



1) From: Lessons on Lekutei Moharan Torah 6

Sometimes we try to gain focus in prayer through the power of thought and then an interesting thing happens. I say 'Lord, open my lips...' and then I focus, meaning that I think about the words which I just said. I say the words twice – one out loud and another time in thought. Since I can feel the emptiness in this action, I try to gather myself but despite the efforts I make to focus, my hands always remain empty because *kavana* is not a power of thought or of speech, it's not even a power of will. It is total identification (with what I am saying.) This is the meaning of the expression 'from the depths of the heart.'

(1) שיערים על לקוטי מוהר"ן תורה ו

לפעמים אנו מנסים לכוון באמצעות כוח המחשבה, ואז קורה דבר מעניין. אני אומר: 'ה' שפתי תפתח' ואז אני מכוון, כלומר חושב על המילים הללו שוב. אני אומר את המילים פעמיים – פעם בפה, פעם נוספת במחשבה. כוון שאני מרגיש את הריקנות שבפעילות זו, אני מנסה לכוון את עצמי, אבל למרות המאמץ שבכוונה, היד תמיד נשארת ריקה, משום שכוונה אינה כוח מחשבה או כוח דיבור, ואפילו לא כוח רצון. היא הזדהות מוחלטת. זוהי משמעות הביטוי 'מעומקא דליבא'.

2) Ibid - 31

In the current conception, the postmodern, a third perspective on existence is developing: the outlook of 'nothing,' which raises deep doubts about the subjective conception. First to crumble was faith in Gd, and with the disintegration of idealism faith in the world was extinguished, until in the end even the subject, in the sense of an 'I' which unites all of the aspects of personality around it, also crumbled. We have arrived at the age of 'the death of the subject' which characterizes the postmodern discourse. What began as denial of Gd's presence became rejection of the objective reality of the world and has culminated in denying the existence of the 'I'. This process can lead to a sort of nihilism, since there no longer exists any absolute anchor up which faith of any kind can be built, since even the subject is now no longer a real anchor. In truth, we could say that there is a blessed result of this third phase: it offers one profound liberation from any category which by its very nature limits them. The next step of this freedom can be the exchange of negative, nihilistic freedom whose meaning is in a total absence of anchor, for a freedom which expresses humanity's ability to build a real world. In this, we become partners with the Holy One in the act of creation – created becomes creator. Postmodernism undermines the 'reality principle' as a the sole measure, exchanging it for the pleasure principle, meaning that objective, measurable existence is not of necessity the litmus test for reality. Postmodernism no longer accepts the modernist stance of opposition between 'scientific rigor' and the 'fantasy of faith.' One could turn this into heresy, negating both science and faith together as meaningless constructs; but it is also possible to claim the opposite, that the human ability to create reality, in context of faith and of science, is completely unbounded.

When it comes to education, much of the religious community has taken hold of the Chassidic, subjective approach to faith. The new postmodern winds have yet to penetrate this community, which explains its heavy emphasis on establishing and developing one's inner world in order to strengthen their faith. The stress is on an existence which is not empty, on the life as meaningful and substantive. Nonetheless, it appears to me that we must move on to the coming phase, 'the phase of foundation,' in which faith is the creation of a world, one which is not imaginary and certainly not illusory, but rather real. In our prayer we can already achieve an understanding that our prayer creates reality. At this stage we have arrived at the connection between faith and covenant: covenant means having faith in the reality of faith. Faith as '*malchut*' is bound up with covenant as '*yesod*,' since it births and shapes reality. Strengthening the subject in their faith is not simply a matter of emotional reinforcement which gives them a sense of personal existential meaning, but rather it is an actualization of faith which requires that one take a decision, and walk with this decision knowing that it is



reality. The deep principle is that if one desires to have faith, they must live according to that faith and if they do not it will be weakened, transforming from reality to possibility. This is the covenant which follows in the wake of faith.

(2) שם - לא

בתפיסה העכשווית, הפוסטמודרנית, מתפתחת נקודת מבט שלישית על המציאות: השקפת האין, המערערת על התפיסה הסובייקטיבית. בתחילה התפוררה האמונה באלוקים, לאחר מכן, אם התפוררות האידיליזם, דעכה האמונה בעולם, ובסופו של דבר, גם הסובייקט, במובן של 'אני' מלכד את כל חלקי האישיות סביבו, התפורר גם הוא. הגענו לעידן של 'מות הסובייקט' המאפיין את השיח הפוסטמודרני. מה שהתחיל ככפירה בנוכחותו של אלוהים, המשיך בכפירה בממשות של העולם, וסיים בכפירה בקיומו של ה'אני'. תהליך זה מביא לסוג של ניהיליזם, כיון שאין בנמצא עוגן מוחלט שאפשר לבנות עליו אמונה כלשהי, שהרי אפילו הסובייקטיביות כבר איננה עוגן של ממש. אולם ניתן לומר כי יש גם תוצאה מבורכת לשלב שלישי זה: הוא מאפשר חופש רב של האדם מכל קטגוריה שמטבעה מגבילה אותו. הצעד הבא של החופש יכול להיות המרת החופש השולל, הניהיליסטי, שמשמעו שאין לנו שום נקודת אחיזה, בחופש המבטא את היכולת של האדם עצמו לכוון עולם ממש. שאדם נעשה שותף להקב"ה במעשה בראשית, הנברא הופך לבורא. הפוסטמודרניזם מערער על 'עקרון המציאות' במדד היחיד, וממיר אותו בעקרון התענוג, הווי אומר שהמבחן לממשות אינו חייב להיות קיום אובייקטיבי ומדיד. הפוסטמודרניזם כבר אינו מקבל את ההנגדה המודרנית בין הקשיחות המדעית לבין אמונה כפנטזיה, ניתן להפוך אותו לכפירה בכך שנשלול את המדע והאמטנה כאחד כמערכות הבניות חסרות פשר, אך ניכל לטעון גם את ההפך, שיכולת האדם לכוון את המציאות, בשני ההקשרים, המדעי והאמוני, היא בלתי מוגבלת.

מבחינה חינוכית רבים בציבור הדתי אוהזים בתפיסת אמונת הסובייקטיבית החסידית. רוחות השינוי הפוסטיות עדיין לא חדרו אל הציבור הזה, לכן ניתן דגש רב על ביסוס ופיתוח העולם הפנימי של האדם בכדי להביא התחזקות באמונה. הדגש הוא שהמציאות אינה מציאות ריקה, החיים הם בעלי תוכן ומשמעות. אולם נראה לי שעלינו לעבור לשלב הבא, 'שלב הכינון', שבו האמונה היא יצירת עולם, עולם שאיננו דמיוני וודאי שלא הזוי, אלא ממשי. בתפילה שלנו כבר אפשר להגיע להבנה שהתפילה יוצרת מציאות. (אורות הקודש ג', עמ' מו) כאן אנו מגיעים לקשר בין האמונה והברית: הברית היא אמונה בממשות של האמונה. האמונה כמלכות כרוכה בברית כיסוד, כיוון שהיא מולידה ויוצרת מציאות. ההתחזקות של הסובייקט באמונתו איננו רק התחזקות רגשית הנותנת לו משמעות אישית קיומית, אלא זהו מימוש האמונה בפועל, המצריך מהאדם להכריע וללכת עם הכרעתו בידיע שהיא הממשות. הכלל העמוק הוא שאם אדם רוצה להאמין, הוא חייב להיות לפי אמונתו, ולא היא תתרום, ותהפוך ממשות לאפשרות. זו הברית הבאה לאחר האמונה.

3) From: *Illuminating the Entrances: At the Threshold of Academia*, p.201-208

The fourth model, which for certain reasons is the most exciting, is the model of multiple identities. That is to say, openness to the academic world not only allows for the acquisition of certain tools and a language which can serve to clarify and deepen the religious world and its language, it actually creates an impossible meeting between worlds...The compartmentalized believer lives in two world – the secular/scientific and the religious – and this is accomplished by opening an unbridgeable chasm between them. They will never be brought into meeting. This type of believer does live in a contradiction, but it is one which dwells outside of the self, never touching the subject or their personal identity. This is not the case with the model of multiple, divergent identities who brings these worlds together with one another and is not prepared to recognize compartmentalized standards or different planes of truth. One could say for a believer who lives the model of multiplicity, the two poles of religion and secularism are both found on the religious plane. This is not a double identity, half religious and half not, a doubling whose price, as we have seen, is either an abstraction and deterioration or even self-deception. This is an identity which lives duplication as a productive strain – not as a meaningless stress but as a religious tension...This is not Rav Kook's vision of harmony, but rather its opposite: each world is manifest in its fullness and the more distant each world is from the other, the more the explosive religious potential of a meeting between these two elemental forces increases... it conducts a complex, and sometimes even schizophrenic, web of relations between them. As a result, a new type of religiosity has come

into being in our day, one which cannot be defined by its position on some sort of graph but rather exists scattered among several different, and even strangely incompatible, centers. This is a religiosity which does not define itself with the standard terminology, allowing for a texture of non-standard identities which integrates different worlds in a way which is not a way, bringing into being a personal depth of faith in which, in my opinion, is hidden the possibility for religious redemption...

This approach must of course be balanced with a posture of “guarding the covenant,” with a capacity for deciding to be whole with my faith and way of life, a wholeness which in a paradoxical fashion allows for openness and even a critical approach. A word of explanation – I am not naïve when looking at this possibility, and I can relate to Rebbe Nachman’s anxiety for his *chassidim* which led him to advise simplicity and flight from “intellectual investigations,” as he called them. Nevertheless, I do not believe it is possible to prevent the meeting of worlds. All I can say is that one who seeks the truth in honest, humility and modesty, one who truly lives a life of seeking the Divine, is assured that he will not stumble. There is no possibility today of real religiosity without an awareness of and encounter with academia...

Of course, one should be critical and ask – won’t this reflection, critical perspective, self-analysis and the stormy encounter with other worlds lead inevitably to religious weakness? In the eyes of many, this is an unstoppable process. As I said, the danger exists – but religious weakness is far from inevitable. The real question is: how meaningful and rooted is our Jewish/religious life? To what degree are our goals, aspirations and desires actually Jewish, drawn deeply from the Torah? Is our encounter with the Divine a real encounter? How much does our life draw its sustenance from the tradition? What is really of interest to us? In simpler words – what do we think of when we get up in the morning? Does our satisfaction, the pleasure we take in life, flow from good deeds, from acts of *chesed*, from learning Torah and keeping the commandments? The answers to these questions are what will distinguish between someone whose religiosity is shaken by academia and one whose academic knowledge will actually enrich them – they, and not the encounter with the academic spirit itself.

Has someone who never left the ‘four cubits’ of the world of Torah ever accepted upon themselves the yoke of the kingdom of heaven in such a fashion? I am going to go out on a limb and say that the academic perspective is a threat specifically to the religious person who doesn’t actually have faith, the one who has never really accepted the yoke of heaven. It threatens those who are religious out of habit, or from submission to an educational or social framework. In contrast, real religiosity has nothing to fear because its faith is a product of an acceptance of the yoke which nothing more than an acceptance of oneself which cannot be shaken. Perforce this stance is more open to everything occurring and existence. If this is so, then the faith of which we are speaking is not a faith in something but rather one which is fundamentally a movement of self-acceptance, of recognizing the deep point of eros within the covenantal relationship. It is a faith which gives one freedom to integrate, combine, translate and connect in ways which our ancestors never imagined. This covenantal relationship flows from the fact that the persistence of faith is not contingent on some faithful act of one individual or another, since its roots are far deeper than the consciousness of those who carry it – it appears as a reality. Only then can one achieve wholeness with their faith and their way of life, a wholeness which itself is a necessary precondition for the invigorated religious phenomenon laid out here.

To clarify, we are not speaking of faith as some independent essence, something which one finds after stripping away all of the superfluous husks overlaying their true and enduring

identity. Rather, this is faith as 'life-form,' - whatever its identifiable source: social construct, linguistic convention, national heritage – that which survives every various reincarnation of identity. That is to say, some insignificant remnant which cannot be nullified or digested, which breaks down dichotomies and defined identities, preparing them for encounter and creativity. This is not a faith which can be found at the pole of some fixed image and is not part of any "wholeness," it can not be categorized and therefore it finds expression most often through non-conformism. Before our very eyes ecstatic and multi-cultured personalities are sprouting up, who cannot be located on any continuum because their faith grows out of a much deeper place, from times gone by.

The faith being described presents itself as a remnant, as a psycho-theological symptom of inexplicable stubbornness; as a readiness to be the world's "sucker" through saying "this is how I am and this is how I want to be" without any visible cause. This is a keeping of covenant in the deepest sense of the term: the covenant is itself the eros, which is the deep understanding of the miracle of the jar of oil stamped with the seal of the High Priest – ones wholeness with themselves, with who and what they are. This is a wholeness in the light of which one need not lock themselves into a particular place; they are able to be what they are, everywhere and anywhere.

I must note that this mode of self-acceptance runs counter to the efforts of religious society to "guard and keep," to keep the kippah on the head, to keep people praying, wearing tzitzit, tefillin, etc... This is an effort which turns religiosity into a forced posture, one which lacks spine and independence, which is itself one of the causes of the spiritual decline of the religious community. A religion which conceives of itself as waging a war of survival is a religion that lacks depth and roots. In contrast, a religious existence rich with eros, expressed through the Chabadnik's tautology of 'I am who I am – which is an inner aspect of the highest will;' that dimension which is found 'beyond and in addition to meaning,' the dimension taught of in the Chabadnik discourse 'I cannot be grasped by name, and no letter nor line hints to Me at all...' An existence like this is sure of eternity, partaking of the promise "I will be that which I will be..." (Shemot 3:14)

In any event, this is a characterization of the faithful at their best, of one for whom keeping the covenant is an act of faithfulness to their eros, to that which truly matters and involves them in the present. This sort of faithfulness allows for an exciting and impossible encounter between parallel and contradictory worlds.

The verse in Habakkuk says "...the righteous live through their faith," (Habakkuk 2:4) meaning that faith flows from one's acceptance of its presence in their life. This is a readiness to live that which the Creator gives to us. On this level, the motion of the faithful has its source in humility, in nullification and in not knowing. All of these open one to joining with what is, with that which has been given them, and to arriving at unity and a self-identity; an identity which is not a comparison between a one's concrete manifestation and an image, symbol or ideal which exist outside of oneself, but rather a revelation of self as one is, without anything beyond – this is who I am.

'The righteous live through their faith,' to the extent that this is one's faith, be it what it may, then one will live.