

# **\*\* Shaar Avodas HaElokim - Gate of Service of G-d \*\***

***from Chovos Halevavos - Duties of the Heart  
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THIRD TREATISE

On the service of G-d, expounding various grounds for the obligation to assume the service of G-d, blessed be He.

INTRODUCTION

Having, in the previous treatises, expounded the obligation of wholeheartedly acknowledging the unity of G-d and the obligation of examining the various modes of His benefits to

mankind, we have next to indicate what a human being's conduct should be, once the foregoing has become clear to him - and that is to assume the obligation of the service of G-d, as reason would require from a beneficiary to his benefactor.

It is proper to open this treatise with an exposition of the various kinds of benefits human beings render each other, and the corresponding obligations of gratitude. We shall then ascend to the consideration of what we owe to the exalted Creator in praise and thanksgiving for His abounding kindness and great goodness to us.

We assert, as a truth generally recognized, that if anyone benefits us, we are under an obligation of gratitude to him in accordance with his intent to help us. Even if he actually falls short, owing to some mishap which prevents his benefiting us, we are still bound to be grateful to him, since we are convinced that he has a benevolent disposition towards us and his intention is to be of use to us. On the other hand, should we obtain any benefit through one who had no such intention, the duties of gratitude to that person would cease and we are under no such obligation.

When we consider the benefits human beings render each other, we find that these fall into five classes:

- (1) a father's beneficence to his child;
- (2) a master's to his servant;
- (3) a wealthy man's beneficence to the poor for the sake of heavenly reward;
- (4) the beneficence rendered by human beings to each other in order to gain a good name, honour and temporal reward;
- (5) the powerful man's beneficence to the weak, induced by pity for the latter and sympathy with his condition.

Let us now consider the motive in each of the classes mentioned:

Is it disinterested, the sole aim being to help the beneficiary, or is it not so? First, a father's beneficence to his child: It is obvious that the father's motive in this is to further his own interest. For the child is a part of the father, whose chief hope is centered in his offspring. Do you not observe that in regard to its food, drink, clothing and in warding off all hurt from it, a father is more sensitive about his child than about himself? To secure ease for it, the burden of toil and weariness is lightly borne by him, the feelings of tenderness and pity for their offspring being naturally implanted in parents. Nevertheless, the Torah and reason impose upon children the duty of serving, honouring and revering their parents, as Scripture says: "Ye shall, everyone, revere his father and his mother" (Lev. 19:3); "Hear, O my son, the instruction of your father and forsake not the law of your mother" (Prov. 1:8); further, "A son honors his father, and a servant his master" (Malachi 1:6). (And these duties are enjoined) notwithstanding that the father is impelled by a natural instinct and the benefaction comes from G-d, while the parent is only the agent.

The kindness of a master to his servant: It is obvious that the master's intent is to improve his property by an outlay of capital, since he needs his servant's work, and his sole motive is to further his own interest. Nevertheless, the Creator, blessed be He, imposes upon the servant the duties of service and gratitude, as it is said, "A son honors his father and a servant his master" (Malachi 1:6).

The rich man's beneficence to the poor man for the sake of a heavenly reward: He is like a merchant who acquires a great and enduring pleasure which he will enjoy at the end of a definite time by means of a small, perishable and inconsiderable gift which he makes immediately. So the rich man only intends to win glory for his soul at the close of his earthly existence by the benefaction which G-d entrusted to him, in order to bestow it upon anyone

who will be worthy of it. Yet it is generally recognised that it is proper to thank and laud a benefactor. Even though the latter's motive was to gain spiritual glory hereafter, gratitude is, nevertheless, due to him, as Job said: "The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me" (Job 29:13) ; and further, "If his loins have not Messed me, when he warmed himself with the fleece of my sheep" (Job 31:20).

Kindness men show each other for the sake of praise, honour and temporal rewards: This is as if one were to deposit an article in another's care or entrust him with money, because of the depositor's apprehension that he may need it later on. Although, in benefiting another person, the aim is to further his own interests, the benefactor is nevertheless entitled to praise and gratitude for his kindness, as the wise king said, "Many court the generous man, and everyone is a friend to him that gives gifts" (Prov. 19:6); and he also said, "A man's gift makes room for him and brings him before great men" (Prov. 18:16).

The kindness of one who has compassion on a poor man for whom he is sorry: The benefactor's motive is to get rid of his own distress that results from depression and grief for the one he pities. He is like one who cures a pain which has attacked him by means of the bounties that the L-ord bestowed upon him. Nevertheless, he is not to be without due praise, as Job said, "Could I see any perish for want of clothing or any poor without covering ? Did not his loins bless me, when he warmed himself with the fleece of my sheep?" (Job 31:19-20).

From what has here been advanced, it is clear that anyone who bestows benefits on others has first his own interest in mind - either to secure an honourable distinction in this world, or hereafter, or relieve himself of pain, or improve his material substance. Yet all these considerations do not absolve the beneficiaries of their duty of praising, thanking, respecting and loving their benefactors and making them some return. And this, despite that the benefit was only loaned to the benefactors; that they were obliged to dispense it, as we have pointed out; and that their beneficence is not permanent, their generosity not prolonged, and their benevolence is mixed with the intent either to further their own interest or ward off injury. How much more then does a human being owe service, praise and gratitude to Him who created the benefit and the benefactor, whose beneficence is unlimited, permanent, perpetual, without any motive of self-interest, or purpose of warding off injury, but only an expression of grace and loving-kindness emanating from Him towards all human beings.

We should furthermore bear in mind that a human being who renders a kindness to another in any of the modes above specified is not superior to the person whom he benefits, except in some casual detail, while in their humanity and essential characteristics they are alike and akin to one another, in substance and form, in physical conformation and figure (or mentality - Gen. 1:27) in their natures and in a larger part of what happens to them. Nevertheless the beneficiary, as we have set forth, is under an obligation of service to his benefactor. And if we thought that the beneficiary was extremely defective and imperfect in his physical conformation, figure and appearance [we would conclude that], the obligation of service on his part would be so much the greater. So also, if we should deem the benefactor the best and most perfect of all beings, while the beneficiary was the most defective of all things and the weakest of all creatures, reason would require that the service to the benefactor should be increased to an infinite degree.

Following this analogy, when we investigate the relation of the Creator, blessed be He, to human beings, we will find that the Creator, blessed be He, is infinitely exalted and glorified above everything existing, above all that can be apprehended by the senses or conceived by the intellect as has been expounded in the first treatise of this book; and that a human being, in comparison with other species of animals, is the most defective and weakest of them all.

This can be demonstrated in three respects:

(1) In respect to his infancy and early childhood: For we find that other species of living creatures are stronger than he is, better able to endure pain and move independently, and do not trouble their progenitors in their period of growth to the same extent as a human being does.

(2) In respect to the filth and foulness within the human body and the similar appearance of exudations on its external surface when one has neglected to wash and cleanse himself for a length of time, as also in respect to the state of the body after death-the effluvium of a human corpse being more noisome than that of the carcasses of other creatures, and a human being's waste more offensive than that of other creatures.

(3) In respect to a human being's helplessness resulting from an injury to his brain, when he loses the rational faculty which G-d bestowed upon him and which constitutes his superiority to the other creatures that are irrational. For at such times he is stupider and more senseless than other animals. He may inflict serious injuries on himself and even kill himself. Most animals, too, we find, possess an apprehension of what will be to their advantage, and show an ingenuity in obtaining their food, while many intellectual men fall short in this regard, not to speak of one who has lost his senses.

When we concentrate our thoughts on the greatness of the Creator, exalted be He, on His infinite might, wisdom and plenitude of resources; and then turn our attention to a man's weakness and deficiency, in that he never attains perfection; when we consider his poverty and lack of what he needs to supply his wants and then investigate the numerous bounties and favours which the Creator has bestowed on him; when we reflect that the Creator has created man as he is with deficiencies in his very being - poor and needing for his development all requisites which he can only obtain by exerting himself - this too proceeding from the Creator's mercy to him, so that he may know himself, study his conditions and cleave, under all circumstances, to the service of G-d, and so receive for it a recompense in the world to come, for the attainment of which he was created, as we have already set forth in the second treatise of this book - how much indeed then does a human being owe to the blessed Creator, in service, thanksgiving and continuous praise, in view of the demonstration already given of the obligation of praise and gratitude that human beings owe to each other for favours rendered them.

Should anyone be so foolish as to contest this obligation of a human being towards the Creator - when he examines and closely studies the subject, and candidly acknowledges the truth to himself, the sleeper will surely awake, the negligent will be aroused, the ignorant will investigate, the intelligent will comprehend the demonstration of the obligatory character of the service of G-d, the proofs for which are so clear the evidence of which is so manifest, and the indications are so true; as the prophet (peace be unto him) said concerning one who neglects to reflect upon the obligation of the service of G-d, "Do ye thus requite the L-ord, O foolish people and unwise?" (Deut. 32:6).

Thus the obligation to assume the service of G-d, incumbent on human beings in view of the bounties He continually bestows on them, has been demonstrated.

In dealing with the subject-matter of this treatise, we have now to expound ten topics:

- (1) the necessity of arousing men to G-d's service, and the methods to be employed to this end;
- (2) the need for each of these methods;

- (3) definition of the service (of G-d); its divisions and degrees;
- (4) the form which the Torah takes to arouse us; its divisions; and the excellencies which men attain through knowledge of the Torah and comprehension of its contents;
- (5) the way in which the exercise of our reasoning faculties prompts us in this regard, set forth in the form of questions and answers;
- (6) the various classes of obligations to the service of G-d, corresponding to the various kinds of benefits received, and their divisions;
- (7) exposition of the minimum of service which the recipient of any benefit owes to the benefactor;
- (8) the difference in the views of the learned in regard to (the problem of) necessity and (divine) justice, and which of these views is nearer the truth;
- (9) the mystery of the purpose for which the human species was created on earth, compendiously set forth;
- (10) an account of the use we should make of all our capacities, each in its right place.

## CHAPTER I.

Arousing man to G-d's service and the various methods of doing so are necessary on the following grounds. The understanding and the faculty of perception impress on human beings the duty of serving G-d. But between the time when the benefits that man receives and the time when he has sufficient intelligence to realize the services he should render in return for them, a long period intervenes. Hence, calling attention to the external acts and inward faith which make the service of G-d complete, is a duty, so that a human being should not be without religion up to the time when his mental powers have become fully developed.

This stimulation is twofold. One of them is inherent in the mind, implanted in the human faculty of cognition, innate from the beginning of his existence. The other is acquired by instruction in the divine law which the prophet imparts to human beings, so as to teach them the mode of service which it is their duty to render to the Creator, blessed be He.

## CHAPTER II.

Both methods of calling attention to the service of G-d are necessary because the innate urge is deficient in three respects; and we are therefore obliged to strengthen it by religious instruction. First, man is made up of diverse entities, natures conflicting and mutually antagonistic. These entities are his soul and his body. The Creator has implanted in his soul qualities and forces which make him yearn for things, the use of which will promote his physical well-being, so that he will develop vigour to populate the earth, in order that the race may continue while individuals perish.

This quality is the desire for bodily pleasures common to all living creatures that propagate their species. The Creator has also engrafted in the human soul other qualities and forces, which, if he uses them, will make him loathe his position in this world and yearn to separate himself from it. This is the desire for perfect wisdom. Since, however, bodily pleasures come to a man's soul first, already in early youth, and the attachment to them is, from the outset, strong, great and extremely urgent, the desire for sensual pleasure overcomes his other faculties, and even predominates over the intellect, for the sake of which man was created. And so his spiritual sight fails and the indications of his desirable qualities disappear.

Man therefore needs external means, by the aid of which he may resist his despicable instinct - the lust for animal enjoyments - and revitalize the marks of his noblest endowment - the intellect. These aids are the contents of the Torah, whereby G-d, through His messengers and prophets, taught His creatures the way to serve Him.

Secondly, the intellect is a spiritual entity, originating in the higher, spiritual world. It is a stranger in this world of gross material bodies. Sensual lust in man is the product of natural forces and of a combination of his physical elements. Its foundation and root are in this world. Food gives it strength. Physical pleasures add to its vigour, while the intellect, because it is a stranger here, stands without support or ally, and all are against it. Hence it follows that it must become weak and that it needs an external means to repel the mighty power of lust and overcome it. The Torah is the remedy for such spiritual maladies and moral diseases. The Torah therefore prohibits many kinds of food, apparel, sexual relations, certain acquisitions and practices, all of which strengthen sensual lust; it also exhorts us to use those means which will resist lust and are its opposites. These are prayer, fasting, alms-giving, kindness; by which the intellectual faculties are revived and man is aided in this world and for the world to come, as David said: "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Ps. 119:105) ; "For the commandment is a lamp and the law is light" (Prov. 6:23) ; "I saw that wisdom is preferable to folly as light is preferable to darkness" (Eccles. 2:13).

Third, the sensual desire, constantly enforced by bodily nourishment, never ceases working by day or night. The intellect, on the other hand, is only called into activity to help one gratify his passions. Now it is well known that organs which are constantly exercised in accordance with their nature, improve and become more efficient, while those that are less frequently used deteriorate and become inefficient. It logically follows therefore that the sensual desire would become stronger because it is continually exercised, while the intellectual faculty would weaken, because it is so seldom used, and so little for its proper purpose. Hence the need of something, the acquisition of whose truth demands neither the use of man's physical organs nor the indulgence of his passions but only the exercise of his intellect, freed from the predominance of lusts. This aid is the Torah, the study of which will make the intellect stronger, purer, more luminous, and will drive away from man the folly that masters his soul and keeps him from seeing things as they really are and placing them in their proper relations. As the Psalmist says, "The law of the L-ord is perfect, restoring the soul; the testimony of the L-ord is faithful, making wise the simple; the ordinances of the L-ord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the L-ord is pure, enlightening the eyes" (Ps. 19:8-9).

From what has been said, it is clearly established how necessary it is that a human being should be aroused to the service of G-d by the Torah, which includes rational precepts as well as those accepted on authority, so that through these we may rise to the service of G-d which, our reason demonstrates, is man's duty and the main purpose for which the human species has been called into existence in this world.

### CHAPTER III.

Definition of the Service of G-d; exposition of its parts; the merits of each of these parts.

Service may be defined as a beneficiary's submission to his benefactor, expressed in rendering some benefit within his power to the latter in return for the favor received. This submission is of two kinds. The first is submission induced by fear, hope, necessity or compulsion. The second is submission arising from a sense of duty, from the conviction that it is right to aggrandize and exalt the person to whom submission is rendered.

Of the first kind is that submission to G-d which has been induced by an external stimulus, as we have mentioned, and the obligation of which arises from expectation of reward or fear of punishment in this world and the next. But the second kind is the submission which arises from an inward urge in the mind, innate in the nature of a human being in whom body and

soul are joined together. Both kinds of submission are praiseworthy and lead to salvation in the life hereafter, the world of eternal rest. But one of these leads to the other and is a step by which we ascend to it. The former is the submission induced by the study of the Torah. The submission which is induced by the urge of the understanding and based on rational demonstrations is nearer to G-d and more acceptable on seven grounds:

First, The service (of G-d) induced by study of the Torah may be entirely devotional and directed to the Supreme. It may, however, be hypocritical; the aim may possibly be to obtain praise for it and honour among one's fellow-men, since the service is rooted in, and founded on, hope (of reward) and fear (of punishment). But the service of G-d induced by the intellectual urge is wholly and solely devoted to G-d. No hypocrisy is mingled with it, nor any false pretense for the sake of self-glorification, since this service is not founded on hope or fear, but is based on wisdom and knowledge of what service a creature owes to the Creator.

Secondly, service of G-d induced by the Torah is only rendered as the result of hope of reward or fear of punishment; but the service urged by the understanding comes from willingness of the soul and its desire to strive with all its might to serve its G-d for His own sake, as a result of knowledge and comprehension. For the soul will freely give all it has, provided it is convinced that what it gives is exceeded in value by what it receives in exchange, and this [boon] is that G-d is pleased with it.

Third, the service due to the urge of the Torah is manifested in external good deeds rather than in inward thoughts and feelings, hidden in the heart. But in the service prompted by the understanding, that which is hidden in the heart is many times as much as what is seen in the external activity of the bodily limbs. This service includes the duties of the heart.

Fourth, the service prompted by Torah is to be regarded as an introduction to the service prompted by the understanding. The former is like seed planted in the ground. The study of the Torah is as tillage is to the soil - ploughing and clearing it. The aid that comes from G-d is like the rain that waters the field. And the fruit that is produced and brought forth is what remains in the heart - the service of G-d for His sake only, and not prompted by hope (of reward) or fear (of punishment). So our wise men have exhorted us, "Be not like servants who minister to their master upon the condition of receiving a reward . . . and let the fear of Heaven be upon you." (Ethics of the Fathers 1:3).

Fifth, the commandments of the Torah are limited. They are a known number, 613 precepts. But the duties imposed by the understanding are almost infinite, for a person daily increases his knowledge of them; and the more his faculty of perception develops and the more he comprehends G-d's beneficences, mighty power and sovereignty, the more will a man humble himself before Him. Hence you find that David (peace be upon him), besought G-d to arouse him to the knowledge of these duties and remove the curtain of folly from his eyes; as it is said, "Open my eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of Your law." (Ps. 119:18); "Teach me, O L-ord, the way of Your statutes . . ." (ibid. 119:33); "Incline my heart unto Your testimonies, and not to covetousness" (ibid. 119:36). Furthermore it is said "To all perfection have I seen an end; but Your commandment is exceedingly broad" (ibid. 119:96); that is to say, our obligation of service to You for Your continual benefits to us is without limit because there is no limit to the varieties of Your bounties to us.

It is also related of some ascetics that they spent the whole of their lives in penitence. Each day they were moved to renewed repentance, because every day their recognition of G-d's greatness increased, and they realized how much they had fallen short in the fulfillment of their obligation of service in the past, as David said, "Day communicates knowledge unto day" (Ps. 19:2). Furthermore, it is said, "Streams of water run down mine eyes, because they

keep not Your laws." (Ps. 119:136).

Sixth, the service enjoined by the Torah is within the range of a human being's capacity. Provided he is intent upon it and sets about it, it is not withheld from any one who seeks to fulfill it. But the service prompted by the understanding can only be performed by one who makes a great effort and with the help of G-d, since human power is insufficient to attain it. Hence you find that David repeatedly supplicates G-d in Psalm 119 to give him this aid.

Seventh, when service is only derived from the Torah, a person can never be sure that he will not stumble. For in that kind of service, the force of evil passion is always lurking in ambush, waiting for the time when he will neglect it. But when the service is prompted by the understanding, a man can be sure that he will not stumble and sin, for the soul is attracted to service of G-d only after physical lust has been overcome and the intellect has obtained the victory over it, and controls it according to the soul's will and desire. Hence, this type of service affords a guarantee against stumbling, and one who has attained it, is guarded from sin, as Scripture says, "There shall no evil happen to the righteous" (Prov. 12:21).

It is necessary, however, that I should expound some of the advantages of instruction in the Torah, as these occur to me. The grounds that necessitate the urge of the Torah to service of G-d are also seven. First, man is composed of soul and body. Among his tendencies there are some that tempt him to surrender himself to physical pleasures, indulge in low desires, and break the restraining bonds of reason. There are also other tendencies that will make him abhor the world and renounce society, because of reverses that he has sustained and continued troubles and sorrows that have befallen him, and so he would turn to the higher spiritual life.

Neither of these plans is commendable. The latter (if generally followed) would bring about destruction of the social order. The former would lead to his ruin in this world and in the next. The exalted Creator, in His compassion and infinite goodness to man, favoured him with a means by which he may improve his condition and direct aright his ways, leading to happiness here and hereafter. This means, which points out the middle road between reason and physical desire, is the Torah which is faithful, preserves righteousness outwardly and inwardly, keeps man away from his lusts in this world and reserves for him his recompense at his latter end, as Scripture says, "Incline your ear and hear the words of the wise ... or it is a pleasant thing if you keep them within you . . . That your trust may be in the L-ord, I have made known to you this day . . . Have not I written to you excellent things in counsels and knowledge, That I might make you know the certainty of the words of truth; that you might answer the words of truth to them that send unto you" (Prov. 22:17-21).

Second, the intellectual urge to the service of G-d does not lead to the recognition of active obligations such as prayer, fasting, alms-giving, tithing, deeds of benevolence. Nor does one thereby attain knowledge of the terms of punishments incurred by one who is negligent in service. In all this, there is need of a stand and definiteness in the way set forth by the Torah and the prophet's instruction, so that by their combination (i.e. The urge of Torah and of the intellect, or of the Torah and instruction of the prophets) the Divine purpose may be achieved in orderly fashion - that purpose being the service of G-d (exalted be He), as it is said, "And G-d made it, so that man should fear before Him" (Eccles. 3:14) ; that is to say, G-d gave us a law to teach us His service.

Third, the intellectual urge cannot comprehend equally all who are under the obligation of service, because some human beings are of limited intelligence, while some are superior in apprehension. But the urge of the Torah applies equally to all who have reached the status subjecting them to this service, even though they vary in their understanding of it, as we have



noted at the close of the first treatise of this book. It sometimes also happens that a person falls short in some duties and exceeds in others. The intellectual stimulus varies in different individuals in accordance with their capacity of apprehension. But the urge of the Torah is not subject to variation. Its obligation is the same for the child, the youth, one advanced in years and the old man, the wise and the foolish, even though the resulting practice varies in different classes of individuals. And so Scripture says in regard to the comprehensive character of the instruction of the Torah for all the people, "Gather the people together, men and women, and children, and the stranger that is within thy gate, (that they may hear and that they may learn and fear the L-ord your G-d . . .)" (Deut. 31:12). Further, it is said, ". . . thou shalt read this law before all Israel in their hearing." (Deut. 31:11).

Fourth, it is recognised that the obligations of human beings to render service are proportionate to the degrees of benefits conferred upon them. In every period there have been events which occasioned one people to be singled out from all other peoples for special benefits that G-d bestowed on it. It follows that individuals belonging to that people are on that account under special obligation to render additional service to the Creator beyond that required of other peoples. There is no way of determining by the intellect alone what this service should be. Thus G-d chose us from among other nations by bringing us out of the land of Egypt, dividing the Red Sea and conferring other benefits subsequently, too well known to be mentioned. Furthermore, the exalted Creator specially distinguished us from all other nations by giving us a religion for which we are under an obligation of gratitude to Him; and, in return for our acceptance of this religion, He has assured us a recompense in this world and in the next, - an abundance of grace and goodness, emanating from Him, that is indescribable. All this can only be clearly made known to us by the Torah, as Scripture says, "Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians and how I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto Myself. Now, therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, (then ye shall be a treasure unto Me above all people) and ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Ex. 19:4-6). . .

Fifth, the stimulus of the Torah is a preparation for, and introduction to that of the intellect, the reason being that a man in his youth needs training and guidance, and restraint from yielding to his passions, till the time comes when his understanding has become strong and firm. So, too some women and frivolous men do not follow the intellectual lead, because its control over them is weak and loose. This condition made it necessary to provide guidance of a medium character which they can endure and which will not be impossible for them to stand. Hence, the instructions of the Torah turn about hope and fear - the poles of its axis. Whoever does not fall short in fulfilling the obligations of this service belongs to the class of the truly pious and is worthy of reward in this world and in the next. But one who rises from this stage to the service of G-d, induced by reason, reaches the degree of the prophets and the elect of the Supreme - the saints. His recompense here on earth is joy in the sweetness of the service of the L-ord, as the prophet said, "Your words were found, and I did eat them; and Your word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart; for I am called by Your name, O L-ord G-d of hosts" (Jeremiah 15-16); furthermore, "The righteous shall be glad in the L-ord and trust in Him; and all the upright in heart shall glory" (Ps. 64:11) ; furthermore, "light is sown for the righteous, and joy for the upright in heart" (Ps. 97:11). His reward in the world to come will consist in his attaining the highest illumination which we are unable to describe or picture, as it is said, "If you will walk in My ways and if you will keep My charge... I will give you a place to walk among these that stand by" (Zachariah 3:7); further, "How great is Your goodness which You have laid up for them that fear You, which You have done for them that trust in You before the children of men" (Ps. 31:20). Furthermore, "Eye has not seen, O G-d, beside You, what He will do for one that waits for Him" (Isaiah 64:3). .

Sixth, the Torah includes prescriptions, the obligation of which reason cannot explain,

namely, those precepts which we obey on the ground of traditional authority as also certain principles that lie at the root of rational precepts. This is because the people to whom the Torah was given were at that period in such a condition that animal lusts dominated them and were too weak in their knowledge and perceptive faculties to apprehend many of the rational precepts. The Torah, therefore, used one method only for the rational precepts and for those resting on authority. The people were exhorted in the same way in regard to both classes of duties. An individual whose understanding and perception are strong, will exert himself and undertake the obligation of fulfilling them on both grounds that they are rational and authoritative. And one whose intellect is too weak to perceive their rational ground will accept them because the Torah exhorts him, and will treat them as authoritative precepts. Thus all classes will be benefited, as it is said, "Its ways are ways of pleasantness, and all its paths are peace" (Prov. 3:17).

Seventh, we come to the Torah through a human intermediary (Moses) by whom were shown signs and demonstrations equally perceived by all the people with their senses, the evidence of which they could not deny. Hence, the message which he brought with him in the name of G-d was demonstrated to them through the senses as well as the intellect. The demonstration through the senses was an addition to the intellectual stimulus which human beings naturally possess. Whoever considers G-d's bounties, bestowed upon him, in common with all other human beings, will faithfully accept the obligation of the service of G-d in the ways indicated by his intellect. Whoever reflects on the Creator's special bounties to him by which his people has been distinguished from other peoples, will faithfully accept the special obligation to obey the precepts that are binding on his people, on the authority of the Torah and are not binding on other peoples.

And when one considers G-d's bounties to him, by which his tribe has been distinguished from the remaining tribes of his people, such as, priesthood or the levitical degree, he will faithfully accept the obligation to fulfill precepts by which G-d has distinguished his class. Hence you find twenty four priestly ordinances corresponding to twenty-four special benefits which the Creator bestowed upon the priests. These are the twenty-four priestly dues.

Analogously, anyone whom G-d has distinguished by special favours beyond those enjoyed by other human beings, should undertake a special service not incumbent on them, striving at the same time, according to his capacity and conception, to fulfill the duties in the obligation of which he is included with them and thanking G-d, blessed be He, for the bounty with which G-d specially favoured him. Thus will he insure its continuance and increase, and will also receive his reward in the world to come. A person should not behave like the one of whom it is said, "And silver I gave her in abundance and gold which they prepared for Baal" (Hosea 2:10).

One who falls short in the special service which he has to render for the bounty with which he has been specially favoured, will be induced to fall short in the service specially incumbent upon his tribe and afterwards in that incumbent upon his people, and at last he will renounce the Torah altogether. Not accepting the Torah, he will not even accept the obligation of the precepts that reason dictates. If he does not accept the obligation enjoined by the faculty of reason with which he is endowed, and its monition, he loses the character of a rational creature; and the cattle understand how to improve their condition better than he does, as it is said, "The ox knows his owner, and the donkey his master's trough; but Israel does not know; My people doth not consider" (Isaiah 1:3). Such a person's fate will be like that of one, concerning whom it is said, "But the wicked shall perish; and the enemies of the L-ord shall be as the fat of lambs, they shall be consumed; into smoke shall they be utterly consumed" (Psalm 37:20).

## CHAPTER IV.

It is now proper for us to explain the form in which the Torah urges one to the service of G-d, and its divisions; the various degrees attained by those who occupy themselves with the wisdom of the Torah, their characters, their faith in the Torah and their acceptance of it. I assert that the urge of the Torah is a revelation from G-d, through the medium of a certain individual, a revelation which prescribes to human beings the service to be rendered by them to Him that would be pleasing in His sight, so that, out of His loving-kindness and goodness. He may bestow upon them, for their acceptance of it, a reward in this world and in the world to come.

The Torah divides human actions into three classes: (1) those that are commanded, (2) prohibited and (3) permitted.

Those commanded fall into two divisions.

One of these consists of duties of the heart. These, grounded in genuine faith, are acceptance of the Unity of G-d; being whole-heartedly sincere with Him, trusting in Him, being devoted to Him, submitting to His decree, believing in His prophets and in His law, revering Him, keeping His commandments, meditating on His wondrous deeds, investigating His bounties and many more duties of the same character too numerous to set forth in detail.

There are also duties that claim devotion of the heart together with physical activities, such as consistency in speech and thought, reading and studying the book of the Law; praying, fasting, alms-giving; rest from labour on Sabbaths and Festivals, erection of a tabernacle (for the Feast of Tabernacles), taking the palm-branch (and the three other plants on that feast); wearing fringes, and similar precepts.

Prohibitions also fall into two divisions.

One division consists of duties of the heart. The other comprises active duties. Prohibitions in the category of duties of the heart are, for example, associating in the worship of G-d any other being with Him, either secretly or hypocritically (Secretly: believing in G-d and also in another being; hypocritically: worshipping G-d, while believing not in Him but in another being), loving to do that which G-d has forbidden; pride, haughtiness, contempt for human beings, mocking the prophets and the messages they utter and that come from G-d; abhorring good and those who do good; finding pleasure in evil doers; jealousy, covetousness, desiring to hurt human beings; resentment at the Creator's decrees, and many sentiments and emotions of a similar character.

The following are examples of prohibitions of actions: open association of anyone with G-d in the worship of Him, false swearing, lying, talebearing, eating forbidden food, indulgence in forbidden sexual intercourse, bloodshed, and many offences of similar character.

Things permissible also fall into three divisions, namely, the sufficient, the excessive and the deficient. The sufficient is that which is indispensable for preservation of the body or management of one's affairs, in food and drink, clothing and covering; necessary speech in conducting one's business, activities and commercial transactions; all kinds of physical movements and their proper employment to the extent needed for the proper maintenance of one's social position, as Scripture says, "Good is a man who is gracious and lends; he guides his affairs with discretion" (Ps. 112:5).

The second division applies to cases where one exceeds the limit of the sufficient and adds that of which one has no need, such as excess in food and drink, against which the sage warned us when he said, "Be not among wine bibbers; among greedy eaters of flesh" (Prov.

23:20). So, too, extravagance in personal adornment, dress, luxurious homes, and superfluity in speech, in regard to which there is no assurance that one will not stumble because of them, as the wise man said, "In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin" (Prov. 10:19). Furthermore, excess in sexual indulgence, concerning which the sage said, ". . . He that keepeth company with harlots destroyeth his substance" (Prov. 29:3, cf. 31:3). It is also said concerning kings, "Neither shall he multiply wives unto himself" (Deut. 17:17): striving for large possessions and accumulation of money, of which it is said, "Labour not to be rich, cease from thine own wisdom" (Prov. 23:4). Concerning the king, it is said, "Neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold" (Deut. 17:17). So, too, whatever we mentioned above as conducive to physical improvement and enjoyment may be reprehensible if it misleads one to that which the Creator warned us against, and forbade.

The third division in the use of things permitted is the deficient. This is the case when a person denies himself what is necessary in food and drink, clothing, speech, or in the occupation by which he will obtain what he needs for his maintenance in food and other requisites. Deficiency falls into two subdivisions. It may be motivated by extreme piety or by worldly considerations. If the motive is a pious one, proceeding from a longing for nearer and closer communion with G-d by asceticism, it is laudable and will be recompensed, as the sage said, "The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning; but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth" (Eccles. 7:4). If the motive is worldly, namely, to leave money, or be praised as one who abstains from what is permitted but superfluous and takes from the world less than he needs in food, it is reprehensible, for a person who acts thus departs from the path of what experience has shown to be normal, and robs his body of its needs. All this comes from excessive love of this world, in reference to which a sage said, "He who separates himself from the world, out of love for the world, is like one who would extinguish a flame with straw."

But to be sparing in speech and in sleep is praiseworthy; in speech, because in the end silence is better, as the wise man said, "Be not rash with your mouth, and let not your heart be hasty to utter anything before G-d; for G-d is in heaven and you are on earth; therefore let your words be few" (Eccles. 5:1). Similarly, in regard to sleep, it is said, "Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep. (So shall thy poverty come as a traveller, and thy want as an armed man.)" (Prov. 6:10).

In what has been mentioned, it has thus been demonstrated that all human activities belong either to those commanded, forbidden or permitted, the last to the extent that is sufficient. For, whatever passes outside that which can be defined as sufficient, and is either superfluous or deficient, belongs to the category of what is commanded, if done for the sake of G-d; or it belongs to the category of the forbidden, if it is not done for His sake. Enquiring more closely into what is sufficient, for example, in obtaining a livelihood, we find this too in a commandment, set forth in the account of Creation, "And G-d blessed them, and G-d said unto them: 'Be fruitful and multiply, replenish the earth and subdue it.'" (Genesis 1:28). And it continues, "Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth" (ibid. 1:29). Hence, to seek a sufficiency in food belongs to the class of the commanded.

This being the case, it has been demonstrated that all human activities are included in what is commanded or prohibited. If what is done is a good deed, it is something commanded. If one is able to do it and neglects his obligation, he falls short in his duty. So, too, if one does one of the things that are prohibited, he is a sinner. If he abstains from doing it, he is a righteous man, provided that he abstains out of fear of G-d, as Scripture says, "They also do no iniquity. They walk in His ways." (Psalm 119:3). And so, if one does one of the things permitted, in the right and proper way, he is righteous, as the Psalmist said, "A good man is gracious and lends; he conducts his affairs with discretion" (Psalm 112:5). If he, however,

exceeds and goes beyond what is sufficient, he fails in his duty, because this will mislead him to what G-d warned against. So, too, if he denies himself what is sufficient when he is in a position to secure it, his aim being to train himself in the service of G-d and in control of his passions, so as to come nearer to G-d or separate himself from this world and direct his attentions to the better world hereafter, he is righteous and his conduct is good. But if he does this not for the sake of G-d, he falls short in the fulfilment of his duty, and his conduct is reprehensible.

Human actions fall into the categories of good and bad. The sensible person is one who weighs his actions before he does them, as is here set forth, examines them carefully with his mind, chooses what is good among them and abandons what is not good, even as David (peace be unto him) said: "I thought on my ways and turned my feet unto Your testimonies. I made haste and did not delay to keep Your commandments" (Psalm 119:59-60).

That this division of deeds into good and evil is correct is proved in the wise man's statement: "For G-d will bring every deed into judgment with every secret thing, whether it be good or evil" (Eccles. 12:14). The sage thus places all actions under two categories, good and bad; this coinciding with what we call laudable and reprehensible. In the Torah, also, as has been explained, human actions fall only into two classes, affirmative commandments and prohibitions. As the Torah consists of words and meanings, individuals, in respect to their apprehension of its wisdom, fall into ten graded classes.

The beginner's class consists of those who have learnt the Pentateuch and the rest of the Scriptures and are satisfied with their ability to read the text without any understanding of the contents. They do not know the meaning of the words nor have they any acquaintance with the grammar of the language. They are akin to a donkey laden with books.

The second class consists of those who have tried to learn to read correctly, pay heed to the vowels and specially concentrate their attention on the right position of the accent. They [may be said to] belong to the class of Punctators and Massorites.

The third class consists of those who have noted the insufficiency of the aforementioned classes and have striven to know the principles of punctuation and musical accentuation (neginoth). They have in addition sought to acquire knowledge of the correct use of the language and its grammar, nouns and verbs, modifying parts of speech (prepositions, conjunctions and adverbs) absolute and construct forms (of nouns and adjectives) ; use of the future to express the past and of the infinitive to express the imperative; the various classes of verbs: complete (all three letters sounded), defective (one letter omitted), silent (one or two letters not sounded), duplicate (verbs with the second and third letters the same) ; the apparent and the hidden. (i.e. Closed and open syllables; the former ending in a consonant, the latter in a vowel sound.)

The fourth class consists of those individuals who have advanced beyond the preceding classes in their ability to explain words of doubtful meaning in the Holy Scriptures, and in their understanding of the plain sense of the text. They have also investigated the figurative and the literal meaning of words in the Hebrew language; homonyms and synonyms; derivative nouns (derived from other words), primary nouns, foreign nouns; and so with adjectives and verbs.

The fifth class consists of those who have advanced beyond the preceding classes in their knowledge of the subject-matter of the Holy Scriptures, have sought to understand its fundamental principles and have endeavoured to investigate the metaphorical sense and the true meaning of its contents with regard, for instance, to the anthropomorphic expressions in

the Bible. These are the expositors of the divinely inspired books according to the plain meaning without reference to the traditional interpretation.

The sixth class consists of those who lean on ancient tradition as contained in the Mishnah, so that they have attained knowledge of some of the laws, commandments and juridical rules without studying the Talmud.

The seventh class comprises those who have added to what we have just mentioned an intense study of the Talmud and devoted themselves to a knowledge of its text, reading its decisions without attempting to answer its questions and clearing up its difficulties.

The eighth class consists of those who were not satisfied with the knowledge of the Torah, which had been sufficient for the previous class, but exerted themselves to comprehend the dicta of the Talmudic authorities, resolve the doubtful points and elucidate the obscurities, with the purpose of winning a name and glory. But they ignore the duties of the heart. They pay no attention to what would be detrimental to their religious and moral activities. They spend their days in the study of singular deductions from the legal principles and of what is strange and difficult in the final decisions; they cite the conflicting views of the Talmudic authorities on novel points of law while they neglect topics which they have no right to do - topics that affect their spiritual interests which it is their duty to investigate, such as the truth of the prophet's signs and of tradition, and the modes by which it can be demonstrated; the obligation which the Creator has imposed upon us to adduce with our reasoning faculties proofs of His existence and to serve Him with a perfect heart, and many similar points that can be intellectually apprehended and which I will explain in this treatise.

The ninth class consists of those who have exerted themselves to know the duties of the heart as well as the active duties and also what is detrimental to right conduct; who understand the plain sense of the Holy Scriptures as well as their inner meaning, and have arrived at a conviction of the truth of tradition, based on Scripture and on reason; have arranged the laws into an orderly system, divided the practical duties in accordance with circumstances of time and place, as a result of their comprehension of the fundamental principles of the Pentateuch; scrupulously observe the duties and exhort others (to do likewise); cherish truth inwardly and outwardly, and follow it wherever it may lead them. They are the talmudic teachers and the Geonim who continued their predecessors customs.

The tenth class consists of those who received the wisdom of the Torah from the prophets, with all its interpretations and detailed results of fundamental principles. They are the men of the Great Assembly and their successors (the Tanaim) who received the traditions from them, the authorities named in the Mishnah and Beraithoth (additional teachings and views not incorporated in the Mishnah) as set forth in the Ethics of the Fathers: "Moshe received the Law from Sinai and delivered it to Yehoshua; Yehoshua to the elders; the elders to the prophets; the prophets to the men of the Great Assembly; the men of the Great Assembly to Shimon the Just; Shimon the Just to Antigonos; Antigonos to Joseph son of Joezer and Yosi son of Jochanan the Jerusalemite; they delivered it Yehoshua, son of Perachiah and Nittai the Arbelite; they delivered it to Judah son of Tabbai and Shimon son of Shetach; they delivered it to Shemaiah and Abtalion; from them it passed to Shammai and Hillel; from them to Rabban Yochanan ben Zaccai; from him to Rabbi Eliezer, Rabbi Joshua, Rabbi Gamaliel, Rabbi Elazer ben Arach, Rabbi Josef the Priest: and Simeon, son of Nathanel; from them it passed to Rabbi Akiba, Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah, Rabbi Tarfon, Rabbi Simeon ben Gamaliel; from them to Rabbi Meir, Rabbi Judah, Rabbi Yosi, Rabbi Shimon Rabbi Judah the Prince The last is our sainted teacher who gathered together the dicta of the Mishnah, arranged them in order, divided them into chapters and compiled them in a work. This compilation is the essential element of the whole tradition on which we rely in our Law.

Those who owe allegiance to the Torah fall into ten classes of varying degrees in their faith and in their acceptance of the service of G-d.

Of the lowest degree are those who are misled by folly and the overwhelming force of evil passions to reject the Torah which they consider to be similar to the customs, by which other peoples are guided and the simple kept in check. This attitude results from the powerful hold that sensual lust has obtained over their understanding, and from their gross nature; they do not submit to the yoke of the Torah, nor will they be bound by the restraints of reason, because of their longing for uncontrolled license. Of people of this sort the sage says, "A fool has no delight in understanding but only that his heart may discover itself (follow its impulses)" (Prov. 18:2). . . ,

Of the second degree are those who cannot deny the signs and wonders that were manifested by the prophets, because of their publicity, but they doubt the veracity of the Torah, and express views that approach those of the foregoing class, namely, that G-d only wished to point out to His creatures a way by which they would improve their condition in this world, and therefore stirred the prophet (Moses) to guide them with statutes that they needed, and gave him signs and wonders, so that they should listen to his words and accept his ordinances. The members of this second class do not believe in reward and punishment.

I will give here briefly the answers to these views by refutation and also alternatively by agreement, (for argument's sake).

By refutation: The Creator is too exalted to alter the course of nature for the sake of one who resorts to falsehood in regard to Him and utters in His name things which He had not said, even if that person aims, by means of these falsehoods about G-d, to direct people in the right way. For the vision of the truth manifested to the prophet is not more wondrous or harder to apprehend than a change in the order of nature that takes place for the prophet's sake.

By agreement: If it were clearly demonstrated by an irrefutable proof that the fact was as these people say (that the Torah was not revealed to the prophet, but was the prophet's own invention), it would even then be right to follow him, for the exalted Creator would not change the order of nature and manifest a wonder through one who does not know the good and right way. And if the exalted Creator has chosen one to teach us the good and right way and guide us, after wondrous signs had been manifested by him, he is sufficiently worthy that we should rely upon him in our behaviour and way of life. Seeing that we owe this to a king or governor, even if he is not endowed with wisdom, as it is said, "O, my son, fear the Lord and the king" (Prov. 24:21), how much more is this our duty toward one through whom a wonder has been shown. Thus, from both points of view, we are under an obligation to accept the Torah. Concerning people of this class, the wise man says, "O, ye simple, understand wisdom: and ye fools, be of an understanding heart." (Prov. 8:5). .

Of the third degree are those who are convinced of the veracity of the Torah but think that it was given as a favor of G-d, to direct aright His creatures and guide them exclusively in this world, but not for the sake of reward in the world hereafter. Their reason for this view is that in the prophetic books reward and punishment in this world are frequently mentioned but there is no mention of retribution in the next world. Our teacher, Saadyah, in his commentary on the weekly portion Behukothai (Leviticus, Chapters 26 and 27) expatiated on this topic and clearly demonstrated the nullity of the views expressed by these people.

The prophetic books contain clear indications of reward and punishment in the world to come. The following are examples: "For G-d shall bring every work into judgment, with every

secret thing, whether it be good or evil" (Eccles. 12:14). "And you shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the sole of your feet" (Malachi 3:21). "Then shall you return and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serves G-d and him that serves Him not." (Malachi 3:18). "And they shall go forth and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against Me; for their worm shall not die. neither shall their fire be quenched, and they shall be an abhorrence unto all flesh" (Isaiah 66:24). "How great is Your goodness, which You have laid up for them that fear You, which You hast wrought for them that trust in You before the children of men" (Psalm 31:20). Thus says the L-ord of Hosts; ,if you will walk in My ways . . .I will give you places to walk among these that stand' " (Zach. 3:7). ". . ."Eye has not seen, O G-d, beside You, what He had prepared for him that waits for him" (Isaiah 64:3). "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt" (Daniel 12:2). "... "Your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the L-ord shall be your reward" (Isaiah 58:8). And there are many passages to the same effect, too numerous to mention.

Of the fourth degree are those in whose consciousness the genuineness of the Torah and the verity of reward and retribution in the world to come are firmly established. But their disposition inclines them to love of the world and its lusts; and they use the practices of the service of G-d as snares with which to obtain worldly advantages. They accept the Torah outwardly but not inwardly, with their tongues and not with their hearts. Of such people it is said, "One speaks peaceably to his neighbour with his mouth, but in his heart he waits in ambush for him" (Jer. 9:7). Further, "With mouth and lips, they honour Me; but their heart is far from Me" (Isaiah 29:13).

Of the fifth degree are those who are convinced on all the points we have mentioned in regard to the Torah and of the truth of reward and punishment in the world to come. But their disposition inclines them to love of the world; they indeed accept the Torah; but in their acceptance their aim is to obtain recompense from G-d as well as praise and honour from human beings. Such an attitude is secret idolatry, the joint worship of G-d and another being.

Of the sixth degree are those who in their religious practice aim at a reward from the Creator solely in this world, because of their love for it, and because they prefer its delights. They do not comprehend the recompense hereafter and its bliss.

Of the seventh degree are those who are convinced of all that we have mentioned. But their motive in the service of G-d is the expectation of reward in this world and in the world to come. They have no conception whatever of service of the Almighty for His own sake, to magnify, honour and exalt Him, as alone befits the worship of Him. Of these, our wise men have said, "Be not like servants who serve the master upon the condition of receiving a reward; but be like servants who serve the master without any condition of receiving a reward; and let the fear of Heaven be upon you" (Ethics of the Fathers: 1:3).

Of the eighth degree are those who are convinced of all that has been mentioned, but they accept the service of G-d out of fear of His punishment in this world and the next. We have already pointed out how reprehensible these two views are.

Of the ninth degree are those who believe in the Torah and in reward and punishment in both worlds. In serving G-d, their intent is to do so for His name's sake and in the way befitting Him alone, but they are not careful to avoid whatever is detrimental to this service, and when detriments have caused injury they do not know whence the trouble came. This is suggested in the text, "Dead flies make the apothecary's ointment to send forth a foul odour: so a little folly spoils the rarest wisdom and honour" (Eccles. 10:1). Further, "One sinner destroys much



good" (ibid. 9:18). A saint once said to his disciples, "If you would be absolutely free of sins, I would be anxious about you and fear something worse than sins." They said to him: "What is worse than sins?" He replied: "Haughtiness and pride," as Scripture says, "An abomination unto the Lord is everyone that is proud in heart" (Prov. 16:5).

The tenth degree is attained by those who have a reasoned conviction of the truth of the Torah and of all the duties, the observance of neglect of which will result respectively in reward or punishment in both worlds, and who, accordingly, take care not to forget their obligations, and are ever conscious of what they owe to their Creator in return for His great goodness and loving kindness towards them. They do not fix their attention on reward or punishment, but hasten to fulfill the service of G-d for His name's sake, to magnify and exalt Him with longing and wholehearted devotion, because they know Him and have realized what is due to His infinite majesty. This is the high degree to be attained by those who profess allegiance to the Torah. This is the degree that was attained by the prophets and saints who were devoted to G-d, made a covenant with Him, were always communing with Him, accepted His ruling, gave up to Him their lives, their children, their possessions, and firmly kept their faith in all that they undertook, even to the surrender of their lives. Concerning these, Scripture says, "Gather My saints together unto Me; those that have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice" (Ps. 50:5).

This is the form taken by the Torah in urging the service of G-d, and these are the degrees of those men of wisdom who devote themselves to the study of the holy books of the Torah and the excellencies of those who believe in it. It is possible that there may be other degrees among men of understanding in the Torah, gradations other than those that we have set forth. But we only mentioned those degrees that are found among the large majority of the people. Still, the list of degrees that we have given will obviously be of use to one who seeks the right way, for, if he finds in this list a degree to which he is sufficiently near, knows what is the next higher degree and strives to rise to it, then notes the distance between the degree that he has attained and the highest of the degrees, and strives to ascend to it gradually, one degree after another-he will find the ascent easier to accomplish.

## CHAPTER V.

We will now proceed to explain the mode in which the intellect urges us to the service of G-d in the form of questions and answers - this method being most suitable to a clear exposition of the topic we are investigating. To be urged by the intellect means that G-d reminds a human being through his intellect, of his duty to know Him, and to become cognizant of the marks of divine wisdom. This call of G-d comes to one who has taken the Torah as the light of his path, attained intellectual maturity and capacity for clear apprehension, yearns to gain the Almighty's favour and rise to the spiritual heights of the saints, and turns his heart away from worldly cares and anxieties. To reach the stage where one experiences this intellectual urge, the requisities are that a person should clearly realize what the Creator has implanted in the human mind, namely: to esteem truth, detest falsehood, choose righteousness, avoid injustice, requite benefactors with good deeds and express gratitude to them, punish the wicked and condemn them, keep at peace with all human beings and act beneficently towards them, estimate good deeds [in comparison] with the resulting praise, righteous deeds with their recompense, wrongdoings with their punishment, the superiority of one reward over another, the severity of one punishment compared with another and forgiveness of transgressors when they truly repent.

After these concepts have been clearly established in a man's soul by his reasoning faculty and power of apprehension, his intellect will have become sound and his apprehension vigorous. And when G-d will remind him of the way of His goodness (by bestowing upon him

benefits), that person will arouse his mind and soul to appreciate G-d's kindnesses to him, and his apprehension of them will become stronger. And when he will attempt to recount them and realize them with his understanding and will find himself unable to do so, because of their universality, multitude, continuity and permanence, he will make demands upon his soul in regard to his duty of gratitude towards benefactors, as pointed out to him by his intellect, and his duty to act righteously. He will then resolve to make a return to the exalted G-d for the multitude of benefits he has received.

And when he perceives with his spiritual vision that he has no power to do so, and that the Creator has no need of him, then he will feel the obligation to humble himself and become conscious of his lowness and insignificance, and he will then importune his understanding concerning what he has to do, that it may be possible for him to approach and draw near to G-d in order that communion with Him may serve as a substitute for the return due to G-d, and his understanding will aid him to the right path in this regard.

It (the Understanding) will say to his soul: Is it clear to you and firmly fixed in your mind that you are pledged to your Creator for His goodness and belong to Him because of the multitude of His kindness and His favors?

The Soul: Yes.

The Understanding: Is it your intention to repay a portion of what you owe to the Creator?

The Soul: Yes.

The Understanding: How is this possible when your longing for Him is so weak. Only a person who longs for health will put up with the bitterness of a medicine; but one who does not long for health will not submit to the severity of the treatment.

The Soul: I feel a strong desire and a yearning that is painful, to repay as much as I can of what I owe to my G-d; therefore continue to exhort me.

The Understanding: If you are telling the truth in what you are saying, the treatment may possibly be successful in your case. But if it is not the truth, why should you deceive yourself? For a sick person who lies to his physician only cheats himself, wastes the physician's efforts and aggravates his sickness.

The Soul: And how can it be determined whether my longing is strong or weak?

The Understanding: If your longing proceeds from a clear realization how great is your obligation to G-d, how little it is in your power to fulfill it and that your neglect of it involves your ruin, while your endeavour to fulfill it will secure your salvation, your longing is genuine and your desire urgent; if not, it is false.

The Soul: My desire was never other than weak, and my longing was always deceptive, from the time when my only incentives (to the service of G-d) were the records of former ages that have passed away up to the time when the truth of what you have stated has become scientifically clear to me, first through the exhortation of the Torah, and later by rational demonstration, so that my longing now is genuine and my desire definite.

The Understanding: If what you say is true, then prepare yourself to bear the pain of the treatment, and endure the bitter taste of the medicine and its unpleasantness, after you will have first given up the pernicious diet to which you were accustomed.

The Soul: What is the pernicious diet to which I was accustomed ?

The Understanding: It is the reprehensible disposition that has mastered you from the first and the forces which have maintained it, from the earliest years of your growth.

The Soul: What disposition is this, and what are the forces that maintain it?

The Understanding: The reprehensible dispositions in you are many. But the root and stock from which they spring are two. One of them is love of physical pleasures-eating, drinking, excessive gratification of the sexual impulse and of other bodily needs. This disposition you have acquired from your bad neighbour, the body. The second disposition is love of domination and superiority - pride, haughtiness, jealousy. This misleads you to be niggardly in making a return to your benefactor. This disposition you have acquired from your

associates, among whom you have grown up, namely, your brothers and relatives.

The Soul: What are the forces that I need to keep far from me?

The Understanding: The forces that maintain the former evil disposition are superfluity in eating, drinking, dress, sleep, rest and tranquility. The forces that uphold the latter evil disposition are superfluity of speech, excessive social intercourse, love of praise and honour, jealousy of others because of their material possessions, even if what they possess consists only of sheer necessities; contemptuousness, picking on the faults of others, and so forth. If what you have said of your strong desire and yearning to make a return for the benefits G-d has bestowed upon you is true, keep far from you, with all your strength, the forces and dispositions that I have mentioned to you, and I will then bring you to the first gate leading to recovery.

The Soul: To renounce these faults would be very hard for me, on account of the long time that I have been habituated to them; therefore be kind enough to show me in what way I can do so more easily.

The Understanding: Surely you know that a sensible man will consent to the amputation of one of his limbs and to its loss, if it is attacked by some disease which he fears will spread and affect the remaining limbs, as soon as he considers the difference between the two states and realizes the inequality of the two evils. So, too, if you wish that the separation which is so hard should seem easy to you, concentrate your mind and employ your intelligence in weighing the good you will derive from the separation and the evil which will befall you if you continue your association with it; and then separation from your reprehensible disposition, which seems so hard, will be easy.

The Soul: What is the good that separation from it will bring me, and what is the evil that will befall me if I continue to keep it?

The Understanding: The good will consist in your spiritual tranquillity and relief from the darkness of this gloomy world, the pleasures of which are mingled with griefs, while its lusts soon cease; also, that your strengthened power of perception will finally lead you to realize your destiny in the place of your repose (the life hereafter) and that therefore you should busy yourself and be concerned about it. This is one of the portals on which depend your salvation and your life. The evil [resulting from not renouncing your pernicious tendencies] is recurrence of your anxiety, reduplication of your grief, continuance of your mourning at the non-fulfilment of your desires in this world which, if they were satisfied, would only bring you something that is vain, without permanence or continuance, and which will undoubtedly pass to some one else; so that nothing will remain to you of this world nor will you secure the world hereafter; and, what is more obvious, you will not fulfill your wishes, however long you strive for them.

The Soul: I understand what you have said. I hope that the separation which previously was so hard will now become easier for me. Continue now to lead me to the second part of the curative methods which will teach me what I desire to learn of the service of G-d.

The Understanding: The ruling principle and sum of the matter is that you assume towards Him who is above you all those obligations which you would desire should be assumed towards yourself by one beneath you-presupposing that relations in both cases are equal. What seems to you good and what displeases you as evil in the conduct of the latter, do and refrain from doing, towards the former.

The Soul: Be more explicit.

The Understanding: Think of the benefits bestowed by G-d that you share with others, and of those benefits with which you are specially favoured. Then imagine that you have conferred similar bounties on your slave whom you acquired by purchase; and the kind of behaviour on his part towards you that would be pleasing to you, undertake to show to your Creator, and what seems to you evil, on his part, you too must regard as evil on your part to your Creator.

The Soul: I have understood in general what you have just said. But kindly explain all this to me in detail.

The Understanding: The duties of good conduct of any servant towards his master, who

bestowed upon him even a tiny portion of the bounties your Creator has bestowed upon you, consist in honouring the master in word and deed, in faithfulness to him, interesting himself in his master's affairs, openly and inwardly, and showing reverence and awe when standing in his presence. As a pious man said, "Do not rebel against your master when he sees you."

Among these duties are also included that he should be humble and submissive to his master, in his visible behaviour and innermost secret thoughts; that he should manifest this humility in his attire and habits, that he should honour and exalt him, in his speech and thought, that he should praise and laud him by day and by night; that he should recall his good deeds privately and publicly; recount his praises as befits him; run to do his service joyously and cheerfully and out of love, so as to find favour in his master's sight; strive to draw nearer in his behaviour to his master's will; ever implore his master to be pleased with him, forgive him and love him; be apprehensive that he may be falling short in doing what he had been commanded; that he should heed the master's command, keep far from that against which the master had warned him, think of the many iniquities which he has committed in the past, appreciate the benefits he has received on account of their great number and importance and deprecate the value of what he has done in comparison with what he should have done; that he should regard his efforts as petty, compared with what he should have attempted. He should confess his own insignificance compared to the greatness of his master. He should bow to him frequently, in deep humility and lowliness. He should put his trust in his master for all his needs and be satisfied with whatever position his master assigns to him. If the master provides for him fully, he should thank and praise him. If the master leaves him hungry, he should accept his condition patiently. He should never suspect the master of unfairness in his judgment of him, nor charge him with perverseness in his decree. He should be contented with what the master favours him, and justify the master when he has punished him. It will be furthermore proper on his part that in every movement of his limbs and in all his habits, he should exhibit evidence of his servitude and of his master's ownership. He should feel pleasure only when he mentions his master; look nowhere else than to the master's ways; listen only to his master's words, eat only the food that his master provides for him, think only of his master's greatness, render no service except if his master approve it, rejoice only in serving his master, seek only his master's good will, hasten only on his master's errands, abstain only from whatever might be against the master's will, stay nowhere except in his master's house, remain ever faithful to him alone, only read his books, wear the livery of reverence for his master, repose on the couch of love for him, keeping ever in his mind the master's likeness, awaking with the sweetness in thinking of him, finding no pleasure except in being with him, fleeing from nought except disobedience to him, never mourning except when his master is angry, feeling no fear except fear of his master, hoping for nought but his master's kindness, never angry except at that at which his master obliges him to be so. He will only be pleased with one who does his master's will; take nothing but with his master's permission; only give to one to whom his master orders him to give. And so with all his movements. He will not move a foot, nor raise an eyelid except to fulfill his master's will. The habits that are bad in a servant are the opposite of those that are good in his master's sight. When these good habits are reversed, they are easily recognised. I have assembled for you a sufficient number of examples to indicate to you the rest of the duties and their opposites. And as the conduct of servants, regarded by their masters as good is as we have described it, and you know how insignificant is the kindness of masters to their servants, how much more in reduplicated measure to what we have mentioned do you owe in service to the blessed G-d in return to Him for the multitude of bounties He has bestowed upon you.

## CHAPTER VI.

The Soul: I have understood what you have stated and your explanation is sufficient. Now

expound to me the various aspects of beneficence for which I am under an obligation of increased service to the blessed G-d.

The Understanding: The obligation of increased service incumbent on human beings varies according to the benefits - general and particular - bestowed on them. These benefits fall into four divisions. The first is the universal goodness of G-d which embraces all mankind, in having brought human creatures into existence when previously they were nought; in keeping them in life and bestowing on them bounties which we have cited in the second treatise of this work. They are accordingly under a universal obligation of service to the blessed Creator. This consists of obedience to all the rational laws observed by Adam, Enoch, Noah and his sons, Job and his friends, up to the days of our teacher Moses, peace be upon him. If one adheres to all these laws for the sake of G-d's service, the Almighty will bestow on him favours beyond those enjoyed by other men, and give him a higher degree in this existence and a great reward in the world to come, as was the case with Abraham, to whom G-d said, "Do not fear, Abraham; I am your shield; your reward is exceedingly great" (Gen. 15-1). One who rebels against G-d, despite His beneficence, will fall from the degree of rational beings and their excellencies, sink to the low condition of irrational creatures and share the fate of the beasts of the earth, as it is said: "And the enemies of the L-ord shall be as the fat lambs (they shall be consumed; into smoke shall they be consumed)" (Ps. 37:20). And in the next world their state will be evil in the extreme, as it is said: "As to your spirit - fire shall devour you" (Is. 33:11).

The second division consists of G-d's special goodness to one people among the peoples, to one nation among the nations, as for example, the favours He showed the children of Israel, in taking them out of Egypt and bringing them to the land of Canaan. Thus He put them under an obligation of service, additional to the universal service which we have mentioned. This consists in obedience to the authoritative commandments (Divine precepts, the reason for some of which is not clear), after He had exhorted them and aroused them concerning the rational moral duties. Whoever assumed this service for the glory of G-d was favoured by the Almighty with special bounties, for which he was under an obligation of additional service beside the service due from his nation and the rest of his tribe, even as Moses said: "Who is on the L-ord's side? Let him come unto me. And all the descendants of Levi gathered themselves together unto him" (Exodus 32:26). G-d showed them additional favour and then chose from among them Aaron and his sons to minister to His glory, charged them with special precepts in addition to those he gave to the rest of the nation, and promised them a great reward in the life hereafter. But whoever of them rebels against the exalted Creator, will fall from both these degrees of excellence and be punished in both worlds; as the wise man says: "But it shall not be well with the wicked, neither shall he prolong his days" (Eccles. 8:13).

The third division is the special goodness of G-d to a certain family among the families of the nations, such as the appointment of the priesthood and the Levites, as also the succession of sovereignty conferred upon the house of David. In return for this, He charged them with specific duties, of which those assigned to the priests and Levites are known and clearly set forth in the book of G-d's law, the Pentateuch. The specific law applying to the House of David is thus set forth: "O house of David, thus says the L-ord, execute judgment in the morning; and deliver him that is spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor" (Jeremiah 21:12). One who completely fulfills these duties, because he loves to please G-d, will be singled out by the Almighty for happiness here and a great reward hereafter. He will be a distinguished nobleman or a teacher of righteousness, as the Scripture says concerning Phineas, "Then stood up Pinchas and prayed (Authorized Version-executed judgment) and the plague was stayed. And that was counted unto him for righteousness unto all generations for evermore" (Ps. 106:30-31). Further, "But the priests, the Levites, the sons of Zadok that kept the charge of My sanctuary...[They shall come near to Me to minister unto Me]" (Ezek.

44:15). But whoever rebels against G-d falls from those highest degrees in this world, and will suffer severe pain in the world to come, as you know from what befell Korah and his company.

The fourth division is G-d's goodness to an individual, by which he has been singled out from the rest of his family and people and other rational beings, as for instance, one chosen to be either a distinguished prophet, a regent appointed to govern a nation or a sage whose spirit G-d has awakened and endowed with wisdom, understanding, counsel and similar qualities. For every one of these bounties, he is under the obligation of additional service of G-d. He who performs this service in full measure unto him will these gifts - general and special - be continued in this world, and G-d will increase his power over them and understanding of them, as it is said, "The L-ord has sworn unto David in truth-he will not depart from it, of the fruit of your body, I will set upon your throne. If your children will keep My covenant and My testimony that I shall teach them, their children shall also sit upon your throne for evermore" (Ps. 132:11-12). The recompense in the world hereafter is indicated in the following verse: "...Unless I had believed to see the goodness of the L-ord in the land of the living" (Ps. 27:13).

But whoever rebels against G-d, despite the beneficence which G-d has specially bestowed upon him, will fall from all these degrees, and the Creator will hold him more strictly to account in this world, as it is said, "... this is it that the L-ord spoke, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come near Me, and before all the people I will be glorified. And Aaron held his peace" (Lev. 10:3); furthermore, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities" (Amos 3:2). His punishment in the next world will be more severe, as it is said: "For Tophet is ordained of old; yea, for the king it is prepared; he has made it deep and large..." (Isaiah 30:33).

According to the above four divisions, human beings are under obligations to serve G-d. Whenever G-d increases His beneficence to an individual, that individual is under an obligation to render additional service for it. This is illustrated by the following examples. It is a duty to tithe produce, as it is said, "You shall tithe all the yield of your seed that comes from the field year by year" (Deut. 14:22). One to whom G-d has given one hundred kur of produce is obliged to give ten kur; one to whom G-d has only given ten kur has to give one kur. If the former were to separate nine and a half kur and the latter were to separate one kur, the former would be punished, while the latter would receive a reward. So, too, if a man has no son, the obligation of circumcising and teaching his son Torah does not apply to him. If a person is lame, the duty of going to Jerusalem for the three festivals is not obligatory for him. When a person is sick, the precepts which he is unable to fulfill are not binding upon him. Analogously, if a person has been singled out by the Creator for special beneficence, he is under an obligation to increased service for it. Hence, the saints in ancient times, when some good fortune happened to them, were troubled in two respects: First, that they should not fall short in the complete fulfillment of the service and gratitude they owed for this good fortune and that it should not turn into evil for them, as our ancestor Jacob said, "I am not worthy of all the mercies, and truth which You have shown unto Your servant" (Gen. 32:11); secondly, that it should not be the Creator's reward for their service, and thus their recompense in the world to come would be diminished, as the ancients explained the text, "And repays them that hate Him to their face\* to destroy them" (Deut. 7:10). This will suffice on this theme.

\*Reward them for their few good deeds here on earth, and destroy them in the life hereafter.

The Soul: I have understood all that you have mentioned. But I do not feel myself able to repay the Creator with services in return for His bounties, not even for those all men enjoy, much less for those with which He has specially favoured me. And when it is my wish and

desire to fulfill the service which it is my duty to render for them, then before I have completed forming the resolution, the hope of a future bounty enters my mind. And so it is with my gratitude to G-d; when I thank Him, I thank Him for His great goodness to me in words while my thought and intent is the wish that the bounty may be continued and increased. I am not like the one who renounced all expectation of an increase of the boon or its continuance. And if I behave in this way in my service and gratitude to G-d, with so little of pure intent to fulfill my obligations for His universal goodness, how will I ever be able to fulfill the rest of the service I owe to Him for bounties with which He has specially favoured me?

I therefore need that you should teach me the minimum of service that it is my duty to render for these favours, so that I may be worthy of their continuance. The Understanding: Your complaint of your scanty devotion in the service of G-d and ingratitude to Him and that the words of your mouth are those of one who expresses thankfulness, while your purpose is that of a petitioner, and the wish in your heart is for an increase in the bounty and its continuance - all this is occasioned by three dispositions:

The first is your excessive self-love, and desire to gain for yourself every Justification. You do not move a step to the service of the Almighty or for any other purpose without the intent to enjoy pleasures. I have already recommended as the beginning of my course of treatment that you should strive with all your might to keep this evil disposition far from you, and then I may hold out the best of hopes for you.

The second is that you do not realize the Creator's kindness to you and imagine that you will not obtain His bounty except through your supplication for it, whereas G-d has been good to you in what you know and in what you do not know, and when you supplicate Him, you do not consider who has done all this for you from the beginning. If you would put away from you this idea, your service would be wholly devotional, your thanksgiving to Him would express your inward feelings, and your hopes would then be worthier and more justified.

The third reason is that you neither know yourself nor how to conduct yourself. You deem yourself deserving of the greatest benefits and you never cease beseeching G-d for them. And when you obtain any tiling, your mind yearns for something higher. You do not, however, realize that the exalted Creator has the right to the greatest service on your part. When you render any service, you regard it as a favour granted by you to Him, though you are cognizant that for all your needs you are dependent on Him and that He has no need of you. If you were to uncover (remove) this blinding folly, study the matter with open eyes and realize that the Creator who created you thinks of you and knows what is good for you and what is not good, better than you do, you would be contented with whatever benefits He bestows upon you, and would render great thanks to Him for them with a perfect heart. Then you would not rest your hope on what disturbs you, and keeps you from recognizing the bounties that you have gotten and from discharging the obligations that you owe to G-d for them. And it is impossible that you should not attain what you are fit for, when it will become due to you by reason of your service, and not merely because you hope for it and fix your mind on it.

## CHAPTER VII.

In regard to your question as to what is the minimum service of G-d, below which, a person would not be discharging his duty, and which is requisite for the continuance of the Divine bounty, there are ten conditions to be fulfilled, as follows:

- (1) One should not use the Divine bounty (G-d's favor) as a means to rebel against G-d.
- (2) One should always declare G-d's bounty to him and also thank and praise Him in his heart for it, in harmony with his utterances.
- (3) The bounty should not seem to him insignificant and small.

- (4) He should not ascribe it to anyone beside G-d; and, if it comes through an intermediary, he should not thank the intermediary and fail to thank the Creator for it.
- (5) He should not boast of it, nor think that he obtained it by his own strength and wisdom or by anything else that made him worthy of it (Or He should not boast of that for which he was deemed fit, thinking that he obtained it by his own strength or wisdom).
- (6) It should not enter his mind that he can secure its continuance by his striving, and will lose it if he neglects the effort.
- (7) He should not despise one who lacks the bounty and regard himself as better before G-d than that person, since it may be that G-d is trying him in order to expose the evil hidden in his nature, so that his good fortune is leading him astray, while everyone who lacks this good fortune is better before G-d than he is.
- (8) His heart should be wholly with G-d in devotion and humility, and if he is not more active in his service than he had formerly been, and does not increase his gratitude and thankfulness, he should at least continue to maintain his standard. In his service he should endeavour to direct his heart to G-d, and prosperity should not cause him to diminish his former [pious] practices, nor disturb him in the effort to intensify his devotion to G-d.
- (9) His attention should always be directed to one beneath him in material well-being, not to the one who is above him in this respect. So, too, his gaze should always be fixed on one more zealous in the service of G-d than he is, so that he will strive to rise to the latter's degree; and not on one who is less zealous, so that he may not become proud of his piety and negligent in his duties.
- (10) The protracted period during which the Creator overlooks his sins and restrains His anger should not beguile him into thinking that he is safe from the Divine wrath, and so may rebel against the Almighty.

For individuals, concerning whom reports have reached us from ancient times, as well as some also among our contemporaries, who were favoured by G-d with various bounties and departed from the service of G-d and rebelled against Him, stumbled only because of the erroneous views which I have mentioned to you. This is also clearly set forth in the bodes of the prophets in every generation. All these faults are detrimental to the service of G-d which we endeavour to expound in this third treatise. Yet, whoever cannot increase his service of G-d, but is able to undertake what I have set forth for the sake of G-d, will be worthy of a continuance of the good [portion] which has been specially allotted to him. And if this is withdrawn from him, it will be for one of two reasons: either to expiate some previous iniquity or requite him in the life hereafter with a recompense greater, more precious than, and much exceeding that of which he has been deprived here.

## CHAPTER VIII.

The Soul: You have occupied yourself with my treatment and helped my recovery. You have corrected me, acted generously, and with your luminous mind supervised my treatment and dispelled the darkness of folly that enveloped me. But of the factors that are detrimental to the service of G-d, one still clings to me. If you will relieve me of the pain it causes me and remove the distress it occasions me, I will be delivered from my worst suffering, and will be almost cured of all my complaints.

The Understanding: What is it that troubles you, as you say?

The Soul: I have found in [the sacred] books in reference to the topic of necessity and fate, divine authority and will, that all things created mineral, vegetable, animal and rational being - are in the power of G-d, as it is said: "Whatsoever the L-ord pleases, that He does, in heaven and on earth" (Ps. 135:6). Further, "The L-ord kills, and makes alive: He brings down to the grave and brings up again; the L-ord makes poor and makes rich; He brings low and lifts up" (I Sam. 2:6-7). "Who is he that says and it comes to pass, when the L-ord commands it



not? Out of the mouth of the most High, proceeds not good and evil?" (Lamentations 3:37). "I form the light and create the darkness: I make peace and create evil" (Isaiah 45:7). "Except the L-ord build the house, they labor in vain that build it; except the L-ord keep the city, the watchman wakes but in vain" (Ps. 127:1). "Vain it is for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows; for so He gives His beloved sleep" (Ps. 127:2).

There are many passages to the same effect, all of which indicate that the Creator formed man and other living creatures to establish the world. When they move, they are moved by His will, His power and His might. When they rest, it is because He ordains that they shall rest, as it is said, "When He gives quietness, who then can make trouble?" (Job 34:29). "You hide Your face; they are troubled. You take away their breath; they die and return to their dust" (Ps. 104:29). And all the sayings of the ancients in every book indisputably agree in this. We find, however, in the book of the Torah a contrary view, namely, that a human being's visible acts are in his own power. He can choose then as he pleases. They are effected by his choice and free will and he is accordingly liable to reward or punishment for service and transgression respectively, as it is said, "See, I have set before you this day life and good, and death and evil" (Deut. 30:15). ". . . therefore choose life" (Deut. 30:19). "Through your hands this has come" (Malachi 1:9). "For according to a man's act, He requites him" (Job 34:11). "A man's folly perverts his way" (Proverbs 19:3).

Everything in our religious literature, whether it be instruction, precept or moral exhortation, demonstrates this view. And whatever is there set forth concerning reward for service, and punishment for transgression, indicates that a human being's acts are left to himself and that the Divine glory does not interfere in his prosperity or in his ill-fortune, in his righteous deeds or in his perversities. This is hard for me to grasp, and to reconcile the contradiction of these two views is exceedingly difficult. If there is a remedy for this difficulty which troubles me sorely, may G-d relieve me through your aid.

The Understanding: The difficulty you state of reconciling these two contending conceptions, found in the books, is no greater than that of solving the contradiction found in life's actual experiences. For we see that a human being's activities are sometimes in accordance with his intentions and desires and sometimes they are against his wish and intent. These disparities show you that the exalted Creator has control over a human being and that the latter is bound by the Almighty who permits him to do only what He wishes and prevents him from doing what He does not wish. This is also apparent in the function of speech, hearing and sight. And, on the other hand, I see that reward and punishment come to a human being; that he is rewarded and punished according to his deeds and movements either in serving G-d or rebelling against Him.

Controversies have long raged among the learned as to the modes of reconciling the issue between Necessity and (divine) Justice. Some say that all human activities proceed according to man's will, capacity and strength; that G-d has left the conduct of these affairs in a man's own hands, and given him control over them. And since the Divine glory does not interfere in these, therefore a human being is liable to reward and punishment for them. Others refer all human actions, like everything else, to the Creator, blessed be He, and say that every movement in the universe from that of a rational being to that of an inorganic body, is in the control of the Creator, takes place by His decree and compulsion, which cannot be varied by as much as a hair's-breadth, either more or less. When, against this view, the justice of reward and punishment was advanced, they replied, "We have no knowledge on the subject of reward and punishment; we do not know its form nor the way it is enforced. G-d, however, is righteous and will not do any iniquity. He is faithful in awarding recompense and retribution as He appointed them, and will not depart from His rules. Our minds are too feeble to grasp His infinite wisdom. His righteousness is too apparent, His loving kindness too

evident, that we should cast suspicion on His decisions, and there is no G-d beside Him.

Some find it possible to accept both principles - necessity and divine justice. They say that one who goes deeply into these subjects will not escape sin and will stumble, in whichever way he apprehends them. They therefore assert that the proper course to follow is to act on the principle of one who believes that actions are left to a human being's free will, who will therefore be rewarded or punished for them, and that we should strive for all that will avail us with the Creator in both worlds. At the same time, we ought to trust in G-d with the trust of one, fully convinced that all things and movements, together with their advantageous and injurious results happen by the decree of the Eternal, under His authority and according to His sentence, and that G-d has a predominant and everlasting claim upon us while we have no claim upon Him. Of all the views that we have mentioned this is the nearest approach to the way of salvation. For honestly and in truth, we must confess our ignorance on this topic which refers to the wisdom of the Creator, because our knowledge is too weak, and our comprehension too limited. This ignorance is one of the various forms of divine beneficence; it is for our good that knowledge is hidden from us. If there had been any advantage to us in understanding this mystery, the Creator would have revealed it to us.

A close analogy we can observe in the case of a person with weak eyes, who cannot enjoy the light of the sun without putting on a thin veil to protect his eyes. The more the eyes are impaired, the thicker the veil which he needs to aid his sight. When the impairment lessens, a thinner veil is suitable for him. Again we note in regard to a large number of physical occupations, that if we did not behold them with our own eyes, and only knew of them by report, we should hastily declare the reporter a liar. Take for instance, the astrolabe (a measuring contrivance formerly used by astronomers). If we had never seen this instrument with our eyes but someone had told us of its form and appearance and what can be apprehended by its use concerning the movements of the spheres, the positions of the stars, the precise determination of each of the seasons, the distances between stars and many other facts that would otherwise be unknown to us, we would have no clear conception of it, nor could we form a picture of it in our minds. The same is the case with a thing we are more familiar with, which belongs to articles multitudes of men use the balance. For were it not that we apprehend it with our sense of sight, we could not possibly deem it conceivable that one could weigh truly with a balance one of whose parts is longer than the other. And what is still more surprising is that on this balance and by means of a single stone, many objects, varying in weight, can be weighed, some of these weighing more, others weighing less than the single stone. A thing that people use still more is the upper millstone which the water causes to revolve regularly by a slight contrivance. When we cast a small stone into a swift current of flowing water, it does not stay on the surface for a single moment, but sinks to the bottom, while the millstone is many times heavier than the stone and the force of the water by which the mill is set in motion is much less than that of the current. If any one had told us this and we had not seen it with our own eyes, we would have quickly denied and repudiated his statement.

All this is because we know so little of the secrets of nature and because our faculties are too limited to recognize the fundamentals of created things and their results, their natural constitution and special forces. Since a person is so ignorant, as we have shown, in regard to a thing which he constantly handles, it is not surprising that he does not comprehend the divine decree and the righteousness of the Exalted Creator's judgments, these being hidden and infinitely exalted beyond all that we have stated.

On a similar topic, David, peace be upon him, said, "L-ord, my heart is not haughty, nor are mine eyes lofty . . ." (Ps. 131:1). And he adds in the next verse, in regard to submission to G-d, "Surely I have stilled and quieted my soul, like a weaned child with his mother; my soul is

with me like a weaned child" (Ps. 131:2).

## CHAPTER IX.

The Soul: You have comforted me in having made me give up the hope of ever fathoming the mystery of this subject because of its subtlety. But reveal to me the mystery of my existence in this world, its aim and purpose; and give me, as well as you can and briefly, some approximate conception of necessity and Divine justice, so that the same should not happen to me as happened to a king who, as I learnt, did not appreciate the various aspects of his good fortune. The story is that in one of the Indian islands, there was a state, the citizens of which decided to appoint over them every year a stranger as a ruler; and when the year had elapsed, they would banish him and he would have to return to the status he had had before he had been appointed over them. Among those elected, one was a fool who knew nothing of their secret plans in regard to him. He accumulated much money, built palaces which he fortified, and sent nothing out of their country. On the contrary, whatever he had outside the state-his money, his wife and children-he brought into it. And when the year was ended, the citizens sent him out, stripped of all his possessions, and deprived of all that he had built or acquired before he entered office up to the time he relinquished it. And so when he left, he had nothing of what had belonged to him in the city and outside it. He grieved and regretted the trouble he had taken and the efforts he had expended on the edifices he had erected and the treasures he had accumulated and which now would go to another person.

Subsequently, they decided to appoint at their ruler a stranger who was wise and understanding. After he had been appointed, he selected a person to whom he showed kindness and enquired of him the customs of the people and their laws which they had observed with reference to the one who had preceded him in office. The favourite revealed to the new ruler their secret plan and what they intended to do to him. When he learnt this, his activities took a different turn to those of his predecessor. He strove and laboured to take everything valuable in the country to the land where he had placed all his other treasures. He did not trust his subjects' exaltation of him nor the honor they showed him. During the whole time he stayed in their country, his mood was betwixt grief and joy. He was grieved that he would soon have to leave the people, and that the treasures he could bring out were in his estimation, so few. If he could have remained longer, he would have been able to bring out more. But he was glad that he would soon leave and be able to settle in the place where he had put his treasures and would be in a position to use and enjoy them in various ways, with a quiet mind, confident spirit and uninterruptedly.

And after his year was up, he was not troubled at leaving, but prepared for the event speedily, calmly and joyously, with approval of his work and diligence. He was going to great good fortune, honour and enduring joy. So he had happiness in both positions and attained his wishes in both places. I fear, however, that what happened to the fool who wearied himself and lost out in both places, may happen to me. Since G-d has favoured me in sending you to be my adviser, please instruct me and show me my position and tell me all you know in regard to the mystery of my being and the ways in which it should be improved.

The Understanding: In the parable you related, you have already given a picture of your state in this world and shown that your situation therein is like that of the kings you mentioned. You clearly realize that you are a stranger here and will soon depart hence. You should therefore act as the wise and understanding ruler did, so that the outcome in your case may be like his. Should you deviate from this course, my words will be of no use to you, my fine language will bring you no advantage.

The Soul: If I had no desire in the matter, I would not have troubled to investigate what is

hidden from me in regard to my condition.

The Understanding: The mystery of your being is that the Creator created you out of nought, in common with all spiritual beings that He created; and His purpose is to exalt you and elevate you to the high degree of His treasured ones-the chosen and elect who are nearest to the light of His glory-for your good and out of His loving kindness towards you. But you will only be worthy of this favour when three conditions have been fulfilled: The first is the removal of the curtain of folly from yourself so that the gift of knowledge of Him shall be a light unto you; the second is that you be tried and tested as to whether you will choose to serve Him or rebel against Him; the third is that He disciplines you in this world by your bearing the yoke of His service, in order to raise you to the degree of the higher beings who serve Him, of whom it is said, "Bless the L-ord, ye His angels, ye mighty in strength, that fulfil His word" (Ps. 103:20). All this you could not attain if you remained in your former state. Therefore the exalted Creator, by His wisdom, created for you this world with all that is therein-minerals, plants and living creatures, everything suitably arranged and properly administered - and all for your benefit.

Out of the finest elements, He chose for you a palace similar to the world in its origin, foundations, products and conformation (the body, which serves as the residence of the soul). In this palace he set five gates opening on the external world, and appointed five trustworthy keepers of the gates. Those gates are the organs of the senses - eyes, ears, nose, tongue, hands. The gatekeepers are the five senses which employ these organs, namely, the sense of sight, the sense of hearing, the sense of smell, the sense of taste and the sense of touch, by means of which you are enabled to attain to the knowledge of all that can be useful to you in this world. He also prepared for you in this palace four degrees for the four rulers. These are the brain, the heart, the liver, the testicles.

Furthermore, He placed four stores for four officers, namely, the faculty of ingestion, the faculty of retention, the faculty of digestion, the faculty of excretion. Their stores and offices are the two galls-black and green, the white lymphatic fluid and the blood. Within and without this palace He distributed servants to attend to it and take care of it. Those within are the intestines, veins, sinews, nerves and arteries; those outside are the hands, feet, tongue, genitals, teeth, nails and other similar parts. He furthermore made for you connecting intermediaries between the spiritual and physical, namely, the blood, the natural heat and the vital spirit. By His wisdom and power He joined you to this palace in a proper and well-ordered union, so that you might fulfill the three requisites which I mentioned to you. He provided you with two counsellors. He appointed for them two scribes. He gave you servants and attendants for your needs in this world. Of the two counsellors the first is the Understanding which points out to you what the will of G-d is. The second counsellor is your lust which entices and seduces you to do that which will arouse the anger of the L-ord, your G-d.

Of the two scribes, one writes down your good deeds, whether done in private or in public, secretly or in the sight of all-through any of those already mentioned whom he placed at your disposition, the gate-keepers, officers, administrators, servants, counsellors, attendants and sextons. The second scribe writes down the bad deeds in the same way as we have stated in regard to the good deeds. The servitors and sextons are the soul's moods and qualities-cheerfulness, anxiety, gladness, joy and grief, memory and forgetfulness, wisdom and folly, courage and timidity, generosity and meanness, righteousness and wickedness, bashfulness and arrogance, hope and apprehension, love and hate, pleasure and pain, pride and modesty, domination and submissiveness, and many similar dispositions which you use with your inner being.

The blessed Creator appointed these watchmen, leaders and administrators, servants,

counsellors, servitors and sextons, to listen to you and be ready to do your bidding, up to a definite period, except in certain matters which He explained to them when they were brought into association with you. Those are the matters wherein necessity and the divine decree prevail. In other words, He gave you liberty to make use of all these aids for the improvement of your physical well-being and to do everything over which the Almighty gave you control and power, but only in certain ways and under certain conditions. These are comprised in the duties indicated by our natural reason, or that are to be accepted on divine authority, or that are permitted. And He said to you: "Whatever I have put into your hands in this world and placed under your control, shall not beguile you, since none of them can contribute aught to your essential being nor take aught from it; nor will you obtain from any of them either (permanent) pleasure or pain, for they are only things that incidentally affect your body, externally or inwardly. None of them is necessary for you. Their relation to you is that of the caul to the new-born babe or the egg-shell to the hatched chicken.

If you will understand and comprehend my intention towards you and the benefit which I wish to bestow upon you, and you choose my service, and keep far from rebelling against me in the management of everything over which I have given you control, I will raise you to the highest of the degrees attained by my elect and favoured ones. I will draw you closer to my mercy and love, and enfold you with the radiance of my glory. But if you choose to rebel against me, I will punish you with a severe punishment and afflict you with prolonged affliction. If you are ignorant of the modes in which you should use any of the things which appertain to your service of me which I have appointed unto you as your duty and obligation, because you are too much occupied with your body and its concerns, with which I test you, I have appointed for you a counsellor, wise and faithful. When you ask his advice, he will instruct you. If you ignore him he will arouse you. This counsellor is the Understanding. Take counsel with him in all your affairs, for he will recommend you how to employ all your servitors who stand before you, in the right way of serving me. The reprehensible qualities will be transformed into praiseworthy ones, even as does the wise physician, making use of injurious and even poisonous drugs for the benefit of the body. If you will continue to be of this mind, and give the control to the Understanding, and listen to his advice, the scribe who writes down good deeds will enter all your lawful movements among your good deeds to which they will be added, and all your servitors will help you in my service.

But if you act contrary to his advice and incline to the view of the second counsellor who is in all respects his opponent, and use all the means placed at your disposal as he advises you, then your praiseworthy qualities will become reprehensible, even as the incompetent physician in his ignorance kills patients by his inexpert use of wholesome medicines. And the scribe, appointed to write down evil deeds will write, down all your lawful movements and enter them in the record of your evil deeds, to which they will be added. And, in either case, you will find that your aids, attendants and servitors and everyone with whom you come in contact, are complaisant and carry out your desire and thus you will have increased joy and gladness."

All this is in accordance with the justice of your Creator because, in your innermost thoughts and secret aims and purposes, you chose either to rebel against Him rather than serve Him, or serve Him rather than rebel against Him. For what is open and revealed in you and what is concealed in you, are equally known to Him. He will requite you for all that His omniscience observes in you, though it remain hidden from human beings. For do you not see that a human judge decides according to what has been established before him as fact, whether on the evidence of witnesses or by his own senses. If what was in the mind could be established for him, he would also take that into account in his decision. Since the blessed Creator knows everything equally well, it follows that He judges according to His knowledge, as it is said: "The secret things belong to the L-ord, our G-d" (Deut. 29:28).

And when the Creator wishes to arouse you and admonish you, He charges one of the servitors to leave your service; and one or two of your limbs or all of them sicken and become painful for a definite time. If you awake and return to Him, He charges that servitor to return to your service. He heals your body, and it resumes its former function, as it is said: "Fools, because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, are afflicted. Their soul abhors all manner of food . . . Then they cry unto the L-ord ... He sends His word and heals them" (Ps. 107:17-20). And when the days of your trial in this world are ended, the exalted Creator commands all those we have mentioned - gates, gate-keepers, servants and servitors - to depart from you and the bonds and connections between you and your body are severed, and you return to your first state. Your body has no movement and no feeling. It also returns to its first state, as the sage said: "Dust will return to the earth as it was: and the spirit will return to G-d who gave it" (Eccles. 12:7) : And then you will be shown the account-books, the record of your deeds and thoughts and what you had chosen and troubled yourself with in your earthly existence; and in accordance with this, will be your requittal.

On all this, the Almighty, through His messengers and prophets and His faithful law, has exhorted and warned you, as the sage said: "Incline your ear, and hear the words of the wise . . . for it is pleasant if you keep them within you . . . Have I not written for you excellent things in counsels and knowledge, that I might make you know the certainty of the words of truth, that you might answer words of truth to them that send unto you" (Prov. 22:17-21).

## CHAPTER X.

The Soul: I have comprehended your statement and paid attention to all that you have mentioned. And now I beseech Your Honour to expound to me the occasions on which I should make use of my good and bad dispositions - each in such a way that I shall win praise and commendation for their proper employment.

The Understanding: You possess many dispositions of which I shall briefly mention those that occur to me. Among these there are two: joy and grief. They are opposites to one another. The occasion when joy is in place arises when you are in secure possession of a pleasure that is enduring without any admixture of grief, and uninterrupted by mishap. Then you may permit yourself the emotion of joy. The occasion for grief arises when something occurs that causes you lasting and unceasing pain, which you cannot remove nor get rid of. Then you may permit yourself the emotion of grief and make use of it (To relieve you). Among your emotions there are other two - fear and hope. Fear is proper when you are confronted with a situation that is inevitable and the end of which will not be good for you and which you have no strength or power to avert. The occasion for hope arises when you busy yourself with the preliminaries that will bring you happiness and secure for you bliss with no hindrance to keep you from it, nothing that will separate you from it. And that is when you fulfill the duties which G-d commanded you and the result of which is good. There are two other emotions: courage and timidity. The right occasion for showing courage is when you meet the enemies of the L-ord, in order to fight them. (Courage is also in place), to endure all tribulations and trials in submission to the will of the exalted Creator and of His saints, as it is said: "Yea, for Thy sake are we killed, all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter" (Ps. 44:23). Further, "Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness; and let him reprove me" (Ps. 141:5). The occasion for timidity arises when you meet those who love G-d, so that you fight neither them, nor those devoted to His service; nor stand up against one who rebukes you for your good, as it is said: "Because thy heart was tender and thou humblest thyself before the L-ord" (II Kings 22:19). Among your dispositions there are other two: bashfulness and arrogance. Bashfulness is proper so that you do not provoke the great Benefactor who is always bestowing upon you His benefits; in whose presence and in whose power you always

are, and who exhorts you by means of good or evil happenings; or when you meet His prophets, as it is said, "O, son of man, show the house to the house of Israel, that they may be ashamed of their iniquities" (Ezek. 43:10) ; and further, "O my G-d, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to You" (Ezra 9:6).

Boldness is in place when one meets wicked people and transgressors and those who oppose the truth; also when you have to exhort men to do kindness; or warn people to avoid what is reprehensible. Boldness is proper to shame sinners and rebuke the small and the great, as it is said: "I have set my face like a flint" (Isaiah 50:7). So, too, there are two moods - indignation and calmness. Indignation is in place when you see a departure from the way of truth and the rule of righteousness, when falsehood prevails over truth and those who follow it. Calmness is proper in giving to all things their right direction, putting everything in its right place, and always keeping, in regard to them, in the ways of truth.

So, too, there are two qualities - mercifulness and ruthlessness. The quality of mercy is to be shown to the needy, to the poor and the sick; to those who live withdrawn from secular society; to one who does not know how to help himself; to the prisoner who is in the power of his enemy; to one who has lost much wealth; to one who repents his iniquities; to one who weeps for his past sins, out of fear of Divine punishment.

Ruthlessness is in place in requiting the wicked and wreaking vengeance on corrupters, as Scripture says, "Thine eyes shall not pity him" (Deut. 13:9). So with the two qualities, pride and humility. Pride and haughtiness are in place when you meet those who deny G-d and turn away from Him. Do not humble yourself before such people nor show them deference, so as not to seem to justify them or even incline to their corrupt views; but exhibit a proud and haughty demeanour, to indicate your opposition to their views and how little you agree with them, as you learn from the relation of Mordecai to Haman.

Humility is in place when you meet a man who is pious and pure, G-d-fearing, learned in the Torah and diligent in his service of G-d. So, too, if any one has shown you kindness and favour, you are under an obligation to make him an acknowledgment for it. And how much more so, if his benefactions are so great and weighty that you cannot make him a return for them. Accordingly, you should infer for yourself your duty to G-d [in acceptance of His judgment], as it is said, "If their uncircumcised heart be humble and they accept their punishment then will I remember my covenant ..." (Lev. 26:41-42).

So with the two qualities, love and hate. Love is in place towards one who is in agreement with you in the service of G-d, and through whom you will secure abiding joy at the end of your earthly existence. Hatred is proper against one who transgresses the will of G-d, stood up against men of truth and misled you to what angers your Creator, as it is said: "They that forsake the law praise the wicked; but such as keep the law contend with them" (Prov. 28:4).

So with the two qualities, generosity and thrift. The part of generosity is to assign to everything its proper place, and give to every deserving person of your money and of your knowledge, in a measure suitable to the recipient, as it is said: "Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of your hand to do it" (Prov. 3:27); further, "Let your fountains be dispersed abroad" (Prov. 5:16). Thrift is in place towards the cruel and foolish and those who do not know themselves, nor the value of the beneficence bestowed on them, as it is said, "He that reproves a scorner gets to himself shame: and he that rebukes a wicked man, it is a blemish to himself" (Prov. 9:7). Our wise men say, "He who does a favor to an ingrate is like a man who casts a stone to Markolis" (A form of idol worship to a heathen deity.)

And so with the two qualities - slackness and diligence. Slackness is proper in the gratification of sensual passions, the pleasures of which pass away while nothing remains to him who indulges in them but shame in this world and punishment in the world to come. Diligence is in place, in securing spiritual delights and in doing deeds, with the intent to attain the favour of the blessed G-d, as David, peace be unto him, said: "I made haste, and delayed not to keep Thy commandments" (Ps. 119:60).

What I have expounded in this treatise should suffice for one who chooses the right way, seeks the truth and finds pleasure in wisdom for its own sake. May G-d in His mercy lead us to the paths of His service.

AMEN.