



Sparks of Light
T'shurah

from the
Wedding Celebration of
**Yakov and Raizel
Menaker**

June 19, 2006

Sparks of light

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INTRODUCTION
THE BOOK, ITS SOURCES
AND COMPOSITION

① THE BOOK

The author called his work by three distinct names. Each of these names characterizes the book in its own way. These names are:

1. *Liqqutei Amarim* — "Collected Essays." By this name the author describes his work in his "Compiler's Foreword," thereby humbly disclaiming any originality for his work. In fact the author explicitly states that his treatise constitutes a collection of essays "which have been selected from books and scribes, heavenly saints, who are renowned among us."¹ Under this title the book was first published (Slavita, 1796).²

2. *Tanya*, after the initial word of the book, quoting a Beraitic source.³ The quotation from tannaitic lore serves the author more than a homiletic introduction to his system. Dealing, as it does, with the mystic descent of the soul and its destiny, it provides the author with a starting point, based in the Talmud, from which to unfold his whole system. Under this title the book appeared for the second time (Zolkiev, 1798), with *Liqqutei Amarim* as subtitle.⁴

3. *Sefer shel Benonim* — "Book of the Intermediates," so called after the type of personality on which the book centers attention, that is, the intermediate type whose moral position is between the *zaddiq* ("righteous man") and *rasba'* ("wicked man"). Thus the author pointedly indicates that his primary concern is not with the *zaddiq*, upon whose veneration general *Hasidut* had placed so much emphasis, nor with the *rasba'*, upon whose condemnation much has been said in other Jewish ethical works, but with the "average," or rather "moderate" man, whose rank is within reach of every person.⁵ The name *Sefer shel Benonim* appeared as a substitute in the first addition ("*Liqqutei Amarim*, Part One, called *Sefer shel Benonim*"). However, actually the author often refers to the whole book, and not merely its first part, when using the title *Sefer shel Benonim*.⁶

The standard complete editions of this work include the following five parts, each of which is an independent treatise:

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The *Tanya* was written, as the author indicates in his Foreword, for the "seekers" and the "perplexed." One is tempted to draw a parallel between this author and his book and Maimonides and his *Guide*. Indeed, both men present some striking points in common. Each of them first established his reputation as a Talmudist and Codifier before entering the field of philosophy; both had written Codes of Jewish Law, which are still authoritative and popular. Each of them created a new and lasting school of thought in Jewish philosophy, and the one, like the other, set out to write a work which aimed at helping those who needed guidance in their religious beliefs. Yet both of them evoked sharp opposition from the direction of the orthodox Jewry; both were misunderstood, accused of heresy, and their philosophical treatises were banned and consigned to the flames.

However, this is as far as the parallel goes. The *Guide* and the *Tanya* represent two widely divergent systems, in essence as well as in form. The two authors were separated by some six centuries in time, and far apart also geographically and in respect of the whole cultural milieu in which they flourished. Maimonides is the rational Jewish philosopher *par excellence*; Rabbi Schneur Zalman is basically a mystic. The "perplexed" for whom they wrote were two entirely different types of people. Maimonides wrote for the man whose perplexity derived from the fact that he desired to retain his traditional beliefs, but was puzzled by the apparent contradiction between tradition and philosophy, yet loath to give up either.¹² The object of the *Guide*, therefore, was to effect a reconciliation between the two.

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No such problem confronted Rabbi Schneur Zalman. Philosophy and science hardly had a place among the masses of Eastern European Jewry at that time. The *Haskalah* movement had not yet made any serious inroads upon the minds of the masses. Rabbi Schneur Zalman addressed himself to those "who are in pursuit of righteousness and seek the Lord . . . whose intelligence and mind are confused and they wander about in darkness in the service of G-d, unable to perceive the beneficial light that is buried in books."¹³ In other words, he writes for those whose beliefs have not been troubled by doubts, but who merely seek the right path to G-d.

He will, therefore, not find in the *Tanya* the type of scholastic philosophy with which the *Guide* is replete, nor any polemics, nor even an attempt to treat systematically many of the philosophical problems which engaged Maimonides' attention. Such basic beliefs as the Existence of G-d, *creatio ex nihilo*, Revelation, and others, are taken for granted by the author. Others, such as the Divine attributes, Providence, Unity, Messianism, etc., are treated as integral parts of his ethical system, and illuminated by the light of Qabbalah.

The *Tanya* is essentially a work on Jewish ethics. The author is primarily concerned with the forces of good and evil in human nature and in the surrounding world, and his objective, as already pointed out, is to pave a new way to *summum bonum*. He is aware, of course, of the existence of Hebrew literature dealing with the same subject. If he is impelled to write a new book, it is not, as he is careful to note, because of the shortcomings of the available works *per se*, but because the human mind is not equally receptive, nor equally responsive to, the same stimuli. The implication is that the works on Jewish philosophy and ethics were useful for their time and age, or for the specific groups for whom they were written. Now there was a need for a new approach (in the light of the Hasidic doctrine), and for a "guide" that would command a universal appeal. However, the author realizes that even this book, in parts at least, cannot be so simple as to be understood by all. Consequently he urges the more learned not to be misled by a sense of misplaced modesty, and not to withhold their knowledge from those who would seek it from them in the understanding of these "Essays."¹⁴

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R. Schneur Zalman knew his "perplexed" intimately. They flocked to him in great numbers, and they flooded him with written inquiries. Most of them, undoubtedly, were simple folk and laymen. But there were also many students of the Talmud, and philosophically inclined young men, who, like himself in his teens, sought a new way of life and new outlets for their intellectual as well as spiritual drives. The consideration of such a variegated audience largely determined the form and style of the book. e/

Speaking of form and style, it should also be remembered that long before he committed his teachings and doctrines to writing, he preached them orally.¹⁵ His sermons and discourses, delivered mostly on the Sabbath and on Festivals (which accounts for their homiletic style), were subsequently recorded from memory by his disciples. These manuscripts had a wide circulation among his followers. Not infrequently Rabbi Schneur Zalman expounded his doctrines in the form of epistles which, being of general interest, were regarded by his followers as pastoral letters, and also copied and recopied for the widest possible circulation. In the course of time, as his community of devotees had greatly increased, Schneur Zalman felt, as he explains in his Foreword, that the time was ripe to present a systematic outline of his teachings in the form of a book, which was to supersede the circulating pamphlets, many of which were replete with errors as a result of repeated copying and transcription, or by the malicious mischief of opponents.¹⁶ This is how the *Liqutei Amarim*, or *Tanya*, in its present composition, was born. 19

2. THE SOURCES

We have already noted that the author of the *Tanya* made no claim to originality for his work. On the contrary, he emphasized his dependence on his predecessors. Among the "books and scribes" which influenced his thinking, the Scriptures, Talmud and Lurianic Qabbalah must be given foremost place. This is indicated already in the first chapter, which opens the book with Talmudic quotations, references to the Zoharitic literature and Hayyim Vital, the great exponent of Lurianic Qabbalah, and with interspersed quotations from Scripture. Here we already have an indication of the author's cast of mind and his aim to build his system on the combined foundations of Scriptural, Rabbinic and Qabbalistic sources. R.

Rabbi Schneur Zalman's interpretations and doctrines are based upon the teachings of the Ba'al Shem Tob, the founder of general Hasidut, and his own "masters," Rabbi Dov Ber of Miezericz, the Ba'al Shem Tob's successor,

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founder of general Hasidut, and his own master, Rabbi Dov Ber of Miezericz, the Ba'al Shem Tob's successor, and Rabbi Dov Ber's son Rabbi Abraham, the "Angel," to whom we referred in the preceding biography.

The author draws abundantly from the *Zohar* and the *Tiqunei Zohar*. He mentions by name Maimonides (the Code), Nahmanides (*Milhamot*), Rabbi Moshe Cordovero (Code), Nahmanides (*Milhamot*), Rabbi Moshe Cordovero (*Pardes*), the *Sefer Hasidim* of (primarily) Judah ha-Hasid, and the *Sefer Haredim* of Eliezer Azkari. Of other "books and scribes" which influenced him, though he does not mention them by name in the *Tanya*, are Isaiah Horowitz's *Shenei Lubot ha-Berit*, the Qabbalistic works of the Maharal (Rabbi Judah Lowe) of Prague, and Bahya ben Asher's *Commentary* on the Bible.¹⁷

Halevi's *Kuzari* was held in high esteem by Rabbi Schneur Zalman and his successors. He is known to have studied it ardently with his son and grandson who succeeded him. Similarly Bahya ibn Paquda's *Duties of the Heart*, which enjoyed great popularity among Talmudic scholars of the day, as it still does. Albo's *Iqqarim* was another popular source for the philosophically inclined. It is safe to assume that Rabbi Schneur Zalman was intimately familiar with these, and no doubt also with the whole range of Medieval Jewish philosophy.

It has been wisely said that the proper approach to a problem is in itself half a solution. Quite often it is the approach to the problem, and the method of treating it, that display the greatest degree of ingenuity and originality, and in themselves constitute the main contribution of the thinker. This is true of Schneur Zalman and of the Habad system which he created. For, while his basic

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concepts have been gleaned from various sources, his doctrines nevertheless present a complete and unified system, and there is much refreshing originality in its presentation and consistency.

1 (R.) But Schneur Zalman did more than that. Very often he has so modified, reinterpreted or remodeled the ideas which he had assimilated, as to give them an originality of their own. remolded

To Rabbi Schneur Zalman, as to Qabbalists in general, the Torah, the Jewish Written and Oral Law embodied in the Bible and Talmud (the latter including both the Halakhah and Midrash), was more than a Divinely inspired guide to the *summum bonum*. It constituted the essential law and order of the created universe.¹⁸ The Qabbalah, in its interpretation, was nothing but the inner, esoteric dimension of the Torah, its very "soul."¹⁹ Without this dimension the Torah could not be fully understood. Consequently, when he looked for the "inner," or esoteric, meaning of Biblical and Talmudic texts it was not for the purpose of adding homiletic poignancy to his exposition, but rather to reveal their inner dimension. In his system the esoteric and exoteric, the Qabbalah and the Talmud, are thoroughly blended and unified, just as the physical and metaphysical, the body and soul, emerge under his treatment as two aspects of the same thing. The polarity of things is but external; the underlying reality of everything is unity, reflecting the unity of the Creator. To bring out this unity of the microcosm and macrocosm, as they merge within the mystic unity of the *En Sof* (The Infinite) — that is the ultimate aim of his system. 20 | 19

3. THE COMPOSITION OF THE TANYA

Structurally, the *Tanya* may be divided into a number of sections, each dealing with a major subject and comprising a number of composite topics.

20 The first section of the work (chapters 1-8) is devoted to an analysis of the psychological structure of the Jewish personality.²⁰ Here the author discusses the two levels of consciousness (to use modern terminology) on which a person operates. These two levels of consciousness are derived from two sources, which the author terms the "divine soul" and the "animal soul." He examines the essential attributes and practical faculties of each. In

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dealing with the "animal soul" the author discusses also the nature of evil, both metaphysical and moral. Evil is basically conceived in terms of disunity; good in terms of unity.

Next, (chapters 9-17), the author goes on to examine the inevitable conflict ensuing from the two divergent sources of consciousness. He evaluates the relative strength of the two souls and their respective functions, whereby the essential unity of the human personality is strongly upheld. Experimentally, however, the conflict produces a variety of personalities, from one extreme to the other, which the author proceeds to define. His attention is focused on the personality of the *Benoni*, the author's ideal moral personality, which falls midway between the extremes. However, in Rabbi Schneur Zalman's definition the *Benoni* is not one whose sins and virtues balance, while the *zaddiq* is a person whose good deeds outweigh his sins, as defined in the Talmud. The *Benoni* of the *Tanya* is a person who exercises complete self control and never commits a sin knowingly in any of the three areas of human activity: thought, speech and deed. The *Benoni* of the *Tanya* is thus superior to the *zaddiq* of the Talmud. Nevertheless, our author insists that this ideal personality is within grasp of the average individual, although not without constant effort and vigilance. The underlying doctrine here is that man is essentially and inherently a moral being.

The following chapters (18-25) are designed to support the author's basic theory, namely, that the ideal personality of the *Benoni* is not a mere concept, but one that can actually be realized. To this end he reexamines the functions of the soul, both on the conscious and subconscious level. With regard to the former, the author insists on the supremacy of reason. As for the subconscious level, the author draws upon the *Zohar* for certain mystical categories, such as the innate or "hidden" love and fear (awe) for the Divine Being. The "hidden" love provides a subconscious urge for the so-called *unio mystica*; the sense of awe for the Divine Being provides a dread of separateness. Love and awe are therefore not conflicting, but rather complementary categories. The author emphasizes the peculiar, and to a considerable extent also hereditary, nature of the Jew, and his attachment to the idea of the unity of G-d, originating with the Patriarchs. This thought is, in some respects, strongly reminiscent of Halevi's concept of the "Divine Influence" (*al'amr al'ilabi*), which Halevi considers peculiar to the Jewish people.*

* *Kuzari* 1:25, 27 ff.

In this connection the doctrine of Divine Unity comes under discussion.

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However, never losing sight of the practical, the author discusses certain states of mind which have a direct bearing on the quest for personal unity as a prelude to unity in the cosmic order, which in turn is *sina qua non* for the realization of the Divine Unity. He offers a series of practical suggestions to attain mental and emotional stability and inner harmony. The emphasis is on joy, stemming from an intellectually achieved faith, while sadness and dejection are severely censured. All this forms the subject matter of chapters 26-32, 31.

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The drama of the inner personal conflict leads the author to an examination of man's destiny, the meaning and purpose of life, and man's place in the cosmic order. These problems are dealt with in chapters 33-37. In the last of these, the author outlines his concept of the Messianic Era and the Resurrection, when the cosmic order will have attained the acme of perfection and fulfillment as a direct result of man's conscious effort to work towards that goal.

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At this point, the author might have concluded his treatise. However, he is not content with leaving us with the impression that life is merely a prelude to after-life, or, as a certain Sage of the Talmud expressed it, that "this world is (merely) a 'corridor' to the world to come."^{18c} There must be more to life, and to religious experience, than serving merely as a means to an end. In the next, and last, fifteen chapters of his work, the author evolves his concept of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth in the *here and now*. In his daily life man is offered

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a foretaste of the after-life, and in some respects it is of a quality surpassing even the spiritual bliss of the hereafter. The author, therefore, takes up again those categories of man's spiritual phenomena which enable him to transcend his physical limitations and to partake of the supernatural in this life. Here again the mystic is very much in evidence. The author provides new insights into the concept of *kawwanab* (the "intention" which must accompany every human act), which is the vehicle of transcendence (chapters 38-40). He discusses the various qualities of *fear* (*awe*) and love, and introduces also the quality of *mercy*, as the basic elements of this transcendency, and as innate qualities in human nature to leap over the gulf that separates the created from the Creator, and to come in direct contact with the *En Sof*, the Limitless (chapters 41-47).

The next two chapters (48-49) are devoted to the all-important Lurianic doctrine of *zimzum* which, in the important Lurianic doctrine of *zimzum* which, in the author's system, holds the key to both the mystery of creation and the destiny of man. Both man and the world in which he lives are two dimensional creatures of matter and spirit. The tension that inheres in such an order can be relieved only by spiritualizing the material. Man has it in his power to achieve personal harmony and unity, by realizing his inner nature. In so doing, he becomes the instrument through which the world in which he lives also achieves fulfillment. To be a true master of the world which the Creator had entrusted in his hands, man must first be master of himself. Creation is seen as a process leading from G-d to man; fulfillment is seen as a process leading from man to G-d. The process leading from G-d to man is one of materializing the spiritual; that leading from man to G-d one of spiritualizing of the material. There is a community of interests, as it were, between the Creator and His counterpart on earth, a community of interests which is realizable because of a community of nature, since man partakes in the Divine nature as G-d concerns Himself with human affairs.

Man's moral acts must be holy acts. The good and the holy are identical; man's duty and purpose in life is to identify himself with his Creator, through identifying his will with that of his Creator. Man is the Divine instrument "to make this world a fitting abode for the *Shekbinab* (Divine Presence)," in which both man and G-d can share intimately and fully, in complete harmony and union. On this mystical note the final chapters (50-53) of the treatise conclude.

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THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CHASIDIC DANCING

By Nissan Mindel

It has been said that the face mirrors the heart. Inner feelings are portrayed in facial expressions. It is no coincidence that the Hebrew word for "face" - Panim - also means "inwardness." All such feelings as pleasure, joy, anger, and the like have their unmistakable facial expression. Such manifestations are spontaneous and involuntary, and hard to repress or control. Stronger emotions call forth additional manifestations, such as vocal ^{emissions} ~~emissions~~ and clapping of the hands (or clasping of the hands, as the case may be). In the case of intense joy, even the feet are stimulated. People "dance for joy." Thus, dancing for joy is the highest manifestation of the most intense feeling of inner happiness, a feeling which permeates the entire body, from head to foot.

Chasidic dancing, that is, dancing as defined in Chasidic terminology and concept, is the outward manifestation of a most intense feeling of religious joy and ecstasy. Needless to say, Chasidic dancing is always done by males separately, as mixed dancing (or social dancing) is prohibited by Jewish Law. It is also needless to add that the Chasidic dance is not an original "invention." There are many references to dancing in the T'NaCh. Miriam the prophetess danced, and sang praises to G-d after the miraculous crossing of the Red Sea; King David whirled and skipped before the Ark of the Covenant. Most festivals, and particularly that of Succoth, the Season of Our Rejoicing, were accompanied by dancing from most ancient times. The Hebrew word for festival - Chag - connotes circle dancing, and it is significant that the most joyous festival of all - Succoth - was called simply The Chag.

There are two frequently-used terms in Hebrew for dancing: machol and rikkud. The first means circle dance, the second - jumping,

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or skipping, up and down. Chasidic dance includes both varieties, each ~~have~~^{has} a significance of its own, as will be explained later. Inasmuch as the ~~the~~ circle-dance^{may} include~~s~~ also hopping and skipping, the rikkud is generic and includes all varieties of Chasidic dancing.

The Chasidic circle-dance is done in a closed circle, with one hand, or both, resting on the shoulders of the dancer in front. ~~It usually, though not necessarily, moves counter-clockwise.~~ There is no limitation on the number of participants. The up-and-down dance is more often done in crowded quarters, where there is no room for a massive circle-dance. Individual Chasidim may come out in a solo-whirling, or hopping-dance, or it may be performed by a duet or more individuals. There is no set pattern of body movements in a solo or duet dance, though a duet usually involves "approach and retreat," and the locking and unlocking of arms.

The dancing is done to the ^{lively} rhythm, or beat, of a/Chasidic tune or melody. Certain tunes and melodies are particularly popular on certain occasions and festivals. Both tunes (without words) and melodies (with words) are significant, not only in the ^{lively} rhythm and movements they call forth, but also in their variety of inspiration. Usually, an animated Chasidic tune without words will stimulate ~~the~~ ~~greater~~ a higher degree of ecstasy. Wordless tunes are considered in Chasidus on a higher plane of religious expression, since words ^{essentially} are/limiting. ~~is~~ (A person overcome by emotion is "speechless.") Some tunes may inspire Teshuvah (contrition, etc.), others - a longing or yearning for the mystic union of the soul with its Source, *etc.*

Chasidic dancing is usually accompanied by hand clapping of the bystanders, who^{also} join in the singing with gusto.

Chasidic dancing is practised (at any rate by Chabad-Lubavitch

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Chasidim) on special occasions of Chasidic get-togethers ("Farbrengen," Hisvaadus in Heb.). These (among Lubavitcher Chasidim) ^{especially} at the terminations of the major Festivals, also on Purim; at the special Chasidic historic anniversaries (19th of Kislev, 12-13th of Tammuz, etc.); on festive celebrations, such as weddings; at meeting and departure of visiting Chasidic groups. It is ~~never~~ ^{hardly} done during prayer, except during the Festival of Rejoicing (Shemini Atzeres and Simchas Torah, particularly during Hakofos, when dancing with the scrolls of the Torah).

The history of Chasidic dance recalls a controversy in the early period of the Chasidic movement. In the late 1760's, when the movement flourished under the leadership of Rabbi Dov Ber, the Maggid of Miezricz (d. 1772), successor to the Founder of Chasidus, Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov (d. 1760), some of the Maggid's disciples, on their part, had large followings of Chasidim, eventually giving rise to various branches of Chasidus. One of the Maggid's disciples was Rabbi Abraham of Kalisk, a person of a ~~na~~ sensitive emotional nature. He was particularly responsive to that aspect of Chasidus which accentuated religious feeling ("G-d desires the heart"), and made this the mainspring of his Chasidic philosophy and manner of Divine service, and indoctrinated his followers accordingly.

To be sure, Chasidic doctrine recognizes that the mind - "cold reason" - is intrinsically too limited to serve as the exclusive vehicle of communion with G-d. Religious fervor, joy and ecstasy, transcend rational limitations; hence, ^{they offer} a much more gratifying vehicle of religious expression. ~~Moreover, a purely rational~~ ^{religion and} approach to/religious experience, apart from the paradox inherent in such an approach, namely, of trying to grasp rationally that which is essentially above and beyond human reason, is, at best, limited to

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intellectuals. They, too, must realize sooner or later that the human reason often functions as a "brake" rather than "accelerator" to religious fulfillment. Be it as it may, the Baal Shem Tov wished to rehabilitate the ~~xxxxxx~~ ordinary Jew, as well as the scholarly, insofar as Divine service (Avodas haShem) was concerned. Accordingly, he emphasized such qualities as sincerity, humility, and joy ~~in~~ as ~~the~~ basic ingredients of true Divine service. Thus, he breathed a new "life" into the practice of the repetitious daily Mitzvos, so that they should be fulfilled not as a matter of habit, but as a meaningful religious experience. Of course, this, too, was no innovation. To "serve G-d with joy" ^{"Simcha shel Mitzva"} was an important element in Lurianic Kabbala, on which Chasidus is based, and, in fact, has its origin in the ^{Chumash} Torah itself.

However, as already noted, Rabbi ~~Katz~~ Abraham Kalisker and his Chasidic followers ~~exaggerated~~ exaggerated the point. In order to set for themselves the proper mood for the daily prayer, they felt the need of a lengthy period of inspirational preparation through dancing and singing. They were thus given to excessive emotional outbursts of religious fervor, such as exaggerated gesticulation, ~~dancing in their bare socks~~, even turning somersaults in the street. This strange ^{display} ~~practice~~ reached its height in 1770, and it naturally added fuel to the already smoldering opposition to the Chasidic movement which had been ^{unjustly} suspected of deviationist tendencies that might estrange Jews from ~~the~~ orthodox Judaism. Whatever reservations one may ~~now~~ have against Chasidus, ~~no~~ one will now suspect Chasidim or Chasidus of heterodoxy; on the contrary, Chasidim are now universally regarded as "ultra-orthodox." But in those early days, when

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the movement was young and largely unknown, it was the suspicion of heterodoxy that fed the opposition to Chasidus, and the highly charged emotionalism of the Kalisker Chasidim was not calculated to allay the suspicion, unwarranted as it was.

However, even among the Chasidim themselves, though they could better appreciate the religious feelings which prompted the said excesses, many frowned upon the Kalisker school, and the Maggid himself rebuked his ^{said}disciple for his lack of self-control. He pointed out to him that dancing should not become an end in itself, and that self-discipline was a sine-qua-non element in Chasidus.

While the excessive emotionalism of the Kalisker Chasidim eventually waned, and the whole episode turned out to be no more than a passing phase in the early development of the Chasidic movement, the doctrine of "serve G-d with joy" has remained germane to Chasidus, and religious fervor and enthusiasm are still characteristic aspects of Chasidus. Nevertheless, a distinction is ~~xxx~~ sometimes made between "ChaBaD" (Chochma, Bina, Daas, hence "intellectual") Chasidim and "ChaGaT" (Chesed, Gvura, Tiferes, hence "emotional") Chasidim, by reason of the varying emphasis on the relative place of these faculties in the Chasidic philosophy and way of life.

In Chabad, reason and emotion are blended ^{to}in/a unified system, where the mind rules the heart. One of the doctrines of the elaborate psychology of Chabad, as outlined in the Tanya, is that the mind is intrinsically and by nature stronger than the heart. Consequently, it is possible, by a conscious effort, contemplation, and so forth, to assert its mastery over the emotions. The Chabad Chosid is not taught to suppress feeling, but to use it sparingly and calculatedly. What ^{most}characterizes the true Chabadnik in his daily conduct is his

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complete mastery of himself; all outward manifestations are measured and calculated; everything has its time and place, and every human capacity must be fully placed in the service of G-d. But the emphasis is generally on inwardness. Even dancing, while obviously an external manifestation, has in Chabad a profound inner, even esoteric, quality.

In the vast literature of Chabad, which embraces every aspect of human conduct and deals with the esoteric as well as the exoteric, the ~~inner~~ significance of Chasidic dance also receives attention. ~~And~~ Indeed, it is closely related to some very basic doctrines of Chasidus itself.

It would take us too far afield to discuss at length the various aspects of Chasidic dance in all its implications for the Chosid. Only salient points can be mentioned here, which, for the savant who is familiar with Chasidic literature, will at once strike a familiar ring.

It is explained in Chabad that everything in the physical world has its counterpart in the spiritual realm.

In dancing the entire body moves. The whole body from head to foot is absorbed in the joy and exhilaration of the dance. However, it is the legs, of course, that play the principle part. The concept of "head" and "foot" is to be found not only in the physical body, but also in the soul. Moreover, this concept is found also in regard to the entire Jewish people, and in the Shechina (Divine manifestation) itself.

In the physical body the head is supreme both in position and in quality, while the feet are the lowest part of the body. Yet there is a superiority in the feet over the head in that the feet serve as a base for the whole body and carry it about from place to place.

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The head may decide where it wants to go, but it is the legs which must carry it to the desired destination. Without the power of locomotion which lies in the legs, the whole body, including the head, would be severely handicapped. Moreover, should the feet stumble even slightly, the whole body, including the head, could crash down with a large bang and be seriously hurt.

The analogy, as applied to the soul is that the soul also possesses a "head" and "feet". The "head" of the soul is that aspect of it which has to do with the intellectual qualities, while the "feet" are represented by that quality of the soul which is the source of simple faith (Emunah). It is simple faith which is the basis of the Jew's entire spiritual life. This is true of every Jew, without exception. Hence, Chasidic dance emphasizes the great quality of simple faith which, like the feet of the body, can lift the whole body, with the head ~~included~~.

Insofar as the Jewish people as a whole is concerned, it, too, constitutes a single organism (Komah Shleimah). The Torah scholars, Rabbis and Sages, are the "heads" of the people; the ordinary Jew - the "legs". Obviously the legs cannot be separated from the head, nor the head from the rest of the body. There must be complete unity and harmony within the organism. So must there be complete unity and harmony among all Jews, if the Jewish people is to be one healthy organism. Thus, Chasidic dance exemplifies this unity. For, in the dance all Chasidim participate and are linked together, both those who are the "heads" as well as those who are the "feet".

As for the Shechinah - G-d's manifestation in the world - there is also "head" and "legs", as it were, termed in Chasidic literature Sovev and Memaleh. The former is the transcendental aspect of G-d;

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the latter - the immanent. Both are, of course, completely unified into the Unity of G-d. The distinction is only valid in our human concept, but not in reality. It is we who distinguish between the Divine attribute as manifest in Nature and that which is over and above Nature. In other words, there are aspects of Divine manifestation which we can comprehend in some degree and those which are beyond the concept of man or angel. In professing the Unity of G-d, as we Jews do daily and repeatedly, we have to understand, as much as it is possible, what this Unity means, and in doing so, we cause the Or Ein Sof (Infinite Light) to irradiate our person, our soul, and the world about us. This is a profound and abstruse subject which cannot be discussed fully here; it is fully discussed in Chabad literature. But let it be said here that the Unity of G-d is symbolically represented by the circle, which has no beginning, nor end, though we can speak of the "upper" part of the circle and the "lower" part of it.

The "mystic cycle" also recalls the famous saying of the founder of Chabad: "G-d converts the spiritual into the material, and the Jew converts the material into spiritual." In other words, Creation is a "descent" of the spiritual into the material, while Divine service, particularly the fulfillment of the Mitzvoth with material objects (Tzitzis - wool; Tefillin - leather; Esrog - fruit, etc.) constitutes the "elevation" of the material into the realm of the spiritual and holy. Jews complete this "cycle" in the scheme of Creation, and make the Unity of G-d a reality also in our experience. Here, again, we have further significant meaning in the Chasidic circle-dance.

The "advance and retreat" feature of the Chasidic dance is,

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Rotzi ve Shuv
of course, symbolic of the fundamental aspect of Divine service, a well-known and basic doctrine in Chabad, as in Kabbalah, and anyone who is familiar with the Chabad literature needs no further elaboration here.

The rhythm of the dance and the beat to which the dance is attuned, have also their particular significance in emphasizing the pulsating vitality that must animate Divine service.

The above by no means exhausts all that can be said about the significance of the Chassidic dance, at any rate to the Chabad Chassidim. The inspirational quality of the Chassidic dance has been greatly emphasized by the heads of Chabad, since its inception. Though the occasions for Chassidic dance are few and far between in the course of the year, their inspirational effect is a lasting one, and their influence is felt in the daily life of the Chosid throughout the year.

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B.H. 10/21/87

Re U.N. from N.M.

With all the fervent hope and anguished prayers of human-kind - nations, groups and individuals, and despite persistent efforts by the U.N. to promote peace and prosperity in the world, the Biblical promise: "They shall beat their swords into plowshares," etc. (Isa. 2:4; Micah 4:3) - [or, in contemporary terms, total disarmament that would make it possible to apply the resources for productive purposes] - has, alas, not been fulfilled as yet.

~~Our Heavenly Father surely expects better things of His children, and we~~ - representatives of the nations of the world, members of this august body, the United Nations - ~~are the ones who~~ bear the ~~major~~ burden of responsibility, as well as the unique privilege and opportunity to help make that Divine promise a reality.

Is not the time ripe that we, at the U.N., should do ~~a~~ ^{some} little old-fashioned soul-searching and ask ourselves, Have we exhausted every avenue, and what else can we do, to make the world a better place to live in for everybody?

No human society would long tolerate conditions of lawlessness, violence, intimidation, and the like, without exerting every possible means to eliminate the causes that produce unacceptable antisocial conditions. Starting at the grassroots, a serious reappraisal of our educational systems immediately comes to mind, for ultimately the moral structure and fabric of society is determined by the way ~~and~~

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kind of education the children receive in the school and at home.

Moral values will not be fostered either by stick or carrot. Respect for law and order will not be instilled by fear of punishment, especially when the delinquent juvenile or adult may feel that he can outsmart the cop and the judge. What will make a human being a better and more decent person is awareness that there is "an eye that sees and an ear that hears"; an awareness of always being in the presence of a Supreme Being - our Heavenly Father who cares how everyone of His children conducts himself (or herself), and before whom everyone of us will have to account for our every action, word, and thought.

Needless to say, a nation is made of individuals. To be sure we must do all we can to heal breaches of peace, mend distrust, eliminate fear and strife in international relations; but, at best, we are treating symptoms. To deal with causes we must work for upgrading moral standards, every nation within its borders. The prophetic promise, "Nation shall not lift up sword against nation," will be fulfilled when individual will not wield knife against individual.

At this point, some obvious questions beg to be answered. What 'moral standards' are we talkkng about? Who is to say what is right and what is wrong? Why should any nation accept the norms and morals of any other nation? Or, is there perhaps a basic universal moral code that would be acceptable to all nations, all of humankind?

The answer is, Yes, ^{as big capital YES-T} there is such a moral code. It is not -

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and cannot by definition be - a man-made charter which could presumably be binding by mutual consent, but which would not be strong enough to withstand the test of selfish interest, real or imaginary - as experience has amply demonstrated.

We are talking about a G-d-given moral code which has served as the foundation of human society from its very inception. Earlier than the Babylonian code of Hammurabi, and the Hittite code, both of which it has no doubt influenced in some degree, the Noahide Code, or The Seven Laws of the Children of Noah, was given to Noah and his children after the Deluge. They ^were the forebears of the new human race that would supplant the antediluvian civilization, whose wickedness brought on its destruction. According to the Biblical account and well documented post-Biblical ~~and Rabbinic~~ sources, G-d gave Noah and his children seven basic moral laws (each with many ramifications), reaffirming it by Divine covenant (Gen. 9:1-17). These were to serve as the minimum set of Divine injunctions for all man-kind in order that it would not again ^{degenerate} / into a jungle as in the age before the Flood, but would develop in accordance with the design of the Creator, "who did not establish it a waste land, but formed it to be inhabited" (Isa. 45:18).

THE SEVEN NOAHIDE LAWS

With the exception of one, the Noahide laws are ~~all~~ prohibitions. The seven Divine commandments are:

- (1) Prohibition of idolatry.
- (2) Prohibition of blasphemy.
- (3) Prohibition of homicide.

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- (4) Prohibition of incest.
- (5) Prohibition of robbery.
- (6) Prohibition of eating the limb of a living animal.
- (7) Institution of courts of Justice.

As mentioned above, these are not single laws, but rather categories of laws, each embracing a variety of related laws or offshoots. For example, the prohibition of homicide includes murder and manslaughter ~~(except justifiable homicide, such as in self-defense)~~; suicide; ~~abortion (except to save the mother's life)~~ ^{etc}. Similarly, the prohibition of robbery includes theft; extortion; overpricing; withholding or delaying wages, and so forth.

The Seven Noahide Laws incumbent on all descendants of Noah, i.e. all humankind, were ~~fifteen generations~~ later incorporated in their entirety into the Mosaic Law, the Torah, which Moses received from G-d on Mount Sinai, in the presence of all the Jewish people, fifty days after their exodus from Egyptian bondage. Thus, these laws are an integral part of the Torah, with all its 613 commandments, to which only Jews are committed in order to live up to their Divine designation as "A kingdom of Priests (G-d's servants) and Holy Nation" (Exod. 19:6).

Within the context of this extraordinary obligatory status, the Jewish people were assigned the task of being "a light unto the nations" (Isa. 60:3), including ^{G-d's} the obligation of disseminating and promoting the Seven Noahide laws in their immediate society and in the world at large. This obligation is specifically included in the all-embracing Maimonides Code of Jewish Law. In practice, however, Jews were precluded from carrying out this

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obligation by circumstances beyond their control. For nearly 2000 years since the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem by the Romans and the dispersion of the Jewish people among the nations of the world, Jews have, for the most part, suffered persecution ^{etc.} in Christian as well as Moslem lands. For fear that the Jews might directly or indirectly proselytize their gentile neighbors, Jews were secluded in ghettos, and otherwise restricted and denigrated, although proselytizing is contrary to the Torah. ^{has been} Indeed, according to the Torah, any gentile who fulfills the Seven Noahide Laws is considered among the Righteous Gentiles who have a share in the World To ^e Welcome. Under these circumstances there was no way in which Jews could discharge their obligation to humanity at large through the dissemination of the Seven Noahide Laws.

However, the gentile world has come a long way in the area of religious tolerance. The principle of religious freedom is a basic tenet in most countries of the world. Thus it came about in recent years that the renowned Jewish Sage and spiritual leader, the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Schneerson, began to awaken his people to the fact that they can now freely promote the ^{time-honored} Divine moral laws and eternal values. He has done, and continues to do, much to bring this matter to the attention of world leaders and heads of state through his personal contacts and through his numerous followers in all parts of the world. Most right thinking people surely agree with him ^{very} that there is an urgent need to strengthen the moral foundations of human society. I have learned that the

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(6) The president's message to the U.S.A. response has generally been most favorable.

I am happy indeed that the Rebbe's message has reached me, too, and it is my privilege and honor to bring it to the attention of my distinguished colleague, in this august body, the United Nations, to which the eyes of all humankind look for direction and leadership.

Handwritten notes in a circle with an arrow pointing up.

Handwritten notes in a circle.

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An Elaboration of the Rabbi's

Answer

The prayer of Shema forms the central theme of our morning and evening prayers. The Shema consists of three chapters, taken from the Torah.

In the first portion of the Shema we proclaim the Unity of G-d and His Sovereignty: He is One, the Creator and Lord of the Universe. At the same time we profess our complete and absolute submission to G-d's reign, with a love that is greater and stronger than anything we possess, including our very life.

The second portion of the Shema speaks of G-d's commandments, the Mitzvot: G-d is the Supreme Justice, rewarding the fulfillment of His commands, and warning about the eventual retribution for their non-fulfilment.

The third portion has been added for its mentioning of the Mitzvah of Tzitzis and the ~~Exodus~~ Liberation from Egypt.

The first two portions are the subject of our discussion.

Our Sages, as quoted in the Rabbi's letter, observe that the order of the ~~xxx~~ first two portions of the Shema is not accidental, but is logical and purposeful. It tells us that the first pre-requisite of observing the precepts and practising our religion is the acceptance of G-d's Sovereignty with absolute resignation and submission. In the presence of the Supreme Being we must acknowledge our intellectual limitations and incompetence. This idea is conveyed in the expression of "yoke." The analogy is used not to suggest ~~xxx~~ a burden; far from it. It is used in the sense that a) the beast has no idea of what is behind its master's will; b) the beast's absolute submission; c) the yoke is the means of enabling the beast ^{to} fulfil its highest functions.

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Our faith is based upon the Divine Revelation and presentation of the Torah at Mount Sinai. We have accepted the Torah in the spirit of "We will do" (first) and (then) "We will understand" (Naase v'nishmo. The latter word, as also in the case of the Shema, does not mean 'hear' or 'obey' but understand). In other words, we have accepted the practice of our precepts as decrees from the Supreme Master of the Universe in the full realization that our human intellect is ~~xxx~~ limited and cannot ~~xxxxxxx~~ grasp the Infinite Wisdom of G-d. We do not know, nor can we know, the full effect of performing the Mitzvoth, what they do to us and for us and to the world around us. We are certain, however, that they are intended for ~~xxx~~ our good and for the good of the world at large. Any explanations or significances that may be advanced or attributed to any Mitzvah must be considered as incidental and not fundamental or basic.

The scientific method is first to establish the facts and then to seek to explain them. If a satisfactory explanation is found, well and good; if not, the facts still remain valid, even if the secret of their origin has not been discovered.

It is an established fact in Jewish life and experience that where the Jewish precepts, customs and traditions have been observed with real submission to G-d's Wisdom and Will, ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ ~~precepts, customs and traditions~~ in a spirit of humility and simple faith, these precepts, customs and traditions have been preserved and perpetuated. But where they were not accepted in this spirit, and became subject to intellectual scrutiny in a reckless search for explanation, and accepted ~~only if~~ ^{because} they appealed to reason or

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fancy and rejected or neglected where no 'satisfactory' reason or explanation was found, there the very foundations of Judaism were undermined (e.g. Reform "Judaism").

Moreover, our Sages say, "He who says this law is a fine one, and that one is not so good, discredits the Torah (and it will eventually become forgotten to him - Rashi)" (Erubin 64a). We must regard all laws with equal sanctity, for they were all given by the same lawgiver, and they all come from the same Source.

Covering the head has been strictly observed by all Jews from days immemorial. It is stated in the Talmud that covering the head is associated with Yirath Shomaim (piety). The story is told of a boy who was a kleptomaniac by nature, but by virtue of keeping his head covered always and being extra careful about it, his evil nature did not assert itself. However, when the wind once blew his headgear off, he immediately became the victim of his kleptomania (Talmud B. Sabbath 156b).

One might find many symbolic inferences in the observance of the precept of covering the head, based on the above mentioned statement of our Sages that covering the head is associated with piety. For example, keeping the head covered shows and reminds us always that there is something "above" our heads, and the like. Such interpretations are ^{useful} valid only if and in so far as they help to preserve the precept, but must by no means be regarded as the reason for the precept. The basic principle in performing a Mitzvah is ~~the~~ the realization that it is the Will and Wisdom of G-d that we perform it.

This is the essence of the Rabbi's holy sanctity, may he be blessed - reply to your inquiry.

T'surah from the wedding celebration of Yakov and Reizel Menaker

**“Rabbi
Sholom Ber
Schapiro
Thursday Night
Learning Group”**



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ברוקלין, נ. י.

By the Grace of G-d
Rosh Chodesh Adar II, 5738
Brooklyn, N. Y.

To All Participants in the Melava Malka
Sponsored by "R. S. B. S. T. N. L. G. "
Oceanside, Long Island, N. Y.

Greeting and Blessing:

I was pleased to be informed of the forthcoming annual Melava Malka on Motzoei Shabbos-Kodesh Parshas Zachor. And though pressure of duties make it difficult to send individual messages to all similar events, I do wish to associate myself, by means of this message, with all of you gathered on this occasion - in tribute to the good work of your group in strengthening Yiddishkeit among yourselves and in your region.

As you surely know, Parshas Zachor, which is read on the Shabbos before Purim, contains the commandment to remember what Amalek, the archenemy of our Jewish people, did to our people when they were on their way to receive the Torah at Sinai. Amalek's unprovoked and sneaky attack was calculated to shake their belief in G-d and dampen their enthusiasm for His Torah and Mitzvos.

Haman, a direct descendant of Amalek, was driven by similar hatred of the Jews, because "their laws were different from those of any other people," as the Megillah states. Likewise all subsequent Amalakites and Hamans of all ages.

But "Amalek" - in a wider sense - represents all obstacles and hindrances which a Jew encounters on his, or her, way to receive and observe the Torah and Mitzvos with enthusiasm and joy in the everyday life. And so Parshas Zachor comes to remind us, and never forget, that "Amalekites" exist in every generation and in every day and age, and that we must not allow ourselves to be deterred or discouraged by any Amalekite in any shape or form.

If the question be asked, "Why has G-d done thus?" Why should a Jew be confronted with such trials and difficulties? - the answer is that every Jew has been given the necessary powers to overcome all such "Amalekites," and he is expected to use them, in order to demonstrate to himself and others that nothing will deter him, nor dampen his fervor, in the observance of the Torah and Mitzvos in accordance with G-d's Will. And once he recognizes that whatever difficulty he encounters is really a test of his faith in G-d, and resolves firmly to meet the challenge, he will soon see that no "Amalek" of any kind is a match for the Divine powers of the Jewish soul. Indeed, far

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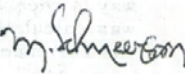
from being insurmountable obstructions, they turn out to be helpers and catalysts for ever greater achievements, having been instrumental in mobilizing those inner powers which would have otherwise remained dormant.

This is also forcefully brought out in the Megillah, in the example of Mordechai the Jew, who "would not bend his knee nor bow down" before Haman. As a result of this indomitable stance, not only was Haman's power totally broken, but many enemies became friends, as the Megillah tells us that "many of the peoples of the land were turning 'Jewish,' for the fear of Mordechai fell upon them!"

May G-d grant that each and all of you should go from strength to strength in emulating Mordechai the Jew, advancing in all matters of Yiddishkeit, Torah and Mitzvos, with joy and gladness of heart, and may you all be blessed with a full measure of "light, joy, gladness, and honor," both in the plain sense as well as in the inner meaning of these terms in accordance with the interpretation of our Sages - "Light - this is the Torah... honor - this is Tefillin," - since the Torah and Mitzvos, though a "must" for their own sake, are the channels and vessels to receive and enjoy G-d's blessings in all needs, materially and spiritually.

Wishing each and all of you a happy Purim, and may the inspiration of it be with you every day throughout the year,

With esteem and blessing



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