

The RYS Daily 6/5/07 Mussar Doctrine V

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To clarify and elucidate the halachot and to grasp their full depth, it is unnecessary to expend the effort to study disinterestedly with the sole objective of discovering the true intent of the Torah. One should utilize every argumentation possible and all one's sharp-wittedness, even if one is thereby diverted from the truth. For only in this way does the mind range freely, turning in all directions, adopt all modes of reasoning and reach to the very depth of the subject. Here R. Israel deviated from the approach of most of the Musar exponents, who opposed preoccupation with pilpul. He stated: "Pilpul is one activity which the Musar Sages have banished from Israel. In my mind the opposite is desirable. Pilpul is a potent element in the search for truth. Without pilpul, it is almost impossible to attain the truth, and for two reasons: (1) A deep and straight thinking mind is the chief element (apart from the precondition — "erudition") in attaining the objective — the truth. It is obligatory and necessary to broaden, to sharpen and to straighten the mind (each man according to his ability) . This is almost impossible if one's thoughts are restrained on all sides by his having to look for truth alone. Indeed by deep pilpulistic reflection on the Torah - and it lies in man's capacity to broaden it, at will, in such a manner as to make it pleasant, attractive and enlightening ®- one's mind will become straightened out and sharpened. (2) My experience has borne this out. In my youth when I had become involved in the study of Musar and its categories, I decided once and for all to suppress my desire (which craved to demonstrate my pilpulistic prowess to all my peers), once and for all to abandon the pilpulistic method, and to direct my attention to the truth as I envisaged it then; simplicity, brevity and the quest for truth. As I proceeded, using this approach, I discerned with penetrating insight, that the desire to display my intellectual prowess broke through the barrier of truth, and misled my mind into deflecting the truth to my desire, so as to set down the truth as I willed it (i.e. by rationalization). Thereupon I declared: It were better for me to utilize the pilpul method (as Chazal had permitted it, so as to sharpen the mind) without any fear or anxiety, to free my mind from falling captive to the enticement of my will. This idea grew so strong within me, till my mind became disinclined to believe that anyone, unless of the very select, could confine himself to pure reason alone, without being bent by his will to declare his thinking the most refined and rational, unless he left himself free to propound his pilpul argumentations as he wished, without any interference."

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