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Rabbi Zalman Schacter-Shalomi
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7318 Germantown Ave.
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Dear Reb Zalman,

Thank you for sending me the enclosed manuscript GATE TO THE HEART. I began going through it during my Pesach retreat, practiced with it for the past six months, and now, during my Days of Awe retreat, want to write you some comments.

For me, personally, the manuscript was a gem. It was helpful on a practical, content basis (particularly the Thursday night reflection section); and it was helpful on a process basis to have you share and address so honestly some of the issues with which you wrestle: e.g., is this Jewish; balancing tradition and creativity; parts of the service that don't speak directly to you any more; making whatever day is most available for Shabbat consciousness; your candor regarding issues of sexuality, with a partner, and without. You truly are trying to pioneer both staying with the form as much as you can, and creating new forms where it is necessary.

In terms of editorial comments, I have made several throughout the manuscript. However, I believe I can be most helpful by being a sounding board who tries to reflect back to you what I believe are your primary goals. You state that the goal of this book is to give the reader "practical information on entering an intentional Jewish Spiritual Discipline." There are really three ways you do this:

- 1) an overview map of the purpose of the techniques
- 2) practical techniques
- 3) questions that might be raised during the practice

Although these areas obviously overlap, I believe it would be more helpful to the reader if they were re-grouped. Therefore, I suggest the following re-outline of the Table of Contents:

REVISED TABLE OF CONTENTS

- i. Introduction: To Whom this may concern
 - i.1 Who I imagine you are

1. OVERVIEW MAP: WHERE ARE WE GOING
 - 1.1 The five Gates (old 1)
 - 1.2 The five levels of the soul (old 2)
 - 1.3 The four worlds (insert from pp. 16-17)
 - 1.4 Sefirot ? (only briefly mentioned on pp. 17-18)

11. WAYS TO GET THERE
 - 2.1 Why Pray? The Nature of Attunement (old 5)
 - 2.2 The Way We have always prayed (old 6)
 - 2.3 On Meditation (old 3)
 - 2.4 Situational Thinking (old 4): suggest retitle:
From conceptual to experiential understanding
 - 2.5 Kavannah (old 7)
 - 2.6 Reminding the Heart: The Inner Process of Daily Prayer
(old 8)
 - 2.7 On the examination (old 9)
 - 2.8 The Sabbath (old 10)

111. Questions that are Asked
 - 3.1 Is it Jewish
 - 3.2 How to balance tradition and creativity
 - 3.3 Do I need to do all parts of the service
 - 4.4 etc.

I believe the above would help keep the reader more focused on your goals. As the manuscript stands, you have the practical (meditation) in chapter three; before you have talked about why pray (chapter 5); you present material on the limits of existentialism\Yetzirah and logical positivism (beriyah) p. 14 before you have described those levels (pp. 16). I believe that material should be presented earlier as roadmaps, then you can present meditation and the other liturgical guides as the means to go beyond them in the next section. Finally, you sometimes answer questions that are too detailed (e.g., vegetarianism and Tefillin) or somewhat intellectual (is this really Jewish) in the midst of the writing. I believe those are critical questions, but let yourself present the techniques clearly (without responding to the "yes, but" questions from your hypothetical reader. Let the person practice the techniques. Then, if there are intellectual and philosophical questions, let them turn to part three. The questions, as we all know, can be an excuse not to practice. As you say in the book, try it, test it.

The other main problem I had with the manuscript as it now stands is that your erudition and broad ranging knowledge sometimes caused the reader (me) to get lost from the main purpose you are addressing. You cite case studies from Freud (Dora); cite Zen masters; all while trying to answer questions, give a

sophisticated "cook book" and provide a road map.

I believe you need to cut extraneous material, or show better how it integrates (I prefer cutting). Keep focused on the main points. In several sections I have tried to suggest ways to do that: p.5 with Nefesh, too abstract; (p. 27 is rep of p. 24; p. 30 top 8 lines are rep.); p. 36 Thich Nhat Hanh (state his quote or let it go); Dora p. 37 delete); p. 42 top is confusing (perhaps a visual table would help); p. 43 circled material, make it a footnote, doesn't flow. Stop that section at p. 44. It is a wonderful and helpful section. End it. What follows is good, but disjointed, jumping back and forth between practical technique; weekday night prayer; and philosophical\contextual issues (p. 45). Again, at p. 47, a section is complete (top of column two. Stop. Review, summarize for reader. Sex is a separate topic (perhaps put in part three).

I saved this particular letter until Tishrei 9. It is the penultimate act of my retreat before the mikvah and final Yom Kippur preparations. As always, dialoguing with you and your quest was a joy for me.

I hope some of the above is helpful. I am particularly aware, during this time that there is only so far that our human efforts can take us. The rest is in HaShem's hands...

Wishing you a peaceful, gentle, and sweet New Year. May this be a time of deep return and clarity for all of us.

With warm regards,

Deane H. Shapiro, Jr., Ph.D.
Associate Professor in Residence

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excellent clear found

Plant cover so
read map
read phrases
confusing

P XXX

Time
Overview
few
not so clear

1. To Whom This May Concern

1. The Five Gates

love
power
beauty
community
divine

2. The Levels of the Soul

no self action
Ruch
Neshama
Yechida
long. young
eye
discern one.

3. On Meditation

4. Situational Thinking

5. Why Pray? The Nature of Attunement

6. The Way We Have Always Prayed: Tradition and Sacred Objects

7. Kavannah, Devekut and Shiviti: God's Presence and Your Intention

8. Reminding the Heart: The Inner Process of Daily Prayer

9. On the Examination of One's Conscience and Going to Sleep

10 The Sabbath: Hospitality to God

11. Shalom

12 Glossary

13. Bibliography

14. Appendices

15. Afterword, a biography of this manual

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cont 4/As-yah - De.
3 Yetzera
2 Beriyah
Vital Atzilut (Hesed)

Neshama
atzilut
?

Tallet - 21

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Intro excellent, etc.

ZALMAN,
GATES of
HEART.

Honest
? Neshama - Zofar ->
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