

"A STUDY OF THE TORAT HAMIDOT"

by Jacob of Dubnow

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Submitted by

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in partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
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Digest of Torot Hamidot

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This study consists of an Introduction, eight chapters, and a conclusion. The work in general is patterned after Bachya's Hovot Halvovot.

The introduction written by Berish Plahm, a devoted disciple of the author, contains many biographical details concerning the life of Jacob Kranz known as the Dubner Maggid. Although the author only lived a relatively short time, sixty three years, his influence was profound and ~~lasting~~ <sup>lasting</sup> ~~enduring~~.

The first chapter is divided into two divisions. The first half of the chapter is devoted to an exposition of Knowledge, and its use as a means of attaining divine perfection. The author makes a strong plea for an Intuitive or Traditional approach to God. The second half is devoted to a homily on the verse of the prayer book, "True and Firm, Established and Enduring, Right and Faithful".

The second chapter is devoted to an analysis of fear. The author classifies the various types of fears, and explains their essential composition. He goes into great length in describing the fear of the Yezer Hara. He seems to possess a sense of personal battle with the Evil Spirit.

The third chapter is devoted to a discussion about love. He distinguishes between the love of the fool for the material and the love of the wise man for the spiritual. This gate or chapter contains a masterful description of the Olom Haze with its ephemeral delights.

Service of God is the topic of the fourth chapter. Man can serve God by complying with the divine commandments, the Mitzvot. Man is exhorted to serve God Lishma without any thoughts

of compensation. The author likewise posits that man has very little freedom of choice. Man's purpose on this earth is actually to achieve purification of body and soul to enable him to gain entrance into the world to come.

The fifth chapter is concerned with an analysis of faith. Man must choose to believe for he is not born with the powers of faith. The author decries man's search for rational explanations of the universe. Although the Torah does not contain any doctrines in conflict with logic, man should accept the teachings of the Torah without question and trust in God.

The sixth chapter is devoted to an exposition of Pride and its evil consequences. Man is exhorted to be content with his lot and not to be arrogant, remembering that he is but a steward of whatever he may possess.

Hate is the topic of the seventh chapter. Envy is the cause of hate. A plea is made for man not to reply to insults but to silence his tormentors with silence.

The last chapter is concerned with prayer. The author discusses the philological terminology of prayer and pleads for sincere and humble prayer at all times.

The study concludes with a comparison of the present work with that of Bachya's Hovot Halvovot.



DEDICATION

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To Abraham Aaroni, my beloved teacher and  
personal friend, these "first fruits"  
are gratefully dedicated.

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I N T R O D U C T I O N  
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Jewish history is rich in creative talents. Many men and women have contributed of their knowledge and imagination to the intellectual development of Judaism. None is more striking in its inherent simplicity and beauty of expression than the work of Rabbi Jacob Wolf Krantz. He was a simple man, this Rabbi of **Dubnow**. He was not endowed with the Talmudic perspicacity of an Elijah of Vilna. He did not possess the philosophic wisdom of a Mendelsohn. Yet his words moved multitudes, and his thoughts elevated audiences. He was a man of the people - a popular preacher - who sought to bring a fresh approach to Jewish life in the latter half of the Eighteenth Century. His works were not devoted to erudite expositions of involved Halachic passages. His knowledge was not gleaned by endless hours of laborious research. He gathered his observations from the streams of Jewish life; his concern was for the practical problems of the multitudes and not for the abstract theories of the few. He identified himself with the masses, and they, in turn, appreciated, loved and revered him.

Jacob ben Wolf was born in Zietel, a province of Lithuania, in 1741, the son of the local Rabbi. He was a descendent, both on his mother's and father's side, of a distinguished family of Rabbis. At the age of eighteen he migrated to Meseritz, where he enrolled in the local "Beth Hamidrash" and pursued his studies.

Many were the people who came to hear his comments on the Torah. Within a short period of time he gained an enthusiastic following and was soon appointed to the position of preacher. He stayed there for two years and left for Zalkev, and went from there to Dubnow. In Dubnow he resided for eighteen years and hence became known to the world as the "Dubner Magid". At the request of the Gaon of Vilna, he left Dubnow and visited him for one year. Leaving the Gaon, he travelled to Chelm, where he preached for two years and was then called to Zamosc, where he served for fifteen years. Jacob of Dubnow was no ordinary recluse, spinning theories of life in the quiet of his chambers. He journeyed throughout all of Poland and Germany, speaking to the people, living with them and becoming aware of their problems. He was endowed with a fine imagination - the descriptive powers of the poet - the eloquence and command of language of the prophet. He preached brilliantly on mundane occurrences of life and aroused warm approval in the hearts of his listeners. He was a consecrated soul, a true teacher of his people, in that, from his eighteenth year he never passed the late hours of the evenings in sleep, but would at twelve, midnight, leave his home, enter the synagogue, and lament the destruction of the Temple. He would then study until the early hours preceding dawn, and as the first faint rays of the sun were penetrating the silent recesses of the Beth Hamidrash, a silent figure would don his phylacteries, wrap himself in a prayer shawl and offer his morn-

ing devotions. Then he would resume his studies, wearing his phylacteries all day until the completion of the afternoon prayers, when he would go home and study the Psalms. He found little time for writing, as all his energies were devoted to preaching and prayer. Long after his demise, in 1804, his disciple, Abraham Baer Plahm, edited his works and published them posthumously.

Jacob Kranz did not arrange his literary efforts in any systematic manner. That which he wrote he did not attempt to standardize. He only entered brief notations and comments in a note book, which he utilized as a source book for his preachings. Neither his sermons nor addresses were ever printed. It remained for his son, Isaac, and his faithful disciple, Plahm, to publish his works. His most important books are:

- (a) Ohel Yaakob (a book of sermons on the Pentateuch)
- (b) Kol Yaakob (a commentary on the five Megillot published by his son, Isaac)
- (c) Emes Layaakob (a work concerned with the Hagaddah)
- (d) Kochov Meyaakob (concerned with the Haftorot) and
- (e) Sefer Hamidot (an ethical moralistic work).

With the latter work Jacob Kranz was more systematic, for he arranged it according to various sections, but did not divide the respective chapters of each section. ~~Torot~~ Hamidot is an ethical work, arranged in eight sections, or gates.

Each section is divided into several chapters, and the task fell upon its editor, Abraham Plahm, to complete the work by elucidating the thoughts of the author in a succinct manner. In many places the editor added his own ideas to clarify abstruse passages. Jacob Kranz did not name his work and it evolved upon the editor to select a proper title for the work of his teacher. At first, Abraham Plahm was tempted to call the work "The New Hovot Halvovoth", but out of deep reverence for Bachya Ibn Pakuda, he reconsidered his decision and gave it its present title. Not only did Abraham Plahm edit the work - he also added a preface to it, containing a biography of Jacob Kranz, and included glosses of his own works as well as those of the author, under the title, "Shiyuray Hamidot". Abraham Plahm paid great attention to style and language and the work is written in a charming Hebrew, comprehensible to the masses of Jewry. The work contains many references to literary volumes of a moralistic theme, to the great mediaeval Jewish philosophers, Bachya, Albo, Luzatto and Maimonides.

Jacob Kranz sought to emphasize Midot<sup>1</sup>, as against Lomdot.<sup>2</sup> He pleaded for personal piety, for the consciousness of the presence of the Divine in every sphere of action. In the latter half of the Eighteenth Century the masses of Jewry were searching for a new path, along the hoary road of religious expression. The pseudo-Messianic strivings of the Seventeenth Century had left Jewry dissipated, frustrated and disillusioned.

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(1) ethics

(2) erudition



The Rabbinic world of dry dialectics and subtle legalisms had lost their appeal for the masses. The masses were helpless, stunted in mind and hardened in heart. Surrounded by economic misery and political confusion, they sought desperately to discover a new approach to their religion. Jacob Kranz, influenced by Bachya and Maimonides, sought to chart new paths for their tried souls - sought to free them from the bondage of spiritual slavery by stressing the ethical precepts of Judaism. Judaism, to Kranz, was not exclusively concerned with Talmudic erudition or Messianic speculation; it was concerned with the mind, with the heart, with morals and with ethics. Here, in Jacob Kranz's book, Hassidism as a philosophy of life found expression. Decades later, this vibrant movement arose in Jewish life, emphasizing Musor, personal piety, and sincere prayer. Jacob Kranz indicated the path which remained for others to follow.

The purpose of the author in publishing the work is clearly stated in the preface. The book is to serve as a **guide for all classes of people**, to direct their hearts to their father in heaven. Through the discussions of piety and morals it is hoped that man will better understand the duties that evolve upon him in serving his maker. For is not the entire universe created for the benefit of man, the summit of creation, the choicest of the created? God selected him and put all the powers of the universe at his disposal.



Therefore, man must not fall prey to his animal passions and reject God. Man should cling to the Torah and its statutes so that he may live. In every generation God inspired individuals to teach His laws and to direct the people upon the true path of the Torah. In every age, consecrated souls sought to kindle a love for God within the human breast. The prophets, the wise men of the Talmud, the Gaonim, - all taught the wisdom of God. In the 11th Century, Rabbi Bachya, the son of Joseph, wrote a book in Arabic, which was translated into Hebrew by Judah Ibn Tibbon, expounding these eternal precepts. However, since it is most difficult for a translator to arrive at the real essence of the work and transmit its doctrines to the reader, the author penned his work to teach Israel the true values of life.

Aptly, the author compares fine manners and good attributes<sup>3</sup> with attractive clothes. The biblical verse, "and thou shalt make upon it a crown of gold around about" is interpreted<sup>4</sup> in the Talmudic manner. If man proved worthy, the Torah was a crown for him; if he proved unworthy, the Torah was a stranger to him. This homily plays upon the Hebrew root **קדש** which can mean either a crown or an attitude of aloofness.<sup>5</sup> When a man is worthy and arrays himself in fine garments, that signifies good traits of character, and when he studies the Torah, it is as if he were wearing the crown of royalty. But he who possesses bad traits and still occupies himself with the study of the Torah, it were as though he were wearing tattered garments, together

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(3) Midot

(4) Exodus 25.11

(5) Yoma 72b

with a crown on his head. Such finery is incongruous to him and he is estranged from the beautiful and the proper. Mizvot and Midot are then the proper attire of the individual, who busies himself with the Torah.

The author recognizes the differences between commandments. For the Torah contains many injunctions that, had they not been written, it would have been necessary to write. We ourselves would have followed these laws without being exhorted to do so. It does not require a law to restrain us from eating rodents. There are certain laws that are necessary for the welfare of society, and as human beings we are naturally compelled to adhere to them. Stemming from man's very essence, they are necessary for his survival. There are other commandments that man must fulfill, as the servant of God. "Let not a man say I do not desire to eat forbidden foods; let him say I would surely partake of forbidden foods, but God has forbidden it and I must follow His teachings", say the Rabbis. The author refers to the Maimonidean division of the commandments into Sichliot and Shiniot. The Mitzvot Sichliot can be deduced logically, as they are necessary for the welfare of humanity. The Mitzvot Shiniot can be arrived at only by adherence to the divine commandments of God.<sup>6</sup>

These Mitzvot Shiniot, or Midot, are essential to man in his strivings to comprehend the divine. When man seeks to

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(6) Sefer Hamada, Chapter 6)

turn to God, it is incumbent upon him to first correct his conduct socially. His heart must be pure; his actions must be true. He must first fulfill the injunctions between man and man. Only then may he hope for God's grace. As the prophet says: "Return, O Israel, unto the Lord thy God."<sup>7</sup> Before you can come to God, you must first repent, by acting ethically with your neighbor. We must analyze our actions to discover whether they are just and whether we are conscious of the presence of God in all our relationships. To gain God's favor man must first return to the moral law. It is incumbent upon man to correct his ways, his Midot, and live as a human being, not as a beast of prey. Upon ameliorating his behavior, he may then turn to God. Man must change his ways and only then can he hope to perceive the presence of the divine.

The purpose of the author is to present the proper means of conduct for all people to follow, to teach the masses in a succinct manner the proper approach to Judaism, so that they may prove worthy of receiving God's grace.

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(7) Hosea, Chap. 14.2

Chapter I

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**K N O W L E D G E**

A.

Knowledge,<sup>(8)</sup> or wisdom, is the prime requisite for an understanding of the divine. As David said to Solomon: "And you, my son, Solomon, know the God of your ancestors".<sup>9</sup> The first chapter of the Book of Proverbs contains the important dictum, "The beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord".<sup>10</sup> Accordingly, it is important to gain a clear conception of the essence of knowledge.

A living organism is motivated to action by three efficient causes:

- (a) Nature,
- (b) Habit,
- (c) Knowledge.

Every human organism is endowed by God with certain powers necessary for its survival. The desire for food, water, and sleep is a universal attribute of all living organisms. These strivings are indigenous to the human organism. These desires are the manifestations of Nature working within our breasts. The function of Nature is to arouse the body to struggle for its survival. The living organism must provide food for its sustenance, water to quench its thirst, and rest to relieve its weariness. As Maimonides states: "They perform these natural acts automatically without pausing to think about them. The body is preserved automatically through the stimula-

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(8) (Daat)

(9) (Chronicles I, 28)

(10) (Proverbs, 1.7)

tion of natural desires that are necessary for its survival."<sup>11</sup> Nature may stimulate our instincts for self-preservation, but it is incumbent upon man to set appropriate limits to his desires. Nature arouses desires; man modifies them. By over-indulgence it is possible to destroy the body, for, if a man were to over-eat late at night, he would harm himself. Nature may thus arouse the desire in man for things which can ultimately prove harmful to his existence. Thus, it evolves upon man to limit his desires and to modify them in accordance with place and time. Man does not have to comprehend the inner workings of Nature to grasp its essence. These powers are innate in the very being of man. Man does, however, have the choice to alter his nature and to acquire a beneficial, natural urge.

The powers of Nature are applicable only to functions concerning the body. They cannot influence the spirit of man. Should a man not pray for many years, he will still experience the urge to eat or drink. Nature is not concerned with the soul of man. **Nature cannot** improve the disposition of man, but may damage it. Should a man surrender himself to his natural inclinations, all the perversions of society would become acceptable to him. Aptly, the Book of Proverbs<sup>states</sup> - "Stolen waters are sweet and bread eaten in secret is pleasant".<sup>12</sup>

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(11) (Moreh Nebuchim, Par 1, pp.72)

(12) (Proverbs 9.17)



Unlike the forces of Nature, the power of Habit is not innate in man and does not exert any involuntary compulsion within him. However, should a man become enslaved to habit, it can compel him to act as if it were a very force of Nature. Once a certain manner of habit becomes habitual, it is transformed to a natural desire. Habit can influence any form of conduct, by influencing man's deeds. Habit can lighten man's most difficult task. Should man accustom himself to perform a certain act, it becomes an all-compelling part of his being, and acts as a powerful force of Nature.

Knowledge, or the ability to distinguish between good and evil, is the sole possession of man. Unlike other living organisms,<sup>13</sup> inanimate<sup>14</sup> and animate,<sup>15</sup> man can discern both good and evil. Man is the crowning handiwork of God as only he is endowed with intelligence. Man only has the ability to weigh his actions, determine whether they are good or evil. As the heart is the power-house of the body, the mind is the store-house of the spirit. The mind, through exercising discretion, can teach man the proper path of life. Knowledge differs from Nature in that it is an acquired power. The powers of Nature are congenital. Knowledge is acquired through education.

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(13) (Chay)  
(14) (Domem)  
(15) (Zomaxach)

Man is not imbued with a thirst for knowledge when he first enters this earth; he does possess a natural craving for food. Unlike Nature, knowledge does not stem from man's very essence; it can be acquired only by constant striving for perfection. Whereas Nature is an involuntary action within man, Knowledge is optional. An infant will begin to talk and utter sounds, purely as a natural reaction to its environment, without understanding the meaning of the sounds it mumbles. It depends upon the infant whether it will some day understand the sounds it emits.

Sincerity is a prime requisite of Knowledge. Man's deeds should not contradict his teachings. If the world is only vanity of vanities, why then does a man pursue the pleasures of the earth so energetically? Why does man endanger his very life to acquire a few paltry material possessions? Man's heart is empty of the ideals he professes to believe. For, were man truly accepting the yoke of the divine kingdom, then he would humble himself and approach God with humility and fear. At present he is merely uttering sounds that his lips have become accustomed to from early childhood. Sincerity and humility are thus prime requisites of knowledge.

Knowledge can be derived by the following media:

- |     |            |             |
|-----|------------|-------------|
| (a) | Intuition  | (AZLIYUT)   |
| (b) | Tradition  | (SHILMIYOT) |
| (c) | Perception | (CHIKRIYOT) |



Intuitively, man is aware of phenomena that are self evident as if they were planted within his heart. Certain facts are evident to him. Certain attributes are known positively and are established as true in his heart. Time will never influence the veracity of these unalterable truths. These phenomena he knows of his own accord.

Man may also derive knowledge by hearing it from the lips of others. Through the transmission of others he becomes aware of certain facts hitherto unrevealed to him. However, this source of knowledge is contingent upon faith in the source of information. It is based upon trust in the source from which our knowledge is gleaned.

Perceptive knowledge is derived by exercising the intellect. Facts are not known to man intuitively, or by transmission from some other person. Phenomena becomes evident only by syllogistic reasoning. Through syllogistic logic man arrives at true deductions. He forms his conclusions by deductive reasoning. This method of knowledge is based upon deep thought and proper understanding.

Tradition as a source of knowledge is dependent upon the faith of the recipient. Three classes of people may be differentiated in this respect. The credulous person believes anything he hears. He listens intently and accepts facts as true, without pausing to examine their details, or analyzing his source of information. This is a foolish method, for only a fool believes everything he hears. The Torah

has warned us against such people. Should a man arise who comes to contradict and confute the teachings of the Law, it is incumbent upon us not to hearken to his words.<sup>(14)</sup>

On the other hand, the incredulous person is stiff necked. He does not believe anything for he does not trust anyone. Like Pharaoh, he hardens his heart even after perceiving the signs of God. Both these two classes of men are displeasing to God.

The third class neither rejects dogmatically, nor accepts blindly. It accepts what is worthy of belief. This is the faith of the righteous man and the wise of heart. He critically evaluates the source of his knowledge. Should his senses not refute the fact, he will carefully examine the source. If no evil is dormant in the heart of the informer, if he did not commit any abominable acts against society, and if the matter is not concerned with his personal welfare, then the wise man will accept the testimony and have faith in the utterances. Even in a matter that is in opposition to Nature, it is necessary to believe, if the source is reliable. However, any doctrine that is in opposition to the Torah we cannot accept, no matter how valid the source may be.

Intuitively, man can arrive at a proper understanding of God. Were man to realize that he is a composite creature consisting of various attributes; were he to wonder at his simple existence in a world of intricate design, asking of

himself - "whence came I?" - he would understand how insignificant his own being is, and how totally dependent he is on God. For man does not exist through his own powers of survival. Man had little to do with his own creation. He was naught, to begin with. Man is a stranger unto himself and he exists without exercising his functions. Man cannot control the involuntary actions of his own body. Man cannot direct the rapidity of his heartbeat or the fineness of the convolutions of his brain. Man had little power of choice or function when he first came into existence. Physically he must adhere to the natural laws of hunger and thirst. Man, by himself, is <sup>a</sup>very insignificant creature. He exercises very little control over his own destiny. Man cannot predict what the next moment will bring. At best, he is a very weak and insecure creature. The fact, therefore, that he gets along as well as he does; the fact that his existence does have meaning and purpose, proves his total dependence upon the will of another, a source that endows his life with meaning and purpose. For man's entire existence is dependent upon powers other than his own. This intuitive knowledge of the impotence of his own powers is the very proof of the omnipotence of the Creator.

Creation is of two distinct forms. A being can create itself, or be created, and exist independently. Discerning man can choose between these two. Is his existence derived

from his own essence, or does he exist by the grace of a creator? It is well known that man did not create himself, for he knows very little about creation. Man was created by a power other than his own, a force that controls all the aspects of creation - the first Creator - God. That is what our Rabbis said: "He fashioned us and not we". We did not create ourselves. True intuition can be arrived at by a fundamental understanding of Creation. All can recognize that they are the products of a master craftsman, who directs his world in wisdom. A man who carefully studies Creation, analyzes his existence, and will arrive at an understanding of God intuitively, from within his own powers. For all that he will see within himself<sup>15</sup> is contingent upon the existence of a divine cause. Intuitively, man can comprehend the divine.

Traditionally, man is exhorted to hearken to the voice of the Torah. Orally, at Sinai, God spoke to His people and then dictated His teachings to Moses. It is incumbent upon every man to imagine himself receiving the Torah from God whenever he hears it in the synagogue. Man may not alter one iota from the Torah. The Torah is an excellent source for the knowledge of God, since no one will deny its existence or doubt its originality. It is in our hands today through the tradition of four forefathers. Tradition can thus lead us to a proper understanding of God.

In this respect, Jacob Kranz is a strict adherent of tradition in Judaism. He believes implicitly in the divine origin of Torah, as given by God on Mount Sinai, to all the people. It is never to be changed, and he would resist any attempts to interpret the teachings of the Torah in a liberal manner. To him, the laws of the Torah are fixed and immutable - never to be altered.

Perceptive knowledge may be identified with philosophical speculation. It is possible to prove, philosophically, the existence of God, His unity, His essence and His omniscience. However, the author warns us not to speculate philosophically concerning God. Before a man can reach God philosophically, he may spend his days in doubt and confusion, never attaining the ultimate truth. As the author of the Book of Proverbs says: "Trust in the Lord with all thy heart and lean not upon thine own understanding. Be not wise in thine own eyes, fear the Lord and depart from evil".<sup>16</sup> These verses are an admonition to us not to follow the commandments because we are convinced of their logic and understand their essential truth, but to cling to them out of fear of God. True fear of the Lord is departing from evil. That is why you must not hurt anyone, not because you are logically convinced that it is inhuman and ethically wrong to harm another person. God commands you to shun evil. Even the Mitzvot Sichliot you should obey as if they were Shimitot, leave nothing for your own mind to convince you.

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(16) Proverbs, 3.5,7



As the Psalmist says: "Teach me good discernment and knowledge, for I have believed in thy commandments".<sup>17</sup> This verse is comparable to the following parable:

Three people were taken ill with one disease. The doctor who examined them prescribed the identical medicine for all three patients. The first patient didn't ask any questions, did as the physician instructed him, and recovered shortly. The second patient had a smattering of scientific knowledge and began to analyze the doctor's prescription. Such substances as he did not comprehend he did not take, but threw away. He died of his illness. The third patient (as well versed as the second one) knew that the doctor was better qualified to judge in matters concerning medicine and despite the fact that he did not understand many aspects of the prescribed therapy, he followed the doctor's instructions implicitly. He too, survived.

This story is comparable to *three* people who fulfill the divine commandments. The common man, the general multitude, will fulfill the commandments without question. The man who seeks logical justification for every commandment, who studies the commandments philosophically, will transgress what his reason cannot encompass. However, should his faith be stronger than his reason, he will not fall into error by pursuing his intellect. Therefore, the Psalmist prayed: "Teach me good discernment, the reason being I have believed in Thy commandments".

Jacob Kranz is a master of the parable. His parables are simple, touching everyday events, yet they are clear and understandable. He is a master of style and understanding and utilizes his parables freely to illustrate his thesis. With these parables he gained immortal fame in Jewish religious thinking. Justly, Moses Mendelsohn called him the Jewish Aesop.

The relationship between man and God is that of master and servant. A servant listens to his master. He hearkens not only to the things he understands logically, but he listens to matters which are even opposed to his reason. We are the servants of God and we must not only hearken to the commandments that are logically deducible, but we must, likewise, follow implicitly the commandments which our intellect does not justify. We are not to ask why and therefore. We are to accept everything God commands and not question His utterances. As a servant does not question his master, we are not to doubt our God. Accept everything, because tradition acclaims it to be true. Do not seek to obtain logical reasons for God's commandments, - just do them, is His message to us.

While not rejecting philosophical perception as a source of knowledge of the divine, Jacob Kranz does not encourage its pursuit. He would rather we know God intuitively, or Traditionally, but not Speculatively.

There are numerous impediments along the path of true faith. A number of factors may prevent us from gaining a true knowledge of God. Man has been weaned on a material creed. He desires empirical evidence before he can accept phenomena as true. The material approach in society has been so ingrained upon our minds that we can only accept that which possesses palpable substance. Empiricism impedes our quest for faith and knowledge. For God is above comprehension by the senses. The senses cannot perceive the essence of the divine, for he is divorced of all form and matter. Empirically, one cannot arrive at God for He is totally spiritual. It is therefore at times a difficult matter to have faith in a force that cannot be limited by description or personality.

Man is likewise possessed of infinite pride in himself. He mistakenly believes that he is the cause of his very existence. His neck is stiff with the arrogance of his heart. As it is forbidden to write upon a parchment of the Torah, unless it be artificially softened and made fit for writing, so it is improper to inscribe the true knowledge of God upon the heart of man, without first softening it of its vain glory and ill-tempered arrogance. It is incumbent upon man to divorce himself from pride in his being and to evaluate himself properly. What is man doing on this earth - who brought him here, and what is his ultimate destiny? When man will observe the infinite beauty of the world, and the limitless grandeur of Nature, he will recognize that he is but a mendicant standing



upon the threshold, seeking for alms. Man needs the compassion of heaven, second after second, to survive. Man should belittle his worth in his own eyes and plead for sustenance from God. As a penury-stricken individual does man knock upon the gates of heaven.

A contrite heart is an indication of subservience to God. Man should not covet any material possessions. He should only seek to satisfy his involuntary natural desires. As Abraham said: "I am dust". How can man covet physical objects after knowing the littleness of his worth. At the same time the author states:- let your life be precious to you. Do not destroy what is given to you. Utilize your life to glorify God's name by serving him faithfully. At all times accept willingly the yoke of heaven. Give thanks to God for the past and seek his mercy for the future. Only with a contrite heart and a spirit of humility can you know God. Look upon yourself and examine your body. The human body is very complex in its composition, being derived from the four elements - earth, air, spirit and water. From these elements God created the body. The body is divided into various functional organs. Every organ, in turn, is divided into various limbs and muscles, each having a distinct name and a singular purpose. Should one limb be lacking, life can become very tiresome for an individual. Should a number of them fail to function, the human being will die. Should one vital organ be lacking, a man will die. Man's very existence depends

upon the proper functioning of these organs. How can you therefore take any pride in yourself and in your existence if death is always lurking in the corner? Your very existence is contingent upon powers outside of yourself, organs and muscles that demand constant attention. Should you neglect your body you will most certainly die. Therefore, be of humble spirit, and a contrite heart, for the past is gone, and the future may not come to pass. Hope only unto the Lord.

As the body is a composite of various forms, so is time a composite of essences - twenty-four hours, seven days, four weeks, twelve months, one year, etc. The time man spends on this earth is at best limited to seventy or eighty years. Man should therefore apportion his time accordingly. Time is not productive spontaneously. It is incumbent upon you to perfect time. A limited amount of time is put at man's disposal. He must utilize it wisely by serving God every hour. By serving God all the time that is allotted to him, he will grow wise in spirit and in understanding, enabling him to reach the stage of divine perfection - Ruach Hakodesh.

B. JACOB OF DUENOW, AS HOMILETICIAN

In the second part of this "gate" the author presents a homily on the verse, "True and Firm, Established and Enduring, Right and Faithful"<sup>18</sup> This verse is most applicable to the discussion of this chapter, the knowledge of God.

EMES - TRUE

There are many forms of ascertaining truth. An object may be true in its own essence or of its own accord. The truth of the matter is self-evident. God implanted a natural instinct within man to recognize truth without the necessity of requiring any further proof. Innate truths represent the highest form of truth. A matter may likewise be proven as true through some miracle, or proof, or it may be accepted without any need of proof. The belief in God and Moses, His servant, is innate in man and does not require proofs to substantiate it. It is axiomatic that there cannot be any creation without a Creator. Without any proofs the innate recognition of truth can instill faith within the human heart. As the author of the Nineteenth Chapter of Psalms says: "The heavens declare the glory of God - the Law of the Lord is whole ..." Scripture tells us about the glory of the sun and then enumerates the glory of the Torah, implying that both are true. As the sun sheds its light upon the earth, the Torah instills its light into the spirit of man. As the eye is the recipient of light, the mind is the recipient of

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(18) Singer Prayer Book, p. 51

wisdom, the Torah being the fountain of true knowledge. The Torah is the repository of all the truths of Judaism. Therefore, the Torah does not require any additional proofs as to its authenticity. The Torah contains such truths that are evident by a mere cursory glance. The Torah contains the sum total of all human knowledge, is an axiomatic truth, and does not require any further justifications, as to its veracity.

#### VEYAZIV - FIRM

The author derives his homily from the verse, "Then David put garrisons in Arms of Damascus"<sup>19</sup>, making a play upon Veyaziv and Nizavim, both having the identical root of NZV. He interprets the word to signify the hegemony of the Torah in our midst, as the garrison ruled Damascus. All our desires are nil, in comparison with the Torah. Many of its injunctions are in opposition to natural desire. However, without the Torah it would be impossible for us to survive. The Torah may proscribe an act and we are bound by its ruling. The Torah has a universal applicability regarding space and time. We are always, anywhere, bound by the rules of the Torah. Hazavah, the noun of NZV, connotes strength, the strength gathered from dominion. We are governed by the dictums of the Torah and God is our Naziv, our Ruler. We dare not alter one iota from the Torah.

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(19) Samuel, III.8.6

Thus, the author again affirms the immutability of the Torah. Liberal Judaism does not recognize this immutability of the Law; it regards the law as flexible, constantly adaptable, always in a **process** of flux, according to the demands of the people.

#### VENACHON - ESTABLISHED

As the Midrash states all deeds of creation require perfection, <sup>(20)</sup> **Wheat** has to be ground into flour to provide bread. Likewise, objects that are the product of man's productive genius require perfection and modification. Customs and religious practices require perfection. Should a man have any doubts he should seek the counsel of a wise man, who will aid him, as there is nothing in life the Torah does not allude to by implication. It is incumbent upon the prophets and Rabbis to interpret these implications for the people, thus performing the law and establishing its supremacy.

#### BEKAYOM - ENDURING

The author quotes the Talmud in commenting upon the verse, "Hear, O Israel, today you have become unto me a people", was the Torah given to them on that day? Forty years were to elapse before they were to be the recipients of the divine law. They interpret the verse as teaching us the enduring capacities of Torah. Torah is beloved by those who study it, as if it

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(20) Bereshith Rabbah 11



were a new document, just presented to them a few days ago.<sup>21</sup> It is customary for an object to lose its popularity and desirability with the passage of time, but the Torah retains its popularity and importance through all ages. The Torah does not become frail with age; it is of an enduring worth and awakens the respect of man forever.

VEYASILAR - RIGHT

The author quotes Albo's Ikarim in maintaining the primacy of reason within the Torah. The Torah does not contain any elements that are in opposition to axiomatic principles of Logic. The words of the Torah are right. Jacob Kranz does recognize that there are divisions within the commandments. Some commandments can be readily understood by everyone. Their logical necessity is self-compelling. Some commandments can only be understood by a few qualified wise men. However, all commandments are rooted in logic and can be reasonably justified. Despite the fact that Jewish intellectual thought is widespread, encompassing many lands and many cultures, there is only one people and one Torah; there is an inherent unity of subject matter despite the geographical diversity. The Ikarim and the Sherashim are all one for they all are opposed to wickedness, and exhort man to truth. Contradictions may not be found in the Torah; the Torah is right.

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(21) Berachot 63b

## VENEMON - FAITHFUL

Man cannot live without faith. If man would only accept what he can perceive as true, or what he has ascertained as true, it would be impossible for him to eat anything that he hasn't already eaten and found wholesome, or go anywhere he hasn't yet traveled and found to be safe.

In every sphere of life we do rely upon faith. We have faith that the food we consume is wholesome, the water we drink is pure, and the path we traverse is safe. Faith is a requisite for life. Without faith man cannot live fully and concretely.

The criteria of faith are:

- (1) The matter should be worthy of faith
- (2) The source should be beyond reproach
- (3) The source should be an intelligent one.

All these qualifications are true in the Torah. Therefore, a man of faith will not doubt the veracity of the Torah, whether written or oral. A faithful Jew will accept all the teachings of the Torah, without any hesitation.

These homilies have proven to be a valuable source of the author's attitude toward Torah. As we can see, he regards Torah to be of Divine origin, accepts every law without hesitation, and discourages any speculation as to its origins, although he does insist that the Torah cannot contain anything which contradicts reason. Jacob Kranz regards the Torah as fixed and immutable and urges us to accept its teachings on faith alone.

CHAPTER II

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F E A R



Scripture states, "The beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord".<sup>22</sup> Fear is the attribute of a wise man, differing from the fool who fears nothing. "A wise man feareth and departeth from evil; but the fool behaveth overbearingly and is confident".<sup>23</sup> A fool will fear God only when evil will be upon him and afflict him, whereas, a wise man will attempt to prevent affliction by thwarting the powers of evil. It is natural for a living organism to fear destruction. But a wise man will be aware of evil in its potential form and will fear it long before it is concretized into grim reality. The fool lives only for the present and is heedless of the evils of tomorrow. A wise man is innately good and the committing of evil by him is very exceptional.

Fear of evil may be due to extrinsic considerations.

A man is motivated to fear God because he recognizes that God is the governing force of the universe and controls the destinies of all living creatures. He will therefore choose to do good, so that he may be rewarded by this all-powerful God, who will spare him from any afflictions. A man may also fear God intrinsically. He comprehends that God reigns supreme in his heart; he recognizes the sublime greatness of God and therefore gladly fulfills all his injunctions, without any expectations of a reward. He will fear God at all times, without any hope of compensation. "O, fear the Lord, ye His holy ones for there is no want to them that fear him" says the Psalmist. Even when they

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(22) Proverbs, Psalms 111

(23) Proverbs, 14.16

do not want, and possess all they may desire, His holy ones will fear Him. Through this medium of ever-constant fear of God the wise man may be differentiated from his neighbors. Since he comprehends the true essence of the Torah, he shuns evil and seeks to do good for the glory of God and not for his personal advancement.

Fear may be divided into the following categories:

- (1) Applicable to all men at all times.
- (2) Applicable to all men at various times.
- (3) Applicable to some men at all times.
- (4) Applicable to some men at some times.

The fear of God is applicable to all men at all times, whenever man acknowledges the dominion of God on earth. Whenever man reminds himself that he is but a servant of God, the fear of the Lord will rest in his heart. Endowed with a contrite heart and an humble spirit, man will stand before God, trembling before Him; the fear of the Lord upon his face. Fear of God is all-inclusive. It lacks any limits of space or time; even in the privacy of his own chamber man will fear God. The fear of God may rest upon all man's limbs, his clothes, his very being. No special limb is set aside for the fear of God. Fear of God knows no limitations. However, one special place is set aside for the fear of God to manifest itself in a more distinct pattern and that place is the synagogue, where "Torah" and "Tefila" are uttered every morning. When man enters the synagogue, he can best express his

respect for God in a humble and pious fashion.

Every living organism possesses an instinctive fear of death and a desire to prolong its life. Who is so brave as not to fear death? The fear of death is innate in man, and stems from the very day he is born. Both life and death emanate from the identical source - birth. It is therefore conceivable that a man will not admire this world at all and will not pay any attention to the vagaries of life, for the shadow of death hangs, as the sword of Damocles, over his head. This world is only of a temporary nature and he must be prepared to leave at any moment, without taking any of his hard earned possessions. A man endowed with such an all-compelling fear of death will lead a very gloomy and unhappy life.

Since death is a sudden phenomenon and may arise at any moment, it is incumbent upon the man who is aware of its possibility to be prepared, at all times. Man should provide spiritual sustenance for the long voyage. "In the hour of man's departure, neither silver nor gold nor precious stones nor pearls accompany him, but only Torah and good works".<sup>24</sup> Therefore, man should accumulate a spiritual reservoir of good deeds. Man must remember that only life is optional; death is certain. Man does not know the exact time of his demise; therefore, it is prudent for him to control his passions and perform good deeds in the present, for the morrow may never come.

The fear of the "Yezer Hara" is also applicable to all men, at all times. It is incumbent upon every man to fear the evil spirit. Man is to wage war constantly against his evil inclinations. Were it not for divine grace, the evil spirit would overpower man daily. However, **man must not** constantly rely upon this divine compassion, but must, himself, purify his thoughts and inclinations. Man must remove all concern for worldly possessions from his mind and wage war against the Yezer Hara, instead. There is not a man in the world who is not affected by the malicious designs of the evil spirit. For the more astute and the more clever an individual becomes, the greater his evil spirit grows. No man is secure from the onslaught of the Yezer Hara. Not only those who sin fall prey to his wicked designs, but even those without blemish must exercise extreme caution. As it is possible for the evil spirit to lead a man astray through sin, it is also possible to make him stumble by the fulfillment of the commandments. Every commandment has a set time and season. A man who observes the proper "Mitzvah" at the correct time fulfills the commandments. Should he not observe the commandment at its proper time, in its correct setting, the "Mitzvah" is reckoned to him as a transgression. "Again it fell upon a day that the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord - Satan also among them to present himself before the Lord."<sup>25</sup> In the midst of the sons of God who perform his commandments, Satan was to be found. Likewise, evil may be an integral element of good. Man must, therefore, exercise great caution, whenever fulfilling the commandments. Man, by changing any detail of the

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law may commit a sin and be snared by the "Yezer Hara".

There are many characters in the Bible who erred egregiously when they believed they were doing good. Hezekiah, the King, exhibited the implements of the Temple to Baladan, committing a great error, although he feared the Lord and thought he was doing good.<sup>26</sup> Saul, the King, thought he was serving God by sacrificing the animals of the Amalekites, only to discover from the prophet Samuel that he had sorely transgressed the law.<sup>27</sup> The "Yezer Hara" deceived us by making a transgression appear to us as a "Mizvah". The evil spirit dons the cloak of charity and impels man to do evil. Whenever a man fulfills the commandments to gain the approbation and the esteem of his neighbors, he is unconsciously donning the garments of the Yezer Hara, though, in his mind, he may be performing good.

The Yezer Hara can have dominion only upon man's expressed desire. The evil spirit cannot incite a man to act when he lacks the desire to perform that particular act. The evil spirit can only arouse the desire and strengthen it - man can quench it. The Yezer Hara cannot endow man with a new inclination that is opposed to his very nature and essence. He leads men to desire and temptation. Should a man covet wealth and have a strong desire to accumulate riches, the evil spirit will persuade him to rob and steal, to achieve his ends.

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(26) Isaiah 39

(27) Samuel I 15)



To withstand this temptation, and to ascertain the proper mode of conduct, man has but to look into the Torah, to determine whether his actions are in congruence with its teachings. Man may also have faith in those individuals who have purified themselves from all material dross, who lead a totally spiritual existence, and whose actions are governed by their powers of wisdom, often rising close to the level of prophecy. These consecrated souls may<sup>he</sup> consult as to the correctness of his behavior.

Man does have the freedom of choice of avoiding evil by following the precepts of the Torah and the teachings of the wise men. On judgment day, not only evil deeds will be accounted for, but even evil thoughts will be considered, to man's detriment. The purpose of life is to avoid the snares and pitfalls of the Yezer Hara, by observing the commandments of the Torah.

There is a fear of God that concerns all men during a limited period, the ten days of Penitence. At this time man should accentuate his piety and fear the Lord to a greater degree than all other days. These are the days of penitence and only through prayer and charity is it possible for man to avoid the evil decree. The Shofar is sounded during this time - to awaken man to repent for his evil deeds, and to forsake his wicked thoughts.



Fear that concerns some men at all times is related to two classes of society, the pious and the wealthy. The fear of the righteous and the charitable, the leaders of the people, has to be exceedingly great at all times. God is more demanding and more exacting with them, than with all others. Moses said to Aaron concerning the death of Nadab and Abihu: "Through them that are <sup>28</sup>nigh unto me I will be sanctified". God's judgment of an individual varies in an inverse relationship to his social and economic position in society. The more pious a man is, the stricter God becomes with him, and the greater is the punishment upon his transgression of the law. Even in minute and infinitesimal matters the pious must exert extreme caution. As the Talmud states: "A wise man with grease on his garments should be put to death".<sup>29</sup> The pious man serves as a model of conduct for others, and therefore he must be most exacting with himself. For a man who is so blessed by God as to be a spiritual leader of his people must be willing to exert the added effort of carefully scrutinizing all his actions. Likewise, whenever one of the masses sins, it is not very evident, and the transgression is of no consequence to the entire household of Israel. Should a spiritual leader transgress the law, his conduct may prove harmful to the entire community, for he is looked upon as an exemplar of truth. Should the pious man sin, he desecrates the name of God, for the multi-

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( 28) Leviticus 10.3

(29) Shabbas 114a

tudes will observe his evil ways and imitate them. The "Zadik" is the spiritual example for all others, and he must therefore exert the utmost caution in his daily relationships. A pious man desecrates the name of God whenever he treads four cubits without donning his phylacteries, or by ordering meat at the butcher and not paying for it. Socially and morally, a pious man must be concerned with his conduct. Even unintentional sins are likened to premeditated violations for the pious man, since the rest of the people will follow suit in their conduct, and thus the unintentional sin will make the multitudes sin intentionally. Repentance cannot mitigate the sins of the pious. Only death will redeem them from their transgressions. A pious man's sins are of greater consequence for him since he is a more sensitive soul and can easily be hurt. His soul emanates from a very high source and is of such a delicate nature that it can be damaged by everyday phenomena, which are accepted as proper by the multitudes. The whiter the garment, the more readily a spot can be noticed.

A man who has risen to this level of perfectibility is very precious in the eyes of God, but he must fear Satan constantly, as he lurks in the shadows to spread his traps before him. He must, therefore, be very strict with himself and conduct himself accordingly.

The wealthy man, who has attained prominence and honor, likewise has to fear God at all times. He must do additional good deeds to please the Lord. He should so conduct himself as to be worthy of this blessing from God. He must devote his time to charitable causes and seek to alleviate the distressed and the sick. The rich man who does not aid the cause of the poor arouses the displeasure of God and it is reckoned as a sin to him.

Fear is at times appropriate to some men at various intervals. "If a man is in physical pain, let him examine his deeds", says the Talmud.<sup>(30)</sup> Affliction is the great index of God; it is the means of communicating God's displeasure to us. If man's heart is weary with pain, man must not attribute that fact to pure chance. He must realize that it is a sign of God's displeasure and he must atone for his misdeeds and seek God's mercy to make him well again. "For a man will not cut his finger without it having been previously ordained in heaven".<sup>31</sup> Evil is visited upon man to induce him to alter his ways. Suffering is thus the divine call for man to repent and live.

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(30) Berachot 5a

(31) Chulin 7.b

CHAPTER III

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L O V E

Fear is the attribute that leads man to love God.

Fear is a necessary prerequisite for love and reverence.

Man cannot love God with all his heart without first fearing and respecting Him.<sup>32</sup>

Man is a dual creature. He is composed of outer elements and of an inner psyche. He is both spirit and flesh simultaneously. As the body consists of certain designated organs, so does the spirit of man consist of a number of predetermined emotions. Certain dominant tendencies are implanted within the spirit of man. He can rejoice or be sad, hate or love, fear or hope, be weak or strong, be timid or arrogant. These emotional tendencies form an integral unit of the composite organism called man. The emotions are subject to change and not all people have similar emotional trends. There are charitable people and humble people. But man has the ability to control his emotions through the exercise of his DAAS, his intelligence. Emotions can be governed by reason. Reason is supreme in man and can control his emotions. By the exercise of his intelligence man can control his habits and emotions. When man can understand that love is good and hatred is evil, he will choose love. Thus, reason is the all supreme governing unit of man, the compelling force of man's emotions. Love and hatred are the two basic emotions

of man, all others being derived from them. Happiness is the direct result of attaining what one loves, and misery, the consequence of having to bear with what one despises. God chose Love for us as the proper emotion to govern our psyche, since love is the source of all good traits in man. God thus commanded us to love Him and to love our neighbors.

The emotion of love is governed by the intellect and is directly dependent upon it. As the intellect can be divided into three distinct units - the wise, the foolish and the pious - similarly love can be classified as - the love of the wise man, the love of the fool and the love of the pious.

The foolish man loves material possessions. The fool can only assimilate sensual phenomena. He can only understand matters in their physical settings. Whatever his senses tell him are good, he declares to be good. Only the gratifications of his material desires can make him happy. The fool does not realize that these matters are like a wisp in the wind, that life here is at best transitory, that the world is not our domain, and that, upon death, he must abandon all his material possessions. His material treasures will exist long after he is reduced to ashes and earth. The foolish man will thus spend an entire lifetime accumulating treasures that others will enjoy after his death. Man's strivings to obtain the pleasures of this world are in vain, for he can possess, permanently, only



what he alone is capable of consuming; the rest he must leave behind. Let him then spend his time accumulating spiritual treasures which shall be his forever.

This temporal world (olom haze) is not worthy of love, for it passes by so quickly. Man cannot control the destiny of this world. Olom haze is like the dew of the grass that disappears with the advent of day. Man cannot guard his portion in this world. There are many things in this world over which man cannot exercise one iota of control. Fire may consume all the wheat that a man may have stored, or the currency he has hoarded may be devalued by a new administration. Man may marry and his wife may prove to be barren. Man can rely on very little in this world. His fate is governed by forces beyond his jurisdiction. Man cannot look forward to a secure future, for chance may play havoc with all his precious plans. Man can only be thankful for the past. As long as he lives, nothing is certain. How then, can man delight in material possessions, living in an insecure world, unaware of what the morrow may bring? Only a fool can love what is not his own. All things that man possesses are but lent to him and may be recalled at any moment. "Call no man secure till after his death". Perhaps Jacob Kranz was aware of the Greek aphorism, "Call no man happy till he dies", which similarly is concerned with man's insecurity in the world, no matter how secure his material position may appear.<sup>33</sup> A wise man will therefore not

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(33) Burnet, Aristotle on Education, p.34, footnote 1

love anything as replete with insecurity as "olom haze".

Another reason for ceasing to love this world so fully, is that man can never satisfy his passions in this world. No man can satisfy all his desires and he thus is doomed to frustration. It is impossible for man to acquire absolute physical concretization of all his desires. His desires increase in direct proportion to his achievements, and thus man can never be satisfied. The more man strives for perfection the greater his frustrations become. The more complex life becomes, the more manifold his desires become. When man is single his desires are relatively simple, but when he marries his desires multiply. He then has to provide a home for himself; clothes for his wife, children and servants, and furniture for his home. The more man labors the less he can rest. The more he acquires, the less satisfied he is. It is fully impossible for man to completely satisfy his desires, to assuage his passion for possessions. Man, at best, is like a seed imbedded in a fruit. Man entered this world to suffer, to be tempted, and to find a little peace. Although the seed is very small in comparison to the fruit, it is impossible for the fruit to exist without the seed. Evil is big and powerful, good is very small and minute. But good keeps man alive and makes possible his survival. Therefore, man should cease striving for the fruits of this world. Remember, man can never achieve the fullness of material possessions, man can never satisfy his thirst for more. Let man be content with

his lot and bear his burdens cheerfully, neither fretting nor complaining. For it will profit man not to attempt to satisfy his desires, for they are incapable of satisfaction. It is not worth while for man to lose his life pursuing the pleasures of this world, which evanesce so quickly.

The merit of this world is only an optical illusion. Viewed from a distance this world appears to be the best of all possible worlds - its joys the most coveted by man. Actually, the wise man will understand that little remains after all his strivings for wealth and power. There is psychologically little difference between the rich and poor. Both must eat and drink. A poor man may only consume a dry crust of bread, but it may be as palatable to him as the rich man's delicacies. The rich man's morsels lose their appeal, once he has become accustomed to them. His delicacies become to him as a poor man's crust of bread. Once man becomes accustomed to luxuries, they automatically lose their value and appeal. Once he becomes accustomed to wearing fine clothes, he pays little attention to them and they become as valueless, in his eyes, as the poor man's ragged apparel. Even a luxurious home becomes commonplace after living in it for many years. Man grows accustomed to luxuries, thereby losing his appreciation of them, for the important factor in man's appreciation of commodities is their scarcity. The scarcer an article becomes the more value is attached to it. Scarcity increases while abundance diminishes value. Once a limit is reached in the

appreciation of a commodity, or service, its value declines steadily until it loses all appeal. It is interesting to note that in some vague manner Jacob Kranz is referring to the marginal theory of value and the concept of diminishing returns of classical economic theory. Here, too, increasing units of labor and capital produce decreased value and price. The choicest possession, therefore, is the scarcest, or the one very difficult to obtain - as, for example, diamonds and precious stones, whose scarcity makes them valuable. Psychologically then, when a man attains a coveted object, he is overjoyed the first few days. He is so contented that he would go without food. After the first twenty days he is no longer as enthused - but will mention the coveted object from time to time. After many days he will completely forget it. The continued possession of a commodity tends to decrease its appreciation and increase its worthlessness. When man thus becomes accustomed to fine foods he loses delight in their consumption and they become unto him as a parched crust of bread consumed by the poverty stricken. Conversely, the continued lack of a commodity tends to increase its value and instill a desire within man to attain such commodity. However, those who constantly live under an economy of abundance eventually lose all interest in commodities, while those who are constantly exposed to a scarcity economy, value greatly the commodities they do attain, and a dry crust of bread is comparable to them as meat and wine.

Joy and sorrow prove good criteria of evaluation in this matter. It is possible to be happy without possessing many things. When a poor man finds bread and appeases the hunger that gnaws at his bowels, he is as happy as the rich man who delights in his wealth. It is likewise conceivable for a rich man to be very sad and depressed. In comparing the emotional attitudes of the rich and the poor, over a set period of time (a week or a month) one will find that the poor man will rejoice as much as the rich man. A poor man will find joy in being appointed the beadle of the local synagogue while a rich man will be grieved over the receipt of a letter omitting the customary praises of the recipient. Accordingly, the "Scarcity of Prevalence"<sup>34</sup> increases the importance of utilities, totally out of proportion to their normal worth and elevates the inferior to a superior position. Conversely, the "Multitude of Prevalence"<sup>35</sup> decreases the utility of an object and reduces the superior to an inferior level. The all-embracing emphasis upon wealth is found only among the poor. The poor man looks at the rich man from a distance and envies his lot. The rich man, who has grown accustomed to wealth, and does not find any more satisfaction in it, looks upon himself as though he were at a lower social level. Riches are sweet and desirable as long as they are unattainable. Once objectives are concretized, they become meaningless and lose all desirability.

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(34) Miyu + Hamziyot

(35) Ribuy Hamziyot



Man's true purpose in this universe is to purify himself for entrance into the next world, Olom Habo. By suffering and temptation, man removes the material dross of his being and is worthy of gaining admittance to the perfect world of the Olom Habo. This is the purpose of life - to extract good out of evil - to prevail above affliction, and by so doing to enter the kingdom of God.

The wise man's love is for the eternal and not the transitory. He will love that which grants him eternal life. A wise man will love according to the dictates of his reason and understanding. He will only rejoice in the study of Torah and in the fulfillment of its commandments. He will not pursue a shadow as if it were substance. The wise man will not cling to material pursuits. He will dedicate himself to the study of Torah and to doing good without thoughts of recompense.

The love of the pious is for the fellowship of God. The pious understand that their existence is dependent upon the grace of God. The sole source of their being is the compassion of the Lord. It is axiomatic that God desires to benefit his creatures more than they themselves wish, and He does not require man's counsel to do so. It is incumbent upon man to cease desiring the pleasures of this world and refrain from telling God what to provide.

Man is also endowed with a natural filial love for his children and family. Man may also love a certain type



of work, as Moses was attracted to redemption and David to leadership. These are natural instincts implanted within the very fiber of man's essence.

Man must strive diligently to achieve the quality of love. Man must exert himself greatly to assimilate the attributes of divine love. Totally improper conceptions of love may be found even among the very wise. Man is born wild and illiterate, totally devoid of knowledge or intelligence. Should he follow these congenital inclinations he will err egregiously. God implanted these improper inclinations at birth within his heart. As man grows older and matures, he perfects himself by discarding these congenital attributes. The good attributes are stored in man for many years and become discernable at maturity. At maturity man will fear the Lord and love the commandments. Yet man must not solely rely upon his intellect to tell him when to adopt the good habits of life. He must love God and discard custom and habit. Only the love for God will lead him along the right path.

Love for God is the cornerstone of man's activity on this earth. Man is the finest of all creation because he is endowed with a soul. The soul emanates from the heavenly spheres and contains all the good attributes of man. Through the divine intellect man can attain the attributes of love and fear of God. When man will separate himself from the vain strivings of the body he will attain the level of Kedusha.

As Leviticus Rabbah comments upon the verse, "Ye shall be holy for I, the Lord your God, am holy," you shall separate yourselves from bodily desires and transgressions."<sup>36</sup> Kedusha is an innate characteristic in man, as God said to Jeremiah, "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee, and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee".<sup>37</sup>

In common with the quality of Kedusha is the attribute of Love. Man cannot very readily attain this quality; he must strive for it constantly. To love God man must first understand His essential goodness and the power of His oneness. Man must first cast from his heart the desires of this world. The soul constantly seeks to purify man; it is only the body that pollutes him.<sup>38</sup> He must therefore reject the pleasures of the flesh and dedicate himself to the desires of the soul. Only after casting his false idols aside can man reach God. Love for God necessitates man's rejection of his vain desires and wearisome struggles to obtain the powers of the flesh. Only upon rejection of these vain desires can man learn to cling to God to embrace divine perfection, to become at one with the King of Glory. It is imperative for man to realize that the desires of this world are false and temporary; that he must struggle against certain innate passions planted in his heart,

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(36) Platonic Concept of Soul

(37) Jeremiah 1.5

(38) Rashi, Leviticus 19.2

and by prevailing against them, embrace the holiness of God. Man must replace habit by intellect, to obliterate his love for this world. Only then will he cling to God's commandments, pursue its studies, and lovingly walk in His ways. Essential for the proper love of God is the rejection of the improper, and the acceptance of the proper.

God can be approached by absolute nullification of the will. "Do His will as if it were thy will, that He may do thy will as if it were His will. Nullify thy will before His will, that He may nullify the will of others before thy will."<sup>38</sup> Nullify your will till it becomes impotent. Accept only the will of God, by listening to the true source of your being, the all-powerful who sustains you in daily life. Fulfill His teachings and observe His commandments. Let not your heart deceive you to elect the proper course of conduct. Hearken only to what God has commanded you. Drive out of your heart the love for this world and its pleasures. Dedicate yourself to God and His Torah. "Do His will as if it were thy will". With the identical degree of diligence you exert to fulfill your desires, you shall fulfill the desires of God. This desire to love God has no limitations or boundaries. Unlike physical desire it can never be satisfied, for man constantly hungers for the divine. By constantly following his intellect and his nobler emotions man will come to thoroughly love God and modify his life in accordance with His teachings. All his powers will be dominated by one desire - to serve God and to love Him truly.

CHAPTER IV

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SERVICE OF GOD

The service of God is the direct result of the love of God working within man. God does not profit by man's obedience and devotion. As He was perfect before creation, He is perfect now, and He does not require man's devotion to complete His perfection. God is not benefitted by man's compliance with the moral law, for in His very essence He is perfect. The commandments were given for man's welfare and it is therefore incumbent upon man to serve Him faithfully with all his heart. Man is obligated to execute all the commandments, without altering one iota. As a servant willingly performs all his master's commands, so is man to serve God without seeking any logical reasons to justify his adherence to the law. Actually, the function of all the "Mitzvot" is to bestow goodness upon man. Service of God concretizes man's innate devotion to his Lord, in a striking fashion.

As the human body consists of numerous limbs and muscles, so the service of God is composed of various deeds and actions. Their number is set and defined, as are the number of muscles in the body. There are 248 Mitzvot Aseh (Positive Commandments) as compared to the 248 limbs of the body; 365 "Mitzvot Lo Saseh" (Negative Commandments) as compared to the 365 muscles of the body. The general name given to all these commandments, both positive and negative, is Avodah, or Service. The essential sources of the Avodah are the Ten Commandments, and the Soul.

Avodah, or service of God, is governed by a set pattern of laws. Avodah is predicated upon acceptance of an act, diligence in pursuit of the act, and finally, fulfilling the act.

Three factors govern an act: (Daas) - intellect; (Teva) - nature, and (Hergel) - habit.

Nature is an innate force in all living organisms. Solely innate instincts direct the lives of animals and beasts. Intellect is a compelling force in an organism that calculates its actions carefully, and lets reason guide its decisions in manners of conduct. After careful analysis of a situation and a logical understanding of the alternatives involved, the intellect will impel man to pursue a designated course of action. Habit is a force that lies midway between the natural instincts and the intellectually acquired instincts. The acquired instincts are man's prerogative, as he is free to act as he wishes; he only has to agree to accept a course of action. The natural instincts are involuntary; they govern the organism automatically and cannot be altered. Habit is comparable to natural instincts, since a creature governed by habit only, is no longer free, for habit compels it to act. Both habit and natural instincts are devoid of will and understanding. Both can be performed without choice or purpose; both are involuntary attributes. However, man is free to break away from his habits and permit intellect to guide him. Avodah is not a product of habit or of nature; it



is the direct result of intellect, the product of an understanding heart and a craving soul. Man, of his own volition, chooses to serve God. Man cannot serve the Holy One by habit or by natural instinct.

Only man is blessed with this capacity for intellectual cognition, as a criterion of action. Only man can serve God by his own choice. All other creatures are impelled to act purely out of habit or natural compulsion. Man acts, not in expectation of any reward, but because God so commanded. God gave us the commandments for man's benefit. God does not need the commandments to exist. It is for man's benefit that He exhorts him to follow His teachings. All the perfection of the **Mizvot**, all that we are bidden to do, is only to comply with God's wishes, and not to gain any favors for ourselves. The observance of the commandments is predicated upon an act derivable by choice. An act done from habit has no value or importance. An act committed by deliberate choice is very important. The commandments are man's choice, and he should fulfill them, not out of any **utilitarian** considerations, but merely to serve God properly. Man should not expect any physical rewards for his good deeds, and should dedicate himself to "**Avodah Lishmah**".

Acceptance of or acquiescence to an act is the prime requisite of Avodah. The significance of Avodah rests in its voluntary acceptance by man (**Haskama**). The consequences of acquiescence or "**Haskama**" are the steady fulfillments of the law. The greater the intensity of acceptance, the more inten-

sive the act that follows. The more a man accepts a certain principle as being true, the more diligently will he pursue it. Every act that is in agreement with the dictates of a man's heart is simple to execute. The task becomes light, and the burden enjoyable when man's spirit is in accord with his actions. By acceptance, man achieves diligence. The more readily man's heart becomes attuned to the fulfillment of the commandments, the more intensive will become his love of God, and the greater will be his Avodah to Him.

The sources of Acquiescence, Agreement, or Haskama, are as follows:

- (1) Persuasion,
- (2) Compulsion without desire,
- (3) Desire without compulsion.

A man may be persuaded by another to adopt a certain pattern of behavior. This action does not represent his own thinking, for he was convinced by another's reasoning; it is therefore not to be considered as his own decision, for it represents another man's influence.

A man may be compelled to take foul smelling and bitter tasting medicines in order to recover his health. He is compelled to agree to follow a certain course, by his natural instincts of survival. He is forced to do it, although the thought of it is abominable to him. A man may desire to perform a certain act because of the pleasure derived from it. A man's desire is attracted to an objective voluntarily, without being

compelled to do so. His desire and will are united as one to attain a coveted goal.

Avodah is contingent upon both compulsion and desire. Fear of God is impossible without some compelling force. As the Rabbis said: "The service of God should stem from fear and love". The desire should stem from love and the compulsion from fear. Avodah is thus a composite of both compulsion and desire.

Man is impelled to serve God whenever he evaluates his position in this world. Man is the summit of creation, the pinnacle of God's achievement. He rules over all other living creatures by virtue of his intellectual and communicative capacities. Man was the only creature endowed with these priceless attributes, that he may discern his proper position in life. His existence is dependent upon a force that bestows life, a Creator. He was created to serve his Creator. His proper position in life is to observe the commandments and fulfill God's law. Man is sent upon this earth, that by his life he may testify of the glory of God. With his Avodah he lends perfection to all creation and sustains the world. "Pious men sustain the universe".<sup>39</sup> The purpose of the world is to complete the perfection of man. Upon considering all this, man becomes dominated by the apprehension that he may not live up to his obligations. What is man that he may cast aside the yoke of God? How can a slave reject the task of his master? By the very purpose of creation man is compelled to serve God, for that is his function in the universe.

There is not a single creature in the universe who does not perform some essential task; not a single living organism sits idly all the time - it performs some necessary service in the complex pattern of life. How, therefore, can man proclaim freedom for himself in which to waste his time on this earth? Man must perform his function, as do all other creatures, by serving God. Man has no freedom of choice in this matter. Freedom of choice is illusory. Man cannot choose to be idle. He must be of service to God. As God said: "See, I have set before thee this day life and good, death and evil... I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day that I have set before thee life and death, the blessing and the curse; therefore choose life, that thou mayest live, thou and thy seed." <sup>40</sup> He associated life with the good and death with evil, repeated it again in verse 20, to impress man with the consequences of his actions. If man desires to live, he must do good, for the consequences of evil are death. Man has no choice in the matter. It is mandatory upon him to do good that he may live. Thou shalt choose life, although thy choice is already determined for you. True, the ultimate course of action rests with man, but should he embrace evil he will perish. He is therefore compelled to observe the commandments, to survive.

Man will find little respite in this world. He who rejects the yoke of the Torah embraces a yoke of iron. Every creature is subjected to the laws of Nature. If man accepts

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(40) Deuteronomy 30,15,19

the yoke of heaven he is exempted from the hegemony of Nature, for the good man is above the forces of Nature. Should man reject the yoke of heaven, the yoke of Nature is put upon his neck, for man is not so exalted that this world should serve him without exacting some degree of compensation. Therefore, he must accept the yoke of this world in payment for its benefits. Man has a choice between these two yokes. This world will not grant man respite unless he subjects himself to the dominion of heaven. Man will then bear the yoke of the law, the Torah and its teachings. Work and struggle are compelling forces of life and no man is exempt from them. Man may choose physical exertion or spiritual efforts, but some form of work must be his lot. The soul is capable of protecting man and endowing his life with dignity. The soul rejects the strivings of this world and seeks to implant within man a desire for the yoke of heaven. Man cannot seek protection from the evil spirits that lurk in the shadows without the soul's guidance. The soul is capable of preserving man, by implanting within him a desire for the yoke of God.

Desire is derived from love. Man loves an object and therefore desires it. This desire for God may be derived from three types of love:

- (1) Love for Olom Habo
- (2) Love for Olom Haze
- (3) Love for the aesthetic and refined.



The desirability of the world to come is unlimited and its existence is without bounds. "Better is one hour of blissfulness of spirit in the world to come than the whole life of this world."<sup>41</sup> Whereas the fortunes of this world are transitory and temporary, the fortunes of the world to come are enduring and eternal. Man, regardless of economic and social position in this world, will acquire eternal bliss only in the world to come. Man is capable of gathering up the good that is in store for him in the world to come. Man should thus strive for permanent happiness only in the world to come.

The desirability of this world may also be enhanced by a love for God. Man can attain the distinctions and honors of this earth by clinging faithfully to the doctrines of the Torah. As Rabbi Meir said: "Whosoever labors in the Torah for its own sake merits many things; and not only so, but the whole world is indebted to him."<sup>42</sup> The multitude reveres a learned man and admires his traits. Even in this world spiritual characteristics are at a premium, and endow life with dignity and reverence. However, all this is not a reward for man's efforts. All compensation will be made in the world to come. This world is not worth the trouble to pursue it. A man who toils idealistically for God's cause will be content

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(41) Abot 4.22b

(42) Abot 6.1



with enough food to sustain him, and will devote his energies to the Torah rather than the acquisition of material goods.

The person with a refined sense of values is mindful of the all-pervading presence of God. "I have set the Lord before me always" says the Psalmist. Every move will be governed by an awareness of the divine spark within his being. Such a man is incapable of sin, for he is at one with God.

Three singular patterns of service may be distinguished:

- (1) a humiliating servant,
- (2) a wise servant,
- (3) a cautious servant.

The humiliating servant is mindful of only his own welfare. His service is only a means to an end. He strives only to better his lot, without paying any attention to his master's welfare.

The wise servant serves his master as faithfully as a son serves his father. His only desire is the welfare of his master. He will never think of himself primarily, and will occupy himself with his master's tasks. All his thoughts and actions will be governed by one purpose - how to aid his master better.

The cautious servant will exert great care on his master's behalf, but he will likewise be mindful of his own interests. Should an opportunity present itself whereby he can serve his master and still further his own position, he will take advantage of the situation, to improve his lot.

The service of God (Aboda) is of two varieties - **Lishma** and **Lo Lishma**. A man who serves God ideally, for the sake of service, never thinks of himself. Faithfully, he devotes his time to God's cause. In striving to achieve the essence of the divine he loses his own personality. He is the wise servant. All his desires are to satisfy the wants of God. He does not serve God to receive compensation, either in this world or in the world to come.

The cautious servant serves God for his own sake, **Lo Lishma**. He seeks payment for all his deeds; he is akin to the humiliating servant whose only concern is for his own immediate welfare. The worst offenders in this group are some Rabbis. A man may minister to God to gain the approbation and respect of his fellow men. Men revere him and call him Rabbi, my teacher. But he serves men and not God, and this obsequious individual is worse than an idolater.

The true servants of God are those who are at one with Him. They serve him "**Lishma**" without any thoughts of material or spiritual reward. They are a blessing to all mankind.

CHAPTER V

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FAITH

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God is perfect in all forms and does not require any additional perfection. The objects of his creation, however, lack perfectibility, and thus cannot endure for a moment without divine sustenance. Four categories of Sustenance can be discerned:

- (1) Sustenance that grants life. It would be impossible to exist without such sustenance.
- (2) Sustenance that strengthens life. Food and drink, without which it is possible to exist for a limited time.
- (3) Sustenance that endows existence with comfort - yet one can survive without it, as, for example, clothes.
- (4) Sustenance that enables a man to live in luxury.

God is the supreme source of all these forms of Sustenance (Shefa).

Man created by the grace of God should not worry about his means of sustenance. He should trust in God about the factors that prolong his existence. For, without any doubt, the Creator will provide for him. It is only necessary for man to appear righteous in the eyes of God for Him to bestow upon man the sustenance and blessedness of life. However, should man rebel against God, and irritate Him with evil actions, God will withhold from him the source of goodness. It is therefore prudent for man to serve God and find favor in His eyes, that he may prolong his existence. Without divine providence it is utterly impossible for man to survive; God provides for man and endows his existence with

meaning. It is foolish for man to trust in another man created by God. Let him trust in the original source of all creation - God. Let him strive to please God and God will grant man's requests. As the Psalmist said: "Trust in the Lord and do good".<sup>43</sup> It is possible for man to have good descend upon him by trusting in the Lord and finding favor in His eyes. It is good practice for servants to seek refuge in the shadow of their master. There are various causes for man's lack of faith. The constant search for a rational explanation of the universe is a serious obstacle to man's faith. Man cannot hope to fathom the ultimate cause of this universe. In his search for a first cause, man is led astray. Man yearns to discover the media of life emanating from God. Man is so preoccupied with a search for media that he loses sight of the great Cause - God. His eyes are darkened and he loses sight of the cause of all Causes, his father in heaven. Although causes emanate from God, the creator of all Causes, they become an iron curtain separating man from Him.

Likewise, faith is not indigenous to man. Faith is not an innate instinct within man's heart. Man must choose faith; man is not born with faith. Man may plant faith within his heart by wise actions. Were faith an innate characteristic of man, man would not exert himself to attain any goal in life. He would have faith that, ultimately, it would become his. He would not strive or labor to satisfy his elementary desires. Life is sustained by people who lack faith, who expose themselves to danger, to attain coveted ends. The value

of an object varies in proportion to the effort exerted to attain it. The greater the effort required to obtain a commodity, the greater is its value. Therefore, God left man to obtain faith for himself by his own efforts and his own desires. Man may choose for himself how he will toil on this earth. Faith is lacking among people who have a confused sense of values. They can only perceive the immediate and the actual - not the distant and potential. They pursue cause only, without turning to the prime Cause, the exalted one, above all causes, the holy one of Israel. They confuse cause with direction; they forsake the permanent for the temporary. Were they <sup>to</sup> have faith in God, the Creator of all causes, they would fear Him and substitute their addiction to causes for love for God. They would love only the first Cause, the Creator of all other causes and phenomena. When man puts his faith in a cause, and forsakes the source of all causes, the Creator, he degrades his love for God. He only loves the cause; he rejoices in its attainment, and sorrows in its loss. Were his heart full of the proper faith he would serve God and not the Cause; he would be full of reverence and adhere to the teachings of God.

This lack of proper perspective can have very serious consequences for man. He may be impelled to steal and cheat, to rob and pillage, in his mad pursuit of a cause. He will set himself willingly to the task, without pausing to reflect



upon his course of action, whither will it lead him?

Gradually, God will remove his providential cares for him and man will be left alone exposed to the cruel elements of chance and fate. Fear will seize him and dominate all his thinking and eventually bring about his ignominious end. Fear is the cause of defeat, and faith the harbinger of salvation. The fruits of faith are God's benign providence and care. The greater the degree of faith a man possesses, the more intense will be God's concern for him. A man who forsakes his faith is lost to God's providence and is exposed to the ravages of the elements, and chance.

Some people are devoted to God, serve him faithfully, and yet are fearful of causes. They rejoice upon the materialization of a cause and fret upon the loss of a cause. They rationalize their conduct by stating that even if God is omnipotent, He desires to govern this world by causality. He permits the causes to direct the destinies of this world. Man cannot earn his livelihood without recourse to Causes. As it is impossible for man to survive without food, so it is impossible for man to earn his living without the proper causes. They will thus permit themselves, by virtue of their fallacious reasoning, to exhibit a lack of faith in God and put their trust in Causes. They err egregiously in this respect, for faith in God is a means of avoiding temptation. Abstention from cheating and robbing is very difficult when one is motivated

by the cause of acquiring wealth. It becomes difficult to give charity, for alms giving diminishes income. Man, when he does fulfill these commandments, observes them grudgingly, and his days become full of sorrow as he abstains from plunder and distributes his income in the form of charity. He bears the yoke of God as if he were carrying a very heavy load, and he loses all the joys of life. It is difficult for man to withstand the lure of wealth and position. At times he becomes tempted to pervert justice and identifies cause with the substance of God. He becomes so enamored of the cause that, even with the best of intentions, he loses sight of God. How can he permit himself to spend the morning in prayer if, at that time, he must be in the store in pursuit of the cause of riches. He will fall into sin and not perform the will of God if it conflicts with his cause.

The concept of freedom of choice for man is illusory. Everything stands revealed before God. Despite the fact that it appears as if man could choose good and reject evil, it is fallacious to think that man can act according to his own desires. Traditionally, we know that this is not so, for God gave the Cause the ability to lead man along his natural inclinations - yet his causes are compelled to be in congruence with the desire of God. Both material Cause and Divine Wish must be equivalent. "Seebah", or Cause, must conform to Divine will. When God desires to punish man, his cause will injure man. Conversely, when the "Seebah" is destined to inflict harm upon

man according to the course of natural events, and God desires to benefit man, He will act so that out from the cause destined for evil, great good will arise for man. God will not alter the essential qualities of Natural Cause; the Cause will remain intact, but the circumstances will be modified to man's advantage.

Natural Causes may be divided into three categories:

- (1) Causes that produce life or death, health or sickness
- (2) Causes that affect man's livelihood, either adversely or favorably
- (3) Causes that affect the life of the soul, that prolong it, or destroy it.

Good food and fine delicacies prolong and sustain life. Bad food and poor nutrition cause death. The elements control man's livelihood. Rain, in its proper time, can bestow upon man the wealth of the field. Cold and frost can cause innumerable damage to man's income.

The teachings of the Torah and the following of its commandments prolong the life of the soul. The transgressions between man and man, and man and God, destroy the soul. The function of the Torah is to prolong man's spiritual life, while the result of the Transgressions is to destroy man's life. Both Commandments and Transgressions are governed by man's reason. Likewise, the cause of wealth and poverty is subject to man's intelligence. Intellect is capable of altering the consequences of Causes, without radically changing the nature

of the cause. Man must comprehend that God is capable of directing the Causes without modifying their characteristics. All Causes are governed by God; all Causality is subject to Him. God can modify a cause by altering the circumstances surrounding it. God is incapable of altering the nature of a Cause for Causality is a compelling factor, that sustains the universe and performs its functions. But God can modify the results of the Cause, completely changing the very purpose of the Cause. As with Joseph, his brothers persecuted him and sold him into slavery, yet these causes were primarily responsible for his rise to power in Egypt. Without his brother's evil actions he would never have departed from his father's home for a strange land. Therefore, man can have little faith in causes, for God may alter the final results produced by them.

Man, therefore, has only to fulfill God's teachings, in order to prosper. He does not have to be concerned with Causes. Accept all causes and have faith in God, for the ultimate decision rests with Him. He can modify the results of any cause. It is an illusion to believe that predatory aggression is the cause of well being and economic success. A man endowed with an understanding heart will comprehend that aggression causes poverty of the soul and affliction of the spirit. "So are the ways of every one that is greedy of gain; it taketh away the life of the owners thereof".<sup>44</sup> Only good deeds can produce contentment and peace, security, and economic well being.

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(44) Proverbs 1.19

God did not find it necessary to mention the rewards of good deeds in the world to come. The Torah expounds the merits of good deeds in mundane terms, in values of this world: "the rain will descend on time if you will hearken to the teachings of God".<sup>45</sup> God found it beneath His dignity to resort to promises to man concerning eternal life, as an incentive to proper conduct. It is not necessary for God to plead with man created by his own words, to walk in His path. It is altogether improper for God to discuss payment with man for his actions, and therefore, the Torah does not contain any references to rewards in the world to come. Even the rewards of this world are not discussed in the Torah; God only desires the heart of man,<sup>46</sup> and since man is too preoccupied with earning a livelihood, to attune his heart to God, God will relieve him of this worry that he may be free to devote all his time to the Torah and its commandments. God will provide the necessary rain for man to enable him to cast aside his material needs and devote all his time to the teachings of the Torah. Actually then, very little is mentioned about compensation or reward, (in the Torah) in this world or in the world to come. God is above discussing means of compensation with man. God is all spiritual and will not reward man in physical terms.<sup>47</sup>

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(46) Proverbs 33

(47) Maimonides Perek Helek

(45) Leviticus 26, Deuteronomy 11

CHAPTER VI

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P R I D E



Pride is an evil attribute in the eyes of the Lord. As the Book of Proverbs says: "Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord."<sup>48</sup>

The source of pride is self exaltation and an adoption of a superior attitude to others. This tendency to maximize one's self-importance is always prevalent in man. Pride is endowed with characteristic evils. A conceited person is prone to anger and jealousy and will only associate with the socially prominent. (Further elaboration may be found in Luzato's work, *Mesilat Yesharim*, Chapter 13).

The causes of conceit are as follows: a man may possess what others covet and he will, therefore, take pride in his possessions. He will be proud of owning what others may lack. He exaggerates his self-importance by attributing his good fortune to his own abilities and wisdom. He thinks that he accumulated all his wealth - that his efforts are directly responsible for his riches. Actually, all man possesses is by the grace of God and not by his own abilities and choice. He should be imbued with a spirit of gratitude and modesty, and thank God humbly for His gracious goodness. He should stand before God humbly, thanking Him for His kindness. As a servant eating at his master's table, so should man humble himself before God, consuming of His divine kindness, sharing a few crumbs from God's table of richness and majesty. All wealth and glory come directly from God, and therefore, man cannot glory in its possession.

Though a man may not possess anything, he may still be conceited. He may have a false estimate of his own worth and regard himself as cheated of life's embellishments, that are rightfully his. A man of his infinite abilities and capacities is certainly deserving of the finest things in life. He will, therefore, exert himself to obtain all the wealth he can possibly acquire. He will be envious of others and will despise those who do possess wealth.

Both types seek to rule over people; both have an exaggerated sense of their own importance, and both seek to subjugate others - to have others serve them as if they were the providers of life, the sum total of existence. They differ in that the man who does have wealth and position thinks it rightly belongs to him, and the man who lacks wealth, seeks to obtain it as his natural right.

A third type of arrogant person is between the two extremes. He lacks the embellishments of wealth, lacks any talent, and yet seeks to obtain in life the position that only a truly gifted person can acquire. He falsely believes that he, too, is of infinite ability and justly deserves the wealth commensurate with his alleged capacities.

The man who believes that glory and honor are due him and are justly heaped upon him as proper compensation for his superior abilities<sup>48</sup> is very wicked, for his only desire is to dominate everyone; he wishes to feel superior to his neighbors and will treat them meanly and wickedly to satisfy his own ego.

The man who still seeks honor and position<sup>49</sup> will be kind to others, will be merciful, and perform charitable acts, for that will make him feel superior to his less fortunate brethren. He will disburse charity and will be a member of a fraternal organization so that he may become important and satisfy his quest for wealth and recognition.

The evils of pride are as follows:

- (1) Forsaking the service of God and rejecting his teachings. (Then thy heart be lifted up and thou forget the Lord, thy God)<sup>50</sup>
- (2) Pride is an iron curtain that separates a man from serving God. Pride keeps man away from divine love and restrains him from finding favor in His eyes.
- (3) Restrains man from serving God "Lishma" - for how can he serve God as his ideal if all his actions are to arouse the envy of others and glorify himself?
- (4) Pride will lead a man to diminish his good deeds.
- (5) Pride will make a man rejoice in another's misfortune.

Pride will also cause a man to lose the comforts of life in this world. Pride will cause a man to be hated by his fellowmen, and will arouse their enmity. This is the natural result of following vain glory. Even a man's own family will despise him, for he is clinging to false gods. Pride will arouse animosity, because man will minimize the dignity and respect of others. Man's love for himself will lead him to despise his neighbor and he will belittle him and humiliate him. The more precious his own life becomes in his eyes, the less honor will man attach to others, and

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(49) Metakesh Leazmo  
(50) Deuteronomy 8.14

thus he will arouse their animosity. Pride will also lead a man to an endless desire for material possessions and will rob him of all contentment in life. As his value will mount in his eyes, his physical wants will increase ~~in~~ proportionately, until his wants ~~will be limitless~~ will be limitless. Whatever he sees he will desire, that he may satisfy his cravings for self importance. He will never be able to satisfy all his progressively multiplying demands and thus will never be content with his lot and will lead a very unhappy life.

An arrogant man seeks to deceive others; actually, he only fools himself. Pride impels him to speak only of his achievements, thereby alienating all the people about him, and causing shame to descend upon him. Let man comprehend that his entire being is dependent upon God. Man has little control over his own destiny. Surrounding man is the infinite beauties of nature - the starry heavens above, the vast skies about - all performing God's bidding without any semblance of pride. Man, compared to nature, is but a tiny locust - a puny force in the universe. In comparison to man, all other forces of nature are infinite in capacity and daily work wonders. Only man's relationship to God endows him with a singular purpose and with singular meaning. Man should act only to justify this singular task in the world - adherence to the divine law. Man is of little consequence - he is as a passing shadow, in comparison with the eternal forces of Nature. Now, then, may man exalt in his position, when his powers are of such a finite nature?

Man must, therefore, understand how evil is this habit of pride. Pride is a universal affliction, swaying the emotions of the rich and mighty and the passions of the poor and humble. Old and young, rich and poor, wise man and fool - all are proud of themselves. A fool exhibits more pride in himself than even a wise man would dare show. This is a false attribute, blinding everyone. The fool persists in this error; the wise man desists.

Let man comprehend the true nature of loyal service to God and he will then cease from his evil ways. Let man observe how the pious serve God, truly and humbly, and then man will uproot pride from his heart. Let man humble himself before his Maker; let him realize the littleness of his worth, the minuteness of his position in life - then he will abstain from vain glory and arrogance. Realize the nothingness of your soul in comparison with the great men who preceded you. True piety and modesty can come only after this realization of the inconsequences of man's worth. True piety can dawn only within a contrite heart and an humble spirit. Piety and Arrogance are mutually exclusive. This is what the prophet Isiah meant when he said: "Woe is me for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips, for mine eyes have seen the king the Lord of hosts".<sup>51</sup> Previously, he had thought that he was a great man, a descendent of royalty, a member of the royal household. But,

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(51) Isiah 6.5



after seeing the glory of God he first realized how insignificant he was, a man of unclean lips; how, then, could he live up to his mission? Modesty, a realization of man's finiteness and impotence, in comparison with God's infiniteness and omnipotence, can lead man to a proper service of God. Moses, the man who had achieved so much for his people, who led them to the Promised Land and delivered them from bondage, was the humblest man of all - a truly modest person. Humility is an essential prerequisite for leadership.

Another cure for the affliction of pride is a careful study of human nature. Man should look about and observe those who have fallen from their mighty positions, whose material fortunes have declined, and view their natural misery and despair. Exaltation of position is only a contingent phenomena and may easily evanesce, whereas poverty and depression are natural concomitants of life, and exist steadily. Many people who once were strong of spirit, endowed with the treasures of this earth, now are penury stricken, humble and abject creatures, consumed like chaff before the flame. Therefore, let not man believe that good fortune will always be his lot; let him tremble lest his position declines, lest he die a humbled and miserable man. Let man humble himself before God and he will then find favor in the eyes of all mankind. The day when man will understand the true nature of his existence, the day when he will serve only one master, he will have no need of material possessions.



The wisdom of God will stand at his right side and will illumine his path in life. When man will see himself in his true perspective, a being dependent upon God's mercy to survive, a being insecure at all times, never knowing in advance what the morrow may bring - then man will humble himself before God and plead for mercy. Man is a frail creature and needs God's guidance to live. Man will then not seek material greatness and covet vast fortunes. He will only plead for God's guidance.

CHAPTER VII

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N A T E

God implanted within man good habits of conduct, that he may perfect his service to Him. Every good habit, however, has its counterpart in an evil attribute. Man has the choice of abstaining from his evil inclinations and performing the good. All good habits are derived from love, whereas all evil attributes stem from hate.

Hate is a very wicked attribute, for it distorts man's perspective. When a man is hated, all his actions seem to be bad. As long as man will hate he will find no peace in this world. Hatred is to be found primarily in its natural setting among the beasts of the forest. They are compelled, by the natural law of survival, to prey upon one another. Hatred in man, however, is purely optional, but both are derived from the same source. As long as hatred exists in the world, so long will the world continue to be destroyed.

Envy is a cause of hatred. Man envies another man who is more gifted with wisdom or with physical possessions. A man who lacks these coveted matters will feel sorry for himself and hate his neighbor, who does have them. It is fallacious for man to regard himself as worthy of all the luxuries and favors of life, without paying any attention to his essential dependence upon God. For man's very existence is highly precarious and he is never certain of surviving till the morrow. Man lives only by the grace of God; how can he

then seek glories for himself, when his very essence is so frail? Let man be happy with what God gave him and let him not pay any attention to what others have.

Various forces of Nature are evident in this world, each endowed with a distinct purpose and function. God gave each force the requisite strength to fulfill its functions. To the day **He** gave the power of light, and to the night He gave the power of darkness. These powers do not compete with one another - each performing its assigned duties. One power does not envy another power - content only to do its work and fulfill its assigned tasks. Each force is content with the divine task assigned to it. Each natural force has a distinct purpose and is content to fulfill its task. The forces of the spirit are likewise distributed in a diverse fashion. They are not equal in every man. Some men are generous; others are thrifty; some are compassionate; others are easily angered - each one reacting according to the nature of his divine essence and composite characteristics. God alone has the power to allocate these tendencies and attributes of behavior, allotting each soul the forces indigenous to it. As wealth is necessary for one man, poverty is an urgent concomitant of another man's essential composition. Wealth would be disadvantageous for such a man and would eventually prove harmful, as the light is not in congruence with the night. God allocated to every

individual a certain limited force necessary for his existence. However, unlike the heavenly hosts who are aware of their limitations, man is ignorant of his divine limitations and bounds. Man is therefore envious of the good fortune of another, when he should be satisfied with his divinely apportioned fate. Man must learn to be content with his lot, as the forces of Nature are content with theirs. Man exists only by divine grace; how can he permit himself to be dissatisfied with his divinely ordained portion of life? How can man permit himself to quibble with God and make odious comparisons with his neighbors, who may have been allocated a bit more? This envy of the "have nots" in relationship to the "haves" leads to bitter animosities. This is a form of envy prevalent among unequals, people of sharply distinct economic and social positions in society. Envy is also prevalent among equals, people of an identical strata in society, members of the same economic class. A man may desire to be the sole possessor of a certain talent, or a definite social position. Man may resent sharing his abilities with another. Another type of man imagines that everyone else is endowed with infinite capacities - he alone is poverty-stricken. He therefore desires to see his friend likewise poverty-stricken, bereft of companions and wealth, without attempting any improvement of his own lot. He casts an evil eye wherever he turns. Let man comprehend the cause of all existence, the cause of

all wealth and perfection. All are dependent upon God. Perfection is open to every man. The Torah is within the grasp of all; whoever wishes may come and take. Wherefore should man be envious of his neighbor and hate him for his good fortune? If man is dissatisfied with his allotted share in life, let him request God for more, and God will bestow more wisdom and <sup>a</sup>sense of well being upon him. Let man not seek to rejoice in his neighbor's affliction, to seek his neighbor's decline that he may thereby satisfy his ego and compensate for his own inferiorities.

Another cause of hate is revulsion. A man may notice despicable traits in his neighbor and therefore despise him, as if he were an abomination, and constantly ~~he~~ seek to humiliate him. This is a strong reason for arousing God's compassion for this unfortunate person and stir His wrath upon the other. Let not another's evil habits lead to hatred. Let not another's abominable actions be an excuse to hate him in your heart. Let not man seek the humiliation of even the most objectionable sort of person. Above all, let not man rejoice in the misfortune of another, no matter how evil that person may be. "Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thy heart be glad when he stumbleth; lest the Lord see it, and it displease Him, and he turn away His wrath from him."<sup>52</sup>

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(52) Proverbs 24.17-18



The household of Israel is comparable to a single man whose body consists of many limbs, each performing a certain necessary function. When all the limbs perform their duties in harmony, man can then live peacefully. Similarly, when harmony rests in Israel, divine love rests in their midst and clings to them. However, when hearts become estranged from one another, it is comparable to a body whose limbs do not function harmoniously. All Israel stems from one origin and is endowed with one soul; the entire household of Jacob consists of a single divine soul. When unity prevails in Israel, divine love rests in their midst. However, when through envy and hatred they are rent apart, the Shekina departs from their presence.

Therefore, man must be cautious not to hate him who God loves, his fellow man. For God loves every man. Therefore, it is man's duty to love his neighbor and thus he will find favor with God and with his fellow-men. For he who loves his fellow-men is also honored by his fellow-men. Do not judge your fellow-man hastily; make allowances for his conduct as you do for the behavior of your own family. Do not hate him; grieve only for him if he does wrong and deals perversely. Guard yourself from punishing your neighbor, or despising him. The only excusable hatred is the one that is directed against a man who evinces no hope whatever of rectifying his conduct, either in this world or in the world to come, the transgressors and evil doers who sin purposely to

taunt God. However, these extremes are far fetched and far removed from existence. Actually, there is little excuse for any manifestation of hatred. Let man exert himself strongly to remove all malice and prejudice from his heart, and to plant therein love and compassion for all. Hate is not indigenous to man; it is only an acquired characteristic, and it is habit forming. Let man fight against this wicked habit and fill his heart with love for all. Let man love his neighbor like himself and have pity upon him in the days of his affliction, never rejoicing in his defeats and always seeking to aid him. Man must remove hate from his mind, to live.

Anger is a very evil attribute and it may be found among the wicked beasts of prey in the forests. "Whoever is angry serves idolotry" says the Talmud.<sup>53</sup> Anger will incite man to evil at the slightest provocation. If hatred is dormant in a man's heart, anger will bring it to the fore. A man impelled by hate will give vent to anger very readily. Anger is like a flame, consuming the very essence of man. Anger incites man to quarrel. Anger will impel man to reply to malicious innuendos and evil implications. The prudent course of action is to remain silent in the face of slander and malicious gossip. There are various reasons for not replying to the taunts of an angry person, namely: pride, wisdom, love, fear, humility, faith and transiency of man.

A sense of pride will restrain a parson from replying to insults. Why should one hearken to a miserable creature, of no importance? Should man reply to the insults hurled at him, he will dignify them, with meaning. On the morrow the other will boast that he had words with him, thereby making this abject creature his social equal. Far better be it for a man to control his emotions and refrain from any reply.

Wisdom also will counsel a man not to reply. The wise man, upon hearing insults, knows that a reply will serve to further enrage the man insulting him, and will result in more insults. There is no more effective medium of silencing a rebuke, than silence. Silence in the face of rebuke proves that the insult is reckoned as nil, as something not even worthy of a reply. Should man desire to justify himself before his neighbors, the best defense is silence in the face of provocation, for his friends will then admire his self control and his emotional restraint. Whoever abuses his friend publicly actually abuses himself, for his listeners lose their respect for him. Silence is thus the best reply and most prudent course of action to follow.

A sense of love may impel a man to be silent when rebuked. The Talmud praises those who are humiliated and do not in turn humiliate others - who hear their abuse in silence and do not reply; these are compared to the beloved of God. Let man exert great effort to control himself, mindful of how precious silence, in the face of rebuke, is to God. Man's



heart may be full of bitterness, and his soul distressed, but he should remain silent, out of a sense of love for God. This is the greatest measure of conduct a man may possess - to be silent because of an unyielding love for God.

A sense of fear will impel a man to silence. A man who fears God in all his actions, who is cognizant of standing in the divine presence at all times, will not pay any attention to a few inconsequential slurs. "I have set the Lord before me at all times" said the Psalmist.<sup>54</sup> A man, conscious of standing before God at all times will not have the temerity to reply to insults hurled in the divine presence. Man is silent because the fear of God rests in his heart and he will not degrade himself by replying to insults.

A man may ignore insults motivated by a sense of humility. A humble person does not place any emphasis upon his own welfare. His dignity and honor are of little importance to him. He is as naught in his own eyes. He sees little iniquity in the words of his tormentor. The man who insults him is more important in his eyes than his own being. The insults he hears do not affect him for he regards himself as a lowly creature, beyond the pale of calumny.

Out of a sense of deep faith man may ignore his insults, believing that it is so ordained in heaven that he be subjected to ignominy. Nothing occurs in this world without the sanction of God. As David said when Shimei, the son of Gera, in-

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(54) Psalm 16

sulted him: "The Lord hath said unto him, 'Curse David'".<sup>55</sup>  
David refused to harm Shimei, realizing that he was merely the instrument of the divine will, the means of effectively communicating God's displeasure. A man of faith will thus accept his rebuke silently and seek to make amends.

A sense of the transiency of man will lead one to maintain silence. Man is but a sojourner on this earth and passes very quickly from the scene. He knows that he will not tarry long on this earth and therefore will not pay any attention to insults hurled at him. Soon he will no longer be here. Matters of this earth will not impel him to action.

Upon all these considerations, impelled by whatever motive, it is incumbent upon man to keep silent whenever confronted by insult. It is best for man to remain silent.

Miserliness, also, is an evil attribute. Miserliness is all too prevalent in the world. A miser may be parsimonious, even to himself, and not eat enough, permitting himself what is absolutely necessary to sustain life; his only indulgences are the bare necessities of life. This condition prevails among people who have accumulated vast fortunes and will not touch their precious possessions. Their money is more precious to them than their own health.<sup>56</sup> A miser loves his money, not as a means of sustenance, but as an end in itself. He casts aside all the pleasures of life, all the delicacies of the palate, to pursue a conglomeration of wealth. He actually tortures himself and lives as a poverty stricken individual, sole-

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(55) Samuel II 16.10

(56) Berachot 61

ly to accumulate money. A miser has a wrong conception of money, for money is only a means of exchange; its value is intrinsic and possesses very little worth, by itself. Money is a means of enabling man to live an abundant life. Should not a miser enjoy his life here? Where else will he find pleasure? A miser is comparable to an ass bearing its burden without any joy.

A miser may also be motivated by a sense of insecurity and fear. A man may stint and accumulate wealth, fearing that soon he will lose his means of support. Such an individual lacks faith in God, and in His divine providence. A man of faith trusts in the Lord, knowing that he will be provided for. Should a man dispense charity to others, God will deal charitably with him. As the Rabbis said: "Whoever is merciful to others receives mercy from heaven, and whoever is miserly with others, heaven deals miserly with him."<sup>57</sup> Whoever stints and denies himself the necessities of life will incur divine disfavor and will be dealt with parsimoniously from heaven.

A third type of miser loves himself more than others, and will lavish all the luxuries of life upon himself, but will be miserly in regard to others. He will refuse to share his bread with the hungry, and will give only an infinitesimal sum when he finally does dispense charity. Self-love impels him to be miserly to others; selfishness produces callous effrontery in daily relations with others. This man errs greatly,

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(57) Shabbos 151b



for he thinks that money is his, permanently. He alone, he thinks, is solely responsible for his abundance. Actually, money is given to him as a sacred trust, to aid others, for charity is the fountain and source of all abundance. The more charitably disposed a person becomes, the greater are his ultimate riches. Charity is the sole cause for divine sustenance and favor. Charity arouses divine blessings.

These evil attributes are necessary in the scheme of creation. A man is a composite of various limbs and various forces; so is Nature composed of various powers, both good and bad. Man is subject to pity and evil, to hatred and friendship. All emotions are necessary at times, both the good and bad. Diverse emotions rage within the breast of man and it is incumbent upon him to use them at the proper time. The proper emotion for an appropriate occasion is an all-compelling necessity for man. He should commiserate with the poor, yet the Torah commanded him: "Thou shalt not hearken unto him; neither shall thine eye pity him".<sup>58</sup>

God created man a composite creature, that he may exercise discretion in the utilization of his powers and emotional capacities. The choice rests with man to select the proper conduct for him. Since man does have this freedom of choice, he is subjected to reward and punishment. Thus, the author is compelled to formulate a certain limited and crude conception of freedom of choice, a matter which he previously had vehemently denied.

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(58) Deuteronomy 13.9

Prayer is of the utmost importance to man. Prayer is the result of man's awareness of his littleness, of how insignificant is his existence in the world. Man should therefore be imbued with a spirit of humility and a contrite heart, whenever approaching God in prayer. Man should bend the knee and cast the eyes in total adoration to God. Man needs divine grace to sustain his life. Man should be cognizant of the infinite good he receives from his Father in Heaven and should therefore thank his Father with praise unto God, and then plead for his own desires and needs. Prayer is the language of the heart to God.

## CHAPTER VIII

### P R A Y E R

Prayer is the language of the heart to God. It is the way in which the soul communicates with the Father. Prayer is the way in which the soul expresses its love and devotion to God. Prayer is the way in which the soul seeks God's help and guidance. Prayer is the way in which the soul expresses its gratitude to God for His mercies. Prayer is the way in which the soul expresses its hope in God's promises. Prayer is the way in which the soul expresses its faith in God's power. Prayer is the way in which the soul expresses its trust in God's love. Prayer is the way in which the soul expresses its surrender to God's will. Prayer is the way in which the soul expresses its longing for God's presence. Prayer is the way in which the soul expresses its desire for God's glory. Prayer is the way in which the soul expresses its joy in God's love. Prayer is the way in which the soul expresses its peace in God's presence. Prayer is the way in which the soul expresses its freedom in God's love. Prayer is the way in which the soul expresses its life in God's power. Prayer is the way in which the soul expresses its love in God's presence. Prayer is the way in which the soul expresses its faith in God's promises. Prayer is the way in which the soul expresses its hope in God's power. Prayer is the way in which the soul expresses its trust in God's love. Prayer is the way in which the soul expresses its surrender to God's will. Prayer is the way in which the soul expresses its longing for God's presence. Prayer is the way in which the soul expresses its desire for God's glory. Prayer is the way in which the soul expresses its joy in God's love. Prayer is the way in which the soul expresses its peace in God's presence. Prayer is the way in which the soul expresses its freedom in God's love. Prayer is the way in which the soul expresses its life in God's power. Prayer is the way in which the soul expresses its love in God's presence.

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Prayer is of the utmost importance to man. Prayer is the result of man's awareness of his littleness, of how insignificant is his existence in the world. Man should therefore be imbued with a spirit of humility and a contrite heart, whenever approaching God in prayer. Man should bend the knee and shut the eye in total submission to God. Man needs divine grace to sustain him in life. Man should be cognizant of the infinite good he receives from his Father in heaven and should therefore begin his prayers with praise unto God, and then plead for his ~~own~~ desires and wants. Prayer has the capacity of turning the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to the fathers. God is zealous for the prayers of the righteous.<sup>59</sup> No pious men were ever <sup>sw</sup> ~~ang~~ered by God without first having prayed to Him. During creation rain did not descend upon the earth until Adam ~~came~~ and prayed for rain. The splitting of the Red Sea, the rain of manna from heaven - all were preceded by prayer. Great are the powers of prayer, for prayer turns strict punishment into merciful benevolence. The prayers of the pious can change Midas Hadin to Midas Horachmim.

Prayer consists of praise for the past and petition for the future. Prayer is designated in ten forms: Shavo (Shouting); Zeakah (Shouting); Neakah (Wailing); Rinah (Singing); Pegiah (Meeting); Bizur (Restraining); Keriah (Calling); Nipul (Falling);

Pilul (Bowling); Tachnunim (Supplication); ~~and~~ (Deuteronomy Rab-  
bah b). In addition, prayer can be called, Shir (Singing);  
Shevach (Praise); Hallel (Praise); Hodoya (Praise) and Zimrah  
(Singing).

Generally, prayer is a uniform matter, differing only  
in particulars. Prayer is both optional and compulsory.  
Should evil befall man suddenly, it is proper for him to pray  
for a mitigation of his fortunes and for a removal of evil.  
Should prosperity descend upon man, it is incumbent upon him  
to thank God for his good fortune. Prayer should begin and  
close with praise. Praise is in essence a petition for the  
future. Let man begin his prayers with praise for the past.  
When Jacob sought to pray for deliverance from Esau, he be-  
gan: "I am not worthy of all the mercies and of all the truth  
which thou hast shown unto thy servant". (60)

Prayers differ from blessings, for blessings have a  
set form and manner. All blessings include the mention of  
God and His kingdom. "Every blessing that does not include  
God and His kingdom (Boruch Atto Adonoy Elohenu Melech Haolom)  
is not considered a blessing. Furthermore, man may not invent  
his own Berachot but must adhere to the set formula. Man must  
abide by the form the Rabbis devised in pronouncing benedic-  
tions. (61) However, prayer may be pronounced in any form or

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(60) Genesis 32.11

(61) Berachnot 40b



fashion. Man may appropriately fashion his own prayers in accord with his circumstances. Man thus has the freedom to create his own prayers for personal worship. The Rabbis of the Talmud fashioned their individual prayers, every one offering an appropriate prayer for any **special** occasion.

Prayer may also be a compelling factor in man's life. It is impossible for a Jew to pass twenty-four hours without any prayer at all. It is **necessary** for man's physical well being to have an emotional outlet in prayer. The orders of prayers were transmitted by the Elders of the great Synagogue, (Anshe Kneset Hagdola). The Shma and its blessings form the core of these prayers. It is incumbent upon man to repeat these prayers at all times. The rest of the prayers may be deleted if man is in a hurry, but his worship is not called a "Tefila Shelima". However, at all times he must include the Shma and its blessings, in his order of worship.

Man's intellect should convince him that he must pray to God. Man should express his gratitude to God by prayer. The prayers of Israel are very precious in God's eyes. The recognition of God's gracious dealings with man results in manifold prayers for his kindness. Prayers of praise are sweet to the ears of God. Whoever enjoys the blessings of this world without evincing gratitude - it is as if he were stealing from the Holy One, Blessed Be He. <sup>(62)</sup> God is the source of all goodness for man, and bestows his kindness upon the universe only after man prays to Him. However, prayer

should be directed for the general welfare. Accordingly, man should petition for general well being and prosperity, and not for his own welfare, in particular. Man should pray for his neighbor's wants and his own wishes will be realized.<sup>63</sup>

The early Hasidim of the Talmud would spend one hour in silent devotion prior to communal prayer. They would pray silently to avoid praying by rote, merely as a mechanical exercise. The Hasidim wished to avoid muttering sounds with their lips without the presence of the divine in their hearts. In the words of Isiah, "For as much as this people drew near, and with their mouth and with their lips do honor Me, but have removed their heart far from Me, and their fear of Me is a commandment of men learned by rote."<sup>64</sup>

To avoid the possibility of such a condition the Hasidim would meditate for an hour concerning their own littleness and the majesty of Him whom they sought to pray to. After this orientation of humility and contriteness they would proceed to pray together.<sup>65</sup>

Despite man's supplications for peace and personal welfare, he may be smitten by God and punished for his transgressions, though they be slight. God may punish the righteous and appear to be angry with them; actually that is a good sign. As the Talmud says: "Better is the anger that God exhibits toward the righteous in this world, than the pleasure he exhibits towards the wicked."<sup>66</sup> Even if the righteous do suffer in this world, their afflictions are only "Yesuray Ahavah" -

(64) Isiah 29.13  
(65) Berachot. 30b

(66) Shabbos 44b  
(67) Baba Kama 91a



God has not forsaken them. God's love may not be apparent amidst the pain, but in the future, love and grace will manifest themselves to all. It is therefore incumbent upon man to be grateful for the evil that befalls him, as well as the good that is his lot,<sup>67</sup> for both good and evil emanates from God's love. We cannot tell what is really good for us and if we do assign arbitrary values to phenomena - God has only one objective - to do good. Only good can emanate from God. Man may call it evil by his own criteria of judgment; actually, man is incapable of discerning the divine good, for from God only can good emanate, although man may classify it as evil. Evil thus cannot be the lot of the righteous, for eventually all is rectified by God. What a righteous man may deem as evil, may actually prove to be good, in disguise. Evidently this is the author's answer to the problem of Job - why do the righteous suffer? The author denies the existence of evil, maintaining that man cannot really judge what is good or bad for him. What man may regard as evil is only another manifestation of the good in a recondite form.

When man prays he must fulfill the following conditions:

- (1) His prayer should stem from a contrite heart and an earnestness of soul
- (2) He should scrutinize himself carefully to remove all impure matters from his heart and mind.

Man must remove all slander from his lips and **guile** from his heart when approaching God in prayer. "He who repeats slanderous tales, serves idolatry."<sup>68</sup> Whoever repeats malicious gossip transgresses the teachings of the five books of Moses.<sup>69</sup>

Man's tongue is a means of serving God, by prayer and study, and should never be defiled by slander and gossip. With his tongue (his means of communication) man is superior to all other animals. Let man dedicate this power to sacred and pure matters and not profane it by indulging in slander. "And thou shalt speak of them, but thou shalt not speak slanderously."

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(68) Erchin 15

(69) Leviticus Rabbah 15



The sources utilized for this work were tremendous in scope and implication. Jacob of Dubnow was a master of Rabbis. He was well acquainted with Midrashic Literature. In addition, he made a complete study of Bachya's "Hovot Halvovot", mastered the Moreh Nebuchim of Maimonides, and quotes liberally from his Sefer Hamada. The author likewise refers to Albo's Ikarim and Luzato's Mesilat Yesharim. Jacob of Dubnow was thus well acquainted with the Jewish literature of his period. Unlike Bachya, (who included Arabic and Christian references in his work) Jacob of Dubnow limited himself exclusively to Jewish sources. Whereas Chovot Halvovot was written originally in Arabic, and consisted of ten chapters, Torot Hamidot was written in a charming Hebrew style and consists of only eight chapters. However, one can discern a definite correlation between the two works; Unquestionably, Torot Hamidot is patterned after Chovot Halvevot.

Throughout this great work the author pleads for a spiritual approach to life. The author is deeply conscious of a personal God manifesting Himself daily in the lives of all men. The author maintains an implicit faith in a personal God, whose providence rules the entire universe. Torah is the source of God's teaching to man, and man must never accept



any change in Torah, whether oral or written. Torah must be accepted on faith alone, and man must not seek any rational excuses for his faith. Maintaining the primacy of Faith in Judaism, the author likewise states that nothing in the Torah can be contrary to reason and logic. However, man must accept the teachings of the Torah without question. Freedom of choice, at best, is limited to man, and the purpose of man's life is to purify himself for entrance into the next world. The author evidences a keen psychological understanding of human emotions and values. He pleads for a completely spiritual life, devoid of any vestige of materialism. He evinces an intense faith in God, and a persuasive belief in a world to come.

The work is written in a beautiful Hebrew, by his disciple, Berish Plahn, a Rabbi and spiritual descendent of many Rabbis from Frankfort.

In this age of doubt and confusion, of soul searching and inner striving for peace and contentment, this work can well point the way. The author was a saint - a truly noble person - who lived a full life completely devoid of the ravages of materialism. May his spirit prove to be a blessing for all mankind. May his teachings of religion illumine the uncertain path that mankind is treading, at present.

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