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SETTING TIMES FOR TORAH STUDY IN R. SHNEUR ZALMAN OF LIADY'S THOUGHT

Wojciech Tworek

Abstract: *This study presents the ideas about setting times for Torah study in the writings of R. Shneur Zalman of Liady (Rashaz) as one of the elements that formed the inclusive concept of mystical experience in the Ḥabad movement. The article argues that in his teachings Rashaz invested common experiences and the precepts of normative, non-mystical Judaism with mystical meanings, and thus proposed a new, inclusive concept of mystical experience. The reinterpretation of the precept of setting times for Torah study in Rashaz's writings was one of the factors that greatly contributed to the re-evaluation of the role of ordinary people in religious life, and to shaping Ḥabad's inclusivist vision of mysticism.*

SETTING TIMES FOR TORAH STUDY IN R. SHNEUR ZALMAN OF LIADY¹

There seems to be a scholarly consensus that R. Shneur Zalman of Liady (Rashaz, 1747–1812) broke new ground by making esoteric lore meaningful and inspirational to broad circles of his followers.² The innovative path of the founder of Ḥabad had already been acknowledged by many of his contemporaries: on the one hand masses of followers flocked to his court,³ while on the other

1. Abbreviations used in the footnotes: T—*Likutei 'amarim: Tanya* (London: Soncino, 1973); LT—*Likutei torah* (Brooklyn: Kehot, 2002); TO—*Torah 'or* (Brooklyn: Kehot, 2001); MAHZ—*Ma'amrei 'Admor ha-Zaken* (Brooklyn: Kehot, 1964–2008); HTT—*Hilkhot talmud torah: Shulḥan 'arukh Rabenu ha-Zaken*, vol. 4 (Brooklyn: Kehot, 1987). This article developed as a part of my PhD project on the concept of time in the teachings of Shneur Zalman of Liady, currently in progress. I wish to thank my advisors, Professor Ada Rapoport-Albert and Dr. Tali Lowenthal, for their valuable insights and comments, which helped me to improve this study. I also would like to express my gratitude to the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture and the Posen Foundation for their financial support of my PhD project.

2. On the communicative aspect of Hasidism in general and Ḥabad in particular, see Naftali Loewenthal, *Communicating the Infinite: The Emergence of the Ḥabad School* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 3–4; see also Rachel Elijor, *The Paradoxical Ascent to God* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1993), 21–22.

3. A story recorded by Bratslav Hasidim speaks of Rashaz having a following of eighty thousand Hasidim; see Ada Rapoport-Albert, “Hasidism after 1772: Structural Continuity and Change,” in *Hasidism Reappraised*, ed. Ada Rapoport-Albert (London and Portland: Littman, 1996), 117. The distress of the masses that reached Rashaz's court resulted in the so-called “Liozna Regulations” (*Takanot de-Lozni*), aimed to restrict access to the court and the rebbe. See David Zevi Hilman, ed., *Igerot Ba'al ha-Tanya u-vene'i doro* (Jerusalem: Ha-Mesorah, 1953), 58–70, and Immanuel Etkes, *Ba'al ha-Tanya: Rabbi Shene'ur Zalman mi-Ladi ve-reshitah shel ḥasidut Ḥabad* (Jerusalem: The Zalman Shazar Center for Jewish History, 2011), 70–80; Etkes, “Darko shel R. Shene'ur Zalman mi-Ladi ke-manhig shel ḥasidim,” *Zion* 50 (1985): 334–341.

hand many responded with fierce criticism. A wave of criticism of Rashaz was prompted by the publication in 1796 of *Sefer ha-tanya*, perceived as a far too radical attempt to open up hasidic experience to non-pneumatic individuals. Rashaz's opponents among hasidic Jewry were displeased by the fact that *Tanya* enfolded hasidic concepts in Lurianic garb and so made them intelligible and meaningful to broader, supposedly unworthy, audiences.⁴ Additionally, in his teachings Rashaz invested common experiences and the precepts of normative, nonmystical Judaism with mystical meanings, and thus proposed a new, inclusive concept of mystical experience. The reinterpretation of the precept of setting times for Torah study (*kevi'at 'ittim la-torah*) in Rashaz's writings was one of the factors that greatly contributed to the re-evaluation of the role of ordinary people in religious life, and to shaping Ḥabad's inclusivist vision of mysticism.

SETTING TIME FOR TORAH STUDY IN HALAKHAH

The origins of the precept of setting times for Torah study can be traced back to a talmudic saying attributed to Rava. According to Rava, when a person is judged in the next world, the second question the heavenly court asks him is if he had set times for Torah study (*kava'ata 'ittim la-torah?*).⁵ Commenting on this passage, Rashi observed that the basis of setting times for Torah was practical. A person ought to divide his time between Torah study and his mundane occupation (*derekh 'erez*); fixing times for Torah study was intended to establish a balance between these two. On the one hand, one should not entirely neglect his worldly responsibilities for the sake of Torah study; on the other hand, one could easily become engrossed in worldly matters and shun his religious obligations. Accordingly, allotting a certain time of the day solely to the purpose of study was regarded a simple technique to integrate Torah learning into the daily routine and preserve one from transgressing the commandment of Torah study.⁶

4. See the famous letter of Avraham of Kalisk against Rashaz's attempt to popularize the esoteric in Hillman, *Igerot*, 105–07, discussed in Loewenthal, *Communicating*, 51–52, Elior, *Paradoxical Ascent*, 21, Elior, “Vikuah Minsk,” *Mehkerei Yerushalayim be-mahashevet Yisra'el* 1, no.1 (1981): 193–96, Etkes, “Darko shel R. Shene'ur Zalman,” 343, and in Etkes, *Ba'al ha-Tanya*, 317–29. According to Ḥabad hagiography, the conflict between Rashaz and other hasidic masters about the idea of communicating the esoteric to the masses can be traced back to the time when Rashaz was still a student of the Great Maggid. One should keep in mind, however, that Ḥabad stories transmitted by the sixth leader of the movement, Rabbi Yosef Yiḏḥak Schneersohn, in which Rashaz defends the idea of teaching the esoteric against the criticism of Rabbi Pinḥas of Korets, were aimed to present the Ḥabad communication ethos as the genuine expression of the teachings of Dov Ber of Mezherich and the Ba'al Shem Tov and can hardly be seen as a historical source, see *Ha-tamim* 2 (1936): 49, and 8 (1938): 50–1, and Avraham Hanokh Glitzenstein, *Sefer ha-toldot Rabbi Shene'ur Zalman mi-Ladi* (Brooklyn: Kehot, 1967), 29–30. On Ḥabad historiography in the times of Yosef Yiḏḥak Schneersohn, see: Ada Rapoport-Albert, “Hagiography with Footnotes: Edifying Tales and the Writing of History in Hasidism,” in *Essays in Jewish Historiography*, ed. Ada Rapoport-Albert (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1988): 154–55.

5. B. Shabbat 31a. The first question concerns business ethics.

6. “If there is no *derekh 'erez*, there is no Torah.” Rashi, B. Shabbat 31a, quoting M. Avot 3:17.

Setting Times for Torah Study in R. Shneur Zalman of Liady's Thought

Medieval commentators followed Rashi's view on fixing time for Torah study as a means to fulfilling a *mizvah* rather than a *mizvah* in its own right, and did not count it as one of the 613 commandments. For example, both the author of *Sefer ha-ḥinukh* and Maimonides considered fixing times for Torah study a procedure that makes the commandment of Torah study accessible to everyone, including the less gifted and the busiest men, married men and bachelors, rich and poor, healthy and sick. Although the commentators did not dwell upon the technicalities of *kevi'at 'ittim la-torah*, they read it as an obligation to study Torah day and night in order to fulfil the biblical obligation: "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night" (Joshua 1:8).⁷ Some of the rabbis attached particular significance to the fact that the Talmud uses the plural form of the noun "time" (*'ittim*), and perceived it as an implicit obligation to set at least two times for study, one during the day and one during the night.⁸ Additionally, the main codices of Jewish law determined the time just after the morning prayers to be appropriate for the daily fixed time of study.⁹

Ideas outlined by the medieval halakhists were fostered by Rashaz in *Hilkhot talmud torah*—one of his few books published during his lifetime, and the first attempt since Maimonides's *Mishneh Torah* to provide an extensive and original treatment of the subject of Torah study.¹⁰ Just like the aforementioned halakhists, Rashaz juxtaposed setting times for study with full-time learning. In Rashaz's view, one should strive to learn the whole of the Oral Torah, and in order to do so, he should devote his entire time to study. But if this were not possible, one is obliged by the Torah to allot "a significant portion of time [*et gedolah*] to Torah learning," defined by Rashaz as at least half a day, in addition to night-time study. Rashaz explained, referring to the Talmud (B. Yoma 19b), that in order to fulfil the biblical command: "And thou shalt talk of them," (Deuteronomy 6:7) one should "Make his Torah [study] perpetual and his occupation—casual" (*torato keva u-melakhto 'ara'i*). The opposite situation—occasional study and permanent work—makes studies futile: one ends up forgetting once learned passages before he manages to memorize the entire Oral Torah.¹¹

Rashaz was aware of the fact that devoting most of one's day and night to study was an ideal that not many could realize. He maintained, rather pragmatically, that only a scholar (*talmid ḥakham*) who has prior experience of study, or someone who has a "fine mind" (*she-da'ato yafah*), which makes him able to

7. *Sefer ha-ḥinukh* (Jerusalem: Eshkol, 1958), 419; Moses Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot talmud torah*, 1.8 (Jerusalem: Mosad Harav Kook, 1993).

8. Shmuel Eidels (Maharsha), *Ḥidushei 'agadot*, 18b, to B. Shabbat 31a (Frankfurt, 1682): "And he said: did you fix times [for study]? Two times: one during the day and one during the night." See also Yeshayahu Horovitz, *Shenei luḥot ha-berit*, Masekhet shavu'ot, ner mizvah, 11 (Amsterdam, 1698): "'Ittim in plural, because one should set as many times as possible, whenever he is free from his occupation."

9. Ya'akov Ben Asher, *'Arba'ah turim: 'Orah ḥayim*, par. 155 (Jerusalem: Kiriyah ne'emanah, 1961–64); Yosef Karo, *Shulḥan 'arukh: 'Orah ḥayim*, par. 155 (Vilna, 1895–96); for the talmudic source informing the codices, see B. Berakhot 64a.

10. See Roman A. Foxbrunner, *Habad: The Hasidism of R. Shneur Zalman of Lyady* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1992), 137.

11. HTT 3.2, 846a.

become a scholar in the future, could make Torah study his permanent occupation. In every other case, sacrificing most of one's time to learning would be pointless, as such a person's lack of disposition would prevent him from grasping the entire Torah, no matter how much time he would be able to invest in study. Therefore, full-time Torah study was an occupation restricted to the intellectual elite.

Such an elitist approach to full-time study should not be read as relegation of Torah learning to a secondary role in divine worship, as has been argued by Norman Lamm;¹² on the contrary, Rashaz held Torah study in very high esteem.¹³ Instead, his approach should be viewed as pragmatic: even though the religious ideal dictated that everyone should master the entire Torah, reality showed that only a few gifted individuals are predestined to do so, while the vast majority of the Jewish people are doomed to remain "ignoramuses" (*burim*) as a result of their limited intellectual disposition.¹⁴ The term *bur*, used by Rashaz to denote the unscholarly class, may be misleading, as in this context it refers to people who study the Torah, yet do not stand up to the very high standards of the *talmid hakham*. These standards include a perfect memory that enables one to remember the entire Oral Torah¹⁵ and an ability to learn "reasons and sources of commandments" (*ta'amei ha-halakhot u-mekoran*).¹⁶ As a result of setting such high standards, Rashaz sometimes counted among the *burim* people who mastered the Pentateuch and the Mishnah, yet were not trained in the Talmud.¹⁷ Therefore, in this context, the term *bur* should not be perceived as a pejorative reference to people who are actually ignorant,¹⁸ but rather as a term that covers a broad range of personalities who do not fall under the category of scholar. For this class of people Torah study still plays a tremendous role in religious life, but this is based on setting times for study as opposed to full-time study, and on orientation to practical laws as opposed to comprehensive knowledge of the entire Torah.

Consequently, Rashaz's halakhah delineates a community of Torah students, divided into two groups: scholars and ordinary men.¹⁹ Both these groups

12. Norman Lamm, *Torah Lishmah: Torah for Torah's Sake in the Works of Rabbi Hayyim of Volozhin and His Contemporaries* (New Jersey: Ktav, 1989), 152.

13. For arguments in favor of the centrality of Torah study in Rashaz's doctrine, see Foxbrunner, *Habad*, 137–39.

14. Rashaz refers to Kohelet Rabbah 7.28:1, to Ecclesiastes 7:28 to illustrate the relation between these two groups: "One man among a thousand have I found. Usually if a thousand men take up the study of Scripture, a hundred of them proceed to the study of Mishnah, ten to Talmud, and one of them becomes qualified to decide questions of law." (translation follows *Midrash Rabbah*, [London: Soncino, 1939]); HTT 3.4, 846b–847a.

15. HTT 3.1, 841a.

16. HTT 3.4, 446b.

17. See HTT, *Kuntres 'aharon*, 3.1, 844a, and *Ma'amar "Perek 'ehad shaharit,"* in: Mordekhai Shemu'el Ashkenazi, *Hilkhot talmud torah mi-shulhan 'arukh 'Admor ha-Zaken 'im hosafot 'im he'arot ve-ziyunim* (Brooklyn: Kehot, 2000), 5:621, and in: Yehoshua Mondschein, *Migdal 'oz* (Kfar Chabad: Makhon Lyubavitch, 1990), 5.

18. See Ashkenazi, *Hilkhot talmud torah*, 5:102.

19. On the high level of Torah education among Rashaz's followers, see Etkes, "Darko shel R. Shene'ur Zalman," 349, 352–53; Etkes, *Ba'al ha-Tanya*, 168, 186–87. The dichotomy between the elite

Setting Times for Torah Study in R. Shneur Zalman of Liady's Thought

bear obligations, determined according to different criteria.²⁰ The scholars are obliged to study full-time at all costs, even if it compels them to live in poverty and destitution, whereas the laymen should not risk poverty but rather engage in a full-time occupation. For the latter group Rashaz determined setting limited time for study every day and night as a way of fulfilling the commandment of *talmud torah*.²¹ Moreover, in particularly difficult circumstances, their study may be further limited to one chapter in the morning and one in the evening. If someone is compelled to work the whole day, he may fulfil his obligation of Torah study by merely reciting the Shema during the morning and evening prayers.²²

The distinction and different obligations that follow are based on Rashaz's understanding of the commandment of Torah study. In his collection of laws of Torah study, Rashaz pointed out two substrates of the commandment:²³ the commandment of knowing the Torah (*mizvat yedi'at ha-torah*)²⁴ and the

and the common people is addressed in Rashaz's writings in various ways. Two distinctions recur in his sermons and halakhic writings. The first one distinguishes between scholars (*talmidei hakhamim*) and nonscholars (businessmen—*ba'alei 'asakim*, householders—*ba'alei batim*, or those who perform commandment—*ba'ale mizvot*), according to the extent of their Torah study and their place in the society. The second one differentiates between penitents (*ba'alei teshuvah*) and righteous men (*zadikim*), according to their relation to God—the latter are permanently joined with God, while the former by means of ritual return to God from their secular activities. Several sources indicate that these two distinctions are synonymous: see for example the excerpt from LT *Shir ha-shirim* 44d–45a, discussed below. Finally, in the first part of the book of *Tanya*, Rashaz introduces the distinction between the intermediate and the righteous one (*beinoni* and *zadik*), namely between two ethical paradigms. *Beinoni* has the potential to sin, yet he always manages to suppress his urge to do so, whereas *zadik* not only never sins, but is also able to transform evil into good. While the level of *zadik* is attainable by a very small group of saintly individuals (if it is attainable at all—see LT *Tzri'a* 22b), the level of *beinoni* seems to be designed to be the ethical ideal of Rashaz's followers, who were predominantly householders and businessmen (see Etkes, "Darko shel R. Shene'ur Zalman," 353; Etkes *Ba'al ha-Tanya*, 168). On the problem of transposing the categories of *beinoni* and *zadik* from *Tanya* to the sermons, see Moshe Hallamish, "Yaḥasei zadik ve-'edah be-mishnat R. Shene'ur Zalman mi-Ladi," 90, in *Hevrah ve-historyah*, ed. Yeḥezkel Cohen (Jerusalem: Misrad ha-ḥinukh, 1980), 79–92; Joseph Dan and Isaiah Tishby, "Torat ha-ḥasidut," in *Ha-'enziklopedyah ha-'ivrit*, ed. Yeshayahu Leibowitz (Jerusalem and Tel-Aviv: Encyclopaedia Publishing, 1965), 792–93. See also Etkes, *Ba'al ha-Tanya*, 208, where he resolves this problem by defining the categories from *Tanya* as abstract ideals, which Hasidim should strive to achieve, and the categories prevalent in the sermons as descriptions of real-life people that emerged from Rashaz's direct contacts with his followers.

20. The importance of such a stratification of the Jewish community in Ḥabad ideology is evident in a letter written by the sixth Ḥabad leader, R. Yosef Yiẓḥak Schneersohn in 1932, in which he emphasizes the traditional difference between businessmen (*ba'alei 'asakim*), including those who spend a good deal of time on study, and scholars (*yoshvei 'ohel*), sharply criticizing the modern idea according to which "everyone should be equal," as wasting (*mevaleh*) and destructive (*mekhaleh*). See his introduction to Shalom Dovber Schneersohn, *Kuntres 'ez ha-ḥayim* (Brooklyn: Kehot, 2000), 7.

21. HTT 3:4, 847a.

22. HTT 3:4, based on B. Menaḥot, 99b.

23. HTT, *Kuntres 'aharon*, 3.1, 843b.

24. On the novelty of this notion, see Foxbrunner, *Habad*, 138–140.

commandment of “Thou shalt meditate therein day and night” (*ve-hagita bo yomam va-lailah*).²⁵ These two components are interrelated. On the one hand, despite the apparent superiority of *mizvat yedi’at ha-torah* over *ve-hagita*, achieving the former does not exempt one from Torah study, for everyone should keep the latter, too.²⁶ On the other hand, lack of ability to achieve the former is not equal to transgressing the commandment of Torah study at all; in this case the focal point is moved to the latter part of the commandment (*ve-hagita bo*), which is fulfilled by setting times for Torah study, while the criterion for fulfilling the commandment of knowing the Torah is relativized to individual intellectual dispositions. Therefore, a layman still ought to fulfil the obligation of comprehending the Torah, but in his case it means that he shall “grasp and comprehend as much as it is possible for his soul to grasp from the knowledge of the Torah [*yedi’at ha-torah*].”²⁷ Moreover, the commandment of “Thou shalt meditate therein day and night” obliges the unscholarly to invest every moment free of work in Torah study, as anything else is considered by Rashaz “idle chatter” (*devarim betelim*).²⁸ Similarly, Rashaz prohibited studying gentile wisdom on the grounds of the sin of neglecting the Torah (*‘avon bitul torah*), permitting only the scholars (*talmidei ḥakhamim*) to learn it occasionally for the sake of divine worship.²⁹

Rashaz’s pragmatism is conspicuous in further concessions in the laws of Torah study that he was willing to grant to those who were particularly troubled. Perhaps in response to the social and economic hardships of his followers,³⁰

25. Joshua 1:8. Analogous typology appears in MAHZ 5562, I, 182–3, where Rashaz lists two *mizvot* included in the Torah: Reasoning and study (*higayon ve-‘iyyun*), and reading out loud (*keri’ah be-dibur*); see also Moshe Hallamish, “Mishnato ha-‘iyyunit shel rabbi Shene’ur Zalman mi-Lyadi ve-yahasah le-torat ha-kabalah u-le-reshit ha-hasidut” (Ph.D. diss., Hebrew University, 1976), 276 n. 7.

26. HTT, *Kuntres ‘aharon*, 3.1, 843c. However, in TO 108d–109a, Rashaz dismisses this view and presents the verbal articulation of Torah as superior to comprehension, for through “speech” of Torah one draws down *Keter* (divine nothingness and the source of *Hokhmah*) into *Malkhut* (speech) and achieves self-nullification. On the mystical re-evaluation of Torah study by laymen, see below.

27. HTT 1.4, 831b–832a. Elsewhere Rashaz presents knowledge of Torah in general as a regulative idea rather than something anyone could really achieve, given the infinity of the Torah: “No one can reach the limit of the Torah (*takhlit ha-torah*), which in itself does not have an end or limit.” Even if someone would memorize the entire corpus of Written and Oral Torah, he should continue with learning its possible interpretations. See HTT 2.5, 835a.

28. HTT 3.6, 847b–848a; T1.8, 13a.

29. HTT 3.7, 848a. See also T1.8, 13b, where Rashaz brings the examples of Maimonides and Naḥmanides, who studied gentile wisdom in order to use it in the service of God.

30. In letters sent to his followers Rashaz acknowledges the worsening economic situation in the community. See for example T4.16, 124a–b; Hillman, *Igerot*, 32, 94, and 320, where Dov Ber, Rashaz’s son, notes that not even the sharp and intelligent young men are not spared from the toil of trade and before long they forget everything they learned. Similarly, according to the Ḥabad chronicler Ḥayim Meir Heilman, Rashaz began working on *Shulḥan ‘arukh* in order to ensure that his contemporaries would be able to learn all 613 commandments despite the economic situation which deprived them from time necessary for deep halakhic studies; see Ḥayim Meir Heilman, *Bet rabi* (Berditchev, 1902), 3b. See also Hallamish, “Mishnato ha-‘iyyunit,” 309, where Rashaz’s affirmative attitude toward

Setting Times for Torah Study in R. Shneur Zalman of Liady's Thought

Rashaz expanded the scope of circumstances in which fulfillment of the obligation of Torah study might be limited to two chapters a day or even merely to reciting Shema. Not only sick and elderly people, whose health makes lengthy study impossible, but even scholars, when occasionally burdened by extensive work necessary to provide them with livelihood, should set times for study.³¹ The latter leniency, however, refers specifically to unplanned situations and does not stand in contradiction to the earlier obligation to suffer deprivation rather than to give up on full-time study. Interestingly, Rashaz imposed the obligation of full-time study on everyone who is sustained by others or lives off charity, with no regard to his intellectual skills. Although in certain conditions one can limit study to allow for work, people who live off charity and do not work should spend their spare time on study and on nothing else, even if their capabilities prevent them from mastering the Torah.³² However, their obligation to permanent study is not bound by the commandment of knowing the Torah (*mizvat yedi'at ha-torah*), but rather by the commandment "Thou shalt meditate therein day and night" (*ve-hagita bo yomam va-lailah*) literally (*ke-mishma'o*).³³ In addition to obligating individuals to study at set times, Rashaz obligated entire communities to complete the entire Talmud every year, by apportioning the tractates among the congregants.³⁴

The distinction between *mizvat yedi'at ha-torah* and *hagita bo* in Rashaz's halakhic works effectively identifies two parallel modes of Torah study: elitist and egalitarian. The former, available to the few, is based on continuous study with the purpose of memorizing the entire Torah. The latter, intended for the majority, is based on limited study sessions, focused on laws of proper conduct.³⁵ The majority is not obliged to comprehend the entire Torah; the criterion for fulfilling the commandment of knowing the Torah (*mizvat yedi'at ha-torah*) is their particular intellectual disposition. The main focus of their study is on the second part of the commandment of Torah study: "Thou shalt meditate therein day and night" (*ve-hagita bo yomam va-lailah*), which means reciting the Torah twice a day at fixed times.³⁶ Following the main codices of

tradesmen among his followers is said to be motivated by his mercifulness (*salhanut*) and understanding of the circumstances in which they live.

31. HTT 3.4, 847b.

32. HTT 3.5, 847b.

33. *Shulhan 'arukh Rabenu ha-Zaken, 'Orah hayim*, Seder masa u-matan, par. 156.

34. T1.4, 102a; T5, 163a.

35. HTT 3.4, 847a.

36. The distinction between these two modes of Torah study is rendered in Rashaz's mystical writings as a distinction between two types of souls: the souls of scholars (*talmidei hakhamim*) and the souls of those who perform the commandments (*ba'alei mizvot*). The former are committed to full-time study, the latter devote a limited time to learning, but make up for this by performing other commandments, especially charity (T4.5, 109a; LT *Ha'azinu* 74b; see also Lamm, *Torah Lishmah*, 149–50). The souls of scholars derive from limitless *Hesed*, whereas the souls of *ba'alei mizvot* derive from the constrained *Gevurah*, which is the reason for the precept of fixing limited times for study. However, in Rashaz's doctrine, every Jew contains both traits, which in practical terms means that *ba'alei mizvot*

the Law, Rashaz pointed out the time immediately after prayer as a suitable moment for fixed study.³⁷

SETTING TIME FOR TORAH STUDY IN RASHAZ'S MYSTICAL TEACHINGS

The halakhic reasons for the precept of setting times for Torah study are reinterpreted in the mystical writings of Rashaz. His mystical doctrine has been broadly discussed in hasidic scholarship, most prominently in the works of Rachel Elior and Moshe Hallamish, who examined Rashaz's writings through the prism of the conceptual apparatus of theology.³⁸ The result was a rather rarefied image of Rashaz's teachings, framed within an onto-theological system governed by rationally intelligible, if paradoxical, notions. Moreover, as pointed out by Naftali Loewenthal, as a result of this methodological approach, Ḥabad scholarship has tended to focus on the acosmistic aspects of Rashaz's teachings, and to see the spiritual project of early Ḥabad above all as the quest for transcending worldliness in order to dissolve within the divinity (Upper Unity). This approach has yielded important studies of Ḥabad's mystical path to self-nullification in the divine nothingness by means of contemplative prayer and study, yet it has overlooked an equally important, worldly aspect of early Ḥabad doctrine, identified by Loewenthal with Rashaz's concept of Lower Unity.³⁹

The present discussion of the mystical aspects of Torah study at set times aims to reintroduce the worldly aspect of Rashaz's doctrine into the scholarly Ḥabad discourse. Admittedly, the quest for transcendence is of paramount importance in early Ḥabad, but it is important to keep in mind that Rashaz was the leader of a broad community of people who were fully engaged with the world rather than a secluded group of mystics and pneumatics. His hasidic leadership was not limited to the delivery of mystical sermons but comprised a good deal of halakhic teachings, too. It is not surprising, therefore, that the endeavour to include ordinary householders in the hasidic experience constituted an important aspect of his hasidic project. For the majority of his followers, the possibility of finding God within their mundane everyday existence must have been much more compelling than a highly abstract and sophisticated quest for transcendence. Placing the routine of Torah study at set times within a mystical framework was an expression of the worldly and practical dimension of the early Ḥabad doctrine, and one of the ways by which Rashaz injected hasidic spirituality into the everyday religious experiences of his followers.

should complement their constrained Torah study with generous charity (T4.13, 119a). This charity should facilitate Torah study by scholars and credit the donor "as if he truly studied himself" (HTT 3.4, 847a).

37. *Shulḥan 'arukh Rabenu ha-Zaken, 'Orah ḥayim, Hilkhot talmud torah*, par. 150.

38. Elior, *Paradoxical Ascent*; Hallamish, "Mishnato ha-'iyyunit."

39. Naftali Loewenthal, "Women and the Dialectic of Spirituality in Hasidism," in *Be-ma'gelei ḥasidim: Kovez mehkarim le-zikhro shel profesor Mordekhai Vilenski*, ed. Immanuel Etkes, et al. (Jerusalem: The Bialik Institute, 1999), 15*-16*.

Setting Times for Torah Study in R. Shneur Zalman of Liady's Thought

SETTING TIME FOR TORAH STUDY AS REPENTANCE

One of the reasons that the halakhists embraced the obligation of setting times for study was to incorporate Torah learning into a daily routine. Allotting times for study was meant to prevent neglect of the commandment to study twice a day under the pressures of everyday life.⁴⁰ However, in one of his discourses Rashaz presented this ostensibly commonsensical idea as underlying his mystical concept of repentance (*teshuvah*). In Habad tradition, setting times for Torah study is related to repentance in non-mystical ways, too, as the praxis that helps to keep away from sin;⁴¹ and here, Rashaz explored the literal meaning of the Hebrew word for repentance⁴² to present setting times for study as an actual act of return to God from profanity and mundaneness:

When businessmen [*ba'alei 'asakim*], who is [sic!] not always for God but only sets times for Torah study, returns from dealing with mundane matters to learning, then it is called repentance [*teshuvah*], for he returns [*shav*] from what he was dealing with at first In this way the ecstasy [*hitpa'alut*] becomes more intensive than if he had not been dealing with worldly matters at first . . . for ecstasy is an essential change [*shinui mahut*]. . . . The ecstasy comes about for his essence has changed, from dealing with worldly matters to being a Torah student. . . . It is written: "As in the days of thy coming forth out of the land of Egypt will I show unto him marvellous things" [Micah 7:15], namely, like at the Giving of the Torah [*matan torah*], as it is written: "The Lord spoke face to face" [Deuteronomy 5:4], the disclosure of God below is in the aspect of "face," for prior concealment of the face [*hester panim*] in the 212 years of the exile in Egypt was necessary so that later "face to face" will be possible.⁴³

This excerpt encapsulates several ideas that recur throughout Rashaz's writings and here are intertwined into the praxis of setting times for Torah study and the concept of repentance. The concept of repentance presented above seems to lack an element that is usually perceived as its condition sine qua non—the sin committed.⁴⁴ Here, the tradesmen do not transgress Jewish law, and yet everyday matters separate them from God. For them, setting times for Torah study, defined by the halakhah as the absolute minimum of observance of Torah study, becomes both a vehicle of return to the divine and of their inner transformation.⁴⁵ The latter

40. *Shulhan 'arukh Rabenu ha-Zaken, 'Orah hayim, Hilkhot talmud torah*, par. 1.

41. See for example Dov Ber Shene'uri, *Pokeah 'ivrim* (New York: Kehot, 2003), 54.

42. *Teshuvah* literally means "return."

43. LT *Shir ha-shirim* 44d-45a.

44. LT *Shir ha-shirim* 75a; on repentance which is not of sins, see TO 74a; LT *Re'eh* 24d, 33a; LT *Nizavim* 48d; LT *Rosh ha-shanah* 60d; LT *Shabbat shuvah* 65c, 66c; LT *Ha'azinu* 77b; LT *Shir ha-shirim* 44d; MAHZ 5565, I, 493-94; MAHZ 5572, 5; *Seder tefilot mi-kol ha-shanah* (Brooklyn: Kehot, 1965), 226a.

45. Although in several discourses (MAHZ 5571, 84, 92, 106, 119) Rashaz mentions people who are completely "unable to study and to fix times," and for that reason their worship is based

is tantamount to transformation of the attributes (*midot*) through redirecting them from mundane desires to God. This process, which entails a pivotal change of self, demands eradicating one's interests in this world in complete nullification (*bitul 'amiti*), drawn from "Kindnesses of the Father" (*hasadim de-'aba*), a place that is beyond the reach of the "external" (evil) forces (*hizoniyut*). In this description, setting times for Torah study, a routine ritual demanding no special intellectual or spiritual abilities, proves its advantage over permanent studies, which allow one to reach only the "Kindnesses of the Mother" (*hasadim de-'ima*), a divine aspect that is below the "Kindnesses of the Father."⁴⁶

In the idea of self-preparation for a personal Exodus and the Giving of the Torah, through setting times for Torah study, one can discern echoes of the commandment to remember the Exodus everyday⁴⁷ and of the talmudic dictum that everyone should see himself as if he himself went out of Egypt (B. Pesahim 116b). In Rashaz's doctrine, however, the ritual of remembrance becomes an actual act of personal redemption. When ordinary persons turn their mind away from mundane affairs and delve into the Torah, they actually go forth out of Egypt (*Mizrayim*), decoded by Rashaz as the "boundaries and limits" (*mezarim u-gevulim*)⁴⁸ of materiality and finitude, and reconnect themselves with the spiritual and infinite divine.⁴⁹ Indeed, routine study twice a day becomes the personal experience of the Giving of the Torah (*matan torah*), during which God reveals himself to a person in the recited words of halakhah "face to face," as to Moses on Mt. Sinai. Hence, Rashaz re-evaluated the seemingly routine ritual of studying Torah at fixed times, and endowed it with profound mystical implications by inscribing it into his concept of repentance.

The excerpt above reveals an ostensibly paradoxical feature of Rashaz's thought: he seems to value study at fixed times by ordinary people more than continuous study by full-time scholars. This seemingly contradictory approach is based on an appreciation of the transformative aspect of *kevi'at 'ittim la-torah*, and of the much higher effort a simpleton must undertake to turn himself to God than does a Torah scholar. According to Rashaz, a merchant who returns to

exclusively on good deeds, one can surmise that they are still obliged to recite the Shema, which in certain circumstances is considered Torah study, too.

46. MAHZ 5565, II, 873. "Father" and "Mother" are two *parzufim* which refer to the *sefirot* *Hokhmah* and *Binah*, sources of unbounded *Hesed* (Kindness) and constricted *Din* (Judgement) respectively; one who is engrossed in worldly matters and studies at set times needs to dissolve himself in the unbounded Divine Wisdom in order to arouse in himself love of God, whereas a full-time Torah student is able to find the love of God through contemplation (*hibonenut*—a term deriving from *binah*) of the Godliness within constrictions of the world. For the Lurianic doctrine of *parzufim*, see Gershom Scholem, *Kabbalah* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1974), 140–44. For the source of the notions of "Kindnesses of Father" and "Kindnesses of Mother," see Hayim Vital, *'Ez hayim*, vol. 1, *Sha'ar ha-kelalim* (Jerusalem, 1988), chapters 10, and 15.

47. Rashi to B. Berakhot 21a.

48. See for example TO 64b–d; TO 67b; TO 102a; LT *Zav* 13c, 18a; LT *Shelah* 48c, 50c–d, 51b; LT *Masa'ei* 96b.

49. LT *Sukkot* 81a.

Setting Times for Torah Study in R. Shneur Zalman of Liady's Thought

the Torah at fixed times attains a higher level of ecstasy (*hitpa'alut*) than someone who studies continuously. The meaning of *hitpa'alut*, one of the prevalent notions in Rashaz's writings, remained a matter of dispute in later generations of Ḥabad.⁵⁰ In this context it is defined in ontological rather than psychological terms, as an essential change (*shinui ha-mahut*) in a person, which need not to be accompanied by an emotional outburst.⁵¹ The transformative aspect of setting times for Torah is emphasized elsewhere, without referring to psychological notions, as above:

This is the advantage of setting times for Torah study by a tradesman, that it is more in the aspect of subjugation [*'itkafya*] [of the evil side] than in the [case] of those who dwell in tents [i.e. full-time scholars].⁵²

In the dynamic image of reality that emerges from Rashaz's writings, ordinary people subject to the ongoing struggle with materiality seem to be valued more than the scholars and mystics dwelling permanently in the spiritual realms. The gesture of a layperson who gives up some of his worldly interests to set times for Torah study is paramount to subjugation of profanity to holiness, termed in Ḥabad the subjugation of the evil side (*'itkafya de-sitra 'aħra*). This is not the case for full-time scholars, who are invariably joined with the divine, and therefore do not need to make efforts to subjugate the evil side and to reconnect with God.

To summarize: setting times for Torah study means return-repentance, tantamount to self-transformation and preparation to receive God's revelation in the words of Jewish law; additionally, worship through setting times for Torah study produces a more intense state of ecstasy (*hitpa'alut*) and is more effective at subjugating the evil side than the worship of full-time scholars, who study the Torah continuously.

THE THEURGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF SETTING TIMES FOR TORAH STUDY

Rashaz's notion of repentance is not confined merely to the spirituality of a human being. Repentance, alongside its personal aspect, also bears a theurgical meaning: it effects a restitution of order in the divine realm by way of restoring the order of the letters constituting the divine name.⁵³ Both the personal and the

50. Elijor, *Paradoxical Ascent*, 191–200; Elijor, *Torat ha-'elohut ba-dor ha-sheni shel ḥasidut Ḥabad* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1982), 290–315; Louis Jacobs, *Hasidic Prayer* (London: Routledge, 1972), 100–03; Etkes, *Ba'al ha-Tanya*, 430–445.

51. LT *Shir ha-shirim* 44d; see also: MAHZ 5565, I, 494–95, where the essential change is defined as the cause of ecstasy, and MAHZ 5565, I, 502–03, where the cause of ecstasy is the renewal (*hidush* or *hithadshut*), inherent in penitence.

52. TO 80c.

53. "Let us begin with the Zohar's esoteric interpretation of *teshuvah*. [*Teshuvah*] is *tashuv hey* ["the *hey* is to be returned"]. [The reconnection of] the latter *hey* [to the preceding letter *vav*] is *teshuvah tata'ah* ["lower-level *teshuvah*"]; [the reconnection of] the former *hey* [to the precedent letter *yud*] is *teshuvah 'ila'ah* ["upper-level *teshuvah*"]. T3.4, 93b, based on Zohar III 122b. The letters of the tetragrammaton refer to different aspects of the *sefirotic* tree: *yud* to *Hokhmah*, *hey* to *Binah*, *vav* to seven lower *sefirot* (*Hesed*, *Gevurah*, *Tiferet*, *Nezah*, *Hod*, and *Yesod*), and the second *hey* to *Malkhut*, identified with the divine speech; see T3.4, 94b. For a scholarly discussion of this motif, see Foxbrunner, *Habad*, 133–36.

theurgical aspects of repentance meet in setting times for Torah study; according to *Tanya*, one must overcome his nature and join his emotional and intellectual attributes to their counterparts in the Godhead. In particular, his mind and speech shall cleave to “God’s word, namely halakhah.”⁵⁴ Overcoming one’s nature also means achieving more than one was used to in his study, as it is written in the Midrash: “If he was accustomed to study one page [of Written Law], let him study two; if he was accustomed to study one chapter [of Oral Law], let him study two.”⁵⁵

What is presented in *Tanya* in general terms as increasing Torah study acquires much more concrete shape in one of Rashaz’s discourses, in which the plural form (“two chapters”) is understood as referring to the two times (*’ittim*) one must set for the Torah: “‘If one was accustomed to study one chapter, let him study two’: this stands for setting times for Torah study: [two] times indeed.”⁵⁶ Given that halakhic material is also divine word, its study and recitation bring about the re-unification of the soul, which is the “part of God above,”⁵⁷ with the divine life-force (*hiyut*), identified as a theurgical mode of repentance (*teshuvah*): the reconnection of letter *hey* with the divine name. Indeed, the theurgical process of restoration of order in the divine name appears to be available to practically everyone, and actually commanded of everyone. An activity, previously reserved to pneumatic figures immersed in mystical texts and practices, appears here to be open to any literate person through a routine study of normative, halakhic literature.⁵⁸

The re-evaluation of the laymen’s study at fixed times may seem paradoxical, given the prevalent image of Ḥabad as the intellectualist movement among hasidic streams,⁵⁹ yet it appears more sound when seen against the background of Rashaz’s broader enterprise, intended to empower *ba’alei mizvot*, the less scholarly-oriented and supposedly lower class of Jewish society. In numerous places throughout Rashaz’s writings the talmudic saying recurs: “Where penitents (*ba’alei teshuvah*) stand, not even the perfectly righteous can stand” (B. Berakhot 34b). Rashaz recognized fixing times for Torah as a path of repentance. Setting times for prayer thus also serves as a means of elevating the ordinary person above the righteous and the scholarly, and of drawing attention to the more intense ecstasy (*hitpa’alut*) and greater subjugation of the evil side that the layperson can achieve.

54. T3.9, 98b.

55. Va-yikra Rabbah, *Kedoshim*, par. 25, 1, to Leviticus 19:23.

56. MAHZ *Ketuvim*, I, 17; in a similar manner Maharsha interprets the plural of *’ittim* as referring to morning and evening study. See *Hidushei ’agadot* 18b, to B. Shabbat 31a.

57. Job 31:2. On the soul as part of God, see for example T1.2, 6a; T1.35, 44a; TO 16a; LT *Va-yikra* 2d, etc.

58. On the possibility of mystical unity through halakhic study, see Naftali Loewenthal, “Finding the Radiance in the Text: a Ḥabad Hasidic Interpretation of the Exodus,” in *Scriptural Exegesis: The Shapes of Culture and the Religious Imagination, Essays in Honour of Michael Fishbane*, ed. Deborah A. Green, and Laura Suzanne Lieber (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 301–08.

59. See for example Simon Dubnow, *History of Jews in Russia and Poland* (Bergenfield, Avotaynu, 2000), 113.

Setting Times for Torah Study in R. Shneur Zalman of Liady's Thought

THE RELATION BETWEEN TORAH STUDY AT SET TIMES AND FULL-TIME STUDY

Rashaz acknowledged that non-scholars would always constitute a substantial proportion of the Jewish community, be it because of the socioeconomic situation, the intellectual limitations of common folk, or because of their place in the hierarchy of souls. Moreover, in the book of *Tanya*, Rashaz stated explicitly that there was only a handful of true *zadikim*,⁶⁰ divided from the *beinonim* by a clear-cut and non-negotiable border.⁶¹ Rashaz did not perceive as problematic the existence of tradesmen who were immersed in materiality and engrossed in the troubles of everyday life. On the contrary, their inferior position presents them with opportunities and tasks that the full-time scholar would never have.⁶² Hence setting times for Torah study can serve complementary yet different purposes from full-time Torah study; it can incorporate laymen in activities that were previously restricted to the spiritual vanguard, and can even serve purposes that are beyond the reach of the scholarly and pneumatic class.

TORAH STUDY AT SET TIMES AS A COMPLEMENT TO FULL-TIME STUDY

In one of his late discourses Rashaz resorted to kabbalistic imaginary in order to express the interdependence of scholars and laymen.⁶³ He took a passage from the Song of Songs as a point of departure: "Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my bride; thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one bead of thy necklace" (Song of Songs 4:9). In his interpretation, this passage refers to two separate groups among the Jewish people: the "eye" denotes leaders of the community, namely the scholarly elite, whereas the "bead of thy necklace" represents the laymen. Such an interpretation aims to bring to the reader's attention the equal status granted by the biblical author to both these groups. In spite of the fact that "Ostensibly there can not be any comparison between them at all" (*li-kh'orah ein 'arokh benehem kelal u-khelal*), they capture the heart of the groom equally, or in other words, they are equally cherished by God.⁶⁴ As Rashaz continued to explain, both these groups are assigned different, albeit complementary roles. Scholars, as "the eyes of the congregation," bring down the Wisdom (*Hokhmah*) from its source in direct light (*'or yashar*), while laymen respond through elevating the Torah in reflected light (*'or hozer*).⁶⁵

60. T1.10, 16a

61. See T1.14, 20a; T1.27, 33b–34a, and Nechemia Polen, "Charismatic Leader, Charismatic Book: Rabbi Shneur Zalman's *Tanya* and His Leadership," in *Rabbinic and Lay Communal Authority*, ed. Suzanne Last Stone (New York: Yeshiva University Press, 2006), 57–59. Rashaz, however, did not deny a possibility of transformation by means of repentance from a wicked person (*rasha*) to *beinoni* or in some particular cases, like in case of Eleazar ben Durdaya (B. 'Avodah Zarah 17a), even from *rasha* to a *zadik* (*Seder tefilot*, 226c, LT 'Aharei 26c, LT *Va-'ethanan* 9b, LT *Nizavim* 46d, TO 20d, MAHZ *Razal* 106–07).

62. MAHZ *Ha-kezarim*, 119; see also Loewenthal, *Communicating*, 69.

63. MAHZ 5571, 204–05.

64. MAHZ 5571, 204–05.

65. On Cordoverian notions of direct and reflected light see Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends of Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken, 1941), 261–273; Scholem, *Kabbalah*, 131.

Rashaz stressed not only two different modes of study (“drawing down” in full-time study and “elevation” when it is pursued at set times), but also two different dispositions: the scholars’ study is intellectual, for they bring down the wisdom of the Torah, whereas the power of the laymen’s Torah lies in their voice. Moreover, the laymen draw the power of Torah from their deeds. Rashaz explained that the laymen purge the husks of *Nogah* through faithful business (*mas’ a u-matan*) and achieve the state of “polished precious stones”—hence “bead of thy necklace”—capable of reflecting the divine light.⁶⁶ For these reasons, ordinary men participate alongside scholars in a theurgical act of bringing the flow of divine light and the Torah’s wisdom into the world. Through their effort to study Torah at fixed times they enable reunification of the light of the Torah with its supernal source, after it has been drawn down to the world by the scholars. Therefore, their Torah study at set times is perceived as a necessary element of the dynamics of the divine light, and a kind of counterbalance to the learning of the scholars.

The picture, in which ordinary people purify the material world around them, becoming a mirror that reflects the divine light encapsulated in the sound of the Torah they recite, demonstrates not only the interdependence of scholars and laymen, but also the correlation of Torah study and deeds. The excerpt cited above from *Ma’amrei ’Admor ha-Zaken 5571* states that purification through deeds paves the way for the reunification of the Torah with its supernal source in the reflected light; yet in another discourse the relation between deeds and Torah study appears to be reversed: setting times for Torah study actually provides strength (*’oz*) for purifying the sparks of holiness, which fell into the husks during the cosmic process of the breaking of vessels.⁶⁷ At this point mystical imagination intertwines with halakhic pragmatics: in the view of Rashaz’s halakhic books, those who fix times for study should concentrate on practical laws that regulate their everyday life and determine the way they act. Accordingly, it is precisely their halakhah-abiding deeds that purify the sparks of holiness entrapped in material reality. Rashaz anchored this idea in the talmudic saying: “Study is greater [than practice] for it leads to practice” (B. Kiddushin 40b), and explained: “A deed without study cannot prevail; however, study without a deed is not the essential thing [*ha-’ikar*] either, for ‘The essential thing is not study (*midrash*),’ etc. [but deed] [M. Avot 1:17].”⁶⁸ This saying has evolved with time into one of the popular slogans of Ḥabad-Lubavitch: “Deed is the main thing” (*ma’aseh hu ha-’ikar*), while the attitude that underlines it has led some scholars to present Rashaz’s doctrine as relegating Torah study to a secondary place.⁶⁹ However, both excerpts from *Ma’amrei ’Admor ha-Zaken 5571*⁷⁰ seem to prove the opposite, for they show Rashaz’s efforts to reveal the hidden significance of fixed times of study, both mystical, as reflected light (*’or hozer*), and magical, as

66. On extracting the sparks of holiness from the husk of *Nogah*, see Foxbrunner, *Habad*, 22.

67. MAHZ 5571, 105. On breaking of vessels in Lurianic kabbalah, see Scholem, *Kabbalah*, 135–40; Scholem, *Major Trends*, 265–68.

68. MAHZ 5571, 105.

69. Lamm, *Torah Lishmah*, 152.

70. MAHZ 5571, 105 and 204–05.

Setting Times for Torah Study in R. Shneur Zalman of Liady's Thought

the strength necessary to achieve the purification of the sparks. The passage discloses a broader function of Torah study than mere intellectual cognition, and through the idea of study at fixed times it finds a way to incorporate the non-scholars' study into the hasidic mystical project. As a result, even apparently futile study at fixed times, by the unqualified and ignorant who are nevertheless devoted to the halakhic lifestyle, serves a purpose complementary to the study of scholars and pneumatics.

TORAH STUDY AT SET TIMES AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO FULL-TIME STUDY

In certain cases, when laymen set times for Torah study, their study gains a dimension previously reserved for the Torah study of scholars and pneumatics. This is expressed, for example, in the idea of person as a substitute temple for the Divine Presence.⁷¹ The hasidic authors based the idea of a human temple on the biblical verse: "Let them make me a sanctuary and I will dwell in them" (Exodus 25:8). The fact that God had said "in them" (*be-tokham*) — in the people of Israel—instead of using the seemingly more suitable "in it" (*be-tokho*)—in the sanctuary—led the Safedian kabbalists and the hasidic masters who followed in their footsteps to believe that Scripture had actually intended to declare humans God's sanctuary (*mikdash*) in the world.⁷² In their view, the commandment of building the sanctuary is detached from its biblical setting and should be understood as referring to everyone, at anytime: "It is not written 'in it,' but 'in them,' to say that each and every Jew must build the tabernacle (*mishkan*) in his soul," that is, draw down the revelation of God through prayer,⁷³ commandments, and Torah study.⁷⁴ Among these three, Torah study occupies a distinguished place, and the talmudic saying that: "Since the destruction of the temple, the Holy One blessed be He has nothing in the world but four cubits of halakhah alone" (B. Berakhot 8a), prompted Rashaz to declare the Torah "verily the tabernacle of the Holy One, blessed be He."⁷⁵ According to Rashaz, drawing down the Divine Presence into the human temple is achievable not only by lengthy studies, but also by setting times for studying halakhah.

The process of building a human sanctuary is detailed in *Tanya*.⁷⁶ It follows the pattern of the biblical narrative, albeit in a spiritual setting. In the biblical narrative, the Israelites were commanded to build the sanctuary when it became clear

71. On the idea of the human temple in the beginnings of Hasidism, see Ron Margolin, *Mikdash 'adam: Ha-hafnamah ha-datit ye-'izuv hayei ha-dat ha-penimiyim be-reshit ha-hasidut* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2005), 127–138.

72. See for example Eliyahu de Vidas, *Reshit hokhmah*, Sha'ar ha-'ahavah, ch. 6, 58a (Warsaw, 1937); *Torat Mosheh Alshekh, Terumah*, 148a (Warsaw, 1861); Horoviz, *Shenei luhot ha-berit*, Sha'ar ha-'otiyot, 'ot kuf, 5.

73. LT *Naso* 20b.

74. See TO 87a, where commandments are compared to curtains (*yeri'ot*) that cover the sanctuary from the outside, and Torah study to the instruments of the tabernacle (*kelei ha-mishkan*), the inner components of the sanctuary.

75. LT *Be-har* 43a. See also T1.53, 74b; TO 90d; LT *Va-yikra* 1d; LT *Balak* 74d; LT *Va-ethanan* 10a; etc.

76. T1.34, 43a–b.

that they were not able to receive divine revelation and remain alive. As it is described in the Talmud, during the revelation at Mount Sinai, “At every utterance their soul took flight” (B. Shabbat 88b). Rashaz interprets this to mean that they could not have handled the ultimate nullification of existence (*bitul bi-mezi’ut*).⁷⁷ Accordingly, only the creation of the sanctuary—a suitable vessel for the divine revelation—made possible the unity (*yihud*) of God in the world, without the annihilation of existence.

The creation of the human temple follows the very same pattern. Full disclosure of the Torah is to come about only in the future.⁷⁸ Yet, even before this happens, it is possible to draw the divine down to one’s personal temple through the ritual of Torah study. Without a doubt, there is a difference between divine revelation in the Jerusalem Temple and the revelation within its human counterpart in the exile, in regard to the place of the *Shekhinah* in the order of concatenation. In contrast to the time of the Temple, the *Shekhinah* in the exile descends to the lowest *sefirah* of the lowest of the four worlds: *Malkhut* of *‘Asiyah*. Nonetheless, what apparently can be taken as the degradation of the *Shekhinah* is given a rather positive characterisation in Rashaz’s writings. In the Temple only the high priest was permitted to enter the Holy of Holies in order to commune with the divine, yet in the exile, where a person’s heart is the Holy of Holies,⁷⁹ this experience is open to every halakhah-abiding Jew able to recite the words of Torah.⁸⁰ Elsewhere Rashaz stated explicitly:

Therefore, after one has meditated deeply, according to his abilities, on the subject of this above-mentioned self-nullification (*bitul bi-mezi’ut*), let him reflect in his heart as follows: “The capacity of my intelligence and of my soul’s root is too limited to constitute a chariot and a sanctuary (*merkavah u-mishkan*) for God’s unity in perfect truth, for my thought cannot grasp or apprehend His unity at all with any degree of comprehension in the world, not an iota, in fact, of that which was grasped by the patriarchs and prophets. This being so, I will make Him a sanctuary and an abode (*mishkan u-maknon*) by studying Torah at fixed times by day and by night, to the extent of my free time, as stipulated by the law governing each individual’s situation, set forth in the *Hilkhot talmud torah*, as our sages say, “Even one chapter in the morning and one at night” (B. Menahot 99b).⁸¹

Rashaz stated unequivocally that God’s abode on earth is not created by a scholarly or pneumatic elite, but rather by anyone who sets times for Torah study,

77. On different types of nullifications in Ḥabad tradition, see Elliot R. Wolfson, *Open Secret: Postmessianic Messianism and the Mystical Revision of Menahem Mendel Schneerson* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 75–6.

78. On the complete disclosure of the Torah in the future to come, see for example LT *Matot* 84a–b.

79. Horoviz, *Shenei luhot ha-berit*, Sha’ar ha-’otiyot, ’ot kuf, 5.

80. T1.53, 74a–b.

81. T1.34, 43a.

Setting Times for Torah Study in R. Shneur Zalman of Liady's Thought

even if he fulfils only the halakhic minimum of reciting one chapter in the morning and one at night during the morning and evening prayers. Obviously, a scholar differs from the ordinary person in the way in which he grasps the divine, yet it is beyond question that both of them, according to their degree of comprehension, constitute the abode for God. This difference is illustrated by the verse: "How goodly are thy tents, o Jacob, thy dwellings, o Israel!" (Numbers 24:5), where tent, or casual abode (*dirat 'ara'i*), stands for study at fixed times, and dwelling (*mishkan*), or permanent abode (*dirat keva*), for study by the scholar.⁸²

TORAH STUDY AT SET TIMES AS A HIGHER LEVEL THAN FULL-TIME STUDY

Rashaz's persistent effort to reinstate a balance between scholars and laymen, full-time and part-time Torah study, as well as Torah and deeds, is conspicuous in the idea of a human being as an intermediary who carries down the divine light into the world. The idea of a human being as intermediary is rendered in different configurations throughout hasidic lore, especially in reference to the role of a *zadik* as a connection between heaven and earth.⁸³ In several places in his teachings Rashaz indicates that ordinary people are bound to play an analogous role.⁸⁴ This follows the more general tendency present in Rashaz's teachings to re-evaluate the layperson's immersion in the material aspect of reality. The particular place that the layman occupies in the world impacts his task as transmitter of divine vitality:

Also a businessman [*ba'al 'eseq*] must fix times for Torah, for every drawing down [*hamshakhah*] [of divine influx] needs to go by degrees, through a transmitter [*ma'avir*]. Even though the essence of drawing down is performed here by a deed [*ma'aseh*], the first stage must be performed by thought and speech [*mahashavah ve-dibur*], and only later by deed. Therefore one needs to set times for Torah study, which is thought and speech.⁸⁵

The passage follows Rashaz's description of drawing down the divine light, divine will (*razon*), and associated with it, divine delight (*ta'anug*),⁸⁶ by means of Torah study for its own sake (*torah li-shmah*).⁸⁷ Rashaz explained that the Oral Torah preceded the Written Torah in drawing down and disclosing the divine light, for through elucidation of the laws that the Written Torah only mentioned, the Oral

82. LT *Balak* 74d–75a; *Va-etanan* 11a.

83. Moshe Idel, *Hasidism: Between Ecstasy and Magic* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1995), 198–207.

84. See for example LT *Teze* 40c.

85. MAHZ 5571, 83.

86. On delight in kabbalah and Hasidism, see Moshe Idel, "Ta'anug: Erotic Delights from Kabbalah to Hasidism," in *Hidden Intercourse: Eros and Sexuality in the History of Western Esotericism*, ed. Wouter Jacobus Hanegraaff, and Jeffrey John Kripal (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 111–151.

87. On the notion of *torah li-shmah* in Rashaz, see Foxbrunner, *Habad*, 152–54. See also Idel, *Hasidism*, 176–85, where different understanding of *li-shmah* in Hasidism are discussed, and Lamm, *Torah Lishmah*, 191–92, where functional, devotional, and cognitive definitions of *li-shmah* are proposed.

Torah spread the divine will in the world and made it comprehensible.⁸⁸ Rashaz added that not only extensive and detailed studies of the Oral Torah bring down the divine light, but also study at fixed times by ordinary men. Indeed, an ordinary person draws down the influx mainly through his deeds, yet the deeds must be preceded by thought and speech, as these three dispositions amount to the “three garments of the soul” a person should direct to God.⁸⁹ Drawing down (*hamshakhah*) by means of deeds takes place when someone follows the halakhah in performing practical commandments, while the initial drawing down by means of thought and speech is achieved by studying Torah at fixed times.⁹⁰ The reference to the delight (*ta’anug*) derived from Torah study elsewhere provides the reason for studying twice a day rather than continuously. Rashaz referred to a hasidic maxim, whereby “constant delight is no delight,” either to the donor, or to the recipient.⁹¹ For this reason, setting two times in the morning and evening is truly a source of delight, whereas continuous study turns delight into an affliction.⁹²

The discourse effectively juxtaposes studying Torah *li-shmah* and at fixed times. Here, the meaning of *li-shmah* is explicated as “drawing down the light of the Infinite (*’or ’ein sof*) into *hokhmah* and *binah*,” a goal achievable not only through detailed intellectual studies or mystical practices, but also by the repetition of the words of Torah at set times by an ordinary, halakhah-abiding Jew.⁹³ Moreover, in some cases, Torah study at set times, described as “spiced wine” (*yein rokeah*), is cherished more than continuous study by scholars—“plain wine” (*yayin stam*), even when they delve into the secrets of Torah, for the Torah of ordinary people crosses the boundaries of intellect and is brought into the material world: “This is the case of tradesmen [*oskei masa u-matan*] who occupy themselves with the Torah and commandments by means of their palate and tongue, as it is written: ‘And the roof of thy mouth (of the congregation of Israel, etc.) like the best wine’ [Song of Songs 7:10], in the manner of scent that is above the delight limited to wisdom and understanding, which are the vessels.”⁹⁴ In this passage, Rashaz took the opportunity to present the intellectual deficiency of non-scholars as their advantage. Indeed, their study is restricted to

88. MAHZ 5571, 81–82.

89. T1.4, 8a.

90. See also TO 47c on set times for study as disclosure of the divine will in thought and speech.

91. See for example *Keter shem tov*, par. 121 (Brooklyn: Kehot, 2004), and Dov Ber, *’Or torah*, 1:84d (Brooklyn: Kehot, 2004). For a discussion of this issue see Idel, “Ta’anug,” in Hanegraaff, *Hidden Intercourse*, 132–35, where he places this dictum in the context of avoiding routine worship. Notably, in his discourse Rashaz uses the same dictum precisely in order to empower religious routine.

92. MAHZ *Parashiyot*, I, Hosafot, Va-yeze, 7; MAHZ 5572, 102–03.

93. See also LT *Ha’azinu* 76a, discussed in Hallamish, “Mishnato ha-’iyyunit,” 274, where it is explicitly stated that a businessman can draw down the divine light by *li-shmah* study at set times. In this case, the difference between a full-time student (*she-torato ’omanuto*) and a businessman who studies at set times is annulled, for they both allow the Torah to speak through them. Businessmen, however, must complement their study with charity. Notably, some passages in Rashaz’s discourses seem to exempt those “who cannot set times for study at all” and are “empty of Torah,” but nevertheless draw down the influx through their *mizvot*, MAHZ 5571, 84, 92, 106, 119.

94. MAHZ 5571, 119.

Setting Times for Torah Study in R. Shneur Zalman of Liady's Thought

short sessions twice a day, and they do not enter the secret, inner pathways of the Torah; nonetheless this should not be perceived as a disadvantage, but rather as a gift, by virtue of which they bring the Torah out of the ivory tower of intellectual cognition. In other words, the non-scholars do not comprehend the Torah fully, be it because of lack of time or because of their intellectual deficiency, but they can experience it sensually, or as Rashaz put it, with their "palate and tongue," and therefore they disclose the Torah on the sensual, material levels, which are beyond the reach of the scholars. Greater delight results from such revelation of the Torah, than from its revelation on higher, intellectual levels, for the former transcends the "vessels" of the Torah—wisdom and understanding—and reaches down to the lower, sensual attributes.⁹⁵

Worship through setting times for Torah study is thus presented in three ways in Rashaz's doctrine. Firstly, it is a necessary complement to worship through full-time Torah study or, in kabbalistic terms, the reflected light that complements the direct light in the economy of the divine light. Secondly, Torah study at set times resembles the Torah study of the spiritual elite inasmuch as it makes a human being the transmitter of divine influx to the world, or the sanctuary and abode of the divine in the lower worlds, allowing the ordinary man to attain in exile the spiritual level of the high priest in the Temple. Thirdly, particular features of Torah study at set times, when it is accompanied by deeds and immersed in materiality, determine its superiority over full-time study: Torah study mixed with materiality is more far reaching than purely intellectual study.

STUDY THAT FOLLOWS PRAYER

Halakhah, which dictates study in everyone's daily routine, encourages the undertaking of study immediately following prayer, assuming that otherwise one is liable to become overwhelmed by mundane responsibilities and forget about learning. The pragmatic considerations that underline the halakhic regulations acquired a variety of other explanations in Rashaz's mystical doctrine, connected to the theurgical purposes of Torah study. These include the idea that prayer is a necessary preparation for study by way of the *raẓo* that precedes *shov*, and that the Torah is a factor that perpetuates the self-nullification and unity with God that are achieved during prayer.⁹⁶

95. MAHZ 5571, 119; see an alternative version of the discourse in TO 80c.

96. On the ideological implication of setting study sessions immediately after prayer, see Hallamish, "Mishnato ha-'iyyunit," 257–58, where he presents Torah study at set times as a finalization of the process which begins with prayer and effects the spiritualization of the self. Foxbrunner rejects Hallamish's speculation on the grounds that Rashaz's emphasis on setting time for study immediately following the morning prayers "is based wholly on explicit statements to that effect in the Talmud, *Tur*, *Shulhan arukh* (*Habad*, 219)." However, Hallamish does not question the halakhic origins of the principle and points out himself its halakhic formulations in Rashaz's *Shulhan 'arukh*. The talmudic and halakhic statements do not render invalid Rashaz's far-reaching ideological implications of this principle as outlined by Hallamish.

PRAYER AS PREPARATION FOR TORAH STUDY

The assumption that prayer is an appropriate preparation for Torah study is compatible with the halakhic call to set times for study immediately after prayer on pragmatic grounds. According to Rashaz, Torah study and other religious obligations are interdependent: Torah study cannot function on its own but should form part of a harmonious, multifaceted regimen of divine service. Moreover, study *li-shmah* demands self-nullification. According to Rashaz, “The Holy One, blessed be He, does not come to rest on someone who is an existent being (*yesh ve-davar*), for I and he (*'ani ve-hu*) cannot dwell [together] in the world.”⁹⁷ Nullification of the self (*'ani*), equivalent on the spiritual level to self-sacrifice (*mesirat nefesh*) in sanctification of the Divine Name (*kiddush ha-shem*), is achievable through the recitation of the Shema and, more generally, prayer.⁹⁸ Following the nullification of one’s will, one substitutes the will of God for it, which is embodied in the words of the Torah, thus achieving a level similar to that of Moses, when “the *Shekhinah* was speaking from his throat.”⁹⁹ According to *Tanya*, the blessings of prayer repeat the gesture of returning one’s soul to God and reuniting it with Him; they function as necessary preparation for the *beinonim* to attain the intention *li-shmah*. Only after such a preparation can one begin one’s regular course of study (*shi'ur kavu'a*). This preparation should be repeated whenever one sits down to learn the Torah.¹⁰⁰

The interdependence of Torah and prayer is set forth in numerous places in Rashaz’s lore, as the relation between ascending and descending, or the lower and upper “arousal” (*'it'aruta di-le-tata* and *'it'aruta di-le-'ila*). The soul ascends to God in ecstatic love during prayer, and through this it merits the power to bring the divine light down to earth in the Torah.¹⁰¹ Thus prayer and Torah are inscribed on the scheme of *razo va-shov*,¹⁰² the continuous dynamics of ascent and descent, nullification and the drawing down of the divine. The former, *razo*, is achieved through the desire to leave the body and to efface subjectivity in ecstatic prayer; only when there is no subjectivity, no particular will, which functions as a

97. LT *Va-yikra* 4d; see also T1.6, 10b. On the interdependence of Torah and other types of worship in the context of *bitul*, see Foxbrunner, *Habad*, 148–49.

98. On *mesirat nefesh* and *kiddush ha-shem* in the Ḥabad school, see Naftali Loewenthal, “Self-Sacrifice of the Zaddik in the Teaching of R. Dov Ber, the Mitteler Rebbe,” in *Jewish History: Essays in Honor of Chimen Abramsky*, ed. Ada Rapoport-Albert, and Steven J. Zipperstein (London: Nicolson & Weidenfeld, 1988), 457–494; Elior, *Paradoxical Ascent*, 185–89.

99. LT *Shir ha-shirim* 22a. On the development of the idea of the *Shekhinah* which overtakes man’s vocal apparatus in prayer and study, see Moshe Idel, “*Adonai Sefatai Tiftah*: Models of Understanding Prayer in Early Hasidism,” *Kabbalah* 18 (2008): 34–49; Idel, *Enchanted Chains: Techniques and Rituals in Jewish Mysticism* (Los Angeles: Cherub Press, 2005), 196–202.

100. T1.41, 58b; LT *Be-har* 40c-d; LT *Ha'azinu* 74a; LT *Tazri'a*, 22d–23a; LT *Va-yikra* 5a.

101. See for example LT *Ha'azinu* 74a, LT *Shir ha-shirim* 17a, LT *Shir ha-shirim* 49a–b.

102. Rachel Elior, Moshe Idel, and Elliot Wolfson proposed three different scholarly readings of *razo va-shov*, see Rachel Elior, “ḤaBaD: The Contemplative Ascent to God,” in *Jewish Spirituality from the Sixteen-Century Revival to the Present*, ed. Arthur Green (New York: Crossroad, 1987), 178–181, and also Elior, *Paradoxical Ascent*, 127–38, Idel, *Hasidism*, 123–24, and Wolfson, *Open Secret*, 145.

Setting Times for Torah Study in R. Shneur Zalman of Liady's Thought

barrier separating one from God, can the divine light descend, clothed in Torah and commandments.¹⁰³

What is expressed here in technical kabbalistic terms as *razo va-shov*, lower and upper arousal, is elsewhere directly applied to the routine stages of everyday worship. Praises of God, recited out loud in *Pesukei de-zimra*, serve as a means of attaining ecstasy, which reaches its peak when the word “one” (*’ehad*) of the Shema is spoken. The silent prayer of Amidah, which follows, signifies the eradication of self.¹⁰⁴ The hasidic masters, in a manner recalling the Aristotelian definition of a human being as *zoon logon echon*, defined the faculty of speech as the unique faculty that elevates human beings above other creatures;¹⁰⁵ hence silence during the Amidah equals giving up one’s uppermost faculty and substituting God’s speech for it by means of Torah study, since it is not a person itself who recites the words of Torah but rather “the *Shekhinah* speaking from his throat” with “my words which I have put in thy mouth” (Isaiah 59:21).

Despite stressing the importance of preparatory prayer, Rashaz did not mean that studying Torah without it did not have any impact on the divine reality. Nevertheless, he argued in favour of study that followed prayer: “with all thy might” (*be-khol me’odekha*; Deuteronomy 6:5), which draws on *keter* to *hokhmah*, in contrast to study with no preceding prayers, which draws only from *hokhmah*.¹⁰⁶ As Rashaz put it elsewhere, study that follows prayer brings down “verily supernal wisdom” (*hokhmah shel ma’lah mamash*) and is identified with *torah li-shmah*, while study without preceding prayer brings down merely shades of the supernal wisdom (*novlot hokhmah shel ma’lah*).¹⁰⁷

TEMPORAL PRAYER AND ETERNAL TORAH

Discussion of ecstatic prayer leads to another significant aspect of the obligation to study directly after prayer: the self-nullification and unity with the divine achieved by means of prayer are only temporary; while the spiritual achievements attained through Torah study are eternal. Contemplation of the words of *Pesukei de-zimra* and the Shema stands for accepting the yoke of Heaven. Therefore, whoever does so, “will always be bound in contemplation, i.e. nullification of the worlds, to the one who brings them to life and constitutes them [*mehayah u-mehaveh*], and it is only in his corporeal body he will not be able to achieve true nullification, so during the recitation of the Shema, he shall direct his mind to Torah study in the words ‘thou shalt talk of them’ [*ve-dibarta bam*; Deuteronomy 6:7]. Namely, through Torah study his divine soul [*nefesh ’elokit*] will

103. See for example TO 25b, LT *Shir ha-shirim* 46a; MAHZ *’Ethalekh–Loznya* 17–18.

104. See for example TO 45c, LT *Zav* 15c, MAHZ 5564, 238; *Seder tefilot*, 116a, 132c, 237d.

105. According to Rashaz, all created things are divided into four categories: inanimate (*domem*), vegetative (*zomeah*), animate (*hai*), and speaking (*medaber*). Only the human being comprises all the four categories. See T1.38, 50b; TO 3d.

106. LT *Shir ha-shirim* 20d.

107. LT *Berakhah* 96b–c; see also LT *Va-etĥanan* 4a. On self-sacrifice in prayer as the condition to Torah study, see also LT *Shir ha-shirim* 41a, LT *’Emor* 33c, LT *Be-har* 40d, LT *Ba-midbar* 19d, MAHZ 5570, 8, MAHZ, *’Ethalekh–Loznya*, 90.

become truly unified [*na'aseh yihud 'amiti*] with the Torah, and the Torah and the Holy One blessed be He are verily one [*'orayta ve-kudsha berikh hu kula had mamash*].”¹⁰⁸

According to the hasidic worldview, corporeality separates human beings from the divine and prevents them from true unity with God. One possible path of breaking this barrier leads through prayer, culminating in the nullification achieved by pronouncing God's unity in the first passage of the Shema. Such nullification, however, is only temporary, for the ecstatic state achieved during prayer ceases when the recitation of the Shema is over, and the ecstatic love of God is transformed into its opposite, the love of corporeality.¹⁰⁹ One can sustain the ecstatic state so long as one undertakes Torah study immediately after the prayer.¹¹⁰ In Rashaz's writings, the Torah emerges as the third way that transcends the duality of divinity and materiality, and bestows lasting unity with God in the material world.¹¹¹ The principle that Israel, Torah, and God are a unity is used to present the way to perpetuate self-nullification through Torah study.¹¹² However, the unity is understood as an obligation one should strive for rather than a description of the actual state of things. Accordingly, a person who studies Torah and puts its laws into practice nullifies his will before the will of God,¹¹³ and even when he is busy with his daily concerns, he does not break his communion with God.¹¹⁴ Here too, prayer plays a preparatory role, as substituting one's will with the divine will requires of the ordinary person that he transcend his nature, and prayer arouses the hidden love concealed in the heart of every Jew, a love that surmounts his nature.¹¹⁵ Obviously, one may choose not to study immediately after prayer, and return to study later in the day, but in that case, one loses the state of love achieved during prayer, and moves away from God.¹¹⁶

Rashaz continued to elucidate the essential difference between Torah study and prayer that determines whether the *devekut* they engender is temporary or

108. TO 16b. On the principle of unity of the Torah and God, see Isaiah Tishby, *Ḥikre kabalah u-sheluḥotehah: meḥkarim u-mekorot* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1993), 3.941–953; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 3.1085–86; see also LT *Sukkot* 79c: “A man can have the impression (*roshem*) of the nullification of *Shmoneh 'esreh* set and affixed, so it will never be shaken, every day in his Torah studies,” and the discussion of this passage in Hallamish, “Mishnato ha-‘iyyunit,” 257–258.

109. TO 28d; see also T1.12, 16b–17a.

110. On twofold ecstasy in Rashaz, see Wolfson, *Open Secret*, 145; Wolfson, “Oneiric Imagination and Mystical Annihilation in Habad Hasidism,” *ARC, The Journal of the Faculty of Religious Studies*, 35 (2007): 141.

111. On Habad worship through corporeality, see Wolfson, *Open Secret*, 138–140.

112. On the origins of the expression see Tishby, *Ḥikre kabalah u-sheluḥotehah*, 3.941–953, where he corrects the common erroneous attribution of the expression to the Zohar by pointing out to its origin in Moshe Ḥayim Luzzatto's writings.

113. Based on M. Avot 2:4.

114. LT *Shir ha-shirim* 25d–26a; on the mystical role of ritual routine, see Wolfson, *Open Secret*, 74: “Indeed, even the minimal halakhic routine should and can be endowed with this mystical valence predicated on the consubstantiality of God and the Jewish soul.”

115. LT *Ba-midbar* 13d.

116. See LT *Tavo* 43a.

Setting Times for Torah Study in R. Shneur Zalman of Liady's Thought

perpetual. According to one explanation, the union with the divine can be perpetuated by memorization of the words of the Torah. Since "Torah and the Holy One, blessed be He, are one," when a person has the words of the Torah "carved in the mind of his memory which is in his soul," it is as if he is united with God Himself, even if he is engaged in mundane occupations.¹¹⁷

According to another explanation, the difference between these two modes of worship lies in their different ontological features. The love engendered by prayer ceases, for prayer is time-bound, whereas the Torah is above the dimension of time.¹¹⁸ The Torah itself is eternal, and therefore Torah study provides a glimpse into eternity.¹¹⁹ The words of Torah recited by a student are the very same words that were spoken to Moses on Mount Sinai:

Even though the Torah was given in time and place, and it has been already three thousand years since the Torah was given, it shall be in your eyes as if it was given verily this day [*ha-yom mamash*], as it is written: "Which I am commanding thee this day" [Exodus 34:11], namely every day when we recite the Shema. And this is why they said: "Every day [these words] will be in your eyes as new,"¹²⁰ and the meaning is that the "I" [*anokhi*] is the one who "commands thee," and is in the nature of the general encompassment [*sovev ha-kelali*], namely he is completely above time And the sages said that "He who sits and reads and learns, the Holy One blessed be He sits and reads and learns in front of him,"¹²¹ that is to say, even if a man reads in time and the Holy One blessed be He is above time ..., the Holy One blessed be He sits and learns in front of him, from above time to the dimension of time, and because of that, He said: "Which I command thee this day," as verily in the time of the Giving of Torah [*matan torah*], which was above time.¹²²

A dichotomy of the corporeal and the spiritual is inscribed into the hasidic metaphysics of light: Torah study is bound to the light of *'Ein Sof*, the surrounding light that shines equally everywhere and is above time, as opposed to the light that fills all the worlds and is bound to time.¹²³ For this reason, the words of Torah are not

117. LT *Kedoshim* 30d. Ideally, everyone ought to memorize the entire Written and Oral Torah. However, because of the "affliction of the times, shortness of the comprehending consciousness and the deepness of the subject" it is enough for a scholar to memorize merely the Pentateuch and the *Seder kodashin* from the Talmud.

118. LT *Re'eh* 23b.

119. On eternal Torah, see for example: LT *Ba-midbar* 13a–b, LT *Balak* 68b.

120. Pesikta Zutarta *Va-ethanan*, to Deuteronomy 6:6 (Vilnius: Romm, 1880, 11a); Rashi to Deuteronomy 26:16; Bahya bar Asher, *Midrash Rabenu Bahya 'al hamishah humshe torah* to Deuteronomy 6:6, 130a (Nagyvarad: Vilmos Rubinstein, 1942; see also Pesikta de-Rav Kahana, *Ba-hodesh ha-shelishi, pis. 12:21*, to Exodus 19:1 (New York: JTS, 1962, p. 219).

121. *Tanna de-vei 'Eliyah*, ch. 18, 51a (Warsaw: Shmuel Shmelka Filitsner, 1912).

122. MAHZ 5570, 10. See also LT *Shir ha-shirim* 42a–b, LT *Matot* 82a–b.

123. On *memale kol 'almin* and *sovev kol 'almin* as technical terms for divine immanence and transcendence in Ḥabad, see Elior, "HaBaD" in Green, *Jewish Spirituality*, 171–72; Foxbrunner, *Habad*, 65–66, Hallamish, "Mishnato ha-'iyyunit," 50–55, and Dov Schwartz, *Maḥshevet Ḥabad: me-reshit 'ad 'aharit* (Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan University Press, 2010), 62–3, and 68–75.

subject to the passage of time, but are always perceived as new. Every time someone recites the words of Torah it is as if he has just received them from God: “Each interpretative gesture is a re-enactment of the revelatory experience, albeit from its unique vantage point, each moment a novel replication of the past.”¹²⁴ Even though study by man is bound to time, the words of Torah are not; hence studying the Torah brings down the eternity and unity into the world of temporality and multiplicity, whereas in the case of prayer, the situation is opposite: one reaches out of temporality into the moment of infinity in an ecstatic gesture of unity with the oneness of the divine.

The relation between prayer and study, described above in terms of the mutual relation between two types of divine light (*sovev* and *memale*), is depicted in sefirotic terminology as a correlation of *malkhut* and *ze'ir 'anpin*:¹²⁵

Contemplation in prayer ... is in the nature of *razo*, the elevation of *nukba*, and is called “temporal life” [*hayei sha'ah*], for time is in *malkhut*, and when one elevates it from the state of being [*yesh*] it is called “temporal life.” The main thing, however, is “eternal life” [*hayei 'olam*], namely that *ze'ir 'anpin* should become specifically world [*olam*]. This is *shov*, the disclosure of the [light] surrounding all the worlds [*sovev kol 'almin*] and which comes to dwell specifically in the lower worlds [*dirah ba-tahtonim*], which is called “eternal life”: drawing down the divine actually and specifically into the world.¹²⁶

Rashaz described prayer in terms of the elevation of *nukba* (the feminine aspect of the Godhead, a term used interchangeably with *malkhut*)¹²⁷ above the sphere of being (*yesh*). Furthermore, since *malkhut* is identified in Rashaz's writings as the source of time in the sefirotic structure,¹²⁸ prayer appears as an ecstatic moment that restores time back to its source, where all three tenses exist as a unity.¹²⁹ “Temporal life,” a phrase coined by the Talmud in reference to prayer (B. Shabbat 10a),¹³⁰ emphasizes here the momentariness of this experience: as

124. Elliot R. Wolfson, *Aleph, Mem, Tau: Kabbalistic Musings on Time, Truth and Death* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2006), 64–65.

125. On the symbolism of *ze'ir 'anpin* and *nukba* in Lurianic kabbalah, see Scholem, *Kabbalah*, 141–42.

126. MAHZ *Ketuvim*, I, 233; *Boneh Yerushalayim*, 80 (77) (Jerusalem: Yehi'el Varker, 1926); MAHZ *Ha-kezarim*, 251.

127. Scholem, *Kabbalah*, 141.

128. See for example T2.7, 82a; TO 37a; *Seder tefilot* 75b.

129. See also *Seder tefilot* 75a–b, where *sha'ah* is identified as the unity of past, present, and future. An instructive passage on *malkhut* as *hayei sha'ah*, in the sense of an ecstatic moment encapsulating all three tenses, can be found in Menaḥem Mendel Schneersohn (*Zemah Zedek*), *Derekh miz-votekha*, 1:151a–b (Poltava, 1912), and is discussed in Wolfson, *Open Secret*, 277–8. On the relation between contemplation and ecstasy in Ḥabad worship see Elijah, *Paradoxical Ascent*, 162.

130. The comparison of prayer to “temporal life” and of Torah to “eternal life” is used by Rashaz to justify exempting professional scholars from praying the Amidah, see HTT 3.5, 851a, *Shulḥan 'arukh Rabenu ha-Zaken*, *'Orah hayim*, par. 106, discussed in Foxbrunner, *Ḥabad*, 139.

Setting Times for Torah Study in R. Shneur Zalman of Liady's Thought

ecstatic love that ceases immediately after the completion of prayer.¹³¹ In fact, in prayer one transcends the differentiation between past, present, and future; yet one does not transcend time as such. Prayer is a transcendental experience that reaches the borderline between divine nothingness and worldly being—the *sefirah* of *malkhut*, the point comprising the past, the present, and the future, and yet not going beyond it.

Torah study, by contrast, is called “eternal life,” for it draws that which is beyond time into temporal reality. The passage is based on the double meaning of the word *'olam*, as both “world” and “eternity.” Here, *ze'ir 'anpin*—an aspect of the divinity above *malkhut*, which is not subject to temporality—is drawn down into the world (*'olam*) to give it eternal life (*hayei 'olam*),¹³² which amounts to transforming it into “the dwelling place [of the divine] in the lower worlds,” a conspicuously eschatological idea in the Ḥabad tradition.¹³³ Prayer leads to the source of time, where the three temporal dimensions coexist, albeit *in potentia* only; Torah study, however, allows for apprehension above this source, at the level of *ze'ir 'anpin*, of the “source of the coming-to-be of time that is in *malkhut*” (*mekor hithavut ha-zeman she-be-malkhut*), as described by Rashaz's son, R. Dov Ber.¹³⁴ The “eternal life” in Rashaz's discourses also denotes “articulation of words of halakhah,”¹³⁵ that is, the egalitarian study of halakhah has an eschatological value, too. In their day, Rashaz explained, the sages could give up on temporal life (prayer) and focus solely on eternal life (Torah),¹³⁶ but nowadays, at a time of “the footsteps of Messiah” (*'ikveta de-meshiḥa*), to enable the articulation of halakhah in order to draw down the divinity into the world, one had to sacrifice one's soul in prayer.¹³⁷

There emerges a paradoxical relationship between worship by means of prayer on the one hand and Torah study on the other. Prayer liberates from the limits of transience and corporeality, but some of its essential features make its purpose—the attainment of ecstatic experience—fallible. Firstly, since the rhythm and time of prayer are externally determined by Jewish law, the ecstatic experience one strives to attain is incorporated in the temporal frames set by halakhah; secondly, ecstasy in prayer is the product of human's corporeal powers, namely love and fear of God. As such, it is subject from its inception to the limitation of corporeality. Consequently, the ecstasy of prayer is a transcendental experience that reaches the borderline of temporal existence, where the past,

131. *Seder tefilot* 28a.

132. See also T5, 155b. The connection between the temporal life of prayer with *malkhut* and the eternal life of Torah study with *ze'ir 'anpin* appears in Mosheh Ḥayim Luzzatto, *Sefer 'adir ba-marom ha-shalem* (Jerusalem: Spiner, 1994), 109–10, see also Amira Liwer, “Torah she-be-'al peh be-khitvei R. Zadok ha-Kohen mi-Lublin” (Ph.D. diss., Hebrew University, 2006), 329.

133. For an example of overly eschatological usage of the phrase in Rashaz, see T1.37, 49a–b.

134. Dov Ber Shene'uri, *Perush ha-milot*, 59b (Warsaw, 1887). For a discussion of this excerpt in the context of the difference between “time” (*zeman*), attributed to *malkhut*, and “the order of times” (*seder ha-zemanim*), attributed to *ze'ir 'anpin*, see Wolfson, *Aleph, Mem, Tau*, 110.

135. MAHZ, *'Ethalekh-Loznya*, 90.

136. B. Shabbat 10a.

137. MAHZ *'Ethalekh-Loznya*, 91.

present, and future are amalgamated, but it does not reach beyond temporality and is followed immediately by a return to the domain of time and matter.

On the other hand, permanent release from time is attainable by means of the ritual of Torah study at set times. Through Torah study one draws down onto oneself and into the world the eternity enclosed in the letters of the Torah. And, contrary to the ritual of prayer, the precise time of ritual Torah study is determined not by an external authority (Jewish law), but rather by the individual himself (even though preferable times are suggested in the halakhic texts). The gesture of setting times for ritual study triggers the process of release from the bounds of time, achievable within the material world rather than beyond it, by adhering to an entity (Torah) that originates above and beyond the source of time.

SETTING TIME FOR TORAH STUDY IN THE CONTEXT OF RASHAZ'S LEADERSHIP

The teachings of Rashaz demonstrate that adherence to the Torah, which entails the transformation of self and sanctification of the world, can be achieved through the seemingly trivial ritual of Torah study at set times. The precept of Torah study at set times, framed in halakhic literature as a means of motivating even the unscholarly classes to a routine of daily study, has been endowed in Rashaz's sermons with mystical and magical significance. This re-interpretation of setting times for Torah study should be considered not only in the framework of Rashaz's concept of time but also in the wider context of his unique style of leadership, marked by his endeavour to empower ordinary people to re-evaluate their mode of religious service, and to create a more inclusive Judaism, which was eventually to become the emblem of the Ḥabad movement.¹³⁸

138. See also Hallamish, "Mishnato ha-'iyyunit," 309, where it is suggested that Rashaz's positive attitude to nonscholarly folk, exceptional when compared to the scholarly ethos of Lithuanian Jewry, contributed to the growing popularity of Hasidism in general and Ḥabad in particular. Hallamish's opinion on Rashaz's exceptional attitude to ordinary men is based on Rashaz's instruction to call up businessmen to the Ark on Shabbaths and Festivals (T4.1, 103a) and not on his egalitarian approach to Torah study, which also should be mentioned, in particular when comparing Rashaz to his Mitnagdic contemporaries. Thus, for example, the Vilna Gaon, according to a tradition transmitted by his student and cousin Avraham Ragoler (for information on him see David E. Fishman, *Russia's First Modern Jews* [New York and London: NYU Press, 1995], 102–03), compared a man who studies Torah intermittently (*ha-lomed torah li-ferakim*) to an adulterer (see B. Sanhedrin 99b), for one who comes to join with the Torah occasionally treats it as a harlot, and not as a wife with which one should be joined continuously (Avraham Ragoler, *Ma'alot ha-torah*, 8 [Pressburg, 1875]). The Ḥabad tradition refers to the same talmudic passage in quite a different way: "The Z'emah Zedek said: This world is a world of falsity therefore even good is adulterated with chaff and must be purified 'from below upward' as well as from 'above downward.' The Coming World is the world of truth. In Torah there are discussions of matters which may appear negative, yet the same matters, as they are studied in *gan 'eden* — are actually positive qualities In This World the meaning of the passage: 'He who studies Torah *li-ferakim*,' means one who studies Torah intermittently; in *gan 'eden* they interpret the passage to mean that he studies Torah and the Torah 'takes him apart,' the words of Torah possess him." (Menaḥem Mendel Schneerson, *Ha-yom yom*, entry for 11th Elul, 86 [Brooklyn: Kehot, 1957]; English translation: Y. M. Kagan [Brooklyn: Kehot, 1987]).

Setting Times for Torah Study in R. Shneur Zalman of Liady's Thought

The emphasis placed on the precept of setting times for Torah study exemplifies some conspicuous trends in Rashaz's style of leadership and in the early Ḥabad community. It shows the level of spiritual independence enjoyed by Ḥabad Hasidim under the leadership of Rashaz: although he was eager to provide guidance in divine service to his followers, he nonetheless held each and every Hasid responsible for his own spiritual achievements.¹³⁹ The "Liozna Regulations" bear witness to Rashaz's continuous efforts to set limits on access to his court for the growing number of his followers.¹⁴⁰ It is therefore plausible that the elevation of routine Torah study at set times as spiritual engagement was aimed to create the possibility of full spiritual involvement for every follower, without the need for his permanent, or even temporary, presence at the rebbe's court.

One can surmise that Rashaz's style of leadership was to a great extent determined by the fact that his constituency of followers consisted predominantly of middle-class businessmen and householders, people whose everyday duties allowed only limited time for study, prayer, or visits to the rebbe's court.¹⁴¹ The re-evaluation of their limited daily Torah study was one of the means by which Rashaz included them in his spiritual project. Others means were the re-evaluation of their prayer,¹⁴² and related to this, Rashaz's direct instructions not to appoint men who overly prolonged the prayers as *sheliḥei zibur*. All this was intended to accommodate the needs of many congregants, who "have to get up early and leave for their daily travail,"¹⁴³ and who therefore could not afford stay for longer services in the synagogue. Finally, frequent visits to Rashaz's court were replaced with guidance through pastoral letters and emissaries, as well as by the transfer to local leaders of some of the functions usually performed by the rebbe during the private audiences he granted his Hasidim on an individual basis (*yeḥidut*).¹⁴⁴

One can only speculate about the factors that shaped Rashaz's unique doctrine and style of leadership. The Ḥabad tradition has preserved an image of Rashaz as a reluctant rebbe, who even considered immigration to the Land of Israel in order to avoid the mantle of leadership.¹⁴⁵ It may have been this reluctance that prompted him to construct his ideal of the distanced hasidic leader, who guides a decentralised network of autonomous congregations of followers by means of letters and emissaries rather than direct involvement with a close-knit court. The personal example of Rashaz's mentor, Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk, who continued leading his followers in a similar way over many years following his own immigration to the Land of Israel, must have had an impact on Rashaz.¹⁴⁶ During the years preceding his ascent to leadership, Rashaz was responsible for

139. Etkes, *Ba'al ha-Tanya*, 47.

140. Etkes, *Ba'al ha-Tanya*, 70–80.

141. Etkes, *Ba'al ha-Tanya*, 168.

142. Etkes, *Ba'al ha-Tanya*, 86.

143. Etkes, *Ba'al ha-Tanya*, 103.

144. Etkes, *Ba'al ha-Tanya*, 99.

145. Etkes, *Ba'al ha-Tanya*, 30.

146. On Menahem Mendel as one of three most important sources of inspiration for Rashaz, see Etkes, *Ba'al ha-Tanya*, 42.

maintaining a network of fundraisers for the hasidic settlement in the Land of Israel.¹⁴⁷ After his ascension, this network was used to spread and enforce hasidic doctrine and lifestyle.¹⁴⁸ Hence it comes as no surprise that in Rashaz's Hasidism so much attention is given to the spirituality of middle-class, independent, and relatively well-educated householders and businessmen; these people had constituted the core of Rashaz's successful fundraising network, and when he became a rebbe in his own right, they formed the core of his hasidic community. The implications of Rashaz's transition from chief regional fundraiser for the hasidic settlement in the Land of Israel to full-fledged hasidic leader still await thorough research. It seems reasonable to assume that emphasis on the spiritual efforts of businessmen and householders was closely related to this transition.

Rashaz's teachings have reverberated in the traditions of all subsequent leaders of Ḥabad. It is thus plausible that Rashaz's re-evaluation of Torah study at set times laid the conceptual basis for the rejection of the so-called "kolel-culture" by the seventh leader of Ḥabad-Lubavitch, R. Menahem Mendel Schneerson.¹⁴⁹ The relation between the conceptual and the historical contexts of Torah study in twentieth-century Ḥabad demands further investigation.

CONCLUSIONS

The precept of setting time for Torah study constitutes an integral part of Rashaz's project of making hasidic spirituality accessible to "intermediate" men, a project that attracted many people to Ḥabad during his lifetime and beyond. This precept, which occupied a secondary place in the halakhic tradition as a means of preserving study within the daily schedule of working men, was employed by Rashaz to form a new spiritual paradigm, in which the routine religious praxis was invested with mystical meaning. Rashaz saw setting time for Torah study as an ideal for the majority of his community, and restricted full-time study to a presumably narrow scholarly elite. The many remarks in his mystical sermons touching on the requirement to set times for study show that not only did he ascribe equal value to this method as to full-time study, but also that he invested study at set times with particular importance because of its perceived role in both the individual and the cosmic dimensions of repentance.

In some sermons, Torah study at set times by the masses is presented as a complement to the full-time study of the elite: while the elite draws down the divine light by fulfilling the ideal of full-time study, ordinary men reflect it by purifying the lower world when they comply with the halakhic requirement to study at set times. In other sermons, Rashaz made study at set times an alternative means of achieving comparable effects to those achieved by the elite, as both scholars and ordinary people

147. On Rashaz's role in collecting donations for the Hasidim in the Land of Israel, see Etkes, *Ba'al ha-Tanya*, 122–42.

148. On the role of the "collectors for the sake of the Land of Israel" (*ha-gaba'im de-'erez yisra'el*) in enforcing the "Liozna Regulations" in Ḥabad communities see Etkes, *Ba'al ha-Tanya*, 99.

149. Menahem Mendel Schneerson, *Igerot kodesh*, 14:30–31 (Brooklyn: Kehot, 1989); Schneerson, *Likutei sihot*, 23:443, (Brooklyn: Kehot, 2006).

Setting Times for Torah Study in R. Shneur Zalman of Liady's Thought

play a part in the construction of God's sanctuary by means of their study. Moreover, even simpletons could do so by fulfilling the minimum halakhic requirement of reciting no more than one chapter of the Torah during the morning and the evening prayer. To underscore the value of this method of study, in some places Rashaz presented Torah study at set times as superior to full-time study, because it brings the wisdom of Torah out of the intellectual ivory tower of scholarship into the sphere of materiality and corporeality. This mode of study that enables an ordinary person to detach himself from mundane affairs and to turn instead toward the divine words of Torah brings more divine delight and produces a more intense state of ecstasy than the static study of the full-time scholar who is permanently engrossed in holiness.

The instruction that Torah study at set times should follow prayer is of paramount importance. What was traditionally seen as a means of encouraging ordinary people to study before leaving the synagogue after prayer to resume mundane work was incorporated by Rashaz into the dynamics of *razo va-shov*. Where prayer was identified with the *razo* mode of worship at the preparatory stage, in which one effaces one's subjectivity in ecstatic prayer, study was identified with the *shov* mode, where the divine light clothed in the Torah descends into the world.

These two sequential modes of worship have special significance in the personal quest for eternity. Prayer, whose timing is determined arbitrarily by Jewish law, grants the worshipper an instantaneous release from the bonds of past, present, and future, but this transcendental experience of ecstatic prayer is ephemeral, as it depends on the corporeal powers of love and fear. Paradoxically, it is Torah study, whose times are set by the worshipper himself, that ultimately allows him to transcend temporality by drawing down the eternal Torah into the temporal world.

Rashaz's concept of setting times for Torah study allows for a better understanding of the ideology that lay behind his unique style of hasidic leadership. It highlights one of the tools that helped him build and sustain a decentralized network of Ḥabad communities, whose members could remain his Hasidim in the full sense of the word even without frequent visits to his court, engagement in lengthy ecstatic prayer, or full-time dedication to study. It freed his Hasidim from the need to resort to activities that put their livelihood at risk. The mystical reinterpretation of the halakhic precept of setting time for Torah study helped Rashaz to reinvent Hasidism as a movement open to broad circles of independent businessmen and householders. This ideology may well have played a part in shaping Ḥabad's inclusivist vision of mysticism in the twentieth century, but the question of doctrinal continuity and change in the history and ideology of Ḥabad still awaits thorough research.

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