

Judaism and the ISMS

Judaism Encounters Spirituality

לעילוי נשמת משה מרדכי בן נתן נותא – יהי זכרו ברוך

Part I – The Problem

Paul, the Book of Romans

“The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart,”^[a] that is, the message concerning faith that we proclaim: ⁹ If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. ¹¹

MODERNITY, FAITH, AND MARTIN BUBER, Adam Kirsch, the New Yorker, May 2019

Buber drew a distinction between religion—a body of received beliefs and rituals—and what he called “religiosity,” the molten spiritual core from which religions are born. Traditional Judaism held that living according to law was itself a source and an expression of spiritual fervor. But Buber was convinced that Orthodox Judaism was no longer a real option for people like him. “Once religious rites and dogmas have become so rigid that religiosity cannot move them or no longer wants to comply with them, religion becomes uncreative and therefore untrue,” he wrote... To preserve Jewish religiosity, Buber was willing to sacrifice much of the Jewish religion.

Alon Goshen-Gottsein, Jewish Theology and World, Religions, Encountering Hinduism

I conclude this section by sharing the testimony of an Israeli writer speaking of the impressions of her first visit to India. Rivka Miriam is observant and active in Torah study and various literary and religious forums. Her knowledge of Torah allows her to relate to her experience in India in terms taken from classical Jewish texts. Her testimony confirms the suggestion I have just made and points to what might be the source of India and Hinduism’s appeal for Israelis and Jews:

And now to divinity. Meeting its expressions in India brought about a transformation in me. We Jews employ the common expression ‘there is no place that is devoid of Him’. In India I discovered a world where indeed so it is. I discovered a world in which there is no one who does not believe. I discovered a world where one sees divinity in every tree and in every stone. But also in every deed and in every matter. The entire world is full of his glory.

Seeing divinity in India brought about a transformation in me. Indeed, there I saw a place full of faith. Another, different, way to believe, a path that may have been uprooted from us when, as the Talmud tells, the evil inclination for idol worship was uprooted. And perhaps together with that uprooting a part of faith as such was also uprooted.¹³

Models of Resolution

- 1) No conflict; “New Age Spirituality” is bogus. Halakha is a much deeper form of spirituality (Twersky)
- 2) The conflict is real, but it only exists because of specific historical circumstances which will change (Rav Kook, Twersky)
- 3) No Conflict; Spirituality is the essence of halakha, but it has different means of achieving this (Twersky, Kugel)
 - a. Examples of spirituality in halakha – Sefer Hachinuch, Rema, Chovot Halevavot, Rambam, Berachot 17

Judaism.¹⁰ In some sense such a model and the turn to Indian spirituality generally may be taken as a sign of crisis. Of course, crisis contains opportunity and holds within it the promise of growth. While this type of spiritual encounter may be driven by the desire for growth, this desire is nevertheless fed by crisis in Jewish spiritual reality. Talk of ‘spirituality’ veils what can be considered the greatest aspect of Jewish spiritual crisis: that most of Judaism is unable to talk of God or to provide a conscious relationship with him. Different people would see Judaism’s present crisis differently. While some see it in terms of identity and others in terms of continuity, still others conceive of it in terms of either learning or practice. In the present context, I would like to argue that Judaism’s deepest crisis concerns God. Judaism is a religion that centres around God, but that to a large extent has lost touch with the living God.¹¹ God has not lost touch with Judaism, nor have the people of Israel lost their faith in God. But Judaism has lost, to a significant extent, the awareness of God at its centre and the ability to structure the entire life of the religious community, let alone the people of Israel, around access to divine presence and its grounding in the community’s life. This loss has deep historical roots, and may itself be an expression of the destruction of the Temple, the loss of prophecy, and a long history of exile. This loss is, to my mind, included in what kabbalists speak of when they refer to the exile of the Shekhinah.

Jews are both a faithful people and a people of faith. But their religious life is presently constructed so that other religious values occupy places of primary importance, often eclipsing God’s centrality within the religious system. One commonly attributes to Zoharic literature the maxim that the Torah, Israel, and God are one.¹² In one way this could express the unity of all values within

אורות, רב קוק - "חכם עדיף מנביא"

this is precisely the exile of God, his hiding, the difficulty in finding or accessing him—however we conceptualize it—seems to me to be the heart of the Jewish spiritual crisis. And it is only when we are able to confront the fact that we are in crisis that we may consider what the turn to Indian spirituality seeks to heal. It is not only that Jews find a spirituality in India that addresses a deep hunger in their souls; rather, India makes available a directness of approach to God that is often lacking in Judaism. This direct approach to God may be the hallmark of India's spiritual life and why it is so attractive to Jews.

When Jews conceive of the goals of the religious life, few of us think of communion or relationship with God, let alone consider it the only thing worth desiring. We seek happiness, family life, the well-being of our group, a life of values, learning, and overall flourishing. God plays a meaningful part in this package of ideals, but for very few is God actually the central focus of their quest. Here India provides so many opportunities for an alternative testimony that it has come to represent for many that very alternative. Indeed, the goal of the spiritual life as stated by so many spiritual teachers of the Hindu tradition says it all: 'God realization'. Perhaps not all know what God realization means. Perhaps very few attain it. But it is a central governing ideal that informs the lives of thousands, if not millions, of spiritual seekers. Hinduism, as encountered through various teachers and religious groups, presents God at the centre and a systematic path to reach knowledge and awareness of God.

One of the most common practices of Hindus of different traditions is japa, the repetition of God's name. The quest to keep God's name a constant reality keeps God very much at the centre of one's awareness. Even more significantly, the theological structure of Hinduism makes God more readily available than do the Abrahamic faiths. Fundamental to the Hindu approach is the recognition that God is omnipresent and all-pervading. This view allows one to recognize God in all and to find him everywhere. Most forms of Judaism think of God in transcendent terms, even if they employ a religious language that speaks of God in personal terms. Even those Jewish traditions that portray God in pantheistic or panentheistic terms do not turn that insight into the governing approach to divinity, readily available for worship and contact. Thinking of God in terms of his omnipresence, as all-pervading in all forms of life, orients religious thought and practice in such a way that highlights God's accessibility. In terms of spirituality, this more than any other may be the one element that defines Hindu spirituality compared with Jewish spirituality. I understand that the centrality of God and God realization is what draws Jewish

בנוהג שבעולם, המשוררים והמליצים מתארים יפה את הדרת החיים בכלל, את כל פנותיהם היפות ביחוד הכוללות זרם רב וטל-חיים מרובה, הם יודעים גם להציג לראוה את הכעור הכללי של הקלקולים שבחיים ולמחות נגדם בכל תוקף. אבל לחדור לתוך-תוכם של כל הגורמים הפרטיים, איך מכשירים את החיים ומעמידים אותם על הבסיס הטוב ואיך משמרים אותם מכל קלקלה גם קטנה שבקטנות, שסופה להעלות שרטון גדול ולהרס הרבה מאד, דבר זה אין לו עסק עם כח המדמה החם והעז, כי אם עם החכמה המדיקת. כאן תחל עבודת הרופאים, החסכנים, המודדים, השופטים, וכל החכמים המעשיים.

למעלה מזה. הנבואה ראתה את זרם הקלקלה הגדולה של עבודה-זרה בישראל ומחתה נגדו בכל עז, את הדרת נעם ד' אחד אלהיו ותתארהו בכל יופי וזהר, את ההשחתה של כל הפרעות המוסריות, ריצוץ דלים עושק אביונים, רצח ונאוף, חמס ושווד, ותמלא רוח אלהים להושיע ולגדור ברום שיח קודש.

והוצרכה עבודת הכללים להמסר לנביאים ועבודת הפרטים לחכמים. וחכם עדיף מנביא, מה שלא עשתה הנבואה, בכלי מלחמתה החוצבים להבות אש לבער מישראל עבודת אלילים ולשרש אחרי עיקרי ההשפלות היותר גרועות של עשק וחמס, של רצח וזמה, רדיפת שחד ושלמונים, עשו החכמים בהרחבת התורה, בהעמדת תלמידים הרבה ובשנון החוקים הפרטיים ותולדותיהם. הליכות עולם לו, אל תקרי הליכות אלא הלכות."

במשך הזמן הרב נתגבר עסק החכמים על עסק הנביאים והנבואה נסתלקה, ארכו הימים והכללים החלו להתרופף, נבלעו בהפרטים ולא יראו החוצה.

על כן באחרית הימים שצמיחת מהלך שיבת אור הנבואה תתחיל להופיע, "אשפוך את רוחי על כל בשר", אז שנאת הפרטים תתגבר, "חכמת סופרים תסרח, ואנשי הגבול, אלו תלמידי חכמים שמשימים גבול לדבריהם, ילכו מעיר לעיר ולא יחוננו", "עד אשר לא כפריבוסר כי אם כבכורים מלאים טל וחיים יצאו הניצוצות של התחלת אור הנבואה מנרתיקם, וזו תכיר בכללה את גדל פעולת החכמה ובענות צדק תקרא: "חכם עדיף מנביא", "חסד ואמת נפגשו צדק ושלוש נשקו, אמת מארץ תצמח וצדק משמים נשקף, גם ד' יתן הטוב וארצנו תתן יבולה." ונשמתו של משה תשוב להופיע בעולם.

their fiddle – but with what we say to the *Ribbono shel Olam* or to ourselves. For the antinomy is real and the tension immanent. Apart from the material, formal, and intellectual factors already cited, other divisive elements might be mentioned. As Maimonides¹⁴ noted, law is formulated with reference to the public; spirituality, by contrast, is highly personal. In a related vein, law is, by definition, normative, and, hence, objective, while the spiritual is presumably subjective, and more contextually oriented. Above all, while *halakhah* may be perceived as constraint – it establishes a floor for the religious life and both provides a basis and points a direction for progress towards the attainment of values, moral and religious – it may also be seen as imposing a ceiling; as clipping the wings of soaring aspiration. This sense is perhaps most keenly felt within the modern context. The backdrop of much current spirituality is, after all, Romanticism; and the Romantics were, both deeply subjective – art was, for them, not so much descriptive mimesis as self-expression – and, as T.E. Hulme¹⁵ complained, persistently expansive.

Same Goal, Different Methods

ספר החינוך מצוה טז

שלא לשבור עצם מכל עצמות הפסח, שנאמר [שמות י"ב, מ"ו] ועצם לא תשברו בו. משרשי המצוה, לזכור ניסי מצרים.... שאין כבוד לבני מלכים ויועצי ארץ לגרר העצמות ולשברם ככלבים, לא יאות לעשות ככה כי אם לעניי העם הרעבים. ועל כן בתחלת בואנו להיות סגולת כל העמים ממלכת כהנים ועם קדוש, ובכל שנה באותו הזמן, ראוי לנו לעשות מעשים המראים בנו המעלה הגדולה שעלינו לה באותה שעה. ומתוך המעשה והדמיון שאנחנו עושין נקבע בנפשותינו הדבר לעולם.

ואל תחשוב בני לתפוש על דברי ולומר, ולמה זה יצוה אותנו השם יתברך לעשות כל אלה לזכרון אותו הנס, והלא בזכרון אחד יעלה הדבר במחשבתנו ולא ישכח מפי זרענו, כי לא מחכמה תתפשני על זה, ומחשבת הנער ישיאך לדבר כן. ועתה בני אם בינה שמעה זאת, והטה אזנך ושמע, אלמדך להועיל בתורה ובמצוות. דע כי האדם נפעל כפי פעולותיו. ולבו וכל מחשבותיו תמיד אחר מעשיו שהוא עושה בהם, אם טוב ואם רע, ואפילו רשע גמור בלבבו וכל יצר מחשבות לבו רק רע כל היום, אם יערה רוחו וישים השתדלותו ועסקו בהתמדה בתורה ובמצוות, ואפילו שלא לשם שמים, מיד ינטה אל הטוב, ובכח מעשיו ימית היצר הרע, כי אחרי הפעולות נמשכים הלבבות. ואפילו אם יהיה אדם צדיק גמור ולבבו ישר ותמים, חפץ בתורה ובמצוות, אם אולי יעסק תמיד בדברים של דופי, כאילו תאמר דרך משל שהכריחו המלך ומינהו באומנות רעה, באמת אם כל עסקו תמיד כל היום באותו אומנות, ישוב לזמן מן הזמנים מצדקת לבו להיות רשע גמור, כי ידוע הדבר ואמת שכל אדם נפעל כפי פעולותיו, כמו שאמרנו.

You must know, that a man is acted upon according to his actions; and his heart and all his thoughts always follow after the actions that he does - whether good or bad. And even he who in his heart is a complete sinner and all the desires of his heart are only for evil; if his spirit shall be enlightened and he will put his efforts and actions to persist in Torah and commandments - even if not for the sake of Heaven - he shall immediately incline towards the good.

Professor Yitzchak Twersky, Religion and Law

A tense, dialectical relationship between religion in essence and religion in manifestation is at the core of the Jewish religious consciousness its legal configuration and its historical experience. **Halakha is the indispensable manifestation and prescribed concretization of an underlying and overriding spiritual essence, a volatile, magnetic, and incompressible religious force designated as Judaism. The tension flows from the painful awareness that manifestation and essence sometimes drift apart, from the sober recognition that a carefully constructed, finely chiseled normative system cannot regularly reflect, refract, or energize interior, fluid spiritual forces and motives. Yet, if the system is to remain vibrant, it must.** If halakha is a means for the actualization and celebration of ethical norms, historical experiences, and theological postulates, then external conformity must be nurtured by internal sensibility and spirituality. This concordia discordantium – prophecy and law, charisma and institution, mood and medium, image and reality, normative action and individual perception, objective determinacy and subjective ecstasy – is the true essence of halakha and its ultimate consummation, but this harmonious, mutually fructifying relationship between law and experience is not always attainable.... When the spiritualizing speculative quest, in philosophic, mystical, or pietistic terms, is overshadowed, then the incidence of atrophied patterns of behavior sets off attempts to restore the ideal equilibrium: to see that action is reflective and deliberate, that the religious performance is both an expression of as well as stimulus to experience, deep and rich, full and fresh

שולחן ערוך אורח חיים הלכות הנהגת אדם בבקר סימן א

יתגבר כארי לעמוד בבוקר לעבודת בוראו, שיהא הוא מעורר השחר.

הגה: ועכ"פ לא יאחר זמן התפלה שהצבור מתפללין (טור).

הגה: שויתי ה' לנגדי תמיד (תהילים טז, ח), הוא כלל גדול בתורה ובמעלות הצדיקים אשר הולכים לפני האלהים, כי אין ישיבת האדם ותנועותיו ועסקיו והוא לבדו בביתו, כישיבתו ותנועותיו ועסקיו והוא לפני מלך גדול, ולא דבורו והרחבת פיו כרצונו והוא עם אנשי ביתו וקרוביו, כדבורו במושב המלך. כ"ש כשישים האדם אל לבו שהמלך הגדול הקדוש ברוך הוא, אשר מלא כל הארץ כבודו, עומד עליו ורואה במעשיו....

James Kugel, On Being a Jew

JL: Do you? I mean, do you do all the things you mentioned?

AA: Oh yes. This is our way of living, our *halakhah*.

JL: I'm surprised that you can find the time.

AA: It is not so much a matter of time: the time is there to be taken. But this way of living consists not only of those minutes of the day or week that are specifically given over to one duty or another, but also of the rest of the time, which is changed because of them.

JL: I'm not sure I understand.

AA: It is as I said: the purpose is to open up a space, a possibility, in the heart. Once the opening is made, it can be filled. Let me explain it in the terms set forth by the Torah itself. After the people of Israel had been led out of Egypt and slavery, God ordered them to build for Him a certain structure, called in Hebrew *mishkan*. This word is usually translated as "tabernacle" or "tent," but its basic meaning is simply "dwelling," a place of residence. Now to us this demand might at first seem strange; after all, as Scripture says elsewhere, the heavens themselves cannot contain God, and all of earth (it notes with perhaps a smile) is like a little stool on which He might, as it were, put up His feet—why then command the Israelites to build this tiny little tent as His *mishkan*? Moreover, why should *they* build it—could not the Creator of the universe have chosen some magnificent feature of the natural world that He had fashioned in which to, as it were, dwell, rather than relying on merely human artisans? But the point was, as I said, for them to open up a space in order to allow Him to fill it. And this is the most basic principle of our way, to open up such a space in our lives and in our hearts. Then such a space will have the capacity to radiate outward. So the holiness of the *mishkan* radiated out to fill the whole camp of the Israelites during their wanderings, and the camp itself became changed as a result. And it was quite proper that the people be the ones to build God's dwelling, because this is the way it always must be: the people create the space and then God can fill it.

say how different two such things are. Yet in another way, they are the same, as Ulla meant it. For just as the Temple constituted a space, a possibility, so does our *halakhah* constitute a space. Perhaps compared to the Temple, our *halakhah* seems modest, four cubits as opposed to a magnificent edifice. Yet his point was that both are structures, both serve to open up a space, so that even with the loss of the great physical space of our Temple, God's presence was not denied a place in Israel: each Jew carried the possibility of opening a space within his or her own heart and life. And so it is today. The trick is to start to construct and so to open.

JL: It really sounds to me like some kind of psychological process —

AA: It is no more psychological than building the *mishkan*, which was done (as the Torah tells in loving detail) with real boards and bronze clasps and linen curtains.

JL: Exactly, whereas what you are talking about is saying prayers and not eating certain foods —

AA: It is the same. It is also a structure, very much a structure, a pattern of actions, and one that keeps open the heart in the same fashion. Perhaps this sounds to you like an empty metaphor. But as I am speaking to you I can see it vividly in my mind. So long as the inside of you remains unbreached, you might be standing at the entrance of the holiest part of that *mishkan*, yet you would still be quite blind to God's presence, because there would be no place inside you in which to receive the impression. But once that smooth surface of the heart has been opened up, a little place in it opened and shored up to stay open, then God's radiance can enter and radiate outward within you; then you could not bear to stand in that same spot of the *mishkan*, so great is the radiance, but would flee to the outer parts.

Our early rabbis expressed this same principle in just these terms. For the *mishkan*, after some period of use in Jewish history, was ultimately replaced by the great Temple in Jerusalem; then for centuries and centuries this Temple was God's dwelling in Israel. When it was destroyed in war in the year 70 of the common era (that is, 70 "A.D."), the people felt an enormous loss, for the great physical space that had been hollowed out in the nation's midst was now profaned, its ceremonies and worship put to an end by an alien invader. This was, and remains, a great lack. Yet one of our Rabbis from early times, the teacher Ulla, put it well when he said, "From the time that the Temple was destroyed, God has had naught on earth but the four cubits of *halakhah*." The expression "four cubits" in Hebrew means a minimal distance or area, a few square feet. But what did he mean by comparing *halakhah*, our way of life, that is, all the practices of Sabbaths and weekdays, prayers and proper foods and the other things I mentioned, with a physical structure, the Temple? You yourself started to

Why There's No Word in the Hebrew Bible for "Spirituality" » Mosaic

“Spiritual” and “spirituality” have indeed become buzzwords in contemporary American culture, in which their main function, as far as I can see, has been to distinguish outward religious behavior, such as belonging to a denominational body and adhering to its precepts and standards of behavior, from an inward sense of the sacred and the wish to express it in a personal way.

This is related to the general decline of organized religion in American life. Once, to be “religious” and to be “spiritual” meant pretty much the same thing to most people. Today, they have come to signify, if not opposites, at least two things that do not easily co-exist. While it is not impossible, in contemporary language, to be both religious and spiritual, being “spiritual” has come to imply that one is more than just conventionally “religious.”

Of course, the tension between the inward and the outward has always been part of religious life, and Mr. Samuelson is quite right to surmise that one difference between Christianity and Judaism is that Christianity has traditionally played up this tension while Judaism has traditionally played it down. Christianity, after all, came into being as a revolt against Judaism and what it took to be Judaism’s obsession with ritual detail and practice as opposed to love of God and one’s fellow man.

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In East European Hasidism, it is true, *rukhniyus* (the Ashkenazi pronunciation of *ruḥaniyut*, in which the Hebrew suffix –ut is parallel to the “-ity” of “spirituality”), as opposed to *gashmiyus* or “materialism,” was sometimes used as “spirituality” is in English today. But there are other, more common terms in Hasidism for a state of religious inwardness and closeness to God, and none of these ever posited a dichotomy between the latter and the outward practice of Jewish ritual, prayer, and custom. On the contrary: outward practice was a precondition for inward “spirituality.”

In the formulation of the founder of Habad Hasidism, Shneur Zalman of Liadi, in his *Tanya*:

And although God is called *Eyn-Sof* [the Infinite] and there is no way of knowing His greatness or comprehending it with the mind, . . . [nevertheless] He concentrated His will and wisdom in the 613 commandments of the Torah and their laws . . . so that the *n’shamah*, *ruah*, and *nefesh* in the human body can attain a knowledge of them [i.e., of “His will and wisdom”] and make them manifest, as far as possible, in deed, speech, and thought.

That’s as good a description of “the Jewish concept of the spiritual” as I can think of. And Mr. Samuelson is right once again: it’s not quite congruent with New Age culture.

Professor Yitzchak Twersky, Religion and Law

It should be stated unequivocally that there is here no natural alliance between spirituality and anti-intellectualism, as is often the case in the history of religion.

One way to achieve spirituality is by study, understanding, rationalization; emotionalism or “sensuousness” are not the exclusive, not even the preferred, means toward heightened sensitivity and spirituality. Rationalism and spirituality are congenial; the cognitive gesture is not only not antagonistic, but is conducive to sensitivity, subjectivity, and spontaneity.

Examples of Jewish Spirituality

חובות הלבבות

I examined these writings but failed to find among them a book specially devoted to the inner wisdom. I found that this wisdom, which is the duties of the heart, had been entirely neglected. No work had been composed, systematically explaining its roots and branches.

I greatly wondered about this, and thought to myself, perhaps this class of duties is not obligatory from the torah but is only an ethical obligation the aim of which is to teach us the proper and just way. Possibly it belongs to the class of extra practices that are optional, for which we will not be held accountable for them nor will we be punished for neglecting them. And therefore, our predecessors omitted to write a special book on them. I investigated the Duties of the Heart from Reason, Scripture, and Tradition (*talmud*, *midrash*, etc.) to inquire whether or not they are obligatory and found that they form the

foundation of all the precepts, and that if there is any deficiency in their observance, no external duties whatsoever can be properly fulfilled.

First the arguments from Reason. It is already familiar that man consists of body and soul. Both are among the benefits G-d has bestowed on us. One of these elements of our being is visible and the other is invisible. Therefore, we are accordingly under duty to render the Creator visible and invisible service. The outward service is the observance of the duties of the limbs such as praying, fasting, giving charity, learning the torah and teaching it, making a Sukka, waving a willow branch (on the festival of Sukkot), Tzitzit, Mezuzah, Maake, and similar precepts whose performance is completed by the physical limbs.

Inward service, however, consists of the fulfillment of the Duties of the Heart such as: to acknowledge the Unity of G-d in our hearts, believe in Him and His torah, to undertake His service, that we revere Him and humble ourselves before Him, that we love Him, trust in Him, and give over our lives to Him, that we abstain from what He hates, devote our actions to His Name, that we reflect on the benefits He bestows, and similar things which are performed by the thoughts and sentiments of the heart but do not associate with activity of the visible limbs of the body.

I am certain that [even] the duties of the limbs cannot be performed properly unless they are accompanied by will of the heart, longing of the soul to do them, and desire of the heart to perform them. If it should enter our mind that we are under no obligation to choose the service of G-d and to yearn for it, then we would be exempt from the duties of the limbs for no act can be complete without the agreement of the soul. And since it is clear that the Creator has put us under obligation to perform the duties of the limbs, it would not be reasonable for us to suppose that our soul and heart, the choicest parts of our beings, should have been exempted from serving Him according to the extent of their ability, because their cooperation is required for the complete service of G-d. Therefore, it is clear that we are under obligation to perform outward and inner duties so that our service to the blessed Creator will be whole and complete, including both our inner and outer being.

רמב"ם הלכות יסודי התורה פרק ב

הלכה א

האל הנכבד והנורא הזה מצוה לאהבו וליראה אותו שנאמר ואהבת את ה' אלהיך, ונאמר את ה' אלהיך תירא.

הלכה ב

והיאך היא הדרך לאהבתו ויראתו, בשעה שיתבונן האדם במעשיו וברואיו הנפלאים הגדולים ויראה מהן חכמתו שאין לה ערך ולא קץ מיד הוא אוהב ומשבח ומפאר ומתאוה תאוה גדולה לידע השם הגדול כמו שאמר דוד צמאה נפשי לאלהים לאל חי, וכשמחשב בדברים האלו עצמן מיד הוא נרתע לאחוריו ויפחד ויודע שהוא בריה קטנה שפלה אפלה עומדת בדעת קלה מעוטה לפני תמים דעות, כמו שאמר דוד כי אראה שמך מעשה אצבעותיך מה אנוש כי תזכרנו, ולפי הדברים האלו אני מבאר כללים גדולים ממעשה רבון העולמים כדי שיהיו פתח למבין לאהוב את השם, כמו שאמרו חכמים בענין אהבה שמתוך כך אתה מכיר את מי שאמר והיה העולם.

השגות הרמב"ן לספר המצוות לרמב"ם מצות עשה ה

ועיקר הכתוב ולעבדו בכל לבבכם מצות עשה שתהיה כל עבודתינו לאל ית' בכל לבבנו כלומר בכוונה רצויה שלימה לשמו ובאין הרהור רע, לא שנעשה המצות בלא כונה או על הספק אולי יש בהם תועלת. כענין ואהבת את ה' אלהיך בכל לבבך ובכל נפשך ובכל מאדך שהמצוה היא לאהוב את השם בכל לב וכלב ושנסתכן באהבתו בנפשנו ובממוננו.

תלמוד בבלי מסכת ברכות דף י"ז עמוד א

רבא בתר צלותיה אמר הכי: אלהי, עד שלא נוצרתי איני כדאי ועכשיו שנוצרתי כאלו לא נוצרתי, עפר אני בחיי, קל וחומר במיתתי, הרי אני לפניך ככלי מלא בושא וכלימה, יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלהי שלא אחטא עוד, ומה שחטאתי לפניך מרק ברחמיך הרבים אבל לא על ידי יסורין וחלאים רעים. והיינו וידוי דרב המנונא זוטי ביומא דכפורי.

מר בריה דרבינא כי הוה מסיים צלותיה אמר הכי: אלהי, נצור לשוני מרע ושפתותי מדבר מרמה ולמקללי נפשי תדום ונפשי כעפר לכל תהיה, פתח לבי בתורתך ובמצותיך תרדוף נפשי