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**מועתק בלשונו הק' • In His Holy Idiom**

By R. Aharon of Karlin II, translation by Joshua Schwartz

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## In His Holy Idiom

R. Aharon of Karlin II  
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**Introduction:** What is it we study when we study Hasidism? While Hasidic homilies (often the main textual grists for the analytic mill) were published in *loshn koydesh*, their pre-textual life grants them a very different *Sitz im Leben*. The versions printed in books are post-facto re-presentations, translated in a semitic calque from an original, oral Yiddish text.<sup>1</sup> While there are, most certainly, within the Hasidic canon, works of literary merit, works intended for the page and featuring creativity and style, our study of this phenomenon may be mistakenly weighted towards the written material, given the classical, textual focus of the scholar.

Our attention has arguably thus been drawn away from a more accurate object of focus, which better represents the phenomenon of Hasidism. In a little-known essay, Abraham Joshua Heschel wrote that Hasidism “...is essentially an oral movement, one that cannot be preserved in written form. It is ultimately a living movement. It is not contained fully in any of its books.”<sup>2</sup> Hasidic writing (and by extension, Hasidism as a movement) has been judged as just that, a literary phenomenon, with its literary products most commonly criticized for their lack of deft skill. There is a tie between language and life, but it is not in its content but rather its enactment. The central site of the Hasidic event was not the publishing press (though it cannot be denied), but rather the giving of the sermon, the dynamic dialogue between master and disciples. As Ze’ev Gries explicates, “[The Hasidic experience] was not essentially literary but rather a direct, immediate,

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<sup>1</sup> On this process, see Ze’ev Gries, “The Hasidic Managing Editor,” in *Hasidism Reappraised*, ed. Ada Rapoport-Albert (London; Portland, OR: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1996), 147-48. There, he writes, “[T]he oral traditions of early Hasidism are no longer retrievable in their original form, and ... our only access to them is through the literary adaptations and translations within which they have been preserved.” See also Dynner, *Men of Silk*, 200.

<sup>2</sup> See Abraham Joshua Heschel, “Hasidism,” *Jewish Heritage* 14:3 (1972), 14-6, quoted in Samuel Dresner, “Introduction: Heschel as a Hasidic Scholar,” in Abraham Joshua Heschel, *Circle of the Baal Shem Tov* (Chicago, London: University of Chicago Press, 1985), xiii. I found this quoted in Dynner, *Men of Silk*, 199.

personal experience of relationship with the Hasidic leader and his community of followers.”<sup>3</sup>

So, how are we to gain access to the oral event, when it has been re-presented in higher-class literary garb and then promulgated in printed form for mass consumption? Here, we should turn our attention to Hasidic material preserved in the original. As Dynner notes, only four Hasidic works were printed in Yiddish before 1850,<sup>4</sup> but in the latter half of the nineteenth century, as Hasidism rested in security as the dominant Jewish movement of Poland, an urge to publish as much material as possible opened the previously programmatic gates. Anthologies became more popular, with editors including older, archival material, sometimes ancestral, often previously unpublished, as appendices to the books of more current Hasidic masters.<sup>5</sup> It is in these *tshulent*-like collectanea that we can find a whole host of material, less processed than prior publishing efforts, and perhaps granting us a more intimate and accurate view, not merely of what was said, but what it was like to receive.

Below are translated selections from a section of Yiddish sermonic material printed in the back of the *Beys Aharon*, a collection of homilies largely authored by R' Aharon (II) Perlow of Karlin. While the bulk of the material was his, since this was the first publication stemming from the Karliner Hasidic community, the book also featured previously unpublished material from R' Aharon's predecessors, including the ethical will of R' Aharon ha-Gadol (the great), as well as homiletical material from R' Shlomo ha-Levi and R' Asher Perlow of Karlin, leading disciple and son of the elder Rabbi. The Karliner community<sup>6</sup> was ground-zero for the polemic and censure emanating from the Lithuanian rabbinic establishment. (Indeed, Hasidim were once generally referred to as “Karliners.”) They were renowned and widely criticized for their ecstatic worshipful practices, turning somersaults in the synagogue aisles, and behaving in (what was deemed) an unseemly fashion with their extremist piety.

Why were these selections preserved in Yiddish? As Dynner has argued above, perhaps this facilitated their circulation and reception. But if that were the case, why only include them in the original, but preserve the Hebrew material in the front? Rather, I believe it is possible that the message influenced the medium. The main theme of these homilies is how one should worship, with particular focus on the affective quality of prayer. Stressed in the recorded speeches below is an immediacy of feeling, which could best be presented not in a rarefied Hebrew calque, but rather in the thick affect contained in the original words. The performative, elastic quality of spoken Yiddish better served to communicate the vitality of the theme. In this way, and through these

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<sup>3</sup> See Gries, “The Hasidic Managing Editor,” 154.

<sup>4</sup> See Dynner, *Men of Silk*, 208-9.

<sup>5</sup> This itself is an extension of an already existent trend to include *likkutim* (miscellany) as an appendix following the section of edited homilies.

<sup>6</sup> For a good survey of the history of Karliner Hasidism, see Wolf Ze'ev Rabinowitsch, *Lithuanian Hasidism*, trans. M. B. Dagut (London: Valentine, Michell; 1970), 8-120.

examples, we may find our way in closer, more intimate contact with the true central text of Hasidic life, neither tale nor sermon, but rather: life itself.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> I want to express my deep appreciation to Ariel Mayse, for guiding me to this text, and to Arun Viswanath, for guiding me through this text. All errors in translation or diction are my own.

## **In His Holy Idiom**

Words of Spiritual Reinforcement from the *Beys Aharon*, R. Aharon of Karlin I

**Words of moral instruction and spiritual awakening from my master and teacher, whose memory should be for a blessing of life in the world to come, on a matter of the heart's labor, which is prayer, in joy. Reproduced in his holy idiom, truly.**

**That to which** a person is connected in this world, is what he is connected to in the other world. Just as a person is in physicality, so is he in a spiritual sense. Nevertheless, when it comes to prayer a person need not make [such spiritual] calculations.<sup>8</sup> In worship, one must bolster oneself, drawing [oneself] away from other matters. The holy Maggid of Zlotshiv, whose holy and sainted memory should be for a blessing of life in the world to come, said that the Evil Inclination once came to him at the time of prayer. He called to it to come and eat.

One need not have any spiritual calculations in prayer. The holy rabbi R' Shlomo (ben Me'ir ha-Levi) Karliner, whose holy and sainted memory should be for a blessing of life in the world to come, once, asked [R' Asher Perlow of Stolin] my master, my father, our teacher and rabbi, of blessed and sainted memory, "When are you coming to prayers?" He answered him that he was coming in the "tavern" (*kretshme*) of "Sing joyfully [to G-d], righteous ones!" (Ps. 33). [recited in the Shabbat morning liturgy]. R' Shlomo Karliner responded, "You're right! When you move, you move. But when you stand and look about, wondering if you missed something—when you plant yourself in the middle of the road, you get left behind!"

Whenever you pray, do not allow yourself any calculating thought. [But] when it comes to [working on] your [moral] qualities, one must make a [spiritual] accounting, since holy qualities are derived, one from another. "Worry, in the heart, a person should speak it (*yasikhena*)..." (BT South 42b)<sup>9</sup> - one must pray it out! [R' Asher,] my master, my father, my teacher and rabbi, of blessed memory, would say, "If you want to speak with Me, speak with Me in prayer." Further, one should "subdue it" (*yashkhena*)—one must tamp down the worry and not [allow] it to spread to all of one's limbs, G-d forbid. "[Rav Khisda said,] In a place where you bring in a vegetable, bring in meat or fish instead" (BT Shabbat 140b). In place of breaking your head over juvenile concerns, it is better to

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<sup>8</sup> For instance, in the *Tanya* (1:29) of R' Shneur Zalman of Liady, founder of Chabad Hasidism and co-regionalist of the Karlin dynasty, a self-accounting is deemed appropriate when as a propaedeutic, when one feels blocked from accessing the full range of one's spiritual and emotional faculties. However, this is counseled as a preparatory stage for worship, to allow one to truly accomplish the "service of the heart." To perform such a spiritual accounting during worship would further disturb one's concentration, being forced to confront all of one's mistakes and missteps.

<sup>9</sup> The reading in the Talmudic passage is based on a punning re-reading of Prov. 12:25, "Worry, in the heart of man, weighs it down (*yashkhena*), [but a good word brings joy (*yisamkheha*)]".

pray and study fresh and lively. The first prayer one must offer before the Holy One is to forget all the foolishness you have in you. One who keeps a clean consciousness is only ever joyful. “Consciousness” (מחשבה), which has the same letters as “joyous” (בשמחה).

**Words of moral instruction from my master and teacher, the holy saint of blessed memory in the world to come, regarding the heart’s labor, which is prayer, amid the love of friends, according to his holy idiom, truly.**

**“Then, those who feared G-d spoke with one another...”** (Mal. 3:16) When they spoke [with each other], that’s when they became fearers of G-d. But only when they would speak. Then “G-d attends;” (Ibid) each brings G-d into his heart. Then “(G-d) heard, and it was written in a book [of remembrance].” (Ibid) All of the actions which a Jew does in this world appear [written] in a book of remembrance before Him, as is taught in the Holy Zohar, “there was a book above the head of [King] David.”<sup>10</sup> [King] David signifies repentance and fear. How does one achieve this? With explication of the words. That is, to infuse<sup>11</sup> them into all of one’s limbs. “[Prayer is] the labor of the heart.” Of course, it’s only in the heart; but it is still labor! “The lips” - That which springs from the lips. When there is no separation of hearts amongst my companions, I would vouchsafe<sup>12</sup> them, so that no [other] nation of culture<sup>13</sup> will rule over them.

(From [R’ Asher II,] his son, the holy rabbi, whose memory should be for a blessing of life in the world to come, who said that separation between friends is dangerous, G-d forbid. It is taught in the holy Zohar<sup>14</sup> that all friends who do not love each other die<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> See Zohar I:151a. Thank you to Dr. David Greenstein for pointing out this reference. It can also be found in English in Daniel C. Matt, *The Zohar: The Pritzker Edition, Volume 2* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 341. Strikingly, in the original source, the mentioned book is a record of the sins which have suffused the world. Here, however, the deeds mentioned seem to be unspecified, in terms of their moral quality, and maybe even good, considering the religio-social setting that frames this teaching.

<sup>11</sup> The Hebrew root פ-ר-ש can mean both “to interpret” and “to spread out.”

<sup>12</sup> In Yiddish, ערױ זײן is a paraphrastic verb that means “to guarantee,” but in Hebrew, ערב can mean to be mutually responsible, as in the famous teaching found in the Tannaitic Midrash *Sifro, Bkhutoysay* 7:5, כל ישראל ערבים זה לזה, “All of Israel is responsible, one for another.” The extra resonance, from the *loshn koydesh*, reinforces the theme of the teaching.

<sup>13</sup> The strict translation of *loshn* is language, but it is used in rabbinic literature and liturgy as a metonymy for a foreign nation.

<sup>14</sup> See Zohar II:190b. Here, it is worth noting that, while the love depicted is not explicitly sexual, it would be equally false to neuter it as merely Platonic. Key to the sociality of the Zohar’s mysticism, and further developed in later Kabbalah, perhaps reaching an apotheosis in the *khavershaft* of Hasidism, is a love that unifies both vertically, with the Godhead, but also horizontally, with one’s fellows, as each axis mirrors the other. On the social eroticism of the Zohar and its ties to esotericism, see Yehuda Liebes, “Zohar and Eros,” *Alpayim* 9 (1994) 67-119; Elliot R. Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being: Kabbalistic Hermeneutics and Poetic Imagination* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005) 296-332; Idem, “Murmuring Secrets: Eroticism and Esotericism in Medieval Kabbalah,” in *Hidden Intercourse: Eros and Sexuality in the History of Western Esotericism*, ed. Wouter J.

before their time has come. Further, it is more of a danger [posed] to the rabbi, G-d forbid, than for the compatriots. He said in the name of [R' Aharon II,] his father, our master and teacher of blessed memory: what is built or undone,<sup>16</sup> during the Ten Days of Repentance, is due to the love of friends. A *midrash* brings,<sup>17</sup> a parable of a king who built a palace on top of inter-connected boats. [When the boats remain in place, so the palace is steady, but it falls if they break apart]

**Words of self-reinforcement from our master and teacher, of blessed memory, regarding matters of repentance, reproduced according to his holy idiom, truly.**

**Tshuve**, [meaning] to repair the upper worlds, is not in our scope. Our *tshuve* is to repair oneself alone regarding what is to come. We only utilize these fasts and penitential practices under three conditions: [they work for] a healthy person, an [especially] coarse sin, G-d forbid, and [during the winter,] when the days are short.<sup>18</sup> We give permission to take upon oneself a [voluntary] fast once, but this is only if one drinks warm [beverages] before the day [of the fast]. And we only allow this [fasting] if [the faster] will not fall into a depressive or melancholic state, G-d forbid. G-d forbid what such sadness leads to; I do not want to speak on it. [G-d is] “the healer of the broken hearted and binder of their wounds” (Ps. 147:3). With a bit of vim and vigor, one can overcome anything. This is a devilish matter: one [thinks one] should [take on the spiritual labor of] making an account of oneself,<sup>19</sup> [putatively] to fix what one has done

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Hanegraaff and Jeffrey J. Kripal (Leiden: Brill, 2008) 65-109. Wolfson, especially, draws attention to the homosocial and homoerotic nature of the situation of Kabbalistic love.

<sup>15</sup> Literally, “are withdrawn from the world.”

<sup>16</sup> This dyad is most likely drawn from the lexicon of *termini tecnici* of Lurianic Kabbalah. There, *binyan* (re/building) and *nesirah* (undoing) refer to the state of the Godhead, whether figured as the intimate union of *Ze'in Anpin* and *Nukba*, or the shared corporeality of *Adam Kadmon* (Primordial Adam) and Eve. In both cases, the emergence of the created world was due to the advent of separation. There is a particular state of *nesirah* during the Days of Repentance, beginning on the eve of the New Year and climaxing at the end of *Sukes*, in which G-d divests Himself of his majesty so that His people can choose to reinstate Him. *Nesirah* is a common theme throughout Lurianic theosophical and theurgical literature, but the particular discussion regarding the New Year can be found in *Pri 'Ets Hayyim*, *Sha'ar Rosh ha-Shanah*.

<sup>17</sup> See *Midrash ha-Gadol*, *Devarim* 33:5.

<sup>18</sup> Voluntary fasts, as an element of penitential practices, are traditionally from sunup to sundown. R' Aharon is willing acknowledge the benefit to such an ascetic choice, but only under conditions in which one is not inhibited or debilitated due to the strenuousness of the self-abnegation. R' Aharon is skeptical of the value of ascetic practices, only granting them conditional worth, if they can genuinely provide the experiential conditions that enable, rather than inhibit, spiritual work, due to the distracting feelings of hunger, pain, or exhaustion. The practice must match the situation or condition in which one finds oneself.

<sup>19</sup> While בארעכענען זיך has an attested meaning of “to change one’s mind,” here, from context, the phrase appears to be used as a reflexive form of the normal verb, meaning “to consider.” It seems to be a calc

until now, thinking one has brought repair,<sup>20</sup> but, on the contrary, one has actually detracted from the good! [Maybe,] once a day, or once a week, or once a month, one should take account of oneself, to get to the truth of the matter.<sup>21</sup> Because waiting for [the right time] to perform self-repair is not in the capacity of contemporary consciousness, as most of what it's [trying to] work out within is wandering and lost.

**Tshuve**, in our scope, we can translate<sup>22</sup> from [the verse] “Turn from evil” by means of “do[ing] good” (Ps. 34:15). [In Hebrew,] “draw” (משכו) can mean both “to draw away” and “to draw to.” When one draws up holiness into the self, one is, as a matter of course, drawn away from wickedness. We interpret, “Those pushed away in the land of Egypt (*Mitsrayim*)” (Is. 27:13) [to mean] one can be pushed away from holiness, G-d forbid, when one harms oneself (*meysr zikh*) with fasts and asceticism. “From either side”<sup>23</sup> - [If] one is not on an upright path, one's fasting and mortifications are also not straight.<sup>24</sup> Alternatively, [if] one is walking on the true path, then eating and sleeping [well] is also good. One should concern oneself to sleep enough and rest up, so one's heart is all in.<sup>25</sup> For the essence of *tshuve* is remorse, and the heart is the vessel of remorse, as we have received from our ancestors and great righteous men.

**In the name of the holy rabbi Shlomo Karliner, the holy, righteous man of blessed memory in the world to come:** when it is time to eat and chills one's desire for food, this is reckoned as [the equivalent of] rolling around in the snow.<sup>26</sup>

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of the common Hebrew pietistic phrase, חשבון הנפש, which means an account of one's soul, psyche, or self.

<sup>20</sup> Here, “repair” [*tiken*] is a technical term drawn from the Jewish mystical lexicon. Engaging in repentance can yield not merely healing within oneself, but a correlate repair in the cosmos as well.

<sup>21</sup> Ironically, one must perform a kind of meta-*khesbn* to see if one is capable of doing a real self-accounting.

<sup>22</sup> The verb used, טייטש, idiomatically means to translate, especially into Yiddish, but is here utilized in its technical sense, to translate biblical verses, phrase by phrase, from Hebrew to the vernacular. This entire section is an example of just such a homiletic technique, which involves not only translating the sense of the phrase, but also including creative interpretation, in a midrashic style, relying on cross-linguistic puns and the moral themes at play. The popular Yiddish idiom, *fartaytsht un farbesert*, signifies that translation into Yiddish adds non-trivial benefits.

<sup>23</sup> The phrase ממה נפשך is a common idiom taken from the Babylonian Talmud (viz. Marcus Jastrow, *Dictionary of Targumim, Talmud and Midrashic Literature* [Leipzig: W. Drugulin, 1903], 736, s.v. מה. The author, in his *taytsh*, may be playing on the common meaning of נפש, which can mean soul or self.

<sup>24</sup> The adjective the author uses, גלייך, means both (directionally) straight and (morally) upright, as well as comparable. This latter sense is consonant with the equivocation of the Talmudic phrase.

<sup>25</sup> Key to R' Aharon's concern is that the *khosid* has full emotional capacity, which would be hampered by the physical distress of fasting. While previous pietistic perspectives appreciated resonance between states of physical difficulty, which would naturally lower one's mood and induce emotional distress, R' Aharon is invested in the full exercise of feeling as an activity, which would be constrained if one's full faculties were not at the ready.

<sup>26</sup> The mortifying technique of rolling one's body in the snow is attested in Jewish mystical literature, first prescribed in the *Sefer Hasidim* of the German Pietists and later further developed within the ascetic traditions of Lurianic Kabbalah, intended to help bring rectification for one's sins and thus healing to the broken cosmos. Here, the corporal mortification has been internalized and domesticated, now as a control of one's appetites.

**Words of awakening from my master and teacher, the holy saint of blessed memory in the world to come, regarding prayer in faithful connection with *Tsadikim*,<sup>27</sup> reproduced according to his holy idiom, truly.**

The source<sup>28</sup> is faith in *tsadikim*, particularly in the *tsadik* to whom you travel<sup>29</sup>— in the [spiritual] vitality which he invests in worship, in study, and *yontif* or the [festival of the] New Moon. [The vitality] he has already absorbed or that which he must take in. “Matters of utmost importance [which people treat with contempt].”<sup>30</sup> The simple meaning is: matters which stand and establish a person in the world’s heights. “And [G-d’s] ministering [angels] all stand in the heights of the universe”<sup>31</sup>— As soon as one begins to serve blessed God, one stands already in the heights of the world.

Let us consider: if one is lacking in [spiritual] vitality; what then? Serve G-d like a yoked ox or a laden donkey. “Sanctify for Me every first-born”<sup>32</sup> (Ex. 13:2). Sanctify to me consciousness. The holiness of the [*tefillin*’s] straps, of the boxes, of the knots, and of the [scriptural] portions, all of it is received by one *yud/yid*.<sup>33</sup> A Jew (*yid*) must thank

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<sup>27</sup> Whereas above, *tsadik* is translated as a “righteous man,” here the author is stressing the more technical significance of the term, meaning a charismatic, virtuosic, mystical leader of a group of *khsidim*. In this context, the *tsadik* is in mystical connection with the Divine, is seen as the *axis mundi*, and serves in the explicit role as intermediary with the Divine, for his followers. Given the technical significance of the usage, in this discourse, I will transliterate the term rather than translate. A foundational treatment on the *tsadik* in Jewish mysticism can be found in Gershom Scholem, “*Tsaddik: The Righteous One*,” in *The Mystical Shape of the Godhead* (New York: Schocken Books, 1991), 88-139. On the *tsadik* as *axis mundi*, see Arthur Green, “The *Zaddiq* as *Axis Mundi* in Later Judaism,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 45:3 (Sep., 1977), 327-346. On the theme of connecting with the *tsadik*, in the context of Hasidic prayer, see Rapoport-Albert, “God and the *Tsadik* as Two Focal Points of Hasidic Worship,” *History of Religion* 18 (1979), 296-324.

<sup>28</sup> It is unclear of what faith in the *tsadik* is the source, but, from context, we may presume the subject to be faith in the Divine, or piety. And awakening in prayer, as the title of the piece suggests.

<sup>29</sup> A main feature of one’s affiliation with a *tsadik* was to go on pilgrimage and spend regular time by his side, hearing his teachings, soaking up his presence, and being in fellowship with his other disciples.

<sup>30</sup> See BT Berachot 6b. There, a question is raised regarding that what is referred to in Ps. 12:9, “When vileness is exalted amongst men.” The answer provided is when matters of import are treated vilely by persons, such as prayer. As the author is about to pun, in its literal sense, the Talmudic answer means, “Matters which stand at the world’s height.”

<sup>31</sup> Quoted from the weekday morning service, the blessings preceding the recitation of the *Shema* (doxology), standard in all extant liturgical rites.

<sup>32</sup> This is one of the passages traditionally recited after the laying of *tefillin* (phylacteries). The following passage refers to the different components of these ritual objects. Additionally, in Hasidic exegesis, the “first-born” is often seen as a symbolic stand in for consciousness, as it is that which is generated, of the first order, from the mind. In addition, consciousness, much like the first born, is accorded prize of place, given its lofty, spiritual status. The *tefillin* situated on the head, as if emerging from one’s mind (*mokhin*), come to stand for one’s mental faculties (versus the manual faculty of the *tefillin shel yad*), which unites this psycho-ritual nexus, much like the knot on the back of the phylactery.

<sup>33</sup> The letter *yud*, in the ineffable, four-letter name of G-d, is associated with the world of thought and the Divine emanation of Wisdom (*khokhme*). The Divine name spelled out in the material of the

G-d, blessed be He, for existing, each hour and each moment. Regarding bodily existence, everyone knows that one must acknowledge its goodness. And for spiritual existence, we must, all the more so, recognize its goodness. The essence is speech, but there exists a more elevated thing: Thought. [For] speech is derived from thought. “You protect me from pain; [You surround me] with songs of salvation” (Ps. 32:7).—You [i.e. G-d], protect us from this pain! Hence, we will sing this song of refuge to You. “And when you come [to the land, which your G-d has given you as an inheritance]...” (Deut. 26:1)--[only] with joy can one come. And what is that joy? When a person merits to speak holy words in connection with *tsadikim* before God. “And you shall take from the first [fruit of the land... and bring it to the place G-d has chosen].” (Ibid, 2) The “first” is Wisdom.<sup>34</sup> “All of the fruit” (Ibid) – all the increase of [one’s] words and actions. “Which you bring from your land (*erets*)” - from your earthiness (*artsiyes*).<sup>35</sup> “This day, the Lord your G-d has commanded you to do...” (Ibid, 16) On that day, you must make<sup>36</sup> your thought. All day, reflect on from where it came. Do you feel something regarding it?

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*tefillin* (*Shadai*) also features a *yud*, and it seems that is to what the author refers. In addition, the name of the letter is the same as the Germanic (and Yiddish) term for a Jew (*Jude*). Here, as with many other occasions in Yiddish, especially in the south of Ashkenaz, the Germanic “u” vowel and the sound of the Yiddish “i” have some mixing. Hence, *yud* can easily be read as referring, as well, to a *yid*. Martin Buber relates a famous teaching of the Seer of Lublin, drawing on this confluence. He writes, in the voice of R’ Yaakov Yitzchak, “The way it is when two men drink each other’s health and each feels equal to the other and neither of them considers himself superior, that is a matter which I experienced when I began to learn the alphabet. In the book before me I saw the letter *Yod*, which is so very like a mere point. I asked the teacher: ‘What kind of a little point is that?’ ‘That is the letter *Yod*,’ said he. ‘And does that little point,’ I asked, ‘always stand alone or can two of them stand together?’ ‘Two of them may stand together,’ said he. ‘But how does one read them then,’ I asked again. ‘When two *Yods* stand together,’ said he, ‘that signifies the name of God, Blessed be He!’ Soon thereupon I saw that at the end of each verse of Holy Scripture there stand two points, one above the other. I did not yet know that these are the points of separation; I considered each of these two points to be the letter *Yod*. ‘Here,’ I said to my teacher, ‘there is printed constantly the name of God, Blessed be He.’ ‘Mark my words: when two *Yods* (Jews) stand beside each other it signifies the name of God; but when one stands above the other it does not signify the name of God.’” See Martin Buber, *For the Sake of Heaven: A Chronicle*, trans. Ludwig Lewisohn (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1945), 39. This teaching is also associated with the Seer’s disciple, the Holy Jew, and R’ Yisroel of Ruzhin.

<sup>34</sup> This identification is a common move in Kabbalistic literature, based in the verse Ps. 111:10 (“The beginning of wisdom is the fear of G-d”). Wisdom, here, serves as a *terminus technicus*, referring to the first distinct emanation in the Godhead, in Hebrew called *Khokhme*, or, Wisdom, the generative intellect of the Divine. The emanation is consonant with the author’s previous reference to consciousness and thought.

<sup>35</sup> Drawing on kabbalistic hermeneutical tradition, the land (*erets*) is a commonly availed-upon symbol to refer to the feminine aspect of the Divine, *Malkhus*, or the Shechinah. Especially in Hasidic exegesis, this term is associated with human, embodied, worldly life. To preserve the linguistic connection to the land, but also to gesture toward the coarseness of materiality, I have translated it as “earthiness.”

<sup>36</sup> The verb *makhn* appears here to function as part of a paraphrastic construction, e.g. *makhn a rekhenung* (make a reckoning), or the above usages in reference to *kheshtbn*. However, I have retained its literal sense in this case to indicate a resonance with the author’s insistence on coupling thought with concrete, physical action. Thoughts must be realized in an actional capacity, not remain strictly theoretical.

Have you considered<sup>37</sup> how you'd take care of it? [However,] dealing with thought alone, without any action, we don't hold with that. Such is not for our kind of people; it is [mere] exertion. He<sup>38</sup> said that the whole of his words had already been uttered and explicated in holiness, in the responsa of the Radbaz<sup>39</sup> 3:472<sup>40</sup>, and in the *Sefer ha-Khinekh* (Book of Education), [the] portion of *Bo*, regarding the verse "A bone shall you not break in [the paschal lamb]" (Ex. 12:46). The rest is commentary, go and learn!<sup>41</sup>

**The language of the Radbaz, ad loc.:** We read in the chapter "One should not stand"<sup>42</sup> - "One should not begin<sup>43</sup> to pray from silliness, lightheadedness,<sup>44</sup> chatter, controversy, or anger."<sup>45</sup> Further,<sup>46</sup> we read: "R' Chanina would not pray on a day he

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<sup>37</sup> Yid. *halt*, literally "to hold." This usage of "to hold" is culturally particular to the idiom of the *yeshive*, the talmudic academy. There, "to hold" meant to be engaged in something, specifically in regards to a rabbinic text (as in, "Where are you holding?"). Additionally, as here, it can be used to signify having an active relation.

<sup>38</sup> This appears to be a shift to the voice of the editor, commenting on a remark made by R' Aharon II, regarding the teaching he had just given.

<sup>39</sup> R' David ben Solomon ibn Abi Zimra, 1479–1573. Born in Spain but lived most of his life in Palestine and the Maghreb, working as a *poysek* (legal decisor) and rabbinical scholar.

<sup>40</sup> This responsum was a popular cited text for the Hasidim, since it is a rare example of a pre-Hasidic rabbi grappling with the favored themes of their movement, namely, intentionality and emotionality in prayer. The Radbaz is a strong countervailing push against the tendency of most later rabbis, to minimize the import and (legal) force of intention in prayer. Given the centrality of enthusiastic worship, to the Hasidim, they felt especial affinity for this minority opinion.

In addition, the Radbaz establishes an important precedent for the special quality between a spiritual master and his disciple, a dynamic upon which the entirety of Hasidic society was (and is) based. Besides here, this responsum is quoted in full in a number of other Hasidic anthologies, such as *Mayim Rabim*, a late nineteenth century collection of teachings connected to Yekhiel Mikhl of Zlotshev, edited by Nosn Neta ha-Kohen of Kalbiel.

On the Karliner's citation of the Radbaz, see Mordecai L. Wilensky, "Hasidic-Mitnaggedic Polemics in the Jewish Communities of Eastern Europe: The Hostile Phase," *Essential Papers on Hasidism: Origins to Present*, ed. Gershon David Hundert (New York: New York University Press, 1991) 250.

<sup>41</sup> This is a famous talmudic paraphrase taken from BT Shabbat 31a, in which Hillel is asked to sum up the entire Torah in an essential kernel that encapsulates the whole of the Torah, while the rest is all commentary upon it.

<sup>42</sup> This is the traditional, short-hand reference to the fifth chapter of the talmudic tractate of *Brokhes* (Blessings), which is mainly concerned with the topic of prayer. In traditional Jewish study, chapters of talmud are referred to by their opening words rather than by numerical citation. The full opening *mishne* reads, "One should not stand to pray save from a serious demeanor [lit. a heavy head]. The early pietists would wait an hour and [then] pray, so they could direct their hearts to the Omnipresent. Even if a king greeted one [during the standing prayer], they would not answer. Even if a snake coiled around their ankle, they would not interrupt." (M Berachot 5:1, BT Berachot 30b)

<sup>43</sup> Lit. "stand."

<sup>44</sup> This is a literal rendering. This phrase often comes with associations of licentiousness.

<sup>45</sup> The Radbaz cites this passage as sourced in the Talmud, but the correct citation for this formulation can be found in Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah*, Laws of Prayer 4:18. A similar passage can be found in the above-cited talmudic chapter, which reads: Our Rabbis taught: One should not begin to pray from sadness, laziness, silliness, chatter, licentiousness, nor meaningless matters but rather from the joy of the commandment."

<sup>46</sup> In BT Eruvin 65a.

boiled over. This means a day he became angry. Further,<sup>47</sup> we read, “Anyone whose mind is not settled should not pray.” Further,<sup>48</sup> we read, “Samuel would not pray in a house that had liquor in it,” because of the odor that disturbed him and prevent him from intending [his mind]. You learn from all this that a person should not pray in a place that disturbs his mind, and not at a time that disrupts his intention. Thus, an individual or group who have loathing, anger, hatred, or are in a fight with the community, their prayers are not wanted. It is forbidden for them to pray there [with the community], where their minds are troubled and are not able to concentrate in their prayer. And all the more so if [these factors] always seem to cause him anger. And all the more so if he is irascible with the community’s leadership. If not for his worry, he would say it would be better for him to pray alone than amidst a quarrelsome scrum, for whom his mind is not at ease. There is a further reason that it is only fitting for a person to pray in a place where his heart desires. There are those who say that a person should only study Torah in a place his heart desires, and the rationale is that when a person sees someone with whom he is at ease, his spirit is awakened and expands to full intentionality, and his heart is happy. And then the spirit of G-d can rest<sup>49</sup> on him, as is said regarding prophecy.

**It is further said in the books of wisdom:**<sup>50</sup> when a person concentrates on his master and gives of his heart, his spirit becomes bound to his [master’s], and, drawing from the [master’s divine] influx, an additional spirit will alight upon him. This is what is called, by them [i.e. the kabbalists] “the secret of [spiritual] impregnation,”<sup>51</sup> with the lives of both of them. As it is said, “Your eyes will see your master” (Is. 30:20). And this is [the secret meaning of] “[The elders] stationed themselves with you, [and I will descend and speak with you there], and I will reserve from some of the spirit [on you (Moses) and place it upon them]” (Num. 11:17). Thus our holy master<sup>52</sup> was glorified, for when he saw the face of his teacher, he would reach a lofty level. This was all the more so

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> The Hebrew verb for “rest,” נח, has the same root as the earlier mentions of being “at ease” with others. The Radbaz seems to imply that there is a correlation between gentleness in interpersonal relationships, and the ease of connection between G-d and humans.

<sup>50</sup> This phrase is referring to books of a kabbalistic nature, most likely drawing from the Lurianic tradition of metempsychosis, a spiritual economy in which souls circulate both through generations, in reincarnation, as well as with the souls of those still living.

<sup>51</sup> I follow Elliot Wolfson in translating *ibur* as “impregnation,” the result of an act, rather than the state of “pregnancy.” Central to Kabbalistic psychology and psychology is the interrelationship between the souls of the living righteous and those of the righteous dead. For a philosophical and phenomenological analysis of this phenomenon within Kabbalah and other religions, see Elliot R. Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being: Kabbalistic Hermeneutics and Poetic Imagination* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 457n231. Here, however, the abundant spirit of the *tsadik* is so expansive and generative, that it is able to spare part of his spiritual substance for his disciple. For more on such spiritual intermingling in Jewish mysticism and magic, see the studies presented in Matt Goldish, *Spirit Possession in Judaism: Cases and Contexts from the Middle Ages to the Present* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2003).

<sup>52</sup> Most likely R’ Joseph Saragossi (1460-1507).

when the master would concentrate as well; each would call to the other, one bestowing and the other receiving. As R' Yossi said, "A person does not merit to learn from everyone."<sup>53</sup> From this, they permitted one to move to a different location to study Torah, even if his father tells him not to go, leading him to transgress his father's command. For one does not merit to learn from everyone. This reason applies as well in prayer, for when a person sees his loving friend, a close relation, his master, or one with whom his spirit is at ease, his own spirit will awaken to the highest intention, and a spirit from on high is joined to him. This is a matter that one's intellect indicates. Thus far is his holy idiom.

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<sup>53</sup> See BT Eruvin 47b. The thrust of this teaching is that a disciple must prioritize studying with his most suitable master, even if one has to travel long distances to study with him.

**דברי מוסר והתעוררות מאדומו"ר זצלה"ה על דבר עבודה שבלב זו תפלה בשמחה. מועתק בלשונו הק' ממש:**

**במאי** דדבוק בר נש בהאי עלמא הכי בההוא עלמא. ווי אַזוי דער מענטש איז אין גופניות אַזוי איז ער אין רוחניות. פֿונדעסטוועגן ביים דאָוונען דאַרף מען ניט האָבן קיין חשבונות. מע באַדאַרף האָבן התחזקות אין דער עבֿודה. סע זאָל ציען צוריק פֿון אַנדערע זאַכן. המגיד ה"ק מזלֶאָטשיבֿ זצוקלה"ה אמר דער יצ[ר] הר[ע] איז איין מאָל געקומען צו אים בשעת דעם דאָוונען, האָט ער אים געהייסן קומען צום עסן. ביים דאָוונען דאַרף מען קיין חשבונות ניט האָבן. הרב הק' ר[ב] ש[למה בן מאיר הלוי] ק[אַרלינער] זצוקלה"ה שאל פ[עם] א[חד] לא[דוני] א[ביו] מ[ורי] ור[בי] צ"ל ווען ביסטו געקומען צום דאָוונען[?]? האָט ער אים געענטפֿערט ער איז געקומען אין דער קרעטשמע פֿון רננו צדיקים. והשיב לו הרב רש"ק הני"ל ביסט גערעכט אַז מע פֿאַרט, פֿאַרט מען. אַז מע שטייט, קוקט מען זיך אַרום טאַמער פֿעלט עפעס. וואָרעם אַז מע שטעלט זיך אין מיטן וועג בלייבט מען הינטערשטעליק. אַזוי פ[ל] ז[מן] מע דאָוונט טאַר מען ניט האָבן קיין חשבון. אין מידות דאַרף מען יאָ האָבן אַ חשבון. אַזוי ווי די הייליקע מידות נעמען זיך איינע פֿון דער אַנדערער. דאגה בלב איש ישיחנה. ער זאָל זי אויסדאָוונען. א[דון] א[ביו] מ[ורי] ור[בי] ז"ל אמר ווילסט מיט מיר רעדן[?]? רעד מיט מיר אין דאָוונען. עוד ישיחנה ער זאָל די דאגה נידעריק מאַכן, זאָל זיך ניט צעשפּרייטן אין אַלע אַברים חס ושלום. באתרא דליעול ירקא ליעול בשרא וכוורי. אויף דעם אָרט וואָס מע ברעכט דעם קאַפּ אויף נאַרישע חשבונות בעסער זאָל מען דאָוונען און לערנען פֿריש און לעבעדיק. די ערשטע תפילה דאַרף מען מתפלל זיין לפני השי"ת, מע זאָל פֿאַרגעסן וואָס מע האָט אַ נאַרישקייט אויף זיך. דערהאַלטן אַ מחשבה ריין איז נאָר בשימחה. מחשבה אותיות בשמחה:

**דברי מוסר מאדומו"ר ז"ל ע"ד דבר עבודה שבלב זו תפלה באהבת חברים כלשונו הק' ממש:**

אז נדברו יראי ה' איש אל רעהו וגומר. זיי זיינען געוואָרן אויפֿגערעדט יראי ה'. סע האָט זיך אַליין גערעדט. דעמאָלט ויקשב ה' נעמט ער אַרײַן גאָט אין האַרצן. אז וישמע (ה') ויכתב ספר. אַלע עשיות וואָס אַ ייִד טוט אויף דער וועלט ווערט אויבן דערפֿון אַ ספֿר זכרון לפֿניו. כדאיתא בזוה"ק ספר למעלה מרישא דדוד. דוד איז תשובה וייראה. ווי אַזוי קומט מען דערצו. מיט פירוש המילות. דאָס צעשפּרייטעכץ פֿון דעם וואָרט אין אַלע אַברים. עבודה שבלב. עס איז דאָך נאָר בלב פֿונדעסטוועגן איז דאָס פֿאַרט אַן עבֿודה. אַז אַ קיבוץ האַלטן זיך אין איינעם ווערט דערפֿון ניבֿ שפֿתים דאָס קוועלן פֿון די לעפֿצן. אַז עס זאָל ניט זיין קיין פירוד הלבבות אין מיינע קאַמפּאַניעס וואָלט איך זיי ערבֿ געוועזן שלא ילולט בהם שום אומה ולשון:

(מבנו הרב הק[דוש] זצוקלה"ה אמר כי פירוד בין החברים היא סכנה חס ושלום כדאיתא בזוה[ר] ק[דוש] כל אילין חבריא דלא רחמין אילין לאילין אסתלקו מעלמא עד לא מטא זמנייהו. וביותר היא סכנה חס ושלום להרב מהחברים. ואמר בשם אביו אדומו"ר ז"ל כי הנסירה והבנין שנעשה בעשיית הכל הוא מאהבת חברים. וכדאיתא במדרש משל למלך שבנה פלטין ע"ג ספינות מקושרות כו'):)

### דברי התחזקות מאדומו"ר ז"ל ע[ל] ד[עת] בעניני תשובה מועתק ממש כלשונו הקדוש:

**תשובה** צו מתקן זײַן בעולמות עליונים איז ניט אונדזער ערך. אונדזער תשובה איז צו מתקן זײַן זיך אליין אלהבא. תעניתים וסיגופים נוצן מיר ניט נאָר מיט ג' תנאים. אַ געזונטער מענטש. און אַ גראַבע עבירה ח[ס] ו[שלום]. און אין די קליינע טעג. גיבן מיר יאָ אַ מאָל רשות צו כאַפֿן איין מאָל אַ תענית. און דאָס אַז מען זאָל טרינקען וואַרעמס פֿאַר טאָג. און דאָס ניט מיר האַלטן דערפֿון נאָר כדי ער זאָל ניט אַרײַנפֿאַלן אין עצבות ומ[רה] ש[חורה] ח[ס] ו[שלום]. עצבות חלילה ברענגט צו אַלץ. איך וויל אַזוי פֿיל ניט זאָגן. הרופא לשבורי לב ומחבש לעצבותם. מיט איין שטיקל פֿרישקייט קאָן מען אַלץ אַריבערגיין. פי זה מעשה בע[ל] ד[בר] מען זאָל זיך באַרעכענען וואָס מע האָט געטאָן עד עכשיו וסוברים שמתקנים ואדרבה זה מניעת הטוב. איין מאָל אין טאָג אָדער איין מאָל אין דער וואָך אָדער איין מאָל אין חודש זאָל מען זיך באַרעכענען דעם אמת פֿון דער זאָך. וואָרעם מע זאָל וואַרטן ביז מען וועט פֿאַרריכטן איז ניט הײַנטיקע פּחות און מוחות און מיינסטן וואָס מע טראַכט דערינען בלאַנקעט עס זיך:

**תשובה** אין אונדזער ערך טײַטשן מיר סור מרע על ידי ועשה טוב. משכו איז טײַטש אַוועקצײַען און צוצײַען. אַז מע ציט אַרויף אויף זיך קדושה ווערט מען ממילא אַוועקגעצויגן פֿון שלעכטס. מיר טײַטשן והנדחים בארץ מצרים. מע קאָן נידח ווערן פֿון דער קדושה ח[ס] ו[שלום] אַז מען איז זיך מיציר מיט תענית וסיגופים. ממ[ה] נ[פֿשך]. גייט מען ניט אויפֿן גלײַכן וועג איז דאָך תענית וסיגופים אויך ניט גלײַך. אלא מע גייט אויף דעם אמתן וועג איז דאָך עסן און שלאָפֿן אויך גוט. מען געהער זיך אויסשלאָפֿן און אויסרוען כדי עס זאָל דאָס האַרץ זײַן אין גאַנצן. וואָרעם תשובה איז דער עיקר חרטה. און דאָס האַרץ איז די כלי פֿון חרטה. אַזוי האָבן מיר מקבל געוועזן פֿון אונדזערע עלטערן פֿון גרויסע צדיקים:

**בשם הרב[ה] הק[דוש] ר[בי] ש[למה] ק[ארלינער] זצוקלה"ה.** אַז סע קומט צום עסן און מען איז זיך מקרר פֿון תאוות אכילה ווערט דאָס גערעכנט גילגול שלג:

### התעוררות מאדו[ני] מור[ני] זצוקלה"ה ע[ל] ד[עת] התפלה בהתקשרות לצדיקים[ם] באמונה מועתק כלשונו הק[דוש] ממש.

**דער** מקור איז אמונה בצדיקים ובפֿרט אין דעם צדיק וואָס מע פֿאַרט צו אים. אין דעם חיות וואָס ער טוט אַרײַן אין דעם דאוונען און דעם לערנען. אין יו[ם] ט[וב] און ר[אש] ח[ודש]. אָדער ער האָט שוין גענומען אָדער ער דאַרף צונעמען. דברים עומדים ברומם של עולם. דער פשט איז דברים עומדים ומעמידים את האדם ברומם של עולם. ואשר משרתיו כולם עומדים ברומם של עולם. אַז מע שטעלט זיך פֿאַר אַ משרת בײַ גאָט ב[רוך] ה[וא] איז שוין עומדים ברומם של עולם. לאַמיר קלערן אַז מען האָט ניט קיין חיות, וואָס איז דען. דינט גאָט כשור לעול וכחמור למשא. קדש לי כל בכור. הייליק צו מיר די מחשבה. דאָס הייליקע פֿון די רצועות. און פֿון די בתים. און פֿון די קשרים. און פֿון די פרשיות. דאָס נעמט אַלץ אויף זיך אַ יוד. אַ יוד דאַרף דאַנקען גאָט ב"ה אַלע שעה און אַלע רגע פֿאַר בריאות. פֿאַר גופניות ווייסט דאָך איטלעכער אַז מע דאַרף מכיר בטובה זײַן. און פֿאַר רוחניות דאַרף מען פשיטא מכיר בטובה זײַן. דער עיקר איז דער דיבור. עס איז פֿאַראַן אַ העכערע זאָך. מחשבה. פֿון דעם דיבור קומט אין דער מחשבה. מצר תצרני רני פלט תסובבני. זאָלסט אונדז אָפֿהיטן פֿון אַ צרה. פֿונדעסטוועגן וועלן מיר דיר זינגען דאָס געזאַנג פֿון אַנטרינג: והיה כי תבא מיט שימחה קאָן מען קומען. וואָס איז די שימחה אַז מע איז זוכה צו זאָגן פֿאַר הש[ם] ית[ברך] הייליקע ווערטער בהתקשרות לצדיקים. ולקחת מראשית. ראשית איז חכמה. כל פרי אַלע מערוג פֿון עשיות ודיבורים. אשר תביא מארצך פֿון דיין ארציות. היום הזה אנכי [ה' אלקיך] מצוך לעשות. דו זאָלסט מאַכן דעם טאָג אַ מחשבה. אַ גאַנצן טאָג זאָל מען זיך באַרעכענען פֿון וואָנען סע נעמט זיך. פֿילט ער עפעס מיט איר צי

האַלט ער דערביי צי קער ער זיך אָן דערמיט. פֿון אומגיין במחשבה אליין אָן עשיה האַלטן מיר גאָר ניט דערפֿון. דאָס איז ניט לאַנשים כערפֿינו נאָר האָרעוואַניע. ואמר שכלל הדברים כבר אמורים ומפורשים בקדושה בשו"ת הרדב"ז ח[לק] ג' סי[מן] תע"ב ובספר החינוך פ[רשת] בא בפסוק ועצם לא תשברו בו. ואידך פירושא זיל גמור:

**לשון תשובת הרדב"ז שם.** גרסינן בפרק אין עומדין. אין עומדין להתפלל לא מתוך שחוק ולא מתוך קלות ראש ולא מתוך שיחה ולא מתוך מריבה ולא מתוך כעס. ותו גרסינן ר' חנינא ביומא דריתחא לא הוה מצלי. פי' ביום שהיה כועס. תו גרסינן כל שאין דעתו מיושבת עליו אל יתפלל. תו גרסינן שמואל לא היה מתפלל בביתא דאית ביה שיכרא. מפני הריח שהיה טורדו ומונעו מלהתכוון. למדת מכל הני שלא יתפלל אדם לא במקום שטורד מחשבתו ולא בזמן שמבטל את כוונתו. לכן היחיד או הרבים שיש להם איבה או כעס או שנאה או מריבה עם הצבור אין תפלתם רצויה. ואסור להם להתפלל שם שמחשבתו טרודה ואין יכול לכיין בתפלתו. וכ[ל] ש[כן] אם מכעיסין אותו על פניו תמיד. וכ[ל] ש[כן] אם בכעס הוא עם מנהיגי הקהל. ואי לאו דמסתפינא הוי אמינא דטב ליה להתפלל ביחיד מלהתפלל בתגרת בני[א] א[דם] שאין דעתו נוחה מהם. עוד יש טעם דאין ראוי לאדם להתפלל אלא במקום שלבו חפץ. כי היכי דאמרינן אין אדם לומד תורה אלא במקום שלבו חפץ. וטעמו של דבר כי בהביט האדם אל מי שדעתו נוחה בו נפשו מתעוררת אל הכונה השלימה. ודעתו מתרחבת ולבו שמח ונוחה עליו אז רוח ה' כענין שאמרו בנבואה. עוד אמרו בספרי החכמה כי בהיות האדם מתכוין אל רבו ונותן אליו לבו תתקשר נפשו בנפשו ויחול עליו מהשפע אשר עליו ויהיה לו נפש יתירה וזה נקרא אצלם סוד העיבור בחיי שניהם. וזהו שנאמר והיו עיניך רואות את מוריך. וזהו והתיצבו שם עמך[...]. ואצלתי מן הרוח וכו'. וכן התהלל רבינו הקדוש שאם היה ראה את פני הרב היה מגיע למדריגה עליונה וכ[ל] ש[כן] אם הרב מתכוין וקרא זה אל זה להשפיע וזה לקבל. ומ[ן] ה[כי] אמר ר' יוסי לא מן הכל אדם זוכה ללמוד תורה. ומכאן התירו שילך אדם למקום אחר ללמוד תורה א[ת] ע[ל] פ[ני] שאביו אומר לו שלא ילך ועובר מצות אביו. שלא מן הכל אדם זוכה ללמוד תורה. וזה הטעם עצמו בתפלה כי בהבט האדם אל אוהביו או לקרוביו או לרבו או למי שדעתו נוחה תתעורר נפשו אל הכונה העליונה ונתוסף עליו רוח ממרום. וזה דבר שהשכל מורה עליו וכו'. ע[ד] כ[אן] ל[שונ] הקדוש: