked at the Messiah and his deeds before the world was created, and He hid the [primal or archetypal] light for His Messiah and for His generation under the throne of his Glory."

Then we can see from these brief references that the theme of light was very available for Schneur Zalman within normative Jewish religious sources. But Schneur Zalman was drawing much of his inspiration and purpose from non-normative sources, specifically, the Kabbalah. The image of light that Schneur Zalman used comes from usage, that the light was utilized in kabbalistic writings such as the following by Moshe Luzzatto:

The impression of Light is the power which remained when the Infinite Light was withdrawn as a source for the world and the Sefirot from the middle point. When compared to what has been withdrawn, it is but a faint impression of Light. If not for the contraction (zimzum) mentioned earlier, the world would have been created in accordance with the undiminished Light. This Impression of Light is the source of the lower beings who appear in their incomplete (fallible) state. It is the root of everything pertaining to good and evil, which issue in a state of balanced power, and denote a condition contrary to total perfection.¹

As we shall see very soon, this is the type of light motif and style of writing that Schneur Zalman was attempting to draw on for inspiration. An early example of this method will be presented for comparison's sake. As to where

vitality comes from this is what Schneur Zalman stated in numerous way throughout the Tanya. Let us see if it resembles the above quotation from Luzzatto's writing:

However, that which does not surrender itself to G-d, but is a separate thing by itself, does not receive its vitality from the holiness of the Holy One, blessed be He, that is, from the very inner essence and substance of the holiness itself, but from "behind its back" as it were, descending degree by degree, through myriads of degrees with the lowering of the worlds, by way of cause and effect, and innumerable contractions, until the Light and Life are so diminished through repeated diminutions, that they can be compressed and enclosed, in a state of exile as it were, within that separated thing, giving it vitality and existence ex-nihilo, so that it does not revert to nothingness and no existence as it was before it was created.²

As we can readily see, both Luzzatto and Schneur Zalman used the image of light as a force that comes down from above and, after transmigrations, gives power to life in a mystical way. This is not the place for a discussion of the philosophical theory of light in the Kabbalah but it is important to point out that the light that Zalman and Luzzatto are referring to is, "the Clothing of the Light of the En Sof."³ This image of Light and Ein Sof is used on every page of the Tanya in an unmistakably pointed manner.

But Schneur Zalman varied his use of light imagery with other images of incandescence. The author would vary his images to include such phrases as, "his heart will glow with an intense love, like burning coals,"⁴ and the element of Fire is in the heart."⁵ The use of incandescent imagery is almost exclusively connected with humans such as the following: "The help comes by means of the glow radiated

by the Divine light, which illuminates the divine soul,"⁶
or "glowing embers of love in his heart."⁷

Perhaps the most intriguing or well-phrased motif
is Schneur Zalman's use of the candle image. He sets about

to clarify the meaning of the verse, "The candle
of God is the soul (neshamah) of man." What it
means is that the souls of Jews, who are called
"man" are by way of illustration, like the flame
of the candle, whose nature it is always to scin-
tillate upwards, for the flame of the fire in-
trinsically seeks to be parted from the wick in
order to unite with its source above, in the un-
iversal element of fire ... And although it would
thereby be extinguished and emit no light at
all below, and even above, in its source, its
light would be nullified, nevertheless this is
what it seeks in accordance with its nature.⁸

Schneur Zalman went on to compare the candle flame
with the neshamah, (including ru'ah and nefesh) both rising
up to God. The candle image was also used later
in the Tanya when the author compared the wicked to melt-
ing wax.⁹ Other light images used were "the 'sun going
forth in its might,', the sun emerging from its sheath
in which it is enclosed in this world,"¹⁰ or a "baker's
red-hot oven,"¹¹ and the spark of Godliness.¹²

Often when the image of the sun is used some analogy
to God and his greatness is being hinted at but the motif
of the spark is a common Kabbalistic and Hasidic reference.
Its usage is clearly stated in these citations: "each
spark being one neshamah and each spark descended into
this world,"¹³ and "bring down the light to mend them ...
elevating the sparks."¹⁴ The spark then, is a bit of light
from the source of light trapped below trying to shoot up

to return to heaven.

But Schneur Zalman also drew upon other images besides light and candles. For instance, the author would draw an analogy between the light of the Shekhinah and the flame of a lamp.¹⁵ Often the author would mix images such as this one: "[this spark] has been clothed in a 'serpent's skin' which is far removed from the light of the King's countenance, at the greatest possible distance, since this world is the nadir of the coarse kelipot."¹⁶ Our souls, when they catch fire, are compared to "glowing coals of a mighty flame which surges upward, striving to be parted from the wick and the wood on which it has taken hold."¹⁷

It is not hard to see that the motif of light, in all of its manifestations is utilized in numerous ways if only to direct the reader in an unmistakable direction. The use of the light motif is not simply for its traditional references or its positive connotations. As has been pointed out earlier, light was a central motif in Kabbalistic imagery. Schneur Zalman showed his purpose in writing the Tanya without any attempt at obfuscation: the Tanya was "to be preserved as a sign-post and to serve as a visual reminder for each and every person... he will find peace for his soul, and true counsel on every matter that he finds difficult in the service of G-d. His heart will thus be firmly secured in the Lord who completes everything for us."¹⁸ In another place in the Tanya, Schneur Zalman stated that he had written his work to explain what his Hasidic predecessors had taught

"according to the Cabbalah of R. Issac Luria."¹⁹ The Tanya was to be a general guide to the Jewish masses on how to achieve union with God through popularized, Kabbalistic/Hasidic methods. With that as an undisguised purpose, he could draw on these images and ideas to color and exemplify his writing. For instance, when discussing the concept of studying Torah to uncover new insights, he referred to the Zoharic concept of elevating sparks²⁰: "One is obliged to do so in order to perfect his soul by elevating all the sparks that fell to its part and lot."²¹

This is not the time nor is it my purpose to discuss the Kabbalah, but without a brief digression into its general ideas, the use of words such as light, encompassing, food, and garments will seem totally unrelated and artificial. It is appropriate, therefore, at this point, to digress for the sake of clarification. We have seen that in both the Luzzatto quote mentioned above and the first quote of Schneur Zalman's Tanya that there is much made of the fact that light descends from above. Also we have seen that reference is made to the light of the Ein Sof. To simplify a very complex system, the general concept involved is this: God produces or utilizes light to create and vitalize all existence. Everything is made out of light or sparks. For humans (specifically Jews) to truly serve God or fulfill their innate nature (which is to unite with God) they must elevate their divine souls (made up of a spark) toward God. God will aid the individual in this endeavor by sending down the

light of the Ein Sof to merge with the individual's light and raise him up or overwhelm the sitra ahra. Light also plays a central part in the Kabbalah's explanation of creation. This concept is that God created through light that descended through many gradations, until it reached this world's level and created earth. This light is involved in numerous contractions and transmigrations (as well as other terms) which connote alterations of energy. Schneur Zalman took these terms and others and utilized them to explain the nature of "energy flow" in the worlds. Here is one example of how the author used images of light, God's plan and man's various forces:

It is not in the (soul's) power to absorb the pleasantness and agreeableness of the tzach-tzachot without leaving its husk and becoming existentially nullified just like the flame in the torch, were it not that from the aspect of this very light there will evolve and issue forth some minute radiation, by way of an evolution of level after level, with many contractions, until a single garment is created thereof, a creation like the nature of this light to garb the nefesh, ruach, and neshamah.²²

In these descriptions the reader is given examples, such as the one above, which describe (in metaphors) complex, mystical processes. Here is a different one: the reason why Torah study needs kavvanah is because the light which reaches this world has "many garments" and "screens" and without kavvanah in silent study, individuals cannot get the light. However, Schneur Zalman went on to say of the spoken words of Torah or prayer that (even without kavvanah) these holy letters: when spoken by the animal soul

constitutes no separating curtain in any degree concealing and covering His blessed Holiness clothed in them, as it conceals and covers His blessed Holiness ... yet He is the "most hidden One of all the hidden" and is called the Hidden G-d: So too, the radiance and extension of vitality from Him, may He be blessed, is hidden in the many dense "garments" and "screens" until it is clothed and concealed in the garment of nogah.²³

EMBRACING AND ENCOMPASSING IMAGERY

What Schneur Zalman tried to do with such images was to make abstract complex suppositions more comprehensible. Numerous times the author used or connected terms such as "clothes," "garments," and "enveloped." On page 17 an analogy is made to God's and man's apprehension of His essence. We are told that God can only be apprehended through His Torah and mitzvot. "It is by way of illustration, like embracing the king. There is n difference, in regard to the degree of closeness and attachment to the king, whether while embracing the king, the latter is then wearing one robe or several robes, so long as the royal person is in them."²⁴ Garments are also used in numerous places to represent Kabbalistic concepts of the Sefirot.²⁵

Almost as prevalent as light imagery in Schneur Zalman's Tanya is his use of the image of embracing and/or encompassing (חֶסֶד/חֶסֶד). Here is a typical example:

"The attachment of spirit with spirit" as is written: "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth" which means the union of the word of man with the word of G-d, namely, the haluchah ... in particular the act of charity and loving-kindness. For "chesed (kindness) is the [Divine] right arm" and this is ... an actual "embrace," as

it is written: "And his right arm doth embrace me" while the occupation in the Torah by word of mouth and concentrated thought constitute, as it were, actual "kisses".²⁶

LOVE AND EMBRACING

Another equally effective image of enfolding is created by the following example: Schneur Zalman suggested that love directed from one man to another "awakens a loving response for him in the heart of his friend."²⁷ This is even more true when the two parties are not equal such as in the relationship between God and man or king and subject. The commoner who loves God, "who is despised and lowly among men, a disgraceful creature cast on the dunghill,"²⁸ is appreciated by the king who comes down to him and brings him up to the palace "and there shares with him the closest companionship with embraces and kisses and spiritual attachment with all heart and soul... with a true attachment of spirit, heart and soul ... Even if his heart be like a heart of stone, it will surely melt and become water, and his soul will pour itself out like water, with soulful longing for the love of the king."²⁹

This image of embracing, encompassing union can become rather intense. Schneur Zalman described it as "the fusion of spirit to spirit."³⁰ He compared it to "one who betrothes a wife that she may be united with him with a perfect bond, as it is written: 'and he shall cleave to his wife, and they be one flesh,'"³¹

FOOD IMAGERY

Food is another motif that Schneur Zalman utilized

because of its immediate evocative impact. Food, as an image, is easily understood and appreciated for its nutritive life-giving value and the analogy to spiritually life-giving practices can be hinted at as well. The Torah is called the "'bread' and 'food' of the soul"³² and its nourishment. The author was very clear in pointing out to the reader that this dining should be done with a certain purpose in mind: "he who eats fat beef and drinks spiced wine in order to broaden his mind for the service of G-d and his Torah ... in such a case the vitality of the meat and wine, originating in the kelipat nogah, is distilled and ascends to G-d like a burnt offering and sacrifice."³³

The use of food imagery varies throughout the Tanya. Here is what Schneur Zalman said about Genesis 27:4 and the usage of mat 'amim (delicacies): "The analogy is to material food ... one of sweet and luscious foods, and the other of tart or sour articles of food."³⁴ Schneur Zalman compared these material delicacies to the two delicacies that God experiences when the sitra ahra is struggled with by Jews: evil's annihilation and conversion is sweet but its subjugation is tart and spiced.

WATER IMAGERY

Water imagery also plays a role in the Tanya. "The Torah [has] been compared to water for just as water descends from a higher to a lower level, so has the Torah descended from a higher to a lower level, so has the Torah descended from its place of glory, which is His blessed will

and wisdom."³⁵ The attachment to God by individuals is seen as an attempt "to quench the thirst of their [own] soul, which thirsts for G-d as it is written, 'Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters.'"³⁶ Halakhah is compared to "particular streams flowing from the inner Supreme Will itself."³⁷

But at times water is utilized in the Tanya to symbolize less positive or enriching concepts. Allusions are made to "turbulent waters"³⁸ (dangerous times) or "evil waters"³⁹ (lust stemming from the kelippat nogah). Waters have also been taken to represent the power of the Shekhinah in the concept of the "feminine waters."⁴⁰ Generally the image of water is taken as life giving and invigorating but sometimes the image of drowning (turbulent waters) is there to remind the reader that water is powerful as well as enriching.

BIRD IMAGERY

The last major motif I wish to mention is that of the bird. The bird is obviously an image of freedom and ascent and that is exactly how Schneur Zalman used it. The bird also can represent the Metatron, the highest ranking angel. The reader is told that man has "wings" (fear and love) to fly upward to God just as birds have wings. If one serves God in this way then one is like "'fledglings' that cannot fly."⁴¹ A bird without wings is still kasher, and a man can still be kasher (before God) if he has not served Him with love and fear. What is essential in both cases is if

the head and the body (the essential parts) are present to make a bird kasher and a man a servant of God. If one does not use his mental faculties to serve God, he simply is not really present even when his body is present. The wings are useful and they allow the bird and man to serve out of love.⁴² Fear, we are told, can produce positive effects: "Without any fear at all, however, it [the soul] does not soar on high through love alone, just as a bird cannot fly with one wing, for fear and love are the two wings."⁴³ Both these qualities are necessary for the ascent but obviously the body and head (actions and mind) are necessary for the complete rising.

INFREQUENT IMAGES

The Tanya has many images that are used infrequently or only once and it serves very little purpose to catalog them. But, in closing, let me briefly mention some of the more captivating ones. The body is briefly compared to the small city over which the evil nature and the man who is serving God fight over.⁴⁴ The heart is compared to an iron wall separating God from man which when pierced, will allow God to restore the joy of salvation.⁴⁵ The Torah is compared to a root reaching up to God.⁴⁶ When one has united Hesed, Din, and Rahamim, the reader is told that that condition is "like one who betrothes a wife that she may be united with him with a perfect bond."⁴⁷ The same situation is referred to with allusion to the Song of Songs, "the union of bridegroom and bride in attachment, desire, and pleasure embrace [sic]

and kissing."⁴⁸ When union is achieved ultimate pleasure is the reward. Schneur Zalman used such sexual images to hint at the extent of one's joy in such an achievement. Schneur Zalman felt that such a mission could be achieved, and he attempted to stimulate the reader with arresting symbols that could stay in his mind. He felt that "When the intelligent person will reflect on these matters in the depth of his heart and brain, then --as [surely as] water mirrors the image of a face-- his soul will spontaneously be kindled and it will clothe itself in a spirit of benevolence, willingly to lay down and ... abandon all ... in order to cleave unto Him."⁴⁹

Notes to Chapter Two

¹Rabbi Moses Luzzatto, General Principles of the Kabbalah, trans. by the Research Centre of Kabbalah, (New York: Research Centre of Kabbalah Press, 1970), p. 137.

²Schneur Zalman, Likutei Amarim-Tanya, trans. and annot. from 1814 Shklov ed., by Nissan Mindel, Z. Posner, J. Schochet, (London: Kehot Publication Society, Bilingual ed., 1973), p.23.

³Ibid., p. 5.

⁴Ibid., p. 11.

⁵Ibid., p. 11.

⁶Ibid., p. 53.

⁷Ibid., p. 69.

⁸Ibid., pp. 77,79.

⁹Ibid., p. 81.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 113.

¹¹Ibid., p. 133.

¹²Ibid., p. 155.

¹³Ibid., p. 173.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 175.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 157.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 239.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 263.

¹⁸Ibid., p. XIV.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 547.

²⁰Zohar, vol. 1, trans. by Harry Sperling and Maurice Simon, (London: Soncino Press, 1931-34), p. 4b.

²¹Tanya, p. 561.

²²Ibid., p. 577.

²³Ibid., p. 199.

²⁴Ibid., p. 17.

²⁵Ibid., pp. 47,77,79.

²⁶Ibid., p. 239.

²⁷Ibid., p. 241.

²⁸Ibid., p. 241.

²⁹Ibid., p. 241.

³⁰Ibid., p. 243.

³¹Ibid., p. 243.

³²Ibid., p. 19.

³³Ibid., p. 27.

³⁴Ibid., p. 119.

³⁵Ibid., p. 15.

³⁶Ibid., p. 43.

³⁷Ibid., p. 95.

³⁸Ibid., p. 123.

³⁹Ibid., p. 37.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 193.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 203.

⁴²Ibid., p. 203.

⁴³Ibid., p. 211.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 63.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 111.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 145.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 243.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 245.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 261.

CHAPTER THREE: GOOD, EVIL AND THE TANYA

While reading the Tanya and other works of Jewish philosophy and musar, I became increasingly aware of the separation between philosophy and applied morality. It is all well and good to hypothesize a system to explain God and the universe, but if that system does not successfully answer questions such as the nature of good and evil and reward and punishment, it will fail to compel individuals to observe a course of action.

That is the ultimate test of a system. Can it deal convincingly with the ultimate problem facing man so that its adherents follow through with its directives? Can it offer solace to the doubtful and those beset with life's travail?

Judaism's traditional method for dealing with the world and for reaching out to God was through the mitzvot and the Halakhah. Despite all the catastrophes of Jewish history and the fragilities of human life, Jews clung to the conception of a just God and his commandments through which they could gain merit and come into contact with Him.

PAST MODELS

But was Jewish rabbinic thought and Jewish philosophy successfully perpetuating such a world view? Some modern historians of Jewish religious thought have felt that medieval rabbinic thinkers failed to validate Judaism for the masses and a gap existed which was filled by the Kabbalists and later by Hasidim such as Schneur Zalman. Scholem, in

Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism¹ claimed that:

One of the decisive weaknesses of classical Jewish philosophy was the fact that it ignored the problem presented by the Halakhah. The whole world of religious law remained outside the orbit of philosophical inquiry, which means of course, too, that it was not subject to philosophical criticism.²

Scholem states that this separation of Halakhah and philosophy was "undeniable"³ and when referring to Maimonides and Saadiah, Scholem stated, "They fail entirely to establish a true synthesis of the two elements, Halakhah and philosophy, a fact which has already been pointed out by Samuel David Luzzatto."⁴ Scholem went on to point out that Maimonides began his Mishneh Torah, his codification of the Halakhah, with a philosophical chapter which had no relationship whatsoever with the Halakhah itself.⁵ Scholem went so far as to call the "synthesis of the spheres [philosophy and Halakhah] ... sterile."⁶ Scholem stated that Maimonides undermined the mitzvot system by claiming that some mitzvot were a concession to the primitive mind, antiquated moral and philosophical ideas, or polemics against long-forgotten pagan rites. "To the philosopher, the Halakhah either had no significance at all, or one that was calculated to diminish rather than to enhance its prestige in his eyes."⁷ The philosopher certainly gave respect to the Halakhah but it was not part of his work as a philosopher.

The Kabbalists saw the matter in a radically different form. In Scholem's words, "But in their interpretation of the religious commandments these are not represented as

allegories of more or less profound ideas, or as pedagogical measures, but rather as the performance of a secret rite."⁸ Scholem went further by telling his reader that despite the possibility of being appalled at the transformation of the Halakhah into a sacrament, the fact remains that this view aided the Halakhah in strengthening "its [the Halakhah's] hold over the people. Every mitswah became an event of cosmic importance, an act which had a bearing upon the dynamics of the universe. The religious Jew became a protagonist in the drama of the world; he manipulated the strings behind the scene."⁹ Jewish philosophy had failed to tie itself successfully with the Halakhah; Scholem claimed that, "a strong link was forged between Kabbalah and Halakhah, ... in large part [it was] responsible for the influence of Kabbalistic thought over the minds and hearts of successive generations."¹⁰

As we have seen, Jewish philosophy failed to come to terms with the Halakhah. Kabbalah was willing to give the Halakhah a purpose within its system. Now, how were these two systems willing to deal with the problems of good and evil and man's contact with God? These were certainly not abstract questions in believer's lives.

Rabbinic Jewish theology posited a benevolent and omnipotent God who rewarded good and punished evil. But, "for the rabbis of the talmudic period the existence of evil in a world created by a merciful and loving God posed a number of theological problems."¹¹ The solutions that the

rabbis of the talmudic period attempted to supply "do not add up to a coherent theodicy."¹² The rabbis insisted that both good and evil derived from God and in that way attempted to refute dualism. But what was God's purpose in having evil occur in creation? One answer is to say that such a question is beyond the grasp of man's intellect, that God will dispense justice as He sees fit (Ber. 7a). Another solution is that the sufferer who seems righteous is not wholly righteous or perhaps he is not a descendant of righteous ancestors and is being punished for their sins. A third solution verges on dualism and posits that evil is from Satan or other demons (Ber. 6a, Gen. R. 84:3). Some find other solutions more compelling such as that evil torments the righteous so that they may be punished for any minor sin they have committed and thereby they will enjoy their full reward in paradise. Another explanation put forth is that the sufferings of the righteous are a form of trial to develop virtues such as patience and faith (Ber. 5a, BM 85a, Gen. R. 9:8). Still others have explained the existence of evil in terms of an "evil inclination" (Hag. 16a) which is a necessary factor in the continued existence of the world. Man could control this evil urge through free will.

The medieval Jewish philosophers accepted some of these solutions to the problem of evil but added some new concepts to the discussion. Saadiah Gaon stated that God did not create evil because evil has no separate existence.

It is nothing more than the absence of good. He saw what evil there was in the world as "afflictions of love" for the righteous. Abraham ibn David argued that evil or defect could not come from God because then He would be a composite. For him, the majority of evils are negations and are not produced by God. Evils such as floods and deformities exist because man has a body and will suffer corruption and destruction. This is natural law. Other evils are socially derived which are due to man's vices and excessive desires. Maimonides rejected the concept of God giving, "afflictions of love," but stated rather, that pain is given for past transgressions. Albo added the idea that perfect saints endure agony to atone for their people or for the entire world.

KABBALAH'S ALTERNATE VIEW

All of these theodicies have major flaws as far as dealing with why evil occurs in the world. Evil, they say, exists because of our sins, or because of our free will, or because of natural law, or to purify us, or because we cannot understand God. There is little we seem to be able to do about changing the course of bad events, of removing evil from the world.

What is the perception of the various Kabbalistic systems as to the cause of evil and what man can do about it? "According to the Zohar, Adam's sin had generated the kelip-pot, and the people's sin continued to activate them."¹³ After 1550, Kabbalistic beliefs began to spread out of the

few study groups and into mass consumption. "The decisive innovation that gave the Lurianic cabbalah its great appeal was the transposition of the central concepts of exile and redemption from the historical to the cosmic and divine plane."¹⁴ In clearer terms, the historical exile and the redemption are seen by the Kabbalah as pointing to a deeper mystical process within God himself. This process has produced the terrestrial events (ie: the exile) and other material processes. The Exile is just the largest example of apparent wrongs and evils that Jews have to face because of the separation between God and Israel. Creation had caused that separation and the shattering of God's vessels is a central process in the Kabbalah. This concept is too complex for us to discuss at this time, but it is important to state that this shattering caused God's light to become enmeshed in the fragments of the shattered vessels in exile on earth. "The powers of evil developed out of the shattered fragments of the vessels, which sank into the lower depths of primordial space."¹⁵

In the Kabbalistic system, Adam failed to complete the tikkun process because he sinned. Man's responsibility is to perform the mitzvot of the Torah and progressively separate good from evil. "Exile was a mission: the Jews had to raise the scattered, holy sparks and liberate the divine light from the realm of evil, which was represented at the material level by the oppression of the Jewish people."¹⁶ This larger landscape of cosmic evil and separation

was one in which the average Jew could play a part. To be more specific, the individual could see his personal suffering as having causes and solutions that he could effect. In specific places in Europe the problem was even more direct: "The emphasis in Poland was on each person's personal struggle with individual demons and evil spirits. Pious behavior and magical safeguards were the weapons used against evil beings."¹⁷

I hope by now that I have placed the Kabbalistic system and its answers in their proper place so that the reader can fully appreciate how important its contribution was to Jewish religious thought and practice. Jewish philosophy left much to be desired when it dealt with good and evil. It gave the average Jew little he could do to alleviate his condition. All he could do was gain merit in this world and wait for death or the Messiah. The Kabbalah may not have produced a foolproof system of explaining the world or theodicy but it certainly gave the Halakhah a purpose. The individual could, through his actions, cause events of cosmic significance and speed up redemption.

THE TANYA'S SYNTHESIS

When Schneur Zalman stated that he had, "selected from books and teachers, heavenly saints whose souls are in Eden, and who are renowned among us,"¹⁸ for material for the Likkutei Amarim he was not just expressing humility. Schneur Zalman quoted profusely from the Zohar, Tikkunei Zohar, and drew on the Sefer Yezirah, the Ari and Vital's

Etz Chayim (among others) for concepts. Schneur Zalman may not have been as much an original thinker as a synthesizer and popularizer of Kabbalistic ideas.

As we have seen, the Kabbalah sought to explain the cause for evil and this explanation placed evil at the core of the working of the universe. The same holds true for the structure of Schneur Zalman's system. Discussing his thought without mentioning concepts such as yetzer ha-ra, kelippot, sitra ahra and other malevolent terms is to ignore the whole thrust of his system's purpose: overcoming evil.

To begin with, every Jew according to the Rav has two souls. One of these souls originates in the kelippah and the sitra ahra and gives life to the body. All evil characteristics coming from the evil elements are contained in it (anger, pride, appetite for pleasure, frivolity, scoffing, boasting, idle talk, sloth, and melancholy).¹⁹ Schneur Zalman is careful to distinguish this kelippah from the other kelippot. This kelippah which is the source of one of the souls of the Jew is the kelippat nogah which contains some good (as well as evil) and is an outer cover for pure evil.²⁰ Non-Jewish souls however, are from the, "unclean kelippot which contains no good whatever."²¹ Just as there are ten Sefirot (attributes or powers) of God and of the human's divine soul, there are also ten impure crowns which oppose or parallel the divine soul.²² (Note: For more on the makeup of man's soul, one should consult Chapter One of this study.)

The kelippot and the sitra ahra (the abominable things) gain their power through man's violations.²³ The animal (or second) soul, which is derived from the kelippat nogah, has evil middot (or emotions) which are compared to a young child who desires and loves petty things. One can be easily provoked to anger, vexation, and boasting. Such behavior is attributed to the middot²⁴ but the qualities of the middot are according to the quality of the person's intellect. The sitra ahra means the other side, the side of non-holiness. This other side is composed of that which is separated from God and has descended by degree and become diminished in this world. That is why this world is known as, "the world of kelipot and sitra achra."²⁵

Therefore, much of what humans come into contact with, by its very nature, is evil. Evil then is defined as that which is separated from God. But, as we have stated before, man's animal soul is a combination of some good mixed with a great deal of evil. This soul can draw even closer to the completely evil kelippot or be "elevated to the category and level of Holiness, as when the good that is intermingled in it is extracted from the bad, and prevails and ascends until it is absorbed in Holiness."²⁶ Matter (which comes from the kelippat nogah) such as meat, for instance, can be utilized for energy in Torah study and thus be elevated. However, matter can also lead to doing a prohibited act such as lust and thus drag the soul down to the kelippot.

This battle of opposites occurs throughout the Tanya.

Good versus evil appears at every turn. This struggle is given graphic symbolism with the idea that the animal soul (nefesh habahamit) "is in the heart, in the left ventricle that is filled with blood ... Hence all lusts and boasting and anger and similar passions are in the heart, and from the heart they spread throughout the whole body ..." ²⁷

The two sources are the left ventricle (evil), as opposed to the head and right ventricle (good) respectively. ²⁸ A human must wage war against the animal soul, "to such an extent that he expels and eradicates its evil from the left part." ²⁹ By doing this he has actually converted evil into good. The nature of man is such that from the outset good has an advantage "because the brain rules over the heart." ³⁰ Also God helps the right side gain mastery over the evil nature as "light over darkness." ³¹

Man can truly serve God and cleave to Him "through the fulfillment of the precepts of the Torah [מצוות] and of the Rabbis [פסוקי דשמוע] and through the study of the Torah which is equivalent to them all." ³² Every living soul has a fervent desire to emerge from its sheath (the body) and cleave to God but since the soul is in the body and cannot grasp God in thought, he can only grasp God through "the Torah and its commandments ... [and] embrace Him with their [his] whole heart soul, and might, which means the fulfillment of the 613 commandments ..." ³³

An interesting aside as to the nature of the kelippot is given in Chapter 22 of the Tanya. Schneur Zalman called

the kelippot other gods (אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים) in a play on words with what the kelippot are usually known as, "'hinder parts' (אֲחֵרִים) of holiness."³⁴ The author goes on to say, "'hinder' [exemplifies] the act of a person giving something unwillingly to an enemy, when he throws it to him over his shoulder, as it were, having turned away his face from him, since he hates him."³⁵ Schneur Zalman is very clear here, declaring that God does not give the sitra ahra and unholiness life from His inner will but rather throws it over his shoulder in order to punish the wicked and give the righteous the reward of subjugating the sitra ahra. Hence, this evil side contains a tiny amount of light and life which is "in a state of actual exile."³⁶ This is the Tan-ya's doctrine of the exile of the Shekhinah.

If an individual actually believes that these are other forces separate from God (whether he calls them other Gods or evil) he is idolatrous and denies the unity of God. The Kabbalah and Schneur Zalman were very clear on this point: There are no independent or autonomous forces operating in the universe. God is the source of all power and he is unitary. "I am, and there is nothing beside me."³⁷ Schneur Zalman continued on in this vein and claimed that arrogance can be compared with idolatry, for the essence of idolatry is the claim that an entity has the power of independent action, to rival or set up a competing system to the power of God.

The author uses this symbolism (elohim aherim) in

another section of the Tanya (Igeret Hakodesh Chapter 25) in a slightly expanded way. In that section Schneur Zalman identified the elohim aherim as patron angels mistaken by the heathens and extended the metaphor of the exile of the Shekhinah. According to Schneur Zalman the first stage of man's exile, as described in the Kabbalah and Genesis Rabbah, began because of the sin of the Tree of Knowledge; this created the ahorayim (the kelippot). Parts of God's essence, the sparks of holiness, became trapped in the kelippot. When the Jews became exiled among the nations, the Shekhinah, which had already been somewhat in exile because of the sin of the Tree of Knowledge, went into total exile along with Israel.

These concepts of the exile of the Shekhinah and the Tree of Knowledge are mentioned often and passed over in a cryptic fashion (Tanya Chapter 17,37,45). We are told that, "When they [the Israelites] were exiled to Edom, the Shechinah went with them."³⁸ Edom, in the Kabbalah, is understood "to represent the principle of judgement"³⁹ ie: A preponderance of judgement (Din) caused the shattering of the kellim at creation. But in the above mentioned quotation, Edom's primary meaning however, is that of evil.

According to Scholem, "The Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge were bound together in perfect harmony until Adam came and separated them, thereby giving substance to evil, which had been contained within the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil ... and is the archetype of all the great

sins mentioned in the Bible ... the introduction of division into the divine unity. the essence of Adam's sin was that it introduced 'separation above and below' into what should have been united, a separation of which every sin is fundamentally a repetition."⁴⁰ Israel's exile is in the form of a mission to gather up those sparks and rejoin them with God. Israel can do this by breaking the power of the sitra ahra and dispersing the forces of evil. Israel may thereby succeed in freeing the Shekhinah somewhat from its exile.⁴¹

The Tanya elaborates further: "the soul itself [neshamah] needs no tikun (mending) at all ... and there is no necessity for it to be embodied in this world ... except in order to bring down the light to ment them ... [the body and animal soul] and this is exactly similar to the esoteric exile of the Shechinah for the purpose of elevating the sparks."⁴² The original sin of the separation of the primordial trees of the Knowledge of Good and Evil and the Tree of Life caused sparks of holiness to be trapped in this world. Divine souls had to be sent down to earth to elevate these sparks back to God, to cause the separation of these sparks from the kelippot. "Only the terrestrial being (can do that), for they are vested in a material body--'hide of the snake,' which is of the kelipat nogah. They weaken its [evil's] strength by crushing the passions and suppressing the sitra achra so that 'all the workers of evil are dispersed.'"⁴³

If it seems I have dwelled too long on an esoteric

matter and unfairly stressed the Kabbalistic aspect of the text, let me quote Schneur Zalman himself to place things in their proper perspective: "I came but to explain the words of the Ba'al Shem Tov , ... and of his disciples, according to the Cabbalah of R. Issac Luria, ... especially since this matter is not of the science of the Cabbalah and of the things 'Secret unto the Lord our G-d; but of the 'Things revealed unto us and unto our children' [the Torah]."⁴⁴ By Schneur Zalman's own admission, therefore, and through my study of the internal evidence, there is a convincing need to set the Tanya in a historical and teleological context.

To Schneur Zalman the "truth" of the Torah was revealed through the teachings of the Baal Shem ^{Tov} and the Kabbalists. That was the correct understanding of the nature of the universe and Israel's connection and service to God. The shattering of the kelim, the scattering of the sparks, was the explanation of the state of the world and the apparent existence of evil. Israel was to disencumber the sparks and meet God in this world through engaging in Torah lishman (Torah for its own sake) and charity.⁴⁵ The descent into this world is so "there be an 'abode for Him among the lowly' in order to elevate them to become one in one."⁴⁶

The Tanya claims that evil does not truly exist "one imagines to have sufferings, or afflictions. In fact, however, no evil descends from above and everything is good, though it is not apprehended because of its immense and

abundant goodness."⁴⁷ The mingling of good and evil is due to the sin of Adam which causes evil to rule over good. "Therefore there will be no peace in the world until the time of the end, when the good shall be disencumbered from the evil ... when the element of the good which sustains it [evil] shall be extracted from its midst."⁴⁸ This apparent existence of evil must not be contributed to by man's sins. "Through his evil deeds and thoughts he 'pulls' and draws down the life-force issuing from the hai into the chambers of the sitra achra..." Teshuvah (and appropriate penance) can reverse that process;⁵⁰ contrition causes the awakening of mercies above and then there is no further nurturing of evil from the life force.⁵¹ Schneur Zalman illustrates the connection of Israel with God in the form of a cord. A sin can snap a strand of the cord but if it reknotted "the place of the knot (קשר) is so much thicker than the unaffected portion."⁵² How does one "reknott" the cord after sin? One should (redouble) Torah study and do good deeds. Man can use these methods to "move from stage to stage, ascending gradually until he attains this superior teshuvah and cleaving of spirit to spirit."⁵³

Schneur Zalman attacked those who claimed that sin is not serious and compared it [sin] with idol worship, avodah zarah, because the individual unites with the kelippat nogah, in other words, gives energy to evil. The ultimate idolatry is to give evil energy; that is serving "other gods," the aherim.

The author could often be quite eloquent when discussing the nature of evil. At times he would describe the sitra ahra as having no vitality of its own and that it is nullified in the presence of holiness "as darkness is nullified before light."⁵⁴

As an example of the use of evil by God, Schneur Zalman brought the parable of the harlot which is mentioned in the Zohar. A king hired a harlot to test the virtue of his son. This is to be compared to why God allows evil to tempt men. If we avoid sin, then there is "great satisfaction before Him ... when the sitra achra is subdued here below."⁵⁵

Schneur Zalman compared the image of the Exodus from Egypt to the "release of the divine sou' from the confinement of the body."⁵⁶ To cause this release one must occupy oneself in the Torah, the commandments, and accepting the kingdom of heaven. Schneur Zalman claimed that the one thing that precludes us from attaching our souls to God is lack of desire. When we truly desire that unity with God then, by saying: "'The Lord is our G-d, the Lord is One' then surely is his soul spontaneously absorbed into His blessed Unity, for 'Spirit evokes spirit, and draws forth spirit.'" This is a form of the Exodus from Egypt."⁵⁷

Schneur Zalman's interpretation of the Kabbalistic concepts of evil has much to recommend it. Evil is defined as of no real power and derived from God. Yet, evil is given a purpose --to test man. Unlike other systems that

denied evil and told man to wait for death or the Messiah, Schneur Zalman presented the Jew with a mission to free good from evil by his actions. By doing so the Jew could please God and speed up the onset of the Messianic Age.

Notes to Chapter Three

¹Gershom Scholem, Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism 1941 rpt., New York: Schocken, 1978)

²Ibid., p. 28.

³Ibid., p. 28.

⁴Ibid., pp. 28-9.

⁵Ibid., p. 29.

⁶Ibid., p. 29.

⁷Ibid., p. 29.

⁸Ibid., p. 29.

⁹Ibid., pp. 29-30.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 30.

¹¹Encyclopedia Judaica, ed. Prof. Cecil Roth, Dr. Geoffrey Wegoder, (Jerusalem: Keter, 1972) p. 775.

¹²Ibid., p. 775.

¹³Stephen Sharot, Messianism, Mysticism, and Magic, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina), p. 39.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 96.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 96.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 97.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 100.

¹⁸Schneur Zalman, Likutei Amarim-Tanya, trans. and annot. from 1814 Shkloved by Nissan Mindel, Z. Posner, and J. Schochet, (London: Kehot Publishing, Bilingual ed., 1973), p. XIV.

- ¹⁹Ibid., p. 3,5.
- ²⁰Ibid., p. 5.
- ²¹Ibid., p. 5.
- ²²Ibid., p. 21.
- ²³Ibid., p. 13.
- ²⁴Ibid., p. 21.
- ²⁵Ibid., p. 23.
- ²⁶Ibid., p. 27.
- ²⁷Ibid., p. 35.
- ²⁸Ibid., p. 35.
- ²⁹Ibid., p. 39.
- ³⁰Ibid., p. 49.
- ³¹Ibid., p. 53.
- ³²Ibid., p. 67.
- ³³Ibid., p. 69.
- ³⁴Ibid., p. 91.
- ³⁵Ibid., p. 91.
- ³⁶Ibid., p. 91.
- ³⁷Ibid., p. 93, Isa 47:8.
- ³⁸Ibid., p. 541 Meg. 29a, Mechilta on Exodus 12:41
- ³⁹Gershom Scholem, p. 117.
- ⁴⁰Ibid., p. 124.

⁴¹Tanya, pp. 73,75.

⁴²Ibid., p. 175.

⁴³Ibid., p. 561.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 547.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 453.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 617.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 447.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 451, 453.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 365, 367.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 367.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 373.

⁵²Ibid., p. 377.

⁵³Ibid., p. 377.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 131.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 117.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 247.

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 249.

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APPENDIX TO CHAPTER THREE: A BRIEF COMPARISON
OF IDEAS IN THE TANYA, MESILLAT YESHARIM,
AND SALANTER'S THOUGHT

At one time I felt that a comparison of the above mentioned works would be interesting and rewarding. I still believe that is the case but now feel it would warrant a full-length study and anything less would be too cursory. The aim of this appendix is to briefly cite some of the points of comparison between the Tanya, Mesillat Yesharim, and Salanter's thought which may be useful for further study.

LUZZATTO

Luzzatto stated, "that man was created for the sole purpose of rejoicing in God and deriving pleasure from the splendor of his Presence; for this is true joy and the greatest pleasure that can be found."¹ "The foundation of saintliness and the root of perfection in the service of God lies"² in a man's coming to see that, "The means which lead a man to this goal are the mitzvot..."³ which must be done in this world. He also stated that only union with God constitutes perfection but that man was in the midst of a "raging battle" between earthy desires and his desire to unite with God. According to Luzzatto, "the soul has no love at all for this world. To the contrary, it despises it."⁴ To Luzzatto, what we can draw in this world as far as pleasures are concerned, are merely in order to aid and assist us so we can be content and free our hearts to serve God.

All the above mentioned ideas could easily fall into any part of the Tanya and are certainly in harmony with Schneur Zalman's thought. What is different between the two writers, it seems to me, is that Schneur Zalman consciously made reference to Kabbalistic categories and symbols while Luzzatto, quite a Kabbalist himself, did not use or credit such a tradition in Mesillat Yesharim. Luzzatto, unlike Schneur Zalman, organized his work to highlight a path leading to perfection: watchfulness, zeal, cleanliness, separation, purity, saintliness, humility, fear of Sin and holiness. Schneur Zalman did not use these gradations in his presentation but in essence there is little difference in their ideas. In Luzzatto's system, for instance, the top of the gradations is holiness which is the state of "completely separating and removing... from earthiness and clinging always, at all periods and times to ... God."⁵ But this is impossible because humans are of flesh and blood. Therefore, most people can only aspire to the pursuit of true understanding and think about sanctifying deeds. If one does this, God will rest upon the individual and he will have constant intimacy with the Creator. If we remember Schneur Zalman's thought on the highest of human potential we can see a clear comparison.

SALANTER

The situation is quite different in Salanter's thought. Schneur Zalman theorized that man has two souls: one divine and one animal. Luzzatto stated man's soul was not in love

with this world (let us say divine). Lusts were from the yetzer ha'ra. Salanter is less clear on these issues. The untutored man has unbridled lusts, wills, inclinations, and corrupt character traits.⁶ Choice is the only human faculty not subordinate to lust and that free will can transmute lusts and the corrupted character. Salanter's concepts are not in total disharmony with the other two but his emphasis is more on the corruption of the human being. All three are respectful of the differences between people and their environment but Salanter is more scathing in his denunciations of human frailties.⁷ But in practice, Salanter urged the same methods as Schneur Zalman: daily routine or study characterized by knowledge, intelligence, and fear of God. "The mere idea of fear of God, Rabbi Israel said, is intrinsically powerless to shape the human experiential mechanism. To affect this mechanism, fear of God must be joined to intellect through 'strategems' and 'study.'"⁸ Israel Salanter saw this struggle to serve God as a continual one, going from external concept to internalization. He spoke often of subjugating the yetzer and transmutation. He urged verbalized study and regular hours for musar work. The aim however, was a non-mystical union with God. He, like Schneur Zalman, stressed Divine service for its own sake and stressed exertion as an ideal. He also placed much importance on habit and its ability to transform the person. Salanter saw man's job as attempting to balance his soul's forces and trying to apprehend God through

pure reason. He saw a distinction between arousing anxiety (which is a key to teshuvah) and despair (which leads to alienation from God.) Schneur Zalman would have agreed with him on that matter. According to Salanter, if one used musar correctly he could elevate himself and then God would elevate him higher.

MAJOR DIFFERENCES

The major differences between Schneur Zalman and Israel Salanter are in their conceptions of man and the ultimate direction of the spiritual pursuit. Salanter concentrated on forces and claimed that evil is the yetzer ha-ra and yetzer ha tov is intellect and fear of God. Schneur Zalman used other terms and emphasized souls much more although they both stressed fear of God (Schneur Zalman stressed love as well) and intellect. The ultimate direction is much different. For Schneur Zalman one can have mystical union with God; for Salanter, a comprehension of God and a non-mystical union is all that is possible. All three thinkers agree on the methods of how to achieve their slightly different ends: study, humility, and fear of God.

Notes to Chapter Three, APPENDIX

¹Moshe Luzzatto, The Path of the Just/Mesillat Yesharim, trans. by Shraga Silverstein, (Jerusalem: Feldheim Publishers, 2nd rev. bilingual ed. 1966), p. 17.

²Ibid., p. 17.

³Ibid., p. 17.

⁴Ibid., p. 25.

⁵Ibid., p. 327.

⁶Hillel Goldberg, Israel Salanter: Text, Structure, Idea, (New York: Ktav, 1982) pp. 20-21.

⁷Ibid., p. 25.

⁸Ibid., p. 30.

CHAPTER FOUR: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

INTRODUCTION

The purposes of this chapter are to articulate the major issues that have been described in the preceding chapters and to attempt to enunciate what the Tanya can contribute to the future of non-Orthodox Judaism. This then will be an attempt to glean the central issues and methods that I have seen in the Tanya and the ones that can become the foundations for a modern alternative to the present anarchy of religious expression.

RESISTANCE TO KABBALISTIC INFLUENCE

In the late Eighteenth Century, Rebe Abraham Kalisker, a Ukrainian Hasidic master, accused Schneur Zalman of "'garbing the teachings of the BeSHT in the teachings of Luria' and thus confusing the minds of ordinary hasidim."¹ These attacks against various teachers for using Kabbalism in their systems is not new and not restricted to only Hasidic teachers. As I have mentioned in other parts of this thesis, Kabbalah has often not been approved if taught outside restricted study groups.

Kabbalah and Hasidic teachings are not viewed, even after Scholem's scholarly work and Buber's translation of tales, with much more than a wary nostalgic interest. Certainly articles can appear in mainstream Jewish publications on Jewish mysticism, and Hasidic stories can be retold by congregational rabbis but will the concepts which are the

foundations of the Hasidic world-view affect the core of mainstream Judaism? Can Schneur Zalman's thought, for instance, contribute a framework to replace the ghost of the religion of reason? I would like to briefly sum up what the Tanya offers us on the issues of the nature of man, the connection with God, human emotions, and courses of action.

THE NATURE OF MAN AND THE CONNECTION WITH GOD

Most men are not all good (a zaddik) or all evil (rasha gamur). The majority of Jews are benonim, people who avoid sinning and wish to unite with God. This division of human beings seems to be very appropriate to our times. The world certainly lacks individuals who have destroyed their lusts (zaddikim) and there are few who have no dread whatsoever of God (reshaim gemurim). Humans have a desire to do good and have a difficult time describing feelings of emptiness and loneliness which cause them to desire connection with things greater than themselves (God, country, organizations, communities, families). But individuals find themselves drawn to baser things (sinning) which are often associated with the fleshy things of this world. Schneur Zalman understood and described this condition very well in the Tanya. Our bodies often desire things which are not right for us to acquire. At times many of us have had the feeling that if only we did not have bodies or emotions that draw us away from what we really should be concerned with, we would accomplish so much of what is truly worthwhile.

The author of the Tanya wrote that the benoni could overcome these evil urges and contact God. Rather than there being a separation between God and man a divine spark of God was present in us (the divine soul). We are part of God in a very direct way.

Rather than basing his philosophy on man, Schneur Zalman directed the reader to appeal to God. Our human abilities are not equal to the struggle; we are not stronger than the universe, only God has such power. Only God's help, the fear and love of Him, and devotion to His Law could help us overcome the evil urge and help us rejoin him. In fact, the performance of all the mitzvot were seen as necessary to avoid reincarnation (a concept the Tanya accepts).

At this point the modern Jew probably draws away. The modern mind worships personal autonomy and radical freedom. Frankly, I think this God of Autonomous Anarchy is a cruel joke. If a person is told he is free and can choose whatever he wants, I believe, he becomes confused, uncomfortable, bored, and eventually does what others around him are doing. Very few of us are innovators or self-actualized, autonomous beings. Most people seek advice and rules for conduct outside themselves and our society functions best when there are clear (as well as fair) laws and strong authorities. In Schneur Zalman's thought the emphasis was on acknowledging the power of God and our connection to the Divine which empowers us to overcome evil and

join Him. God is seen as the Reality of the Universe. Evil is an illusion and its separation from God is the prime delusion.

The power of love (directed to God) is the key to our power. Humans must despise pleasure and mundane things if they are to be true to their true essence. Our brains can rule over our desires and can (through will power) control our words, thoughts, and actions. If we sin, repentance and good deeds can clear ourselves with God. Sadness and dullness of heart must be avoided because they can undo repentance and good intentions. It is very wrong for one to dwell on his errors in sadness. Sadness in itself is not a virtue but is only useful if it causes us to turn from evil and do good. We must serve God in joy for we cannot serve Him in sorrow, that would separate us from Him.

The modern Jewish malady could be typified as a wish for commitment but a refusal to commit oneself to any concept or set of actions. If nothing else, Schneur Zalman was very clear on these two areas: the authority is God and the mitzvot (Torah) are the plan. That may be too rigorous for Westerners to accept, but I suggest that without an agreement somewhat along those lines, we may have no alternative but becoming increasingly schizophrenic in our religious theory and practice as well as equally confusing in our attempts to transmit Judaism.

HUMAN EMOTIONS AND COURSES OF ACTION

Beside describing a fairly clear God--man relationship, Schneur Zalman presented a number of practical methods to help the benoni in his battle against evil and toward God. The list I am going to present is only a selection of Schneur Zalman's suggestions for religious behavior but it is representative of his thought and his emphasis on conscious actions:

1. Minimize talking about mundane matters.
2. Postpone meals to study Torah.
3. Abstinence
4. Repentance
5. Struggle
6. Contemplate the sins of youth.
7. Keep a reckoning of thoughts and utterances and determine whether they were on the side of holiness or evil.
8. Be humble before all men.
9. Stress the unity of all Israel.
10. Love each other and have compassion. If one rebukes another, the rebuked one must be of one's own group. Others must be drawn by love, not criticized.
11. Engage in Torah study; do righteous acts.
12. Concentrate during prayer and meditation on God's greatness, especially while putting on tefillin and tallit.
13. When saying the Shema one should concentrate on the fear and kindness in one's soul, as well as the Gevurah's sternness and love which are in the heart.

The stress in all these matters is on conscious actions and the emphasis is on the necessity of fear and love. Simply intending to do good is not enough. One can repent and

that is certainly moving in the right direction but what does that actually accomplish? Becoming despondent about one's condition is counter-productive and makes positive actions even more difficult. The goal of the mitzvot, of positive action or rejection of evil, is to make human actions sacred and meaningful because they join us with God and his purpose. But our problem is not only motivating ourselves to do good, to do the mitzvot, but believing there is a Good that can be done and that the mitzvot have a relationship with that Good. These problems have a long history traceable back to Maimonides and are still with us today in the Reform movement.

When Maimonides, and others, claimed that many mitzvot were historically bound or were a reaction to pagan practices he undermined the basis of Jewish practice. What was the sense behind it? Did God really want it? Schneur Zalman and other Hasidic masters, by contrast, claimed the mitzvot were necessary to serve God, that the Torah and mitzvot were parts of God and human involvement with them was essential. Schneur Zalman stated that the performance of a mitzvah caused a flood of light to descend on the person performing the act. Charity brings redemption. Torah study draws down the Ein Sof. In other words, these acts are claimed to have purpose and produce rewards. Without purpose and rewards, why do them? Stating that they are Jewish practices and folkways is simply not enough. The performance of rites and rituals must be endowed with sanctity or the act becomes meaningless and boring. Schneur Zalman understood

the power of symbols and the psychology behind habitual behavior very well. People find it difficult to do habitual behavior but the stress on and performance of habitual behavior could cause a certain attitude and change in the individual's life.

Ideally, Schneur Zalman's system encourages a great deal of understanding of the differences between people. The Tanya recognized that the world was made up of Jews and non-Jews, the later he unfortunately consigned to the realm of the kelippot and claimed they had only animal souls. Although we can understand historically why he felt this way, this perception is unacceptable for liberals on many grounds and has to be totally repudiated or reinterpreted. Schneur Zalman recognized that different people are involved in different circumstances and have different temperaments. Because this is the case, one should not be quick to judge others. Humility and compassion between people are essential. All must understand that the time involved in meditation and exertion is not the same for all people. Consideration and care must be taken in dealing with these differences.

Schneur Zalman took into account that we have a tendency to exert ourselves to an extreme level or, on the other hand, we have another tendency to only do the absolute minimum required. The Alter Rebbe described these tendencies as akin to the parts of the Sefirot called Hesed and Gevurah and quite aptly stated that these two forces had to be balanced. The major issue involved is the internal struggle

of extremes between passionate intentions and limitations. The author often clearly indicated how competing forces within personality would struggle against each other. How could a person resolve the struggle between the animal and divine souls, judgment and mercy, despair and joy? When all is said and done, it is up to the individual to:

1) commit himself to habitual behavior which can suppress the evil inclination and 2) consciously concentrate the intellectual faculties toward union with God.

What are we ultimately left with? Is the reader to leave this work with the impression that Schneur Zalman's writings represent an arcane gospel of the struggle between darkness and light in which the only hope for man is to curb his evil impulse through self denial? Are we to feel that this book is without any application to the world outside of the sect that holds this doctrine? I hope I have shown the reader that there are important elements in the Tanya to learn and practice.

THE CHALLENGE

If it has not been made clear earlier, let me now state what Schneur Zalman's thought can contribute to the future of Jewish thought. The future theologians of Judaism will have to struggle with the issues of purpose for and commitment to Jewish practice and will have to articulate and motivate the Jewish community to actualize what is preached. Schneur Zalman was not original when he wrote of Jewish practice from a Kabbalistic perspective and used

its symbolism. But what may make the work effective beyond those committed to the Habad ideal is the Tanya's articulation of an ideal commanding but loving God who has given us acts to perform on earth so we can overcome the material, mundane world and rejoin God. The issue ultimately is one of purpose. Is there a purpose to religion? Is Israel merely a chauvinistic ethnic group that practices folk customs in declining numbers? I hope there is more to the faith of Israel than that. If there truly is more to being Jewish than the political state of Israel or a gypsy band of cosmopolitans, then we have to reformulate our understanding of our existence and purpose. Arthur Green has stated, "We twentieth-century Jews suffer, among other things, from a terrible impoverishment of the imagination."² and suggested that "one of the elements I seek in the kabbalah is the legitimization of the life of fantasy and religious imagination."³ What makes the Kabbalistic system so appropriate for our time (and Schneur Zalman's use of it as well) is that many of the users of the system itself make no claim that it represents the reality of God and the universe; it is only a metaphor or a rough approximation. The tradition itself claims that its explanations cannot come close to explaining the grandeur or mystery of God and I think that this attitude is one of its strongest merits. Dogmas, we can do well without. Visions are another matter. Proverbs 29:18 states: "בְּאֵין חֲזוֹן יִפְּרֹץ עָץ וְאֵין תּוֹכַח אֶשְׁרֵפָה." which I translate as "Where there is no vision the people

cast off restraint but blessed is the one who keeps the Torah." The times call for a new vision, a vision of Judaism which clearly states that prayer and mitzvot are powerful and sacred in and of themselves because they connect us with the most Sacred. We need a new vision of how we are as human beings which takes into account the nature of evil; free will; and the internal struggle within the individual of various forces such as love, restraint and greed. The Tanya deals effectively with all these issues. I hope I have highlighted these aspects effectively and that the reader will leave this work with some new insights from which he or she will be challenged to struggle further with these issues and contribute to a revival of Jewish spirituality. We desperately need a synthesis of imagination, faith, commitment, doubt, and joy. Let us hope we can raise the sparks in each other.

Notes to the summary

¹ Arthur Green, Tormented Master: A Life of Rabbi Nahman of Bratslav (1979 rpt. New York: Schocken ed., 1981) p. 98.

² Arthur Green, "Jewish Mysticism in a Contemporary Theology of Judaism," Shefa Quarterly, Vol. I no. 4, (Sept. 1978), p. 38.

³ Ibid., p. 37.

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