

**BILVAVI**

**MY  
HEART  
ASKS**

**QUESTIONS & ANSWERS**

**PARSHAS BERAISHIS 5782**

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## WHERE IS THE OHR HAGANUZ TODAY?

### QUESTION

What are the roots of both the approaches of *Mussar* and *Chassidus*?

### ANSWER

This is a very expansive discussion, and the following is all being written in extreme brevity.

**[INTRODUCTION]** Chazal state that Hashem created a special *ohr* (lit. “light”, a revelation) on the first day and hid it away for the *tzaddikim* in the future. Thus the main, complete level of this *ohr* light has been hidden away from Creation. What remains today from it are parts of its ***he’arah*** (illumination, a partial level of the *ohr*/ light), which are called ***nitzotzos***, “sparks”. Today the ***keilim***, the “vessels” which are meant to contain this *ohr* (light), are only able to contain “sparks” of the light. These “vessels”, as they are manifest in our world, are a mixture of good and evil, especially ever since the sin of eating from the *Eitz HaDaas*, when a mixture of good and evil entered into everything.

**[MUSSAR]** The **Gra** explained the rule of the Gemara that “Where there is wine available, there is no need for any remedies”, it means “Where there is Torah learning, there is no need for *mussar*.” The reason for this is because the hidden light (*ohr haganuz*) which Hashem stored away at the beginning of Creation really became hidden in the Torah. When this light shines completely, it banishes all evil, because “the words of Torah cannot accept *tumah* (defilement).” However, when the *ohr* of Torah isn’t found at the complete level, there becomes a need for *mussar* (ethics, self-discipline). The word *mussar* is from the word “*lyaser*”, “to remove”, hinting that it is an approach

in which a person can banish and remove the evil within one's human nature, mainly through waging war with those forces of evil that are found in human nature. This connects us to the sparks (the *nitzotzos*) of *ohr* (spiritual light) which shine on this world. That is why, in the approach of *mussar*, the general *avodah* is to remove our negative *middos* (character traits). **Reb Yisrael Salanter** taught that this is accomplished through the method of contemplating the depth of evil that a person can sink to when he doesn't work on himself, which brings a person to punishments of *Gehinnom*, etc. Corresponding to this reflection, one also needs to make use of the light of the Torah, as a spiritual power to remedy the particular evil one is facing, by studying the particular area of Torah which discusses the evil of a particular character trait. The way to actualize this concept in our *avodah* is by reviewing many times, with passion, with "lips on fire", a particular statement of the Torah or the Sages. Correspondingly, one also needs to make use of the imaginative faculty, by imagining the punishment for unfixed character traits. At the core of this approach is to uproot the evil from within oneself, and in this way, one actually wages war with the forces of evil. The student of R' Yisrael Salanter, the **Alter of Kelm**, expanded the idea of reflecting into the statements of Chazal, through the approach of "*chochmah v' mussar*" (wisdom and ethics). This is by learning the depth of the character traits, from reflecting into the statements of *Chazal* about them, and also by reflecting about the ways and happenings of the world. The way to actualize this concept in our *avodah* is through being orderly, precise, and serene, which is expressed through taking on small resolutions to improve. His student **Reb Yeruchem of Mir** expanded upon the above approach, through the approach of "*daas chochmah u' mussar*" (integrated knowledge, wisdom, and ethics). It is through reflecting into the ways of conduct of the Creator, as it pertains to the Creation at large. (This approach was also mirrored by the *Ramchal* in *sefer Daas Tevunos*.) In this way, one reflects about each thing to encompass all the details. Then, a person takes upon himself small resolutions, to act upon what he has realized. The **Alter of Novhardok**

established that the concept of *bitachon* (placing one's confidence in Hashem) is the pillar of our *avodah*. This represents the state of Adam before the sin. It is about letting go of the self, through working on the concept of *bitachon*. This is actualized through going to an extreme in order to act upon *bitachon*, so that a person is can easily undergo a self-effacement (*bittul*) amidst strongly pursuing truth. This path enables one to strongly connect to the sparks of spiritual light on this world, and even more so, to the light itself. However, this is mainly for the purpose of removing evil from oneself. The **Alter of Slobodka** established the root of man's *avodah* as *gadlus ha'adam* (the greatness of man), or *tzelem elokim* ("in the image of G-d"). Through this, a person is able to distance oneself from all evil, because when one realizes his greatness, he will avoid evil. This path brings a person very close to becoming attached with the very *ohr* itself. However, the purpose of this path was to "replenish the spirits of those who feel lowly and crushed in spirit", so it makes use of the "light" for that specific purpose of healing people. The *mashgiach* **R' Chatzkel Levenstein** mainly took the approach of Reb Yisrael Salanter, but he was also very connected to the concept of "palpable *emunah*". He established clearly that the purpose of all his *avodah* was to live with palpable *emunah*, and that the entire purpose of banishing evil from oneself is to live a life of palpable *emunah*. From amidst this palpable *emunah*, he left to his eternal home. **Rav Dessler**, the author of *Michtav M'Eliyahu*, integrated the approaches of *mussar* (ethics) with *Chassidus* (devotion) together, by delicately fusing the "light of *chassidus*" into *mussar*.

**[CHASSIDUS]** The approach of *Chassidus* is based on the *ohr haganuz* which Hashem hid away for the *tzaddikim* in the future, and even more so, it was based on the new *ohr* which will be revealed in the future. Its purpose is to bring a person to a palpable sense of being actually attached [to Hashem]. It is also about elevating the *nitzotzos*, the sparks that fell from *kedushah* as a result of sinning, to bring the fallen sparks of *kedushah* back to its root, to the *ohr* that it came from. That is



why much of *Chassidus* contains the concept of *birur*, “sorting” the sparks, which is essentially about refining the character traits, such as channeling our misused love, misused fear, etc. back to their root. It is about elevating the sparks of *kedushah* that are contained within the mixture of good and evil in each thing. Even more so, it is about *tikkun hekeilim*, to “repair the vessels” mainly through the concept of “A little bit of light can banish a lot of darkness”, and to thereby wage war with evil. A large part of this *avodah* involves the concept of *ahavas Yisrael* (loving the Jewish people), by focusing on how “A Jew who sins is still a Jew” (*Sanhedrin 44a*), etc. This is all enabled through the *ohr* that came down to the world which can illuminate even a person on the lowest level. In order to access that *ohr*, one needs to (1) Become connected to a *tzaddik*, who brings a person to the *shoresh* of his *neshamah*. 2) To focus on the secret dimension of Torah, called *razin* (secrets), and the deeper secrets of Torah, which are called *razin d’razin* (secrets of secrets), revealed in *Chassidus*. Through this, one becomes connected to the *ohr EinSof* and shines the “oneness” of Hashem (*achdus*) onto the Jewish people – which is the depth of *ahavas Yisrael*. And that light can also spread to the rest of Creation and unify the entire world under the one reality of Hashem. The **Baal Shem Tov** mainly emphasized two parts in his *avodah*: (1) *Emunah*, also called *p’shitus* - simply attaching oneself to Hashem, and through this, one becomes *davuk* (attached) and *miskalel* (integrated) within the *ohr EinSof*. (2) *Yichudim* (certain intentions to have while doing to saying something). Through these two aspects, coupled with *ahavas Yisrael*, one extends the revelation of *Elokus* (G-dliness) upon the world, and from that, all *shefa* (sustenance) comes to the Jewish people. The primary focus of the Baal Shem Tov’s path emphasized increasing the light of the *neshamah* upon oneself, as opposed to smashing the physicality of the *guf* (body).

The way of the Baal Shem Tov was explained through his students. It is known that he wanted 60 students, corresponding to 60 warriors that surrounded the bed of Shlomo. However, the one who

filled his place was the **Magid of Mezritch**. His *avodah* was to reveal the source of *chochmah* (wisdom) which is in *ayin* (nothingness) – a wisdom that revealed *Elokus*, G-dliness. His students and those after them continued to explain his teachings, and it would really require an entire series of *sefarim* to explain all of the details. The following is just a general description.

Each sect of *Chassidus* took a particular *middah* (trait) by which one can reveal *Elokus* (G-dliness) upon the world. This wasn't just to repair evil character, but for a higher purpose: to reveal *Elokus*. For all *middos* (traits) are really *middos* of HaKadosh Baruch Hu, and though repairing a certain *middah*, one elevates the *nitzotzos*, “sparks” of the holy *middah* which fell down from their source, and he also repairs the *kli*, the vessel that contains the trait. One who learns *Chassidus* needs to clarify, based on the *sefer* as well as on the life of the author of the *sefer*, what the root *middah* is, by which the author is revealing all of his words of Torah and way of *avodah*. (This is also generally true about all *sefarim*). Based on this, one can then understand the way of thinking and the path of the author, and thereby know how to go about the ways of *avodah* of the particular author. This is deep and subtle, because one needs to know the particular world, path, and trait the *sefer* is based on.

Here are some general examples [of this insight]: The *sefer* **Noam Elimelech** is based on the trait of *yesod-tzaddik*, meaning that it is about connecting to the root, and from this, to bestow good upon a Jew. The *sefarim* of **Slonim** are mainly about *emunah*. The *sefer* *Toras Avos* established how from *emunah* comes *kedushah* (sanctity), the trait called *yesod*, and also the *kedushah* of Shabbos. **Breslev** focuses on *p'shitus* (simplicity), *emunah peshutah* (simple faith), by which one can draw forth *chochmah*, from its source that is called *ayin*. It involves having *emunah peshutah* in Hashem, and *emunah peshutah* in a *tzaddik*. The root of this is to guard the trait of the *tzaddik*, which is *yesod*. The way of **Chabad** is *hisbonenus* (reflection), by comparing two different matters

with each other. The root of this is to compare the difference between Creator and creations, and from this, to bond with the Infinite. The way of the **Sfas Emes** is to find the root that empowers each thing. The way of **Rebbi Pinchos of Koritz** is to have an encompassing view, to see each matter from above and around the matter, thereby gaining a new perspective in each matter. This is why he stressed truth, to be aware of the beginning, middle and end of a matter. It is to gain an encompassing view of a matter, so that one can see the full picture, the full truth. The way of the **Kedushas Levi** is the trait of *ahavah*. Therefore his *avodah* was to reveal an unlimited love, endless *ahavas Yisrael* and always judging others favorably. The way of the **Kamarna** is to have *emunah peshutah* and to make oneself as *ayin* (nothing). It is to use the light of *emunah*, to become a container to house the level of *ayin*. Through this one can bond with a “G-dly light” and with spiritual bliss. The way of **Reb Baruch of Medzhybizh** is *gevurah*, restraint. The way of **Reb Yisrael of Rizhin** is to have *d’veykus* in Hashem, by going above the world, to be like a king above his nation, and thereby enable *shefa* to come from above down to the world. It is like standing “above” the confusing “garden-maze” of life [mentioned in the beginning of *Mesillas Yesharim*], not because one has traversed the “garden-maze” but an ability to be above the “garden-maze” to begin with! The way of the **Chozeh of Lublin** is, as implied from his title of “*Chozeh*”, “Seer” – as is known, he closed his eyes for seven years which enabled him to see any detail at its root. The way of the **Ohev Yisrael** is described in the introduction to the *sefer Ohev Yisrael*: “Only through this *middah* (of *ahavas Yisrael*) will I be glorified in the Heavenly Court.” His *ahavas Yisrael* was firmly established in his heart. In the first section of the *sefer*, he said that “The main pleasure of man is to bestow good upon other people and give pleasure to others, and all else follows [the above is only a partial list.]



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