

The only way to lead a consistent life

Draft of a letter to Mr. Julius Stulman¹¹ - 23 Shevat, 5712

Uniqueness of Judaism's approach; emphasis on day-to-day practice; only through being able to follow before fully understanding can one lead a dependable life; need for immediate change in practice

The printed copy of your talk at E. C.¹² with the accompanying letter of Jan. 21st, duly reached me. However, owing to the intervening 2nd Yahrzeit of my f.i.l. of sainted memory, which took place on the 10th of Shevat, with preparations before it and the attention claimed by many out of town visitors, etc., I was unable to reply to you sooner.

I read your talk with great interest and found many thoughts in it which are both constructive and well expressed.

Inasmuch as you permit me to make some critical remarks on it, and without going into a detailed analysis of it, since it is a fait accompli, I will make one overall observation ~~concerning~~ ¹³ **שיכולים אנו להבין ע"י ההתבוננות בהחיי** the general approach of the Jewish religion to the problems of life, as it differs fundamentally from other religions.

The outstanding and underlying basis of the Jewish religion is that notwithstanding its profound appreciation of intellectual research and philosophy, its primary concern is the practical deed and every-day behavior of man, both in his relationship to G-d and to his fellow man.

This approach to life is clearly brought out by the fact that our Torah - both our Written Law (the Bible) and our Oral Law (the Talmud) - devotes by far the most of its attention to the practical aspects of life, and comparatively little attention to intellectual research into theology or philosophy, which is left to the esoteric teachings of the Torah. ~~-a province limited to the few.~~

Hence, as you know, the Jew makes religion the basis of his every-day life, fulfilling its precepts as a matter of course, without the prerequisite condition of knowing the deeper meaning and significance of the religious precepts. ~~Religion to the Jew is, therefore, a very practical everyday reality, not something abstract.~~

והטעם ע"ז מפני שרק באופן כזה אפשר לאדם להשריש בעצמו, אופן בגופו ובחיינו בעוה"ז, דגילות סדר בחיינו שיהי' בר קיימא גם בפני נסיונות ונוסף ע"ז הנה רק בדרך כזו אפ"ל להיות דתי, היינו להתקשר עם אלקה, לקשר הנברא עם הבורא ורק בדרך כזה יש קיום להדתיות באדם. שלא יחלף כליל או

המורם מזה, שהדרך לקבוע בקביעות איזה שינוי בחיים מכמו שהם עתה צ"ל קשור תומ"י בשינוי בחיים המעשיים. וא"א להשיג זה ע"י התבוננות וכו'. ובפרט בהנוגע לדתיות שזהו היסוד למוסריות¹⁴

¹¹ Mr. Yehuda (Julius) Stulman (15 Nissan 5666 - 10 Iyar 5757) was a business-man and philanthropist, meriting extreme *Kiruvim* from the Rebbe Rayatz and the Rebbe, he was the major supporter of the Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch in its early years. A deep thinker, many of the Rebbe's - close to 100 - letters to him emphasize the importance of practical day-to-day observance, even before properly understanding the reasons for the Mitzvos.

¹² =Earlham College.

¹³ Which becomes understandable after reflection on.

¹⁴ The reason for this is that only in this way can man establish a well balanced and firmly rooted way of life, in his own existence and daily conduct during his life on this earth, a way of life which would remain unshaken by trials and temptations. Besides, only in this way (through the practice of the religious precepts) can one be religious, that is to say, to

JS

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It is a pity that this important point was entirely omitted in your talk, for herein lies a fundamental difference between the Jewish religion and other religions in their approach to life as a whole.

Hoping this letter finds you and yours in the best of health,

Cordially yours,

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between the חוק של חיי הנשמה בגוף, חוק שנתגלה לנו ע"י

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Hoping this letter finds you and yours in the best of health,

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have communion with G-d and maintain a constant union between the created and the Creator. And only in this way can religion exist and work.

It follows, therefore, that when one desires to change his life to be more in keeping with the tenets of (religion, the foundation of) morality, it must be coupled with an immediate change in one's habits and practical, every-day life. This cannot be attained merely by reflection or philosophy.

¹⁵ Law in the life of the soul on this earth, as it is embodied in its physical frame, a law which has been revealed to us by our Jewish religion.