ב״ה



SELF DIAGNOSIS

The haters' arguments can teach us what's important, what's true, and what needs improvement.

TEACHER'S MANUAL

JEWISH INSIGHTS

A TASTE OF THE REBBE'S TEACHINGS

19 KISLEV

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Shluchim of the Rebbe to Mumbai India

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The Alter Rebbe writes: “When I read the verse of Pslams, “Redeem my soul in peace” I left in peace; peace is from G-d" (Source 1). The Talmud associates this verse with the mitzvot; one who studies Torah, does acts of kindness, and prays with the community (Source 2). The Rebbe notes that the libel against the Alter Rebbe centered on these three issues.

The claims were that Chassidut would bring a laxity toward Torah, that the charity sent to Israel was to support the Ottoman Empire, and that the new prayer liturgy demonstrated that Chassidism was a new cult.

The Rebbe explains that in general, the rule is that if one asks for advice from an enemy, they will give advice that is the exact opposite of the correct course of action. Here too, the fact that such accusations were presented in the Czar’s court proves that the reality was precisely the opposite.

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Chabad Chassidut emphasizes the importance of humility before Torah scholars, out of deference to the Torah’s greatness. The Alter Rebbe was a tremendous scholar in the area of Jewish law, the greatest virtue - Saul envied David because the law was ruled in David’s favor (Source 3-4), and Beit Hillel merited that the law followed their ruling.

The Maggid of Mezritch gave the Alter Rebbe the task of writing a code of Jewish Law (Source 5), unique in that it was concise, yet explained the reasoning behind the rulings.

The accusations were that the Alter Rebbe would degrade the primacy of the Torah, however the truth was precisely the opposite.

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Charity: The Torah study and mitzvah observance that was enabled through sending charity to Israel would hasten the coming of Moshiach, freeing the Land of Israel from Ottoman rule, in other words, this was opposing the Ottoman Empire. The accusations, however, claimed that these funds would support the Ottoman rule.

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As “falsehood has no legs,” so there must have been a kernel of truth in the allegations. What

could it have been? After his release, the Alter Rebbe's involvement in Torah study, prayer and charitable acts was at a far greater scale than before. The allegations essentially pressed the olive and brought forth its oil.

Lesson: We must add in our Torah study, prayer and charity.

Introduction

The Alter Rebbe's opponents made three libelous charges against him. In this class, we we learn what they were, what the truth was, and how to apply it to our lives.

השיעור לי"ט כסליו

משיחת י"ט כסלו ה'תשל"ב,
הנחה בלתי מוגה.
תורת מנחם, כרך ס"ו עמוד 317 ואילך.

לשמיעת השיחה:

השיחה כפי שפורסמה במגזין הווידאו "תורת חיים":

A. The Holiday of the 19th of Kislev

The 19th of Kislev is marked as the "New Year's of Chassidism." On this day in 1798, Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi (1745–1812), the founder of the Chabad movement, was released from a Czarist prison. The joy of his release wasn't just his own; this day opened a new chapter in the history of the Chassidic movement and marked a new era in the dissemination of the Torah's inner dimension.

Chassidism already took root two generations prior. The founder of the Chassidic movement, Rabbi Yisroel Baal Shem Tov (1698–1760), revealed mystical ideas of Chassidism which were, until then, only accessible to a select few. After his passing, the movement continued to gain momentum under his successor, Rabbi Dovber "the Maggid of Mezritch." He too, had a special connection with the 19th of Kislev: It was the day he left this world, 26 years before Rabbi Schneur Zalman was released from prison. Shortly before his passing, the Maggid even told Rabbi Schneur Zalman, "this day is our holiday."

Rabbi Schneur Zalman took it a step further by founding Chassidus Chabad — Chassidism which can be brought down in philosophy, in a set form of learning, contemplation, and self-evaluation, which transformed abstract mystical parts of Kabbalah to be understood and applicable to one's everyday life.

During its pioneering years, the Chassidus movement faced great opposition — at times very intense — from the established Rabbinate and Jewish establishment.

In the fall of 1798, several Jews in the opposition went to the government and falsely accused Rabbi Schneur Zalman of fomenting a rebellion against the czar. Rabbi Schneur Zalman was arrested on charges of treason and sent to the Petropavalsky prison in St. Petersburg. Fifty-three days later, he was miraculously released and acquitted from all charges.

Rabbi Schneur Zalman saw the imprisonment as a reflection of the heavenly opposition to his decision to disseminate the secrets of Torah, and therefore saw his release as a vindication as well. Therefore, after 19 Kislev, he intensified his efforts in disseminating Chassidism and expanding his ideas.

The Alter Rebbe describes the moment he was freed in this letter:

Redeemed my soul in peace

Source 1 Hayom Yom, 19 Kislev

Student's pg. 3

From the Alter Rebbe's letter:

מִמִּכְתָּב רַבֵּנוּ הַזָּקֵן:

This indeed must be made known, that on the day G-d made for us, the 19th of Kislev,

בְּרָם כְּגוֹן דָּא צָרִיךְ לְהוֹדִיעַ, כִּי יוֹם אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה הַשֵּׁם לָנוּ יוֹם י"ט כִּסְלֵו,

יוֹם ג' שֶׁהֻכְפַּל בּוֹ כִּי טוֹב, יוֹם הִלּוּלָא רַבָּא שֶׁל רַבֵּנוּ הַקָּדוֹשׁ נִשְׁמָתוֹ עֵדֶן, וּכְשֶׁקָּרִיתִי בְּסֵפֶר תְּהִלִּים בְּפָסוּק "פָּדָה בְשָׁלוֹם נַפְשִׁי", קֹדֶם שֶׁהִתְחַלְתִּי פָּסוּק שֶׁלְּאַחֲרָיו, יָצָאתִי בְּשָׁלוֹם מֵהַשֵּׁם שָׁלוֹם.

Tuesday (the day on which "it was good" was said twice in Torah), the yahrzeit of our holy teacher whose soul is in Eden, while I was reading in the book of Tehillim the verse "He redeemed my soul in peace," before beginning the following verse, I emerged in peace by the act of the G-d of peace.

The Alter Rebbe was accustomed to reciting Psalms daily, dividing the book into seven parts. On Tuesday, the chapters were 51-72. On that day, as the Alter Rebbe was reciting chapter 55, saying the words of the verse "He redeemed my soul in peace" the guards entered his room and informed him that he was free.

Years later, the Chassidim composed a tune to those words, concluding with the word "And I trust in Him." This became a song identified with the holiday of the 19th of Kislev and is sung by Chassidim with great fervor. (Click here to see a 3-minute video of Pada Beshalom being sung by the Rebbe)

On the first anniversary of his freedom, the Alter Rebbe celebrated a "holiday of redemption." Many Chassidim traveled from all over Russia to celebrate his freedom, the victory of light over darkness, and Chassidut over its opponents. The Alter Rebbe recited a Chassidic discourse, beginning with the words "He redeemed my soul in peace" and from then on, the Chabad rebbes recited a discourse opening with those words every year on the 19th of Kislev.

In this talk, said on the 19th of Kislev, 5732, the Rebbe focuses on the commentaries on this verse and their relevance to the saga of the imprisonment and release.

>> The Rebbe

Student's pg. 3

The Alter Rebbe was of course aware of the reason for his imprisonment. After his release, he said that his liberation was associated with the verse "He redeemed my soul with peace." This is a verse in the Written Torah, in the book of Psalms. To understand its meaning we must look into the Oral Torah, the Talmud in Tractate Berachot.

רבינו הזקן, שבודאי ידע מדוע הושיבוהו במאסר, וכיצד לאחרי זה הוא שוחרר ויצא לחירות, אמר ששחרורו היה קשור עם הפסוק "פדה בשלום", שזהו פסוק בתנ"ך - בתהלים. וכדי לדעת את הפירוש של הפסוק הזה, צריך להסתכל בתורה שבעל-פה - בגמרא במסכת ברכות.

Source 2 Talmud, Berachot 8a

Student's pg. 3

What does "He redeemed my soul in peace" mean? G-d said: Whoever studies Torah, acts charitably and prays with the congregation, I will consider it as if they have redeemed Myself and My children from among the nations.

פָּדָה בְשָׁלוֹם נַפְשִׁי מִקְרֵב לִי וגו' אָמַר הקב"ה, כָּל הָעוֹסֵק בְּתוֹרָה וּבִגְמִילוּת חֲסָדִים וּמִתְפַּלֵּל עִם הַצִּבּוּר, מַעֲלֶה אֲנִי עָלָיו כְּאִלּוּ פְּדָאַנִי לִי וּלְבָנַי מִבֵּין אֻמּוֹת הָעוֹלָם.

The Talmud says that G-d proclaims that anyone who studies Torah, acts charitably, and prays with the congregation is considered as though they redeemed G-d and the Jewish people from captivity.

Why these three mitzvot specifically? The Rebbe explains in a talk:

>> The Rebbe

Student's pg.3

The redemption of the Alter Rebbe is thus connected with three elements: (a) "engaging in Torah study," (b) "acts of kindness," and (c) "praying with the congregation."

One commentator notes that these are the three pillars on which the world rests: Torah study, prayer, and acts of kindness.

Another commentator notes that these three elements correspond to the three faculties of thought, speech, and action. Torah study is properly done verbally, in speech; acts of kindness are performed with the faculty of action; and prayer is the "service of the heart," the faculty of thought.

ומזה מובן שהפדיה והגאולה של רבינו הזקן קשורה עם שלושת העניינים: (א) "העוסק בתורה", (ב) "ובגמילות חסדים", (ג) "ומתפלל עם הציבור".

והם שלושת העמודים שעליהם העולם עומד: תורה, עבודה וגמילות חסדים

(כפירוש המהרש"א), או שלושת העניינים: מחשבה, דיבור ומעשה (כפירוש הרשב"א): "העוסק בתורה", שצריך להיות באופן של "מוציאיהם בפה" - ענין הדיבור; "ובגמילות חסדים" - ענין המעשה, "ומתפלל עם הציבור" - "עבודה שבלב זו תפלה", שזהו ענין המחשבה.

Triple Slander

Student's pg. 4

The slanderous accusations made against the Alter Rebbe were about Torah study, acts of kindness - charity, and communal prayer.

One accusation was that the new Chassidic movement would lead to a disregard for Torah study.

A second accusation was that the charity money that the Alter Rebbe sent to the Land of Israel for the support of Torah scholars, widows, and orphans was a contribution to the Russian Czar's military enemies.

ובכן: המלשינות שבה האשימו את רבינו הזקן - כפי שתורגמה על ידי גוים - היתה בנוגע ל"העוסק בתורה", בנוגע ל"גמילות חסדים" וצדקה, ובנוגע לענין "מתפלל עם הציבור":

טענה אחת היתה בנוגע להשפעה על לימוד התורה - שיבואו לזלזל בלימוד התורה;

טענה נוספת היתה בנוגע לגמילות חסדים - שהכסף ששלח רבינו הזקן ל"כולל" שבארץ ישראל עבור החזקת תלמידי חכמים, אלמנות ויתומים וכו',

נתפרש על ידם ששולחים זאת כדי להילחם נגד ה"צאַר"; וכן טענו בנוגע לאריכות בתפלה, נוסח חדש בתפלה, ו"שטיבלעך" נפרדים וכו' - שנעשית "כת" חדשה כו', כמבואר בארוכה ב"כתב ההלשנה".

The third accusation was about the extra length of chassidic prayer, the institution of a new prayer book, and the opening of separate synagogues. These changes to prayer were presented in the allegations as proof this was a new religious sect [which was illegal in Russia at the time].

The allegations made against the Alter Rebbe included charges that the Chassidic movement is disrupting the communal order and conspiring against the government. The Rebbe here notes a very interesting point - the accusations focused on matters related to the three pillars of Judaism, Torah, prayer, and acts of kindness.

Allegation One - Torah Study

The claim was that the Chassidic path would lead to disregard for Torah study. This was said in the wake of two chassidic innovations:

A. In those days, one of the most important things in the Jewish community was honoring Torah scholars. The elite class of scholars was seen as far more important and special than the regular folk. They had their own synagogues, they usually married among their own, and the effect this elitism had on the regular folk is obvious. Chassidut preached that all Jews are equal; all are beloved children of G-d. It lowered the barriers between people and put everyone back at the same table. The purity of the regular folk was something to be proud of, Chassidut said, and perhaps their Torah and mitzvot—done simply and with the purest of intentions—was dearer to G-d than the deep Torah study of the scholarly class.

B. In those days, Torah study was the most important thing for the rabbinic establishment, and prayer took second place, or perhaps even lower. They didn't put much effort into their prayers, they showed up to synagogue, said the prayers quickly, and continued on to the main thing - Torah study. Chassidut stresses the importance of prayer from the heart. A person must feel as though they stand before the king, where every word must come from the heart. Obviously, such prayer took much longer. This prayer was accompanied by great excitement—something quite novel in those days—and the movement swept up many youngsters who were entranced by such Divine service.

The opponents of Chassdut came out against these two innovations, claiming that undermining the elite scholarly class and focusing more on prayer would undermine Torah itself.

2. Allegation Two - Charity

In 1788, the Alter Rebbe established a charity organization called "Colel Chabad." The goal of this charity was to materially support the Jews in Israel, who suffered greatly financially. Over the years, the Alter Rebbe sent enormous sums - collected from Jews all over Russia and the region - to support the Jews of Israel.

Israel was then under Ottoman occupation, and the Ottoman Empire was at war with Russia. The Alter Rebbe's opponents falsely alleged that the money was being sent to Turkey to aid their war with Russia.

3. Allegation Three - Prayer

One of the original characteristics of the Chassidic movement was the adoption of a different prayer liturgy. The established liturgy in Eastern Europe was the Ashkenazic rite, and Chassidim switched to a liturgy following the Kabalistic tradition of the Arizal, based the Sefardic rite.

Regarding the importance of the Arizal's liturgy, the Maggid of Mezritch writes: "The Jerusalem Talmud established that there are twelve gates which the prayer of the twelve tribes pass through. Each tribe has its own unique gate. In addition to these twelve, there is a thirteenth gate, a universal gate, where universal prayers go through. This universal liturgy was revealed by the Arizal."

This provoked the opponents of Chassidut and they claimed it violated the law that one may not vary from the accepted custom.

Being that their liturgy was different, and they prayed at length with great excitement, the Chassidim opened their own synagogues so as to not disrupt the prayers of the existing congregations. Their opponents saw this as a threat to the status quo and claimed this was a new cult. They also claimed that the liturgical changes were disrespectful to prayer and to the accepted liturgy.

ידוע מה שכתוב בספרים בנוגע לענין ד"ותשועה ברוב יועץ" - שבפשטות מובן שיש להתייעץ עם אוהב - שכאשר אדם נמצא במעמד ומצב שאין בסביבתו אוהבים, אזי יש עצה נוספת: לשמוע חוות-דעת של השונא, ולעשות להיפך!... גם כאן, הטענות שהשונא הגוי השמיע בפני המקטרג (שהקטיגור השמיע בפני בית המשפט), היה ענין שהוא היפך האמת.

Student's pg. 4

The verse states that "victory is won through many advisers." Of course the first choice is to seek advice from a friend. But some commentators add that when a person is in a situation where they don't have any friend available to ask for advice, they should seek the advice of an enemy and do the opposite! Along the same lines, all of the allegations made by the enemies of the Chassidic movement were the opposite of reality.

If you ask an enemy for advice he will counsel you the exact opposite of what is good for you. Here too, the fact that the prosecutor made these allegations in court indicates that the exact opposite is true. The Rebbe goes through the allegations one by one, and shows how the reality is 180 degrees different.

B. Torah Study

>> The Rebbe

Student's pg. 6

First, regarding the allegation that the Chassidic movement disregards Torah study. The teachings of Chassidut, and especially of the Chabad school, explain the great value of Torah, raising it to a far higher level than it was considered previously.

ובפרטיות יותר - בנוגע ללימוד התורה: תורת החסידות בכלל, ועל-אחת-כמה-וכמה חסידות חב"ד - מסבירה את יקר התורה שלא בערך לגבי אופן ההסתכלות על התורה שהיתה עד אז.

Humility

Student's pg. 6

This change regarding Torah study was expressed on two levels:

הדבר התבטא בשני קוים:

Firstly, as great of a scholar as a person may be, the Torah is always greater, "longer than the earth and wider than the sea." Therefore, all of one's Torah achievements pale into insignificance compared to all the Torah that remains to be learned. Even the greatest scholar must study as if he has only just begun.

א) ככל שתגדל מעלתו של ה"למדן", למדן אמיתי - הרי התורה היא גדולה יותר ממנו, להיותה "ארוכה מארץ מדה ורחבה מיני ים", וכיון שכן, הרי כל מה שפעל בתורה, אינו בערך לגבי מה שישנו עוד בתורה, כך, שעליו להמשיך ללמוד תורה כאילו שזה עתה רק מתחיל ללמוד תורה.

Chassidut teaches the scholar the need for humility in the face of the greatness of the Torah. True, you have learned a great deal, but the Torah is much broader and deeper, and you still have so much to learn. You must feel humble and keep on learning as if you've just begun.

Practical Law

Student's pg. 6

Secondly, Chassidut places a special emphasis on "study is great because it leads to action." One of the first works of the Alter Rebbe—before he assumed the leadership of Chabad, and as a preparation for it—was focused on reaching the practical legal conclusions from Torah study, "G-d's word - this is halachah."

ב) הדגשה מיוחדת על הענין ד"גדול תלמוד שמביא לידי מעשה", כפי שמצינו שאחת הפעולות של רבינו הזקן - עוד לפני שנתמנה לנשיא, בתור הכנה להנשיאות - היתה למצוא בתורה פסק דין ברור להלכה בפועל, "דבר הוי' זו הלכה".

The Talmud relates that David and Jonathan were great scholars. When Doeg told King Saul about David's scholarly abilities, he wasn't moved, saying "my son Jonathan is just as good." But when Doeg told Saul that "G-d is with him - the law is always decided in accordance with his opinion," Saul became upset and jealous, because that is something that even he did not merit.

וכפי שמצינו בגמרא במסכת סנהדרין בנוגע לדוד ויהונתן בן שאול (ששניהם היו לומדים גדולים, ועל אחת כמה וכמה שאול בעצמו), שכאשר דואג סיפר לשאול אודות מעלותיו של דוד בתורה, לא התפעל שאול מזה, באמרו "יהונתן בני כמוהו", ורק כשאמר לו "וה' עמו, שהלכה כמותו בכל מקום", אזי חלשה דעתו וקינא בו, כיון שזהו דבר שגם אצלו לא היה.

Source 3 I Samuel 16:18

Context: Saul, the king of Israel, became very depressed, to the point he could no longer function as king. His advisors thought about how they could ease his burden, and suggested that a talented musician play for the king and perhaps it would help him. Saul agreed and they began seeking an appropriate candidate.

His advisor, Doeg, nominated David, son of Yishai, who was a very special person in addition to being a musician, and would be a good fit for the position.

Student's pg. 7

One of the young men answered and said, "I saw a son of Yishai from Bethlehem, who knows how to play, a mighty man of valor, and a warrior, and logical in his affairs, and a handsome man and G-d is with him."

וַיַּעַן אֶחָד מֵהַנְּעָרִים וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה רָאִיתִי בֵּן לְיִשַׁי בֵּית הַלַּחְמִי יֹדֵעַ נַגֵּן וְגִבּוֹר חַיִל וְאִישׁ מִלְחָמָה וּנְבוֹן דָּבָר וְאִישׁ תֹּאַר וַה' עִמּוֹ.

Source 4 Talmud, Sanhedrin 93b

The Talmud interprets this verse:

Student's pg. 7

Rabbi Yehuda says that Rav says:

"Who knows how to play" means that he knows how to ask complex and germane questions about Torah matters.

"A mighty man" means that he knows how to answer questions raised with regard to matters of Torah.

"A warrior" means that he knows how to negotiate his way in the battle to understand the Torah.

"A handsome man" is one who displays an understanding of Jewish law and explains it well.

וְאָמַר רַב יְהוּדָה אָמַר רַב:

"יֹדֵעַ נַגֵּן" — זֶה שֶׁיּוֹדֵעַ לִשְׁאֹל בִּדְבַר תּוֹרָה, שְׁאֵלוֹת שֶׁל טַעַם.

"גִּבּוֹר" — שֶׁיּוֹדֵעַ גַּם לְהָשִׁיב דִּבְרֵי תּוֹרָה לַשּׁוֹאֵל.

"אִישׁ מִלְחָמָה" — אִישׁ שֶׁיּוֹדֵעַ לִשָּׂא וְלִתֵּן בְּמִלְחַמְתָּהּ שֶׁל תּוֹרָה.

"אִישׁ תֹּאַר" — שֶׁמַּרְאֶה פָּנִים בַּהֲלָכָה וּמַסְבִּיר אוֹתָהּ יָפֶה.

"וּנְבוֹן דָּבָר" — שֶׁמֵּבִין דָּבָר מִתּוֹךְ דָּבָר.

"וַה' עִמּוֹ" — שֶׁהֲלָכָה כְּמוֹתוֹ בְּכָל מָקוֹם.

וּמְסַפְּרִים: בְּכָל הַדְּבָרִים שֶׁמָּנוּ לְשֶׁבַח בְּדָוִד אָמַר לָהֶם שָׁאוּל: יְהוֹנָתָן בְּנִי כָּמוֹהוּ. כֵּיוָן שֶׁאָמַר לוֹ "וַה' עִמּוֹ" — שֶׁהֲלָכָה כְּמוֹתוֹ, דָּבָר שֶׁבּוֹ עַצְמוֹ, בְּשָׁאוּל גַּם כֵּן, לֹא הָיָה בּוֹ, חָלְשָׁה דַּעְתּוֹ וְהִתְקַנֵּא בְּדָוִד.

"And logical in his affairs" means that he infers one matter from another.

"And G-d is with him" means that the law is ruled in accordance with his opinion in every area of Jewish law.

In response to all of these virtues listed in praise of David, Saul said to his servants: My son Jonathan is his equal. Once Doeg said to Saul: "And G-d is with him," meaning that the law is ruled in accordance with his opinion in every area of law, a matter that did not apply even to Saul himself, he was offended and grew jealous of David.

From this story, we see that the greatest virtue is Torah study which leads to the correct application of Jewish law.

>> The Rebbe

Student's pg. 8

מצינו אמנם שאף על פי שבית הלל אומרים כשר וטהור וכו' ובית שמאי אומרים להיפך, מכל מקום, אומרת הגמרא ש"אלו ואלו דברי אלקים חיים", אבל ישנו ענין נעלה יותר - "הוי' עמו", שֵׁם הוי' שלמעלה משֵׁם אלקים - ש"הלכה כמותו", וענין זה יכול להיות רק אצל אחד.

We find that Beit Hillel may rule that something is kosher and pure, while Beit Shammai states exactly the opposite. Nevertheless, the Talmud says that "both are the words of the living G-d." But now we are saying something greater, that "G-d is with him - the law is always decided in accordance with his opinion." This is something that can only be true about one person.

Torah study has always been characterized by debates between scholars. The scholars that are perhaps most identified with the Talmudic culture of debate are the schools of Shammai and Hillel, who debated hundreds of halachic questions. Beit Shammai are usually more stringent, and Beit Hillel tend to be more lenient.

The Talmud makes an incredible statement about these disputes: "both are the words of the living G-d." The opinions of Beit Shammai and Beit Hillel are both holy and Divine. Yet, the law is decided specifically in accordance with Beit Hillel. It is a great merit for a Torah scholar to have the law decided in accordance with them.

The Rav's Shulchan Aruch

Student's pg. 8

ובנוגע לענייננו: כשהיו אז מנהיגים וגדולים משני הצדדים - הנה הענין

In our case, there were great scholars and Torah leaders on both sides.

But it was the Alter Rebbe who wrote the *Shulchan Aruch Harav* making practical halachic decisions. He did this before he began to publicly spread the esoteric dimension of Torah, as his sons write in their introduction to the work: "he started to write the *Shulchan Aruch* while he was studying in the home of the Magid of Mezeritch." He didn't just make a start, he actually finished the sections on the laws of *tzitzit* and Passover at that time.

של חיבור השולחן-ערוך לברר ההלכה לאמיתתה למעשה בפועל, היה חידושו של רבינו הזקן, עוד קודם שהתחיל לגלות את פנימיות התורה, כמבואר בארוכה בהקדמת הרבנים בני הגאון המחבר, ש"היתה התחלתו של חיבור השולחן ערוך בהיותו יושב בשבת תחכמוני כו'" בבית הרב המגיד ממעזריטש, ולא רק סתם התחלה, אלא ש"הלכות ציצית והלכות פסח... נגמרו שמה כו'".

While the Alter Rebbe was a student in the court of the Magid of Mezeritch, the Magid charged him with the weighty task of writing a Shulchan Aruch.

Source 5 Foreword to the Alter Rebbe's Code of Jewish Law, by his sons

Student's pg. 8

From heaven it was agreed that the Maggid of Mezeritch search among his students to find one upon whom G-d's spirit rests, to study and rule clearly in Jewish law, with the reasoning behind the laws, and to write it according to the order of the Code of Jewish Law, focusing on the everyday matters of the most frequent application, which take precedence over other mitzvot, and to arrange all the laws from the original Code and the recent sages in clear, understandable language, with the relevant reasoning.

The Maggid chose our holy father, who was filled with knowledge of the Talmud and later authorities. The Maggid told him: "There is no one as wise as you to descend to the depths of Jewish law and carry out this holy task of distilling the laws and their rationale from all the authoritative texts, with conclusive rulings."

מִשָּׁמַיָּא אַסְכִּימוּ עַל יְדֵי הָרַב הַקָּדוֹשׁ הַנִּזְכָּר לְעֵיל (הָרַב הַמַּגִּיד) לַחְפֹּשׂ בְּחֶפְשׂ מְחֻפָּשׂ בְּתַלְמִידָיו לִמְצֹא אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר רוּחַ אֱלֹקִים בּוֹ לְהָבִין וּלְהוֹרוֹת הֲלָכָה בְּרוּרָה מָתוּן וּמַסְיִק אַלְבָּא דְּהִלְכָתָא הִלְכוֹת בְּטַעֲמֵיהֶן, לַעֲשׂוֹת מְלָאכָה זוֹ עַל סֵדֶר הַשֻּׁלְחָן עָרוּךְ אֹרַח חַיִּים וְיוֹרֶה דֵּעָה שֶׁהֵן הַדִּינִים הַנִּצְרָכִים, שֶׁלָּהֶן מִצְוַת קְדִימָה עַל הַשְּׁאָר וּלְסַדֵּר כָּל פִּסְקֵי דִּינִים הַבָּאִים בְּשֻׁלְחָן עָרוּךְ וּבְכָל הָאַחֲרוֹנִים בִּלְשׁוֹן צַח וּמְלָתָא בְּטַעֲמָא.

וְיִבְחַר בִּכְבוֹד אֲדוֹנֵינוּ אָבִינוּ מוֹרֵנוּ וְרַבֵּנוּ זֵכֶר צַדִּיק לִבְרָכָה אֲשֶׁר בּוֹ בִּזְמַנּוֹ הָיָה מָלֵא וְגָדוּשׁ מִיָּם הַתַּלְמוּד וְהַפּוֹסְקִים וְהִפְצִיר בּוֹ עַד בּוֹשׁ, וְאָמַר לוֹ אֵין נָבוֹן וְחָכָם כָּמוֹךָ לֵרֶד לְעָמְקָהּ שֶׁל הֲלָכָה לַעֲשׂוֹת מְלָאכָה זוֹ מְלֶאכֶת הַקֹּדֶשׁ לְהוֹצִיא לָאוֹר תַּמְצִית וּפְנִימִיּוּת טַעֲמֵי הַהֲלָכוֹת הַנִּזְכָּרִים בְּכָל דִּבְרֵי הָרִאשׁוֹנִים וְהָאַחֲרוֹנִים זְקוּקִים שִׁבְעָתַיִם כָּל דָּבָר עַל אוֹפַנָּיו בְּלִי בִּלְבּוּל וְתַעֲרוּבוֹת וּפְסַק הֲלָכָה הַמִּתְבָּרֵר וְיוֹצֵא מִדִּבְרֵי כָּל הַפּוֹסְקִים עַד חַכְמֵי זְמַנֵּנוּ.

>> The Rebbe

Student's pg. 9

The *Shulchan Aruch Harav* has a novel feature: it also includes the rationale behind the halachic decisions.

ולא עוד אלא שבחיבור השולחן ערוך כָּלַל רבינו הזקן גם את ההבנה וההסברה של פסקי הדינים -

שזהו החילוק בין השולחן ערוך של רבינו הזקן לשולחן ערוך של המחבר - רבי יוסף קאַרו, שהמחבר כתב רק את הפסק-דין, ואילו בנוגע למקור הדברים והבנה והסברה, סמך על ספרו "בית יוסף" בפירושו על הטור (כמו שכתוב בהקדמתו לספריו), ואילו רבינו הזקן הכניס גם את טעמי ההלכות - אם כי בקיצור נמרץ - "הלכות בטעמיהן" (כמבואר בהקדמת השולחן ערוך).

This is the main difference between the *Shulchan Aruch Harav* and the original *Shulchan Aruch* written by Rabbi Yosef Karo. Rabbi Karo only gives the final halachic conclusions, leaving all the sources and explanations in his earlier work the *Beit Yosef*, written as a commentary on the *Tur*. The Alter Rebbe, by contrast, includes brief explanations of the laws, as explained in the work's foreword.

The Alter Rebbe's code is different from all previous works on Jewish law. Until then, the texts of Jewish law fell under two categories: Rif and Beit Yosef, who wrote the laws and their rationale but expounded at length in scholarly debate to justify their rulings, therefore requiring much effort to understand their final rulings. The second kind is Maimonides and Rabbi Caro's Code of Jewish Law, and similar works. They write the laws very concisely, without giving the rationale behind their rulings. This requires the reader to seek their rationale in other works in order to fully understand.

The Alter Rebbe, on the other hand, uniquely combines the need for brevity and the need for the inclusion of the underlying rationale. Thus, he wrote a work that did not exist until then.

In summary: One of the greatest virtues in Torah study is to understand its practical application in Jewish law, as evidenced by the compliment Doeg gave David, and the merit that Beit Hillel had that Jewish law always follows their opinion. The Alter Rebbe was so masterful in his study of Jewish law that his teacher chose him to write a new, innovative work on Jewish law, which includes the rationale together with the practical rulings written in concise fashion.

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ובכן: אמיתית העניינים היתה להיפך ממה שהתקבל בדעתו של ה"צאַר" והקטיגור שלו, ששיטתו של רבינו הזקן תגרום לזלזול חס ושלום בלימוד התורה.

Thus, the truth was precisely the opposite of what was alleged to the Czar, that the Alter Rebbe's path would undermine Torah study.

The truth was just the opposite of what the opponents claimed: not only did the Alter Rebbe not undermine Torah, he enhanced it in the greatest way possible.

C. Charitable Acts and Prayer

>> The Rebbe

Charity and the Sultan

Student's pg. 10

The accusations regarding charity were similarly the opposite of reality. The Alter Rebbe sent various forms of support to the Jews in the Land of Israel in order to enable them to study Torah and observe mitzvot. The goal of all of this was to bring Mashiach closer, at which point the Land of Israel would be freed from Turkish rule. But the prosecutor alleged the exact opposite, that the money was intended to assist the Sultan.

ועל דרך זה בנוגע לגמילות חסדים: רבינו הזקן שלח תמיכה בכמה אופנים ליהודים שבארץ ישראל כדי שיוכלו ללמוד תורה ולקיים מצוות, ועל ידי זה - לקרב את ביאת המשיח, שאז תשתחרר ארץ ישראל מממשלת הסולטן; ואילו אצל השונא התפרש הדבר להיפך - שהסיוע מיועד לעזור לסולטן.

The Alter Rebbe constantly encouraged his followers to donate money to poor people in Israel. Many letters in his published collection of letters in Tanya were written with that goal, exhorting his followers to contribute funds to support the Jews in Israel even when their own financial situation wasn't the best. In his written response to the Russian authorities while he was imprisoned, the Alter Rebbe explained that he encourages Russian Jewry to donate to Israel because all our prayers go to heaven via Israel, and the prayers of the residents of Israel are heard more because of their proximity. Thus, we must support the people of Israel, because their prayers bring blessing to Jews everywhere.

The Rebbe notes something ironic here:

Ultimately, the Torah study and mitzvah observance of the Jews in Israel hastens the coming of Moshiach, when the Land of Israel will be freed of its Ottoman occupiers, meaning those donations opposed the Ottoman Empire. The allegation was, however, that the Alter Rebbe was supporting the Ottoman empire.

Lengthy Prayer

Student's pg .10

The allegations made against prayer were also absurd. The claim was that due to the change of prayer book, unique customs, and separate synagogues, this may be something other than true prayer to the true G-d.

ועל דרך זה בנוגע ל"מתפלל עם הציבור": הטענה היתה שמצד שינוי נוסח התפלה, המנהגים המיוחדים, והשטיבלעך המיוחדים וכו' וכו', יכול להיות ענין שהוא היפך תפלת אמת לא-ל אמת כו'.

ובנוגע לפועל הרי זה בדיוק להיפך: כששואלים אצל מישהו - יהיה מי שיהיה, מליטא, גליציא או פולניא - מי מאריך בתפלה? ישיב, שאם פלוני מתפלל חצי שעה מאוחר יותר, הרי זה סימן שיש לו שייכות לחסידות, ועל כל פנים - לחסידים.

The reality was exactly the opposite. If you ask anyone - whether they are from Lithuanian, Polish, or Galician background - who prays at greater length, the answer will be that if you see a person praying for an extra half an hour that is a clear indication that he is associated with Chassidut and the Chassidic movement.

It is a clear fact that people who study Chassidut place a greater emphasis on concentration during prayer, and pray at greater length. Here too, the allegations were the opposite of reality.

D. Crushing an Olive Releases its Oil

>> The Rebbe

The Kernel of Truth

Student's pg .11

Why was the slander against the Alter Rebbe specifically about Torah, prayer, and acts of charity? Lies are unsustainable, so there must have been at least a kernel of truth in the accusations.

The Alter Rebbe certainly strongly focused on Torah study, prayer, and acts of charity, but "the olive only releases its oil when it is crushed." In this case the Rebbe Rashab stated that all of the Alter Rebbe's activities increased after his release from prison.

וההסברה על זה שהמלשינות היתה על שלושת העניינים "העוסק בתורה ובגמילות חסדים ומתפלל עם הציבור" - כי לכאורה, כיון ש"שקר אין לו רגלים", הרי צריך להיות איזה ענין של אמת בתחילתו:

בודאי עסק רבינו הזקן בלהט בשלושת העניינים של תורה וגמילות חסדים ותפלה עם הציבור, אבל בזה עצמו ניתוסף הענין שהזית אינו מוציא את שמנו עד שכותשין אותו, כדברי כ"ק אדמו"ר (מהורש"ב) נשמתו עדן בנוגע לחילוק שלפני פטרבורג ולאחרי פטרבורג.

The Rebbe says that there must be some kernel of truth to the accusations made against Chassidut. How so? After the Alter Rebbe's release from prison his activities in the areas of Torah study, prayer, and charity increased greatly. So the accusations actually served to "crush the olive" in order to release its oil.

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Of course, all three elements were present before the imprisonment. We mentioned earlier that the Alter Rebbe began writing his *Shulchan Aruch* during the lifetime of the Magid of Mezeritch, and he even completed some sections then. His charitable activities had also begun earlier. An example of this can be found in a story that occurred even before he traveled to Mezeritch: The Alter Rebbe received a dowry from his father-in-law, and then used it for charity, helping other Jews make business investments that he determined would be beneficial for them.

וכל זה - למרות שגם לפני פטרבורג היו אצלו כל ענינים אלו, כאמור לעיל בנוגע לכתיבת השולחן ערוך, שסיים כמה הלכות עוד בהיותו אצל מורו המגיד ממעזריטש; ועל-דרך-זה בנוגע לגמילות חסדים וצדקה שהיה אצלו כמה זמן לפני זה, ועד לסיפור הידוע (שאירע עוד לפני הליכתו למעזריטש) בנוגע ל"נדוניה" שקיבל מֵחוֹתְנוֹ, שהתנה עמו מלכתחילה שיהיה בבעלותו, ואחר כך השתמש בזה לגמילות חסדים - לסדר יהודים בענין של פרנסה כפי שהתקבל אצלו באיזה אופן צריכה להיות פרנסתם;

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We also know the level on which the Alter Rebbe conducted his prayers before assuming leadership.

ועל-דרך-זה בנוגע לתפלה, כידוע אופן הנהגת רבינו הזקן בענין התפלה עוד קודם הנשיאות שלו.

The Rebbe clarifies that the Alter Rebbe certainly worked in all three of these areas in an extraordinary manner before his imprisonment. His exemplary charitable actions are illustrated in the following remarkable story.

Source 6 Sefer Hatoldot, Alter Rebbe's biography, p. 82

Student's pg .12

Already at 14, the Alter Rebbe had gained recognition in the region for his genius. Rabbi Yehudah Leib Segal, one of the wealthy people in Vitebsk, took him as a husband for his daughter, Sterna.

One of the conditions the Alter Rebbe had before getting married was that the planned dowry of 5000 coins would be his immediately, to use for whatever he wanted. During their first year of marriage, with his wife's agreement, he gave away all the money to families who wanted to make a living by farming. He helped them buy farmland and livestock with that money. That money helped pay for many new agricultural settlements near Vitebsk. The Alter Rebbe visited them often, encouraging them to commit time to daily Torah study, and telling them stories from our sages and the Torah.

כְּשֶׁהִגִּיעַ אַדְמוֹ"ר הַזָּקֵן לְפִרְקוֹ – בִּהְיוֹתוֹ בֶּן אַרְבַּע עֶשְׂרֵה – כְּבָר יָצָא שְׁמוֹ בְּכָל הַסְּבִיבָה כְּגָאוֹן. ר' יְהוּדָה לֵיב סֶגַל, שֶׁהָיָה אֶחָד מֵעֲשִׁירֵי וְנִכְבְּדֵי הָעִיר וִיטֶבְסְק, לְקָחוֹ לֶחָתָן לְבִתּוֹ מָרַת סְטֶעֶרְנָא.

אֶחָד הַתְּנָאִים שֶׁהִתְנָה אַדְמוֹ"ר הַזָּקֵן בְּהַסְכָּמָתוֹ לַשִּׁדּוּךְ, הָיָה שֶׁיִּמְסְרוּ לְרִשׁוּתוֹ אֶת חֲמֵשֶׁת אֲלָפִי שְׁקָלִים הַזָּהָב שֶׁהוֹבִילוּ עֲבוּרוֹ כִּנְדוּנְיָה, וְשֶׁהוּא יַעֲשֶׂה בָּהֶם כְּחֶפְצוֹ. וְאָמְנָם בַּשָּׁנָה הָרִאשׁוֹנָה לַחֲתֻנָּתוֹ מָסַר אֶת כָּל הַסְּכוּם, בְּהַסְכָּמַת רַעְיָתוֹ, עֲבוּר מִשְׁפָּחוֹת שֶׁרָצוּ לְהִתְפַּרְנֵס מֵעֲבוֹדַת הָאֲדָמָה. בְּכֶסֶף זֶה סִיַּע לָהֶם לִקְנוֹת שִׁטְחֵי אֲדָמָה, בַּעֲלֵי חַיִּים וְצִיּוּד חַקְלָאִי. בִּזְכוּת כֶּסֶף זֶה הוּקְמוּ יִשּׁוּבִים גְּדוֹלִים שֶׁל יְהוּדִים עוֹבְדֵי אֲדָמָה לְאוֹרֶךְ נְהַר הַדְּוִינָה הַחוֹצֶה אֶת הָעִיר וִיטֶבְסְק. אַדְמוֹ"ר הַזָּקֵן בִּקֵּר פְּעָמִים רַבּוֹת בְּיִשּׁוּבִים אֵלּוּ, עוֹרֵר אֶת הַיְּהוּדִים לְקֶבַע עִתִּים לְתוֹרָה, וְהֵרְבָּה לְסַפֵּר לָהֶם סִפּוּרֵי תּוֹרָה וְאַגָּדוֹת חַז"ל.

At a young age, the Alter Rebbe encouraged Jews to work in farming. He felt that if they dealt less in business and lending and more in manual labor, that would lessen the antisemitism they experienced. When he married, he took all the money his father-in-law gave him and donated it to Jewish farmers. A young man, with his life ahead of him, donates all his money to people he doesn't know!

After his imprisonment, he increased these efforts on a much broader scale.

The Lesson

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The main thing is that the discussion should have practical consequences.

וכאמור לעיל, והוא העיקר, שענין הזכרון יבוא לידי פועל.

While of course none of us can compare to the Alter Rebbe,

ואף כי מי הוא זה ואיזהו אשר ערב לבו לגשת כו', אפילו "שמץ מנהו",

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we are given the power to study Torah—both the revealed and inner dimensions—with diligence, and, most importantly, great excitement. The same is true regarding prayer and charitable acts.

The Rebbe Rayatz explains that the words "whoever engages (osek)" refers to all three of the details, Torah study, charity, and prayer. He explains that Torah study, charity, and prayer (together with the community) must be "engaged in" with great effort and intense engagement, in the same way a person engages in their work to make a living (esek).

נותנים לנו כחות שיוכל להיות הענין של "העוסק בתורה" בהתמדה ושקידה, ובעיקר - מתוך חיות גדולה, הן בתורת הנגלה והן בפנימיות התורה, ועל-דרך-זה בנוגע ל"גמילות חסדים" ו"מתפלל עם הציבור".

וכפי שמבאר רבינו נשיאנו, ש"זה שאומר כל העוסק, מתייחס לכל שלושת הדברים, תורה גמילות חסדים ותפלה", ומבאר, שלימוד התורה וגמילות וחסדים ועבודת התפלה (ובאופן שהתפלה תהיה "עם הציבור") צריכים להיות באופן של "העוסק" - "בדרך יגיעה והתעסקות גדולה", באותו אופן שמתעסק בענין שעל ידו משיג את פרנסתו.

The Rebbe often highlighted the words "whoever engages" which is the same Hebrew word for financial pursuits, teaching us that our efforts in the areas of Torah, prayer, and charity should be just as intense as our efforts to make money. When a person has a business, they don't wait for people to wake them up from their sleep and ask if they have a particular product. They rush to open their store in the morning and spend all day thinking about how they can attract more customers. We must act similarly with our charitable endeavors, for example. We shouldn't wait for a poor person to knock on our door asking for food, we should make it our business to find where there is a needy family and ensure they get everything they need. The same applies to Torah study and prayer. We must actively engage in these pursuits with the same intensity and effort we put into our business.

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This is the lesson for everyone, including our generation. In fact, it is all the more relevant to our generation, as we need to welcome Mashiach soon, as the Rebbe Rayatz famously proclaimed. We must increase in our Torah study and charitable acts—especially charity in the Land of Israel—and prayer with the community. And we must invest ourselves in this just as we do in our business.

וזוהי ההוראה לכל אחד ואחת עד לדורנו זה - ואדרבה: על-אחת-כמה-וכמה בדורנו זה, דור של עקבות המשיח, שצריך בקרוב לקבל פני משיח צדקנו (כידוע דברי נשיא דורנו כבוד קדושת מורי וחמי אדמו"ר) - שצריך להרבות בתורה ובגמילות חסדים (וצדקה בכלל, ובפרט צדקת ארץ החיים) ובתפלה עם הציבור, וכאמור, באופן של התעסקות ("העוסק").

משיחת י"ט כסלו ה'תשל"ב,
הנחה בלתי מוגה.
תורת מנחם, כרך ס"ו עמוד 317 ואילך