

**** SHAAR HAPERISHUS - THE GATE OF ABSTINENCE**

(with classic commentaries)
from Chovos Halevavos - Duties of the Heart
by Rabeinu Bahya ibn Paquda zt'l

english translation by Rabbi Yosef Sebag

Level: Intermediate

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- [Translator's Foreword](#)
- [Introduction](#)
- [Chapter 1](#) - What is general abstinence and why do human beings need it
- [Chapter 2](#) - The special abstinence for men of torah
- [Chapter 3](#) - The classes of abstainers
- [Chapter 4](#) - The mark of true ascetics
- [Chapter 5](#) - Which things must one conduct in abstinence according to our torah
- [Chapter 6](#) - What scriptures says on abstinence
- [Chapter 7](#) - The difference between the early ones and between us regarding abstinence

Translator's Foreword:

The following is a translation of the ninth gate of one of the earliest of the classic mussar works, Chovos Halevavos by Rabeinu Bahya. The book has inspired many great men to walk in its ways and review it throughout their lives.

In this second revision, I added select commentaries and also checked/compared every sentence against the brilliant translation by Rabbi Moses Hyamson O.B.M., the former chief Rabbi and head Dayan of England between 1911 and 1913. The translator studied in various yeshivas under great Torah scholars such as Rabbi Dov Shwartzman zt'l (~2 years), Rabbi Nachman Bulman zt'l, Rabbi Nissan Kaplan (~5 years). He also completed a degree in physics at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst and was a research associate in nuclear physics for some time before heading off to yeshiva.

- Yosef Sebag, Jerusalem, Tevet 5778 - October 2017

Abbreviations used in this translation:

ML - Marpe Lenefesh commentary

TL - Tov HaLevanon commentary

PL - Pas Lechem commentary

LT - Lev Tov commentary

MH - Manoach HeLevavos commentary

***** **SHAAR HAPERISHUS - THE GATE OF ABSTINENCE** *****

from Chovos Halevavos - Duties of the Heart

by Rabeinu Bachye zt'l

the need for abstaining from the superfluous

***** INTRODUCTION *****

Since our previous discussion dealt with the accounting of a man with himself, and abstinence from this world's interests was one of the ways of such accounting, I deemed it proper to follow with a clarification of the various types of abstinence, and which forms of abstinence are a duty for men of torah (religious people) to adopt. For this furthers the improvement of one's religious and secular pursuits and brings peace of mind and of body in both worlds [here and hereafter].

It is proper for us to clarify seven matters on the subject of abstinence.

1. What is general abstinence and why do human beings need it?
2. The special abstinence for the followers of the torah, and the need for abstinence by them.
3. The classes of abstainers as determined by their type of abstinence.
4. The conditions of special abstinence.
5. The kind of abstinence which is in accord with our torah
6. What the torah and the books of the prophets tell us on abstinence
7. The difference between the early ones and between us regarding abstinence.

*** CHAPTER 1 ***

- What is general abstinence and why do human beings need it

Regarding what is general abstinence (i.e. the kind of abstinence which all human beings adopt - *LT*), and why do human beings need it, I will answer this question as follows: Abstinence is a term which connotes many matters. The term is commonly used but the true matter is a hidden secret. When the cloak is removed, and the seal is broken - its hidden matter will appear, and its purpose will be revealed.

Pas Lechem: the author has specified two expressions corresponding to two things which cover and hide from a man the true nature of a thing until he brings himself to contemplate on it:

The first: the veil of the physical which obstructs the clear thinking of the soul until he willfully contemplates and reviews it over and over in his thoughts. This is the meaning of: 'the cloak is removed'. Because the physical is like a thick garment, a fur cloak which conceals the light of the soul, as written "*You have clothed me in skin and flesh*" (Iyov 10:11).

The second: Pursuing unnecessary enjoyments, which is like a tight seal, which shuts and locks one away from reaching the benefits of abstinence. On this he said: 'the seal is broken'.

And corresponding to both he then said 'its hidden matter will appear, and its purpose will be revealed' - which means that the true purpose and goal of abstinence will be revealed to him.

The plain meaning of abstinence is to bridle the inner lusts and to refrain from something, that one has the ability and opportunity for due to a reason which obligates this. It is said: "the abstainer is one who has the power but does not use it".

The reason which obligates bridling the inner lusts divides into two categories:

1. That which applies to human beings [collectively] and many of the other living creatures (animals abstain from excessive eating, mating, etc. which damages them - *TL*)
2. That which applies specifically to men of torah (Jews).

General abstinence is that which is practiced for the welfare of our bodies and to keep our secular matters in good order. Examples are: the practice of kings in instituting laws of the land, the regimen prescribed by doctors for the healthy or the sick, the practice of every intelligent person to bridle his lusts for food, drink, marital relations, clothing, speech, and his other activities and pleasures.

The abstinence which applies specifically to men of torah (religious people) is that kind which the torah and reason teaches on for the benefit of the soul in the Afterlife, as I will explain later on with G-d's help.

The need for abstinence in its general sense is due to what I have already introduced in the third gate of this book. Namely, that the Creator's purpose in creating mankind was in order to bring difficulties to the soul and test it in this world so that it purifies itself and attains the form of the holy angels, as written "*If you walk in My ways, and if you keep My charge, you, too, shall judge My house, and you, too, shall guard My courtyards, and I will give you a place to walk among these that stand (i.e. the angels)*" (Zechariah 3:7).

Divine wisdom necessitated the testing of the soul [by union] in physical earthen bodies which can grow and gain mass through eating foods suitable for it. G-d then implanted in the souls of human beings a desire for the foods appointed to its body in this world in order to sustain and maintain them during the time of their union.

G-d also implanted in human beings another power. Through this, a man longs for marital relations, so that a human being should procreate another individual to take his place. The Creator granted him reward for these functions, namely, the pleasure in this.

G-d instituted on man an inclination which drives him to eat, drink, engage in marital relations, and partake of other

pleasures and relaxations, which further the welfare of his body, as written: *"also he has set the world in their heart[...that every man should eat and drink, and enjoy the good of all his labor, it is the gift of G-d]"* (Koheles 3:11-13).

But when this inclination predominates over the understanding, and the soul is drawn to it, the man turns to the excesses which bring to his detriment and to the destruction of his body (excessive indulgence/lusts ruins a man.. and as the Rambam writes: 'heavy eating is like swords to the body - PL). It is necessary because of this, a measure of abstinence from pleasures and relaxations, in order to balance his tendencies, and that his affairs be in proper order in this world, so that he will be considered praiseworthy in them, as written: *"A good man shows favor, and lends: he will guide his affairs with judgment"* (Tehilim 112:5).

Since it is necessary for human beings to practice abstinence which will further their welfare in this world by taking from it only what is necessary, it follows that there should be in this world complete ascetics which separate and cut themselves off completely from secular occupations. So that all of mankind can learn from them on abstinence, each person according to his need, and according to what is fitting for his customs and tendencies.

(*Marpe Lenefesh*: i.e. since there are many human beings whose [bad] practice has become ingrained in them as second nature. They indulge excessively in pleasures, whether in food and drink, or in bad and disgraceful character traits, until this led them to many bad things such as ruining health, or even premature death, and they deem themselves incapable of refraining from them. Therefore, G-d put in the hearts of some human beings to become complete ascetics. This ascetic from such a trait, that ascetic from that trait, etc. until he has become completely separated from it. Thus, everyone can learn from them virtue, and to see with their own eyes that they are capable of forcing their nature in whatever matter to the middle way. Similarly, there are many different trades and sciences in the world, and there are countries which excel in certain skills or resources over all others, so that they will all benefit from each other.)

It would not, however, further the welfare of mankind if everyone would practice asceticism like them, because this would lead to the abandonment of civilization and to the end of the human race, and the verse already said: *"He did not create it to be a deserted but formed it to be inhabited"* (Yeshaya 45:18).

Abstinence is one of the cornerstones of the world, and the need of human beings for it is just like their need for other sciences and trades in which some nations excel over others, for the benefit of all of mankind. Each class takes from the world according to its needs and what is suitable for it. It would not further the welfare of the world if everyone devoted themselves to only one field and no others, because the general welfare of the world is furthered by the cultivation of all fields, as the wise man said: *"also He has set the world in their heart"* (Koheles 3:11), and *"everything has a time and place..."* (ibid 3:1).

We have explained, with this introduction the concept of general abstinence and the need of human beings for it. So that they may order their affairs in this world through it.

*** CHAPTER 2 ***

- The special abstinence for men of torah

What is the special abstinence and what need do men of torah have for it? The Sages are divided as to its definition. Among them, one said abstinence is the renunciation of all that distracts one from (fulfilling the service of - PL) G-d.

Another said: to be disgusted by (vanities of) this world and curtailing desires.

Another said: abstinence is tranquility of the soul and curbing its tendency for idle imagination.

(*Tov Halevanon*: to curb the thoughts of the heart and tendencies which are "only evil since one's youth" (Gen.6:5), from all the lusts and desires which oppose the (spiritual) soul.

Another said: [Abstinence means] Trust in G-d

Another said: To limit oneself to wear only basic clothing of whatever material, and likewise to eat only enough to survive and push off one's hunger, and to abhor everything else.

Another said: Abandoning love of company of human beings and to [instead] love solitude.

Another said: Abstinence means gratitude for the good and bearing difficulty patiently.

Another said: Abstinence means to deny oneself all leasures or pleasures of the body except for what one's nature requires and that one cannot live without, and to remove everything else from the mind.

| (*Tov Halevanon*: To remove from oneself what is not necessary since this distracts one's soul.)

This last definition is closest to the abstinence prescribed in our torah, and is better than all the other definitions we mentioned.

The need for the torah observant to practice abstinence is as follows:

The torah's aim is to make the understanding rule over and prevail over all the lusts of the [lower] soul.

| (*Marpe Lenefesh*: "rule over and prevail over" - i.e. there are lusts that one cannot do without, such as desire for food and marital relations, for preservation of the human race. On this he wrote: "rule over". Some lusts are not needed at all. On this he wrote "and prevail over" - to nullify them completely.)

It is well known that the overpowering of lust over the understanding is the beginning of all sin, and the cause of all that is reprehensible. The people did not incline towards (the lusts of) this world until they had turned away from the torah. Then the evil inclination enticed them to abandon cultivating the world of their salvation. And thus, they turned away from the path of their forefathers who limited themselves to what was necessary and in the amount that was necessary, and who were contented with what was sufficient for their livelihood.

The inclination enticed them by making hoarding and increasing worldly possessions seem beautiful, by making indulgence in worldly pleasures seem desirable, and by inducing pride in owning worldly possessions, until they sank in the depths of its seas.

| (*Marpe Lenefesh*: Just like one drowning in the sea cannot come out, so too them, since (Avot 2:7) "more possessions, more worries"
Pas Lechem: The worldly enjoyments which storm up a person's heart are like a stormy sea, while the worries and pains that result from excessive indulgence are like waves of the sea.)

The evil inclination then forced them to suffer the pain of [being tossed by] its waves. This world rules over them and stops up their ears and shuts their eyes. There is not one of them who does not occupy himself with indulging in its pleasures whenever he can reach it and an opportunity presents itself. This is his torah and his religion, until he is led completely astray from his G-d, as written: "*Your own wickedness shall correct you, and your backsliding shall reprove you... [know that it is evil and bitter that you have forsaken the L-ord your G-d]*" (Yirmiya 2:19).

Included in this class of people, is also one who has been denied that pleasure, but his mind is set on it, his soul longs for it and lives for it, and he heartily pursues it night and day, as written: "*He devises mischief upon his bed; he sets himself in a way that is not good*" (Tehilim 36:5).

Both these classes are drowning (in the sea of desires and lusts - *TL*), each in his matter, and yet they are cut off and weary from ever reaching any good out of it. They are losing in their business trade (trading an eternal world for a fleeting world - *PL*). Their soul is diminished, and their choice is bad.

| (*Pas Lechem*: their outlook is confused, what they see as good is bad and vice versa, as in: "*woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that change darkness into light, and light into darkness*" *Yeshaya 5:18*)

They are foolish in their exchange, as written: "*They exchanged their Glory for the likeness of an ox eating grass*" (Tehilim 106:20).

| *Tov Halevanon*: In normal business trade, one who exchanges something for another must know the worth of what he is giving and what he is getting for it. Who is foolish that receives in exchange something which he does not know its worth, and even more so if he does not even know the worth

of what he is giving away. [How much more so if] he loses something infinitely valuable for something which is not worth anything.

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"They exchanged their glory for the likeness of an ox eating grass" - Just like the worshippers of the golden calf exchanged the service of G-d for the service of the golden calf, so too they exchange the service of G-d for possessions of gold and worldly pleasures.

The incessant call of habit overpowers them. They exert themselves and take pride in their business trade, in which they are losing (since they sell the next world for this world), and which never ceases to distract their minds from the resulting vanities, and to entrench in their hearts its never-ending desires. The more they become embroiled in this world, the more they distanced themselves (from the truth - PL); and the further they distanced from the light of truth from which they parted due to their association with the evil inclination, and the more the darkness engulfed them, and the (love of the lusts of this - PL) world grew on them.

The striving for its improvement became embellished in their eyes, and they ingrained themselves in it to the destruction of their understanding. The more this world was improved, the greater was the destruction of their understanding, until they considered its evil ways to be good, and its straying to be right, and they turned this into a statute and a moral outlook.

Parents then bequeathed this outlook to their children, their teachers aroused them in it. The masses were commanded to follow it. Their nobles vied with each other on it, until the evil inclination became firmly entrenched in them and they filled their homes with vanities. What had been strange to them became familiar to them, while the right way became strange to them. Whoever was contented and refrained from pursuing the superfluous, they considered him to be neglecting his duties.

Each one of them, did as he saw his fellow do. One who only took of this world what was sufficient for himself was called lazy. One who delayed to accumulate of it was considered a slacker. One who was contented with only what he needed was considered a weakling, while he who surpassed this amount was regarded as an industrious man.

And they praise themselves and pride themselves in it (in reaching material possessions - PL), and on its account they befriend, become angry, and congratulate each other. And in order to benefit from it, they appoint their bellies as their god, fine clothing as their torah, and houses in strong condition as their ethics.

(*Pas Lechem*: sometimes, they befriend each other to help each other attain more, sometimes they get angry with each other, and afterwards make amends - everything according to what appears to them will be beneficial in attaining more.

"bellies as their god" - the main purpose of creation is for man to serve his Creator, and to put his heart and all of his aspirations to this always, as written: "all my aspirations are to You" (Tehilim 87:7). But instead they worshipped their bellies and put all of their thoughts and aspirations to it...)

They went astray in the depths of folly, moving in the course of idleness, laden with burdens of lusts, and claiming the reward of the worshippers (of G-d) while committing the acts of the transgressors, and the levels of the righteous with the conduct of the wicked, as our Sages said: *"they commit the sins of Zimri and seek the reward of Pinchas"* (Sota 22b).

Since the evil inclination has brought most of the men of torah (Jews) as far as we have described, it is necessary to stand up to it with the special abstinence which we have described at the beginning of this gate. With the help of abstinence, we should hold firmly against the evil inclination until reaching the proper torah way for religious and secular pursuits.

Therefore it is necessary for there to be among the men of torah, special individuals, bearers of the special abstinence, who take on its conditions, and thereby benefit the other men of torah who turn and tend towards the animalistic lusts of the evil inclination. Thus these special people are the doctors of souls to the religion.

They bring healing to those who stray from the good traits and tended towards the disgraceful traits. Then the evil inclination has prevailed over their understanding, and when their occupation with increasing the superfluous of the world distracts them from the things essential in their religion.

If a man with a sickness of faith or who is sick with doubts comes to them, they will hasten to heal him with their genuine wisdom.

If it is one fleeing from the service of G-d (one who recognizes his Creator but rebels against Him due to the⁶ overpowering of the lusts on him - *TL*), they will return him to it and reassure him in it (that he will be able to return and that it is not too hard for him - *PL*).

If it is one burdened by his sins, they will reassure him of the forgiveness of G-d when he repents from his sins.

If it is one who has forgotten G-d, they will remind him. If a tzadik (righteous person), they will praise him (to encourage him). If one who loves G-d, they will love him (to encourage him - *ML*). If one who magnifies G-d's omnipotence, they magnify him. If he sins, they will exhort him to repent immediately. If he is physically sick, they will visit him and if they have more than they need of the world, they will bestow to him of it. If some trouble befalls him, they will come to his assistance.

In this world, they are similar to the sun which shines its light on the world, above it and below it, since it illuminates what is above it and what is below it, of the celestial spheres and planets.

So too they shine on this world as written: "*G-d said, If I find in Sodom fifty righteous men within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sake*" (Bereishis 18:26). And: "*Therefore He said that He would destroy them, had not Moses, His chosen, stood before Him in the breach to turn away His wrath*" (Tehilim 106:23), and in the next world, as written "*The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life*" (Mishlei 11:30), and therefore Devorah said: "*they that love Him shall be as the sun when it goes forth in its might*" (Shoftim 5:31).

You will find that this conduct of abstinence was practised by the prophets and the early pious ones in previous generations as clearly explained in their books, and as I will expound further in its proper place, with G-d's help, blessed be He.

*** CHAPTER 3 ***

- The classes of abstainers

As to how many classes the abstainers are divided, I will answer this question as follows.

As we introduced, abstinence from this world is due to one of two reasons, one is religious and the other is secular.

Those who abstain due to religious reasons. They are the true genuine abstainers and are divided into three classes.

1) Men who went after the highest extreme of asceticism, to be like spiritual beings (angels, i.e. non-physical beings). They renounce everything that distracts them from G-d. They left civilization to dwell in the deserts, the wastelands, and the high mountains, places where there is no companionship and no acquaintance. They eat whatever can be found, vegetation growing on the soil and leaves of the trees. They dress in worn garments and raw wool. They take shelter in the rocks. Their fear of the Creator drives away fear of the created beings.

(*Marpe Lenefesh*: they are so absorbed with the fear of G-d, that they have no fear whatsoever of flesh and blood. Because of this, they put themselves in danger to go off to deserts (i.e. the wilderness), a place where there are dangerous animals. For the fear of not being able to serve G-d in their homes is, for them, greater than the fear of the created beings.

Translator's note: It must be that we are talking about someone who was given special permission from upstairs since it is forbidden to put oneself in danger and rely on a miracle, as brought earlier in the Gate of Trust Chapter 4: "Either he will die, and it will be considered as if he killed himself, and he will be held accountable for this just as if he had murdered another human being...")

Their delight in love of G-d distracts them so much that they do not think of the love of human beings. They are content with whatever sustenance G-d reserves for them, and they do not expect anything from human beings.

This class is the furthest extreme of all the classes from the middle way prescribed by the torah. For they renounce worldly interests completely and the torah does not bid us to give up social life entirely, as we have introduced earlier from the verse "*He did not create it to be a waste but formed it to be inhabited*" (Yeshaya 45:18).

2) The second class, men who went in the middle way of abstinence. They are completely repulsed with the superfluous things of this world, and undertake to bridle their lust in them.

The superfluous things are of two types:

One: superfluous things which are outside of a man and separate from him, such material things as food, drink, clothing, and dwelling.

Two: superfluous things which cleave to a man whose causes are not outside of him, such as: [superfluous] speech, laughter, relaxation, leisure, watching or listening useless things, and useless musings.

This second class has renounced all things that are "superfluous", but did not deem it fit to withdraw from society. They stayed to provide their bodies with its minimum need, as is their duty. They exchanged the deserts and mountains with confinement in their homes and solitude in their dwelling. They attained both matters (abstinence and establishing the world - *PL*) and reached both portions (this world and the next world - *PL*). They are closer to the middle way of the torah, than the previous class.

3) The third class consists of those who walk on the lowest level of abstinence. These separated themselves from the world in their hearts and minds. But they associate outwardly with other people in the rectification of the world, such as plowing and sowing. They also actively toil with their bodies in the service of G-d. They realize that a man is being tested in this world, and that he is like a prisoner and a stranger in it, taken from the world of spirits and brought here.

(*Marpe Lenefesh*: They understand what G-d wants from man, and why He created him, namely, to test him in this world to benefit him in the next world.)

They are repulsed by the (pleasures of this) world and by its wealth, and they long for the next world.

They wait for death (where the soul returns to its Source of life, for them this is not death but eternal life. It is only called death due to its appearance to the [physical] eye - *TL*), and yet they guard themselves from death (danger). They prepare provisions (torah and good deeds) for the time of their journey, and they consider with what will they arrive to their final abode before their departure. They take from this world, the minimum of their food needs (the minimal possible - *TL*), yet they do not neglect anything of taking and carrying provisions that will be good for their final end, according to their ability.

This class is the closest to the correct balance and right way which is in accord with the torah than the other classes we mentioned. (since the intent of the torah is that the world not be desolate - *ML*).

ABSTINENCE IN SECULAR AFFAIRS

Those who practice abstinence in order to secure worldly benefits. Their abstinence is in their limbs but not in their minds and hearts. These fall into three classes:

1) Those who abstain from some of their lusts or pleasures in order to gain a reputation for abstinence, in order to receive praise for their faith and piety, so that through this method they will obtain their full lusts.

They are hypocritical in faith and in abstinence. Doing so, in order that men should trust them, deposit their money by them and reveal their secrets to them. so that they will be able to harm them. They are the worst class of all human beings. They are the furthest removed from the truth, and more disgraceful than anyone else. Of such people, scripture says: *"Their tongue is a deadly arrow; It speaks deceit; With his mouth one speaks peace to his neighbor, But inwardly he sets an ambush for him"* (Yirmiya 9:7).

2) The second class: Those who obtained a small amount of wealth. When they see how swiftly money is lost and circumstances change, and combined with their little trust in G-d, they pain themselves by eating little and abstaining from their lusts (to save their money). They then claim that abstinence has pushed them to live like this.

But after true inspection, what really brought them to this is their great love for this world, their zeal to increase of its wealth, their worry from poverty, and their little satisfaction with what they have obtained from this world. Of such people, the wise man said: *"a man whom G-d has given riches and property and honor, and his soul lacks nothing of all he desires; [yet G-d gives him not power to eat of it, but a stranger eats it: this is vanity, and it is an evil affliction]"* (Koheles 6:2).

3) The third class: Those who are not capable of making enough money and have only acquired enough money to live in the poorest of circumstances. They deemed proper to maintain their self-respect and subsist with whatever food they can obtain rather than having to stand to ask and embarrass themselves to beg from other people. They restrained their desires by bearing constant hunger and by covering themselves with basic clothing. They do this in order to avoid receiving charity and to not be ashamed of asking help from others, thereby becoming disgraced. But, they claim to be doing all of this out of asceticism.

If you wish to test the true motive of one who claims to practice abstinence, whether he is doing this for religious or secular improvement, test them with the conditions for perfect abstinence which I will mention, and you will with G-d's help, discern whether they are genuine ascetics or only pretending to be so.

*** CHAPTER 4 ***

- The marks of special abstinence

The marks of the special abstinence are as one of the pious declared:

The [genuine] ascetic:

* His joy is on his face, and his sorrow is in his heart.

(he receives every person with joy, but his heart is as Koheles 7: "the heart of the wise is in a house of mourning" - TL

Translator: Another explanation even if he has some sorrow in his heart, he nevertheless greets every person with joy - Rabbi Nachman Bulman z'l)

* His heart is exceedingly broad.

(to receive much wisdom, since there is nothing which troubles his heart, unlike the common person, full of lusts, his heart is constricted from receiving wisdom, since the thoughts of desires occupy a place in his heart and trouble him - PL)

* His soul is exceedingly lowly.

(from lusting anything - PL)

* He does not bear a grudge.

(he does not guard hatred towards anyone who did bad to him, since to him, even for the entire world and everything in it, it is not worth bearing a grudge on anyone, namely, to find him culpable of wrong and hate him for it - PL)

* He does not covet.

(He does not desire to take any possession of any person - PL)

* He does not speak negatively of anyone.

(since he abstains from lusts, all the more so, he does not have imaginary honor. Why then would he talk negatively of any person? For this is only due to lust for honor, namely, to elevate himself by putting down another - PL)

* He does not discuss anyone.

(since he does not desire to speak negatively of others, why should he speak of them? - PL)

* He abhors being honored.

(if others want to elevate him with some honor, he is abhorred by it and does not accept it from them, as told by Gideon when the Jewish people asked him to become their leader, and he strongly refused - PL)

* He hates dominion over others.

(He hates to be appointed over them and command them on his service, as written by Samson, who never asked one Jew even to move his staff from one place to another - PL)

* He is calm and collected.

(he does not hasten to answer before he is settled and clear in his mind - PL)

* He remembers well.

(since he does not have many thoughts of desire in his heart, which overpower the masses who lust, therefore he remembers the things which he puts his mind to - PL)

(alternatively, He remembers his spiritual accounting always - TL see Gate 8)

* He admits the truth.

(since honor and victory over others is worth nothing to him, why should he deny the truth? - PL)

* Has much shame.

(if something happens which is proper to be ashamed for, he is very ashamed, unlike the masses which due to their stormy hearts after lusts and pursuing after them, they are forced to act brazenly against each other. 'This one says it is all mine, and that one says it is all mine'. Therefore, the trait of shame diminishes and weakens by them - PL.)

* Avoids damaging.

(it is unlikely that any man will be damaged by him - TL)

* If he laughs, it will be little.

* If he becomes angry, he will not be wrathful.

(even if he gets angry, he will not hold a grudge, rather he will be quickly appeased or if he shows anger outwardly, he will not be angry in his heart - TL)

* his laughter is a mere parting of the lips.

(he does not fill his mouth with laughter - PL)

* his asking is in learning.

(he does not ask things of any man, since through his abstinence he is content with what he has. Only if he needs to

learn torah from a man greater than him, will he ask him to teach him - *PL*)

* His wisdom is extensive and his humility is great.

* His resolve is strong.

(when he resolves in his mind to do something, he does not retract. Since he deliberated whether or not to do it with peace of mind. Unlike the hasty who errs in his view and lacks resolve, and one cannot rely on his words - *PL*)

* He is neither hasty nor foolish in his actions.

* His arguing is polite, his reply is courteous.

* He acts righteously when angry.

(does not punish completely as the person deserved. Also included in this is unlike the masses, whose nature is that when one gets angry with someone, he cannot then have mercy towards someone else. But the righteous can be angry with this person, and have mercy on another simultaneously, each matter in its proper place - *PL*)

* He is compassionate when entreated.

* His friendship is sincere.

(his love for another is pure without self-interest and deception - *TL*)

* His resolution is strong.

(if he takes something on himself - *TL*)

* His covenant is faithful.

* He desires in the judgment of the Creator. (joyful in suffering - *TL*)

* He rules over his evil inclination.

* He does not speak badly about one who harmed him.

* He does not occupy himself with what is not useful.

(one who occupies himself with something of no benefit - this is due to love of recreation, which does not exist by the ascetic - *PL*)

* He does not become joyful in the downfall of his enemy.

* He does not remind to anyone a wrong which that person had done him.

* He troubles others lightly but helps them much.

* His gratitude is great at a time of bad.

(when many bitter evils befall him, he thanks and praises G-d, as our Sages say: 'just like one praises on the good, so too he should praise on the bad' - *TL*)

* His bearing is patient at a time of financial loss.

(when some financial loss strikes him, he patiently bears it and does not question G-d's judgment - *TL*)

* If he is asked from, he gives. If he is robbed, he will forgive.

* If others refuse from him something, he will nevertheless volunteer.

(even if others refrain from doing good to him, nevertheless he volunteers and seeks their good, and pays back good in return for their bad - *TL*)

* If they keep him at a distance, he will nevertheless bring them close (be friendly to them).

* he is softer than butter, sweeter than honey.

* He exhorts others to adhere to the truth.

* He speaks righteously.

(since to do righteousness and kindness is ingrained in a person's nature if it were not for the lusts - *PL*)

* He relinquishes his desires, and looks forward to his final day.

(not only does he leave the lusts physically, but even in his heart he renounces them and forgets them - *PL*)

* What he says, he does.

(unlike the masses where after a promise, when a desire later clashes with the request he will retract from his word - *PL*)

* He is wise.

(since desires dull the mind - *PL*)

* He is energetic.

(he is zealous in his deeds unlike the desirous person who is lazy since the lust for comfort and leisure overpowers him, besides the great and many lusts which he cannot obtain which cause him constant distress and his limbs are heavy on him, and therefore he is dismayed in many of his matters and acts sluggishly - *PL*)

* His soul is noble.

(he does not debase himself with low deeds, unlike the desirous whose famished desire for obtaining his lusts brings him sometimes to humiliate himself to do base things to reach his desire - *PL*)

* His covenant is agreeable.

(when he agrees with someone to do something, certainly it is an agreeable and proper thing unlike the lustful who sometimes enter an agreement to do bad and disgraceful things - *PL*)

* He is powerful in the land.

(for he only fights for truth, and the truth endures. Therefore, he has a reputation as a powerful man who wins - *PL*)

* He is free of all that is blameworthy.

* He is a helper of the poor and a savior of the oppressed.

* He does not expose what is hidden nor reveal a secret.

* His troubles are many, but his complaints are few.

* If he sees good, he will mention it, if he sees bad, he will cover it.

(if he sees something good in a man, he will tell others and praise him for it. Likewise for the opposite, when he sees something bad in another, he will conceal it and won't reveal it to anyone - PL)

* He is pleasing in his manners and pure in his heart.

(everyone likes him and his heart is pure with all - PL)

* His company is a joy, his absence, a cause for sorrow.

* Wisdom purges him.

(the study of wisdom has purged and purified him of all traces of bad traits - PL)

* Humility has embellished him

(the humility in him makes him appear handsome and noble in the eyes of the public - PL)

* He is a mentor to the wise.

(even the wise benefit from him, that if some thing is forgotten by them, he will remind them, since all of his desire is to benefit others - PL)

* He is a teacher to the ignorant.

* Every act of others he considers purer than his (due to his lowliness - PL).

* Every person he considers more pure than himself.

* He is aware of his own lacking.

(if he is lacking in some good deed, he knows and recognizes his lacking - PL)

* He remembers his iniquity.

* He loves G-d and chases to do His will.

* He does not take revenge for any wrong done to him.

* He does not keep his anger long.

* His company is with those that remind him [of his duty to G-d].

(he joins always with G-d fearing men who tend to remind a person and encourage him in the service of G-d - PL)

* He sits with the humble.

(when there is some assembly, he sets his place among the humble due to his great lowliness - PL)

* He loves men of righteousness, and is faithful to men of truth.

* He helps the poor, is a father to orphans and a protector to the widow, and shows respect to the needy.

To these marks (of a true ascetic) should be added that he undertakes all the duties of the heart we mentioned earlier in this book and which I do not need to repeat them so that this treatise does not become too lengthy. Take note for yourself.

*** CHAPTER 5 ***

- What kind of abstinence is in accord with the torah

(Tov Halevanon: In the previous chapter, he mentioned the marks of abstinence in a general sense, to distinguish between abstinence which is for G-d and abstinence which is hypocritical. Now he returns to explain the ideal kind of specific abstinence which is in accord with the torah.)

Regarding what kind of abstinence is in accord with our torah, I will answer this question as follows: The abstinence recommended by the torah is on three fronts:

1) When engaged with business relations with other people and when engaged in social interactions with them.

2) In matters which relate to ourselves alone and do not affect other people, with respect to the function of our physical senses and movements of our limbs.

3) In matters which relate to ourselves alone and do not affect others, with respect to our inner being - our traits, our thoughts, whether good or bad, that are hidden in our hearts. All these I will explain in a concise manner as well as I can, with G-d's help.

SOCIAL ABSTINENCE

The proper abstinence to adopt in association with other people is as follows:

* To receive them with a cheerful countenance and to exhibit joy when meeting them; at the same time, cultivating humility, gentle speech, and a lowliness of spirit towards all of them.

* Showing them mercy, graciousness, and compassion. Relieving them of their troubles, speaking good of them, doing kindness to them without expecting any benefit from them, and abandoning all thought of receiving anything of what belongs to them.

* To help them with what can further their religious or secular welfare, and to teach them the way which G-d¹ approves.

* To patiently bear their difficult words, and to pour out one's words before G-d and not before them (that we speak our troubles before G-d and not hope for help from human beings - TL).

* To keep away from gatherings that assemble for eating, drinking, and merrymaking, and avoid anything in association with them that would lead to rebellion against G-d, or going out of the bounds of modesty, traditional morality, or the like.

ABSTINENCE IN THE SENSES AND LIMBS

What is proper for us in the second type of abstinence, namely, that which relates to ourselves alone and involves only our physical senses and limbs. This is divided into two categories.

The first refers to what is forbidden to us. These are the prohibitions [negative commandments in the torah].

The second refers to what is permitted to us. These are all the things permitted to us of all the permitted enjoyments.

Both categories subdivide to three divisions.

(Regarding the negative commandments:) Everything that is forbidden to us necessarily falls into one of three classes.

1) That which is in a person's nature to desire these things, such as forbidden relations, theft, taking interest, eating or drinking of forbidden foods.

2) That which is neutral in a person's nature, namely, that he does not desire nor abhor it, such as wearing shatnez (mixtures of linen and wool), sowing Kilaim (diverse seeds together), eating meat and milk together, eating forbidden fat, and many more like this.

3) That which is in a person's nature to abhor and be disgusted by these things, such as eating from an animal carcass (treifa), eating blood or various types of creatures which a man would not want to eat even if these were permitted, such as the eight species of rodents and reptiles (Vayikra 11:29-30), or others like this.

It is proper for you, my brother, to train yourself in abstinence to abstain from all that G-d has forbidden to you until you reach a level that you are equally disgusted by what your nature desires as by what your nature abhors, so that forbidden relations or obtaining things in a forbidden manner (such as through theft, oppression, or interest, or the like - PL) seeking to honor yourself through lowering someone else, or holding him in contempt, which, by nature, are things people swiftly desire - should be as repellent to you as eating mice, blood, or reptiles, which your nature abhors and which your soul hates.

Tov Halevanon: "equally disgusted" - that it be equal to you, that which the Creator has prohibited, even though it is not disgusting to you, just like something which is disgusting to you by nature. For you will habituate your nature and draw it according to the commandment of the Creator. Because since the Creator has forbade them, certainly, it is proper that they be much more inconceivable to you than what your nature abhors. For [your nature] stems from the powers of your body while the commandment of the Creator is from the powers of your soul.

"honor yourself through lowering someone else" - seeking that your fellow be lowered in order that you be honored.

When you reach this level of abstinence from prohibited things without needing to force your nature and without resistance from yourself, you will belong to the class of those saved from sin and stumbling which the verse says of them: *"no mischief shall befall the righteous"* (Mishlei 12:21).

Marpe Lenefesh: even though it was originally against your nature, if you habituate yourself many times to force your nature, you will reach the level where you will no longer need to force your nature.

Tov Halevanon: until you are not pained in abstaining from this, and you no longer need to force your soul [which tended] to desire this thing.

Similarly the permitted things fall into one of three categories.

1) Taking food whereby one does not do so with intent for deriving pleasure, but because one cannot live without it, and one has no other remedy (for his hunger) besides this.

2) Taking permitted food in the way of 'overlooking' (beyond what is necessary), (that one 'overlooks' on himself by taking more than the necessary - *PL*) for mere enjoyment, but not to excess or unbridled over-indulgence, in order to compliment the minimum necessary. For example, eating good bread with decently prepared dishes, and drinking good wine in moderation, and likewise for one's clothing, home, and other requirements.

3) Taking much indulgence of the permitted pleasures. This distance a person (from all good qualities - *PL*) and leads him to also indulge in the prohibited pleasures, besides the distraction it brings from fulfilling his duties to G-d, as written *"Lest he drink and forget that which is decreed"* (Mishlei 31:5)

Thus, it is proper for you, my brother, to strive with all of your ability to practice abstinence from the permitted pleasures until they become equal in your eyes to the prohibited pleasures for fear lest you abandon your torah and neglect your duties. You already know what the torah commanded a Jewish king in saying:

"Neither shall he have many wives to himself, [lest his heart turn away]" (Devarim 17:17), and it says *"he shall not have many horses"* (ibid 17:16). Furthermore, it says: *"Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things?"* (Nehemiah 13:26), even for him, the women caused him to sin, despite his exceedingly powerful intellect, vast understanding, and greatness. Hence, [how much more so for you] according to your understanding, take heed and guard your soul and abstain (from all unnecessary enjoyments, even those permitted - *LT*) that will distance you from fulfilling the commandments of G-d.

[At least] do so in your heart and mind, if you are unable to free your body to matters of the next world due to being so fully preoccupied with providing for your livelihood and maintenance, as our Rabbis mentioned on many (great men) who would toil in matters of this world while being separate from it (in heart and mind), such as Aba Chilkiya who would work hoeing the ground (Taanis 23a), Shammai in construction work, and Hillel who would earn his livelihood by chopping trees and selling the wood (Yoma 35b).

Let not your wholehearted abstinence prevent you from working in a secular occupation, since your intent in this is to serve G-d, as we mentioned previously (in ch.4 of the "Gate of the Service of G-d" - *TL*).

But when you will be in a position to give up the secular occupation (if you have enough to live on for the time being - *PL*) - leave it and spend all of your time in the service of G-d.

But during the times you are unable to serve G-d due to the need to earn a livelihood, do not be satisfied with what we said (rather let all your thoughts and desires be to hope and pray and make efforts that G-d will free you from toiling for worldly matters - *MH*) . Because He who watches your thoughts will help you to fulfill your desire in regard to His service, as our Sages said: *"He who fulfills the torah from poverty will eventually fulfill it from wealth, and he who neglects the torah from wealth will eventually neglect it from poverty"* (Avot 4:9). (i.e. if he puts off [serving G-d] until he amasses wealth, in the end he will neglect it from poverty, namely, that even his daily need he will not have - *TL*)

It is proper for you, to train yourself to curb your senses and movements as I will explain to you:

GUARDING THE TONGUE

Begin at first by restraining your tongue and clamping down your lips. Refrain from idle words, until you will regard moving your heaviest limb to be easier than moving your tongue. For the tongue sins more quickly than all of the other limbs, and its sins are more numerous than the sins committed by all of them. Because it moves easily and swiftly, it easily completes its deed, and has the power to do good or evil without any intermediary.

Pas Lechem: One does not need any intermediary for his work, i.e. any tool, or other thing for doing the sin. For example, in eating prohibited food, the food is the intermediary, or for prohibited relations, that woman is the intermediary, and perhaps he will not have the opportunity so quickly for that food or that woman, unlike the tongue which does not need anything to sin.

Therefore, my brother, it is incumbent on you, to train yourself to restrain and rule over your tongue. Do not unleash it to speak words except for what is indispensable for your torah needs and your worldly needs. Diminish extra words of your tongue as much as you can, perhaps you will be saved from its damage, as the wise man said: *"Life and death are in the power of the tongue"* (Mishlei 18:21).

They (the Sages) began exhorting on the tongue before the other senses and limbs, because it is more difficult to control than all of them as David said: *"Who is the man who desires life... guard your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking deceit [depart from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it]"* (Tehilim 34:13). In our holy books, the exhortations to minimize speech are so numerous and well known that it is not unfamiliar to anyone.

Tov Halevanon: Scripture correlated the eternal afterlife and the good in this world with the tongue, and also exhorted on it before the other limbs - to teach you that the success of a person in this world and in the next world depends on the tongue.

If you wish to attain a clear understanding of what I mentioned of the many sins of the tongue, take on yourself to remember what comes out of your tongue during the course of one day in your association with other people and consorting with them. If you can write it all, do so. Afterwards, at night, when you are free from your matters, go over it and reflect on it. See which of them were necessary and which of them were superfluous and without benefit; and which of them were harmful to you, such as falsehood, tale bearing, swearing, lashon hara (negative speech about others). Then you will recognize your faults and you will see your iniquity.

Remember them always just like you remember the faults and iniquities of your enemies. Do not be diligent in this for a short time, so that your tongue will be rectified and your words will be few.

Marpe Lenefesh: This last statement has a double meaning:
 Either 1: You will not need to be diligent in this. For even after a short time your tongue will be quickly rectified when you do as before to remember or write down [your words].
 Or 2: One can also explain this as: Do not be diligent in this only for a short time, to remember or to write [your words]. Rather do it many times until your tongue is rectified.
 [Both meanings are intended and] everything according to the nature of each person.

And in exchange for much talking, substitute prolonged thinking, continuous reflecting, and spiritual accounting (see previous gate), because reflection is a candle which enters your heart, and the spiritual accounting is like the sun which illuminates the darkness of your interior being, to reveal to you what is hidden inside whether of good or of evil.

The tongue is the gate of this inner being. If the tongue is unbridled and does not keep careful guard over what is in the inner being, then the gate to the treasury will be open, and things will go out which you do not wish them to go out, and things will become visible which you do not wish them to be visible. But if you guard the gate, you guard the treasury and what is in it, as the wise man said: *"even a fool who keeps silent is considered wise"* (Mishlei 17:28). He also said: *"do not be quick with your mouth, do not be hasty in your heart to utter anything before G-d"* (Koheles 5:1), and: *"permit not your mouth to cause your flesh to sin"* (Koheles 5:5).

GUARDING THE EYES

Afterwards, endeavor to shut your eyes and shut your sense of sight from seeing that which you do not need, or that which will distract your mind from thinking of what will be of use to you. Separate yourself as much as you can from superfluous sights, just like you separate from looking at things which are forbidden to look at. The Creator has already exhorted on this in saying *"you shall not wander after your hearts and after your eyes"* (Bamidbar 15:39), and our Sages said: "the heart and the eyes are the two agents of sin (the eye sees, then the heart desires...) " (Talmud Yerushalmi Berachos 81). Rather use your eyes to gaze at the works of the Creator, to examine them, to contemplate them, and to understand the omnipotence of the Creator, and His wisdom and benevolence from them, as David said: *"When I consider your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained"* (Tehilim 8:4), and *"The heavens declare the glory of G-d; and the firmament proclaims His handiwork"* (Tehilim 19:2).

Marpe Lenefesh: (advanced) The author did not mention regarding guarding the Brit Kodesh, and this is a stumbling block before many. It is proper to bring here a bit of the severity of the punishment for a man who wastes seed, r"l. Here is an excerpt from Seder Yom (hanhaga halayla): The Sages said in tractate Nidah: "says Ula: 'if a thorn was lodged in his belly (near his organ) (Rashi: and he must rub there in order to extract it), let his belly split rather than he be considered wicked one moment before G-d'" See just how far the holiness of Yisrael goes before their Father in heaven! One who sees and hears this, how could he not be disdained all of his life before G-d because he has already transgressed this many times! Who out there is clean from this, and more than this... And all the more so, if he willingly brought himself to an erect ion that he is chayiv nidui

(excommunicated by the heavenly court), and all the more so still if he wasted seed to fulfill his lust that he is hated and banished before G-d, and will not merit to behold the Shechina (Divine presence in the future), as written: *"the evil will not dwell with You"* (Tehilim 5:5), and evil here refers to those who do these kinds of deeds. He is considered evil towards heaven and evil towards the public (the living). He destroys above and destroys below, damages above and damages below, woe to him and woe to his soul, etc. The gates of atonement and repentance are almost locked to him were it not that G-d does not desire the death of the wicked... these things bring destruction to the world, plagues, death, tragedies ... see there for more)

GUARDING THE EARS

Afterwards endeavor to block your ears from listening to that which you have no need for. Separate as much as you can from listening to anything superfluous. Do not lend ear to listen to what will not be beneficial to hear such as superfluous words, lies, tale bearing, slander. Separate from hearing what will lead you to rebel against G-d or neglect His commandments such as the various types of songs and melodies (which draw a man after the superfluous pleasures which in turn lead to the forbidden pleasures - TL), comedy and merrymaking, which distract you from fulfilling the commandments and performing good deeds. Rather, lend your ears to the words of the Sages who know G-d and His torah, as the wise man said: *"Incline your ear, and hear the words of the wise"* (Mishlei 22:17), and *"The ear that hearkens to the reproof of life, abides among the wise"* (Mishlei 15:31).

GUARDING THE TONGUE (from superfluous food)

Afterwards, endeavor to bridle the sense of taste, that you take of food and drink only as much as you need for your sustenance, and abstain from what is beyond this.

The strategy to adopt in this matter is to reduce the various types of accompaniments (to bread) and limit them to only one course (such as meat, fish..or the like - ML) if you can. And also to minimize this accompaniment as much as you can, and to also have intent that this (dish) is to facilitate the transfer of bread to your stomach - not for enjoyment.

Habituate yourself to sometimes eat your bread without accompaniment in order to lead your nature in this, so that it will be easy for you to do this when the accompaniment is not available (and you have only bread). If you can relinquish accompaniments which require effort and labor to prepare (cooking, etc.), and you rely instead on what needs no labor to prepare such as olives, cheese, dates, grapes, or the like - do so.

If you are used to eating two meals a day, let your meal by day be lighter than your meal by night, so that the movements of your body will be lighter during the day, and your religious and secular occupations will be easier on you.

Manoach Halevavos: Excessive or heavy eating, weighs on the body, making him lazy in all of his occupations.

Tov Halevanon: Eating brings sleepiness and heaviness of the limbs.

Afterwards, practice fasting if your body is strong enough, even if this is only one day per week. Whatever you can do to train yourself to be indifferent to matters of eating and drinking, do so. Regard what you eat as a medicine (to heal your hunger) rather than as food. Your drinking should be only water, unless your intent in drinking wine is to benefit your body, or to remove distress from your heart, as written: *"Give strong drink to he who is ready to perish and wine to the bitter soul"* (Mishlei 31:6).

Be careful not to drink (wine) too frequently or too much, or to join drinking parties, because it is a great sickness to religious and secular matters, and the wise man already spoke sufficiently on this in saying: *"Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging"* (Mishlei 20:1) (a man who loves wine is a mocker who is hot after drunkenness - LT), and regarding eating and drinking, he said: *"be not among winebibbers; among gluttonous eaters of flesh. For the drunkard and glutton shall come to poverty"* (Mishlei 23:20).

Tov Halevanon: it is the way of those who drink (wine) together to speak slander, and lashon hara (evil speech) due to their drunkenness and joy of heart, as scripture says (Tehilim 69:13): "They that sit in the gate speak against me; and I was the song of the drunkards".

GUARDING THE HANDS

Afterwards, endeavor to restrain your hands from touching worldly possessions that are not yours. Separate from the

various types of theft, fraud, robbery, and from doing any evil to any human being. Restrain the movements of your hands and think of its consequences (do not do any action with your hands quickly without being in a calm and collected state of mind - ML). Guard your ethics and modesty by being elevated from doing evil with them, as written: *"keeps his hand from doing any evil"* (Yeshaya 56:2). It also says: *"that shakes his hands from holding bribes"* (Yeshaya 33:15). Rather, use your hands for fulfilling the commandments of G-d, open them to give to the poor and needy, as written: *"you shall surely open your hand unto your brother, to your poor, and to your needy, in your land"* (Devarim 15:11), and it says: *"she stretches out her hand to the poor; she reaches forth her hands to the needy"* (Mishlei 31:20).

And likewise, you need to use them for what will provide your livelihood, so that you will be saved from borrowing and stealing, and from needing the kindness of people to support you and to benefit you, thereby giving away to them your merits, and giving your piety to he who was pious towards you (one who gives to you and does you kindness, will take for himself a part of your reward - ML). Likewise, so that you won't be a burden on people, as one of the Sages said: "G-d will have [great] mercy on His servants who separate from this world. But only if his separation has not become a burden on his friends. Namely, he engaged in a trade thereby freeing them from troubling themselves for him", as written: *'For you shall eat the labor of your hands: happy shall you be, and it shall be well with you'* (Tehilim 128:2).

It has already been said: "the beginning of abstinence is the securing of a livelihood". And it was further stated: "the beginning of abstinence is to think properly on arranging the obtaining of one's needs", which means to work to secure one's needs. (so as not to be distracted by one's need for food, and thereby neglect one's torah study and good deeds - TL).

GUARDING THE FEET

Afterwards, habituate your feet in this way, and refrain from going with the wicked, who seek the superfluous things, as written: *"Blessed is the man that walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful"* (Tehilim 1:1). Rather, hasten to do all good deeds, and to the gatherings of the wise, as written: *"He who goes with the wise will become wise [but he who befriends the fools will be broken]"* (Mishlei 13:20), and it says: *"in order that you go in the way of the good..."* (Mishlei 2:20).

Scripture has already gathered together everything we introduced on curbing the senses in saying: *"Who among us shall dwell with the consuming fire? ... He that walks righteously, and speaks uprightly; [he that despises the gain of oppression, that keeps his hands from the holding of bribes, that stops his ears from hearing of blood, and shuts his eyes from seeing evil]"* (Yeshaya 33:14).

And afterwards, the wise man gathered them and added to them the heart in saying: *"There are six things that the L-ord hates, and the seventh is an abomination of His soul; Haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood; A heart that thinks wicked thoughts; feet that hasten to run to evil; A false witness who incites quarrels among brothers"* (Mishlei 6:16), and likewise they are found in the Psalm 15: *"O G-d, who will dwell in Your tent?..."*

ALL OR NOTHING

It is proper for you to know, my brother, that it will not be possible for you to fulfill any of these things, unless you do all of them and you don't omit even one of them. For they are like a string of pearls. If you release one of them, (the string will break and - TL) all of the others will be scattered and their unity will be destroyed.

■ *Pas Lechem*: if you abandon one of them, behold, all of them will become annulled.

Therefore, strive to be careful in all of these rules, and then each one of them will help the others, as our Sages said: "a mitzvah brings another mitzvah, and a sin brings another sin" (Avot 4:2), and the wise man said regarding the close connection of all good deeds: *"Fortunate is the man that listens to me, watching daily at my gates, guarding at the posts of my doors"* (Mishlei 8:34). At first he said: *"listens"*, and after *"watching"*, and after *"guarding"*.

INWARD ABSTINENCE

The abstinence which applies to the third type, namely, what applies exclusively to ourselves - our thoughts, inner life, and our inclinations, good and evil.

The beginning of this type of abstinence is to separate in heart and mind from material possessions, except for your food and living needs. Not to engage them (heart and mind) for securing any physical pleasures, or to attain through them leisures, or a position of power, or to feel proud over owning possessions of this fleeting world.

Let your abstinence in them be for G-d, may He be exalted, not to acquire a name, not to feel proud for abstaining from pleasures, and not to save your money due to your abstinence. Do not go out of the bounds of the torah in it, such as fasting on the Sabbath, Holidays, or Rosh Chodesh (new month), or to refrain from what the Creator obligated you in the commandment of having children. Rather, your matters of abstinence should be inwardly and outwardly in line with the torah and the religion.

Afterwards, to diminish your desires for this world, as if you were journeying from it in the evening of this day. Afterwards, make a spiritual accounting with yourself as we mentioned earlier in the gate of spiritual accounting. You should abandon all thought of what belongs to other people while trusting in G-d, and being contented with His decrees and judgments. Realize that you are under obligation [to fulfill] all the duties of the heart, which were previously clarified - and that they are the pillar of abstinence from the world. Investigate them closely and bind them to your heart. You will attain through them to all good.

*** CHAPTER 6 ***

- what scriptures say on abstinence

The explanation of what is written in the holy books and the words of our Sages regarding abstinence from the world. Among them, what Yaakov said: *"[and Yaakov vowed saying:] If G-d will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and a garment to wear"* (Bereishis 28:20).

Among them, the fasting of Moshe for 40 days and nights three times. Likewise, Eliyahu for 40 days, as written: *"And he arose and ate and drank, and he went on with only this meal for forty days and forty nights up to the mountain of G-d"* (Melachim 19:8).

| Lev Tov: Hence whoever wants to ascend the mountain of G-d and to receive the torah must first purify himself and to separate completely from all matters of this world.

Among them what was said of the Nazir, which G-d calls him "holy", as written: *"All the days of his abstinence he is holy to G-d"* (Bamidbar 6:8). Because he abstained from the fruits of the vine and allowed his hair to grow [long]. All the more so for one who abstains from all physical pleasures that he has greater reward and recompense.

Among them, what was said to Aharon (Vayikra 10:9): *"do not drink wine or beer"*, and then *"to separate between holy and mundane"*, and to teach the Jewish people. That through this, G-d exhorted everyone who is engaged in religious service, to not occupy himself with anything that would distract him from completely doing the service (with devotion) to G-d, as our Sages said: "one who drank a reviis (about half cup) of wine is forbidden to teach, if he drank a chamishis (almost same as half cup) should not pray" (Eruvin 64a).

Among them: The matter of the sons of Yonadav ben Rechav whose father commanded them to never drink wine, nor sow, nor plant a vineyard, nor build a house, that they dwell in tents, outside settled places. This is the custom of those who separate themselves from the world. The Creator praised them for this as written: *"Therefore Yonadav the son of Rechab shall not lack a man [descendant] to stand before Me forever"* (Yirmiya 35:19).

Among them, the story of Elisha when Eliyahu passed by him, as written: *"And he went from there and he found Elisha, the son of Shafat, as he was plowing; twelve yoke were before him and he was with the twelfth. And Eliyahu passed over unto him, and cast his mantle upon him"* (Melachim 19:19), and Elisha dropped everything and followed Eliyahu as written: *"And he left the oxen and ran after Eliyahu and said: 'Let me, please, kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow you'..."* (Melachim 19:20). Likewise, this was the practice of the disciples of the prophets in that generation and in previous ones, that they renounced occupying themselves with affairs of this world and neglected their physical well-being by going out to deserts in order to devote their souls and minds to G-d.

Among them, what the torah has commanded us to fast during the season of repentance and seeking forgiveness, in order to curb our lusts for all the pleasures, which are the greatest causes of sin as written: *"According to their pasture, so were they filled; they were filled, and their heart was exalted; therefore have they forgotten Me"* (Hoshea 13:6), and it says regarding the opposite: *"in their trouble they will seek Me"* (Hoshea 5:15).

Among them: what is written *"neither shall they wear a robe of coarse hair to deceive"* (Zechariah 13:4), and this teaches that it was the attire of the early pious ones, and some of the other [non-pious] men of that generation would wear it to appear pious.

And what David said: *"Before I was afflicted, I did err"* (Tehilim 119:67) (i.e. before I learned the ways of abstinence, afflictions fasts, and not seeking the superfluous - but then I discovered how to serve G-d - TL), and also: *"It is good*

for me that I have been afflicted, in order that I might learn Your statutes" (Tehilim 119:71), and also: *"The tōrah of Your mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver pieces"* (Tehilim 119:72) (hence he renounced wealth - PL).

Among them the practice of Iyov (Job) who described of himself how he scorned this world and its material wealth, curbed his senses, bound his hands and his tongue from all that may lead to rebelling against G-d, chose the truth, saved the oppressed, provided for the poor and lost - like the practices of those who separate themselves from the world.

Among them, what Daniel did in praying to G-d on the lengthiness of the first exile, and his mourning on it, that he said: *"I ate no decent bread, neither came meat nor wine in my mouth"* (Daniel 10:3), and the angel said to him: *"from the first day that you did set your heart to understand, and to chasten yourself before G-d, your words were heard"* (Daniel 10:12), and the rest of the matter. This is the best of all the practices of separation.

Among them, that which the people of Nineveh did, when they heard what the Creator decreed on them, as written: *"So the people of Nineveh believed in G-d, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them"* (Yona 3:5), and similarly what our fathers did in the days of Haman, as written: *"And in every province, where the king's commandment and his decree came, there was great mourning among the Jews, and fasting, and weeping, and wailing; and many lay in sackcloth and ashes"* (Esther 4:3), and many like this in our books, when you investigate it, you will find it scattered frequently in the words of our ancestors.

Among them what Shlomo said: *"Be not among wine-bibbers; among gluttonous eaters of flesh"* (Mishlei 23:20), and *"A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to lie"* (Mishlei 6:10), and what the mother of Lemuel said: *"Do not give your strength to women, nor your ways to the pleasures of kings; It is not for kings, Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine, neither is strong drink for rulers; Lest he drink and forget what was decreed"* (Mishlei 31:3-5).

Among them what is written: *"For to the man that is good in His sight He gives wisdom, knowledge, and joy (in his portion - TL) [but to the sinner He has given an occupation to gather and to accumulate]"* (Koheles 2:26), and it says: *"The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning; but the heart of fools is in the house of merrymaking"* (Koheles 7:4).

"It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting: [for that is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to heart]" (Koheles 7:2), and it says: *"The sleep of a laboring man is sweet, [whether he eats little or much: but the abundance of the rich will not allow him to sleep]"* (Koheles 5:11), and *"for childhood and youth are vanity"* (Koheles 11:10), and *"The end of the matter, all having been heard: fear G-d, and keep His commandments; for this is all of man"* (Koheles 12:13).

Regarding what our Sages said in the mishna and talmud. These are too numerous for this book, and most of it is found in the tractate Avot. Our Sages said: "this is the way of the torah - eat bread with salt, drink water in measure, sleep on the ground..." (Beraitha in Avot 6:4), and that which is near their words: "the torah is acquired in 48 ways (ibid 6:6): (minimal business, minimal pleasures, minimal sleep, minimal speech, minimal laughter...). And in the chapter of the pious in tractate Taanit, many things teach on their great separation from this world. He who investigates this matter, will find it in scripture, reason, and in the oral tradition.

Put your heart to it, reflect on it in your inner being, you will reach it with G-d's help, as written: *"If you seek it as silver, and search for it as for hidden treasures; Then shall you understand the fear of the L-ord, and find the knowledge of G-d"* (Mishlei 2:4).

*** CHAPTER 7 ***

- The difference between the early ones and us

The difference between us and our predecessors regarding separation is as follows. For the early ones such as Chanoch, Noach, Avraham, Yitzchak, Yaakov, Iyov and his company, their intellect was pure and their evil inclination was weak. So their souls were drawn after their intellect. The few mitzvot they had combined with their heartfelt faith in G-d were sufficient for them to complete their service of G-d, as written by Avraham *"You found his heart faithful before You"* (Nehemiah 9:8). They did not need the abstinence which goes out of the middle way which the torah prescribes.

But when their descendants descended to Egypt, and dwelled there 70 years in peace during Yosef's lifetime, their lust became strong, their desires grew, and their evil inclination overpowered their reason. They then needed, an abstinence, which would be counter to their lusts, and which would allow them to resist their evil inclination. The

Creator added on them additional commandments, which reason does not obligate. This would serve as a substitute for the abstinence which was proper for them, according to their ability, and even less than that (so as not to be too much for them - PL).

When they conquered the land of Israel and settled it, and enjoyed its good, they started to seek superfluities in food and drink, indulgence with women, and in erecting buildings. The more the land was developed, the more their intellect deteriorated, as written: *"Lest when you have eaten and are full, and have built goodly houses, and dwelled therein...[then your heart be lifted up, and you forget G-d..]"* (Devarim 8:12). And the more the lusts increased and strengthened, the more the intellect weakened, and delayed grasping the correct way.

Therefore, they were in need for severe abstinence, through which they would be able to resist their lusts, as in the way of the Nazir, and the disciples of the prophets, which we mentioned previously in this book.

In later generations, the intellect has become weaker still while the lusts have strengthened more. Whenever people are occupied in secular matters, they are distracted from being concerned with matters of the next world. Therefore they need separation from this world, to free themselves from it, whenever they are doing anything of the next world.

The early ones, with their strong intellect and pure souls were capable of working for this world and also for the final one. Neither one would be detrimental to the other, as written: *"did not your father eat and drink, and do justice and righteousness, and then it was well with him?"* (Yirmiya 22:15), and it says: *"it is good that you should take hold of this, and also from this you shall not withdraw your hand"* (Koheles 7:18).

I saw, my brother, a powerful parable on the matter of separation from one of the pious, who commanded his son in it as his last testament. It pleased my eye, and I placed it as the final words for this gate as I found it, instead of ending with my own rebuke and teaching. Understand it and examine it, you will reach the good and the just with G-d's help.

Here it is (see hebrew commentaries for detailed explanation):

"Now my son, may G-d place you among those that will hear and listen, and that listen and think, and that think and know and do, and not among the people who drown in error, who are drunk with the wine of foolishness, which the evil inclination has enslaved them, and ruled this world over them, and which the lusts have overpowered them, and swayed them towards the pleasures, and enticed them to the desires, and drawn them to coveting.

And they, in their darkness are smitten, and swiftly move dazzled in their error, they hear but don't lend ear, they say but don't do (they verbally say that it is good to serve G-d but they don't do - PL). They sought the pleasures but fell in the frustrations, endeavored to reach the pleasing, but reached instead the hard suffering, their soul is tired, and their body is weary.

Their minds are empty, and their understanding is shattered. They hoard gold to be lost and fleeting silver, which becomes an inheritance to their enemies or to their traitorous wives. They erect mansions and lie down in graves. They build and don't dwell, they amass and don't spend, each man among them buries his father and his son (i.e. someone older and someone younger than himself but does not put to heart the day of his own death - MH), yet still does not do religious deeds which endure forever. He forgets his end, but remembers his desires, what will you say of a middle piece, which lost both end pieces, and of a child whose parents abandoned him?

Look my son, at whose heart the Creator has broadened, and who G-d has helped him to rule over his thoughts, opened his eyes for what is good for him, showed him the straight path, and drew him close to it. People are assured of him, and he is assured of them, he is at peace with them, and saved from them. People serve their evil inclination, but he serves the G-d of heaven and earth, who grants life, who brings death, the Creator, who is gracious, and there is no god besides Him.

Look at the difference between them (the men who serve their evil inclination - TL) and the men with pure interiors (who serve G-d) - their eyes are at rest (unlike the desirous whose eyes are always scanning to spot desirous things they enjoy and to afterwards strive to attain them - PL), their hearts are secure (they are not worried or pained by anything - PL), and in their solitude, they delight in remembering G-d, thank Him for His goodness in all their situations. They quickly grasp all forms of deep wisdom. They ripped off the veil from their eyes (the [inner] eyes of the intellect - PL) which prevents seeing the interior ways. They reached the true tranquility through their toil (to conquer their lusts - PL). Their tranquility led them to delight, their desire does not distract them, nor does their long life make them procrastinate. They are zealous to prepare for the day of death, and from what is after it. They prepare, call to G-d, seek Him, hope to Him, and serve Him, They speak truth, converse righteousness, without fear of the Sultan, and without being ruled by the Satan. They are more precious (to G-d) than any man, and more

guarded than any nation. Their splendor and grandeur is greater than all of them, honored in the houses of G-d, and great in the eyes of men. Nothing distracts them away from remembering G-d, and nothing prevents them from thanking Him. Their tongue is habituated in praises and thanksgivings, and their hearts are full of purity and unity.

This world disguised itself but they recognized it, and they tread it and told of it. Its deception was not hidden from their eyes, neither was its fraud concealed. This world adorned itself to them with beautiful garments (enticed them to pursue the enchantments of this world), but they considered it naked and empty. It deprived them (of livelihood), but it was forced (to provide for them their basic need in its proper time since they trusted in G-d - TL). It tried to befriend them (with wealth), but they scolded it. It tried to sway them, but they distanced from it. They gazed at its evil deeds, and understood its disgraceful acts, and it has no dominion over them, and nothing with which to approach them. They are the choicest of G-d. The pure ones, and the treasured of the pious, possessors of discerning eyes, noble desires, favored deeds, who dug after G-d and became rich, did business with Him and profited G-d was gratified with them, purified their hearts and became pure. They equipped themselves with fear of G-d in the path of evil and were saved. They rode the wagon of piety and arrived, met with the eternal joy, and the delight which never erodes, were spared from the assembly of judgment, and were saved from the punishments (of gehinom).

And you, my son, choose the good for your soul, before the regret which will not avail, and the worry which will never end." (end of the letter of the pious man)

Pas Lechem: "regret...worry" when the wicked person sees there (in the afterlife) how much good he lost, he regrets a tremendous regret, and on his worry and pain in paying the price for his sins, he wrote: *"and the worry which will never end"*, because this is a crookedness which he can no longer straighten out there, and a loss which he can no longer recover.

May G-d teach us the just path, and incline us to the road of salvation, in His mercy and great kindness, Amen. (see the next gate for more on abstinence)