



LIBRARY COPYRIGHT NOTICE

www.huc.edu/libraries

Regulated Warning

See Code of Federal Regulations, Title 37, Volume 1, Section 201.14:

The copyright law of the United States (title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material.

Under certain conditions specified in the law, libraries and archives are authorized to furnish a photocopy or other reproduction. One of these specific conditions is that the photocopy or reproduction is not to be “used for any purpose other than private study, scholarship, or research.” If a user makes a request for, or later uses, a photocopy or reproduction for purposes in excess of “fair use,” that user may be liable for copyright infringement.

This institution reserves the right to refuse to accept a copying order if, in its judgment, fulfillment of the order would involve violation of copyright law.

THE SOCIAL, CULTURAL, AND ETHICAL
IDEALS OF JUDAH LOW BEN BEZALEEL AS REFLECTED
IN HIS NETIBOT OLAM

Nathan Kaber

Submitted in partial fulfillment for
the Title of Rabbi and
for the Degree of Master of Hebrew Letters

REFEREE: DR. JACOB R. MARCUS

HEBREW UNION COLLEGE

1 9 4 2

rec. 10/78

To My Dear Parents

Sophia and Henry Kaber

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	Page 1
------------------------	--------

Chapter

I. Judah Low Ben Bezaleel	1
II. Acts of Lovingkindness	11
III. Charity	44
IV. Power of the Inclination	67
V. Summary	93
List of Biblical and Rabbinic References	104
Bibliography	121

INTRODUCTION

We learn from the title page of the Yosefow(folio) edition of Netibot Olam that the first printing of the book was made by the author himself in Prague, 1595. The second printing was in 1809 by a R.Jacob Moses, son of Solomon Zalman. The Yosefow edition(1836) was the third printing, and the Stettin(duodecimo) edition (1865) was the fourth, and to my knowledge, the last printing of the book. Of these four editions, the Yosefow and Stettin are found in the Hebrew Union College Library.

Netibot Olam is an ethical work consisting of thirty-three "Paths", thirty-two of which are devoted to ethical teachings and the one additional Netib is on Torah. The first three Netibot of the book are Torah, Avodah, and Gemilut Hasadim, arranged in this order probably in keeping with the statement of Simon the Just who said: "The world is based upon three things: upon the Torah, upon the Temple service, and upon acts of lovingkindness"(Abot. 1.2). Although the following Netib is on Charity, it appears at least as far as the arrangement is concerned that it is considered as a branch of Gemilut Hasadim. We find that the arrangement of the next three Netibot is based on the statement of Rabban Simeon, the son of Gamaliel:"By three things is the

world preserved: by truth, by judgment, and by peace". (Abot. 1.18). Thus we find that there is a definite basis for the arrangement of the first six Netivot of the book which are: Torah, Avodah, Gemilut Hasadim, (Zedakah), Din, Emes, (Emunah), and Shalom. Other Netivot are Humility, Fear of God, Love of God, Love of Friend, Silence, Restraint, Modesty, Power of the Inclination, Repentance, etc.

The author is very clear in his Preface as to the nature of the book and his intention in writing it. He states that he has seen fit to arrange the ethical teachings of the Sages according to subject matter for the convenience of the reader. "Thus if one desires", he writes, "to study the ethical teachings which the Sages taught he will find them together". The underlying motive of course in studying these "Paths" is that the reader may have a clear code or guide for religious conduct. He who walks in these Paths shall have life, or as Low states, "death will not overtake him".

The method which the author employs in presenting the material is the same for each Netib. Each "Path" begins with a verse from Proverbs which serves as an introduction to the topic under consideration. Low may have been inspired in this arrangement by the fourteenth century Biblical exegete, Bahya Ben Asher Halawa who, in his commentary on the Pentateuch, prefaces each

parashah with some verse from Proverbs. After explaining the verse, Low then presents a Talmudic or Midrashic passage relevant to a particular aspect of the main topic and follows this with an explanation of the passage. Each "Path" contains numerous Talmudic and Midrashic passages by which one comes to appreciate the broad knowledge of rabbinic literature which the author possessed. It is in the explanation of these references that the reader gains an appreciation of the depth of thought and lofty spirituality of Low.

While I have prepared a translation of five of the Netivot: Acts of Lovingkindness, Charity, Power of the Inclination, Modesty, and Restraint, I found that the first three offered ample material for the thesis and in bringing out many of the author's ideas. I have followed Low's arrangement of first stating the rabbinic reference, and then presenting his explanation. It was of course impossible and unnecessary to mention each and every one of the Talmudic and Midrashic references. I have tried to select those references which were either more appealing to me, or which I thought best represented the point which the author desired to make. The concluding chapter is devoted to a summary of the main ideas expressed in the three Netivot to which I have already alluded. Perhaps the only major criticism that I can offer of

these Netivot is that there is a great deal of repetition. I have tried to avoid this repetition but am frank to admit that I have not always succeeded. Most of it is due to the fact that the author uses much the same wording and phraseology of the rabbinic passage that he comments upon.

All Midrashim quoted in the thesis which are found in Midrash Rabbah, are taken from the Soncino translation, Soncino Press, London, 1939. Likewise, all Talmudic passages quoted in the thesis for which a translation has been made by Soncino are taken from the Soncino edition of the Talmud.

I wish to express my appreciation and acknowledge my indebtedness to The Temple, Cleveland, Ohio, for the use of its splendid library last summer in preparing the translation of the five Netivot; to Dr. Jacob R. Marcus for his suggestions as to the treatment of the subject, and for referring me to several articles dealing with the life of Low; to Dr. Isaiah Sonne for aiding me in checking several Talmudic and Midrashic sources, and for discussing with me the life of the author and the general nature of his work; and to Walter Plaut, C Grade student at the Hebrew Union College who was very helpful in translating the articles on Low in Encyclopaedia Judaica and in Jahrbuch der Jüdisch-Literarischen Gesellschaft.

CHAPTER ONE

JUDAH LÖW BEN BEZALEEL

The author of Netivot Olam, known as the Maharal of Prague or "Der Hohe Rabbi Low" (the exalted Rabbi Low), was born in Posen about the second decade of the sixteenth century. It was probably due to persecution we are told, that his family fled from Worms toward the end of the fifteenth century and settled in Posen. We do not know the exact date of his birth, although Bloch¹ and Chones² state that he was born on Seder night, 1512, while Horodezky³ gives us the year 1525. We do know, however, that he was the descendant of an illustrious family of rabbinical scholars and that Low himself was destined to carry on this great scholarly tradition. His father, Bezaleel Ben Hayyim was the brother of Jacob of Worms who, in his time was considered the leading Rabbi in Germany. Low's maternal uncle, Rabbi Isaac Klauber, was the grandfather of the famous sixteenth century Polish Talmudist, Solomon Luria of Lublin. Low's elder brother Hayyim, studied with that other eminent Polish scholar and contemporary of Luria, Shalom Shachna. It has been said that Low too was a pupil of Shachna, but Grunwald is of the opinion that this assumption "is disproved not only on the ground of chronological difficulties, but also by his positive attitude in denouncing the pilpul, in which Shachna indulged so much".⁴

The fact, however, that the names of Shachna and Luria are mentioned in connection with Low's family, reveals its association with the world of Jewish learning of that day. It was Shachna and Luria, together with Moses Isserles who formed the famous triumvirate,--men whom Graetz characterizes as "the three great rabbinical lights(who) laid the foundation of the extraordinary⁵ erudition of the Polish Jews".

But Low's family background was not his sole claim to merit for he proved to be one of the foremost Talmudist and rabbinical leaders of his time. For about twenty years(1553-1573) he was the chief Rabbi of Moravia, the "Landsrabbiner" at Nikolsburg where he directed the affairs of the community and the study of the Talmud. In 1573 he came to the Jewish community of Prague-- the "mother city in Israel", and the seat of Jewish learning which attracted thousands of students who came to sit at the feet of its many scholars and teachers. "Only a few(of these scholars and teachers) however", states Meir Perels, "left a last memory,--men who made an indelible impression upon all. Such was Jehuda Lowe Ben Bezaleel".⁶ Here in Prague Low became head of the "Klaus", the Talmud school which had been founded by his intimate friend, the leading Jewish benefactor in Prague, Mordecai Meisel. The Prague Jewish community also felt Low's influence through his service in regulating the statutes of the hebra kaddisha. Believing that

a fundamental knowledge of the Mishnah was basic for an understanding of the Gemara, Low also organized Mishnayot societies in Prague. Many students studied at the "Klaus" and joined the Mishnayot societies, including two^{who} were to contribute greatly to the field of Jewish scholarship,--David Gans, the Chronicler, the author of Zemach David, and Lippman Heller, the author of Tosofot Yomtov. Heller especially was influenced by the Maharal, for he took part in organizing the Mishnayot societies, and as Grunwald tells, "received his education in the house of the great Rabbi Low⁷ in Prague".

So great was Low's reputation as scholar and leader, that upon the death of Prague's chief Rabbi, Isaac Melnik, he became a candidate for the office. When, however, he was ^{defeated} ~~defeated~~ in the election by his brother-in-law Isaac Hayyot, Low left Prague(1564) to become head of the Yeshibah of his native community of Posen, and subsequently Ab Beth Din of all the provinces of greater Poland. He was to remain in Posen only four years however, for in 1568 Low returned to Prague. "He was drawn thither not only by family ties(his wife belonging to the eminent Altschuler family, and his daughters being married in that city), but also by the fact that Isaac Hayyot had resigned his office".⁸ Once again the Maharal went back to the "Klaus" where he resumed his

activities as student and teacher. But the days of travel for this itinerant Rabbi were not over, for in 1582 he again left Prague for Fosen. The reason for his departure from Prague at this time as contained in a document published by Alexander Marx⁹ seems to have been due to difficulties between Low and the head of the community, Zalman Hurwitz. A certain Asher b. Gershom Mordecai of Nordlingen complains against the Parnas. He also points out that Hurwitz was put in herem by Low, and for this reason Low was compelled to leave Prague. And yet it appeared that he was never destined to remain away from the great center of Jewish erudition permanently. In 1596 Low was back in Prague, and this time he remained to spend his last years in this city which had come to know and love him. He died in 1609 and was buried in Prague's Old Jewish cemetery where he is surrounded by over a score of his followers who lie buried in a circle around their master. I was unable to ascertain whether or not Low ever actually succeeded his brother-in-law as chief Rabbi of Prague. We have a statement by Grunwald, however, in which he says: "In the 'Pesak 'al 'Agunah'(1594) there is a responsum by Low. In this work Low is called 'chief Rabbi of Prague'; and indeed he became chief Rabbi¹⁰ de jure, probably after the death of Isaac Hayyot(1597)".

It would appear from the information that I was able to gather on Low, that not only did he possess a

fine knowledge of the Talmud but was also well versed in mystical lore which consciously or unconsciously formed an integral part of his thinking. We see for example that his choice of thirty-two Netibot was probably suggested by the thirty-two Netibot mentioned at the beginning of Sepher Yetzira. Only once, however, in the five Netibot which I read does he quote from the Zohar, although on several occasions Low refers to, and at times ^{quotes} from "secret wisdom" and "deep wisdom". We see too that his concept of hesed as the good with constantly pours forth or emanates from God, the "Fountain of Life" as an earthly fountain pours forth its waters abundantly is a definite Kabbalistic concept. In spite of the fact, however, that mysticism played an important role in molding his ethical thought, we must not draw the conclusion that he was a staunch advocate of Kabbala, or that his works represent a deliberate attempt to set forth mystical doctrines. Indeed, Grunwald tells us: "he was not among the champions of the Cabala and none of his works is devoted to it".¹¹

That which seems to account for the allusion to the "mysterious Rabbi Low" is the fact that he was an ascetic, meditative personality who became the central figure about whom revolved numerous myths and legends of a mystical character. In referring to the Ghetto of Prague, Bloch writes: "the fame of one man resounds in

it--the name of Faubi Loew, one of the greatest pillars of the Goluth about whom tradition has wreathed a luxuriant¹² garland of legends and woven a colorful tapestry of myths".

The most famous of these legends is that of the Golem-- a clay figure of a man fashioned and brought to life by Low by pronouncing the wonderworking Shem-ha-muho-rasch. Legend has it that Low named the Golem Joseph, and assigned him the task of protecting the Jews against persecution and to apprehend the instigators of the blood libel. We are also told that Low once had an audience with Emperor Rudolph II but the exact nature of their conversation is not known. Legend, however, helps us out again. It was said that Low had received assurance from the Emperor that not only would the blood accusations against the Jews cease, but that they would also be granted equal rights as citizens of the country. In view of this promise, Low regarded the work of the Golem ended. On Lag B'Omer, 1593, at two o'clock in the morning, the sleeping Golem was carried to the attic of Prague's famous Altneuschule and destroyed. There too legend tells us may be found the remains of Joseph Golem until this very day.

Although the name of Judah Low Ben Bezalel is associated with Jewish legends and myths, it must likewise be thought of in connection with certain educational ideas which Low possessed. Chones,¹³ for example says that he was the first to reject the pilpulism of the

Talmudic school, and quotes Low as castigating the hair-splitters in this manner: "Why must you bother with all this pilpulism before you have drawn in joy from the wells of the Talmud and before you have become well-versed in the foundations of the Mishnah". He favored a critical approach to the Talmud and a thorough-going study of Talmudic sources. It was Low's insistence upon the study and knowledge of Talmudic sources which led him to disapprove of the Shulchan Aruch. He bitterly assailed the educational system of his day which first taught a boy Gemara, and afterwards Mishnah and Bible. One must first know the Bible, he said, and then make the Mishnah the foundation upon which to build a knowledge of the Gemara. He denounced the philosophers whose speculations carried them far afield from Jewish traditional thought, or who were led to scorn religious belief. Low joined the Rabbis of Mantua in attacking Azariah Dei Rossi for his humanistic predilections and disrespect for tradition, and in branding his Me'or Anayim as an heretical book forbidden to be read by any God-fearing Jew. Like many of the Rabbis of his day, Low stood ready to endorse speculations and writings providing they did not run counter to Divine revelation.

While we think of Low because of the legends which have been built around him, his Jewish erudition, and see him in the setting of the Prague Ghetto, it would be incorrect to believe that he possessed no secular interests

or that his acquaintances were confined solely to the Jewish community. His interest in a scientific approach to learning was not limited to Jewish studies for he became a fine student of general knowledge as well. Low was more than familiar with astronomy and mathematics, and believed it fitting and proper for all Jews to acquire this knowledge so as to broaden their intellectual horizon. It was undoubtedly due to his interest in, and knowledge of astronomy and mathematics that Low was on friendly terms with the noted scientists Tycho De Brahe and John Keyler. It was the former we are told who arranged the audience to which I alluded between Low and Emperor Rudolph.

Low's contact with the outside world, however, was not only of a personal nature, for he became the intermediary between the Jewish and non-Jewish communities of Prague. He is said to have engaged in several disputations with church dignitaries and to have defended Judaism and the Jewish community against the calumny characteristic of that day. It is not at all surprising that a man of his great intellectual stature, who was rooted in Jewish learning and possessed more than a familiarity with secular knowledge, should have been the champion of his Prague co-religionists, its spokesman to the non-Jewish community and the defender of the Jewish faith.

In the list of beloved and deeply revered Jewish personalities, the name of Judah Low Ben Bezaleel must be placed near the very top. He was loved for his piety and humility which he displayed not only in his daily conduct but in his approach to study as well. One of the reasons why many of the details about Low's personal life are either vague or unknown is because his humility prevented him from alluding to himself in his works. (For a list of Low's more important works see the articles by ¹⁴Horodezky and ¹⁵Grunwald). He never boasted of his scholarship, but remained devoted to the study of Judaism in a quiet, modest manner. But with all his humility, Low was a man of firm convictions and ever ready to defend and champion them. He was held in highest esteem by his contemporaries and paid glowing tributes by his own and later generations. David Cans described him as "the glory of the Exile", and Lippman Heller went so far as to say: "The power of the word of our great Master was greater than the power of the word of Rabbi Jehuda ha-Nasi". Low's grandson, Naphtali ha-Kohen said that he "served with the holy spirit", while others acclaimed him as the "Lion of the Torah", "The Iron Pillar on which Israel leans", "Our life's breath", and "the wonder of our time, in whose light our coreligionists walk, and whose waters all Israel drinks". Bloch praised the Maharal in this manner: "This man, to whom the people, out of gratitude and veneration, gave the title "Hohe"

exalted, was of a divinely gifted nature. He had a heart overflowing with love, a soul which thirsted after righteousness, a character which throbbed in harmony with the threefold basic chord of ancient Jewish morality--modesty, compassion and kindness".¹⁶ And at the dedication of a monument of Low in Prague, Prof. Dr. Ladislaus Saloun said: "I could certainly place no better statue than that of the learned and mysterious exalted Rabbi Loew, in whom everything noble which was produced from the Ghetto of Prague, was incorporated. Rabbi Loew¹⁷ was to me the symbol of the Ghetto". Such are a few of the glorious testimonials paid to this outstanding spiritual personality, profound thinker, and great influence for good who admirably combined scholarly pursuits with pious living. With this description of some of the activities, thoughts, and personality traits of the author of Netivot Olam, we now turn to the first of three "Paths" which I discuss--Gemilut Hasadim.

CHAPTER TWO

ACTS OF LOVINGKINDNESS

We also learn that "he who practices lovingkindness possesses absolute goodness because he does good to others. This man has merit, and possesses a minimum but not total matter, for matter is not giving but is always receiving".⁷ The Sages allude to this principle by stating that the reason "an ignorant man cannot be pious"⁸ is because he is total matter,-- i.e. being total matter he cannot perform *qoh* which is piety (*h'q'oh*). At the same time, however, the Rabbis recognize that even they who practice loving-kindness are not completely devoid of matter. This is so because all life, both the organic and inorganic is composed of matter. Nevertheless, it is through Gemilut Hasadim that the matter which the pious do possess and from which sin emanates, is purified and the body is cleansed from sin. It is hesed then, which purifies matter and acts as an atonement in cleansing the body of sin.

Truth (emes) as our Scriptural verse tells us can also accomplish this end. Sin, states Low is the work of falsehood and one sins because the Evil Inclination entices him. Nonetheless, one can obtain pardon for his sins by reverting to truth. What is truth? This is Torah which acts as an atonement for sin committed by the intellect. One may sin with the intellect by having a false notion or misconception.

It is through Torah, however, which is completely intellectual(i.e. truth) that the false conception is removed. To study Torah then, is to pursue truth, and thereby to rectify any false impressions or incorrect ideas. We see too that hesed and emes are of the same quality and serve the same purpose. The practice of lovingkindness cleanses the body from sin, while the study of Torah cleanses the intellect from sin.

Torah and Gemilut Hasadim, however, are not to be thought of solely in terms of purification and expiation. They can also accomplish redemption. In ⁹ Berakot R. Nathan says: whence do we know that God never tires of the prayers of assemblies? as it is written: Behold, God is mighty, yet He dispiseth not¹⁰
any, and it is written: He hath redeemed my soul¹¹
from the battle that was against me. God said: everyone who occupies himself in Torah and in loving-kindness and prays with the congregation, I account it unto him as if he had redeemed Me and My children from among the nations. We learn from this that God went into exile with His children and that His Shechinah is with them. When, however, the congregation prays to God it rises above the nations among whom it is dispersed and attains spiritual kinship and nearness to God. Through prayer it is as if both God and Israel were redeemed from exile. Indeed, albeit physical exile

may continue, spiritual exile ceases through prayer.

Israel also rises above the nations through Gemilut Hasadim, for it is through the practice of lovingkindness that man is exalted and elevated. Scripture offers ample proof for this: righteousness¹² exalteth a nation; and, he that walketh righteously and speaketh uprightly,... he shall dwell on high,¹³ his place of defense shall be the munitions of rocks. Thus we see that he who practices lovingkindness not only exalts himself, but exalts Israel above the nations and helps to liberate both God and Israel from exile.

Torah also achieves the same ends for the individual, God, and Israel. The Rabbis depict Abraham as a lofty personality as shown first by his name: (אברהם = "A lofty father"). He occupied himself both in Torah and in Gemilut Hasadim. In Torah, as it is written: Because that Abraham hearkened to My voice, and kept My charge,¹⁴ My statutes, and My laws. In Gemilut Hasadim, as it is written: That he may command his children and his¹⁵ household after him. Here we see how tremendously important were the concepts of Gemilut Hasadim, Torah, and Tefillah to the Rabbis for redeeming God and Israel. All three succeed in separating Israel from among the nations and redeeming the Shechinah who is with Israel in exile. Here too we have a picture of Judaism's

emphasis upon worship, and upon intellectual and ethical striving. We know that with the destruction of the Temple, the termination of the sacrificial cult, the loss of nationhood and Israel's dispersion among the nations, these concepts of Tefillah and Gemilut Hasadim came into prominence in Jewish religious thought, and have ever remained fundamental tenets of Judaism. Not only were Tefillah and Gemilut Hasadim approved as substitutes for the Temple sacrificial service, but came to be regarded as far superior religiously to sacrifices. All three, Prayer, Torah, and Acts of Lovingkindness were viewed not only as sources of comfort and inspiration for an exiled and scattered Israel, but also as guides and goals for religious action.

It is hesed in terms of specific examples of religious action which Low now presents. In Sota¹⁶ the Rabbis raise the question as to the meaning of the verse: You shall walk after the Lord your God.¹⁷ It cannot mean that one should walk after the Shechinah, for¹⁸ it is written: the Lord your God is a consuming fire. No, the verse means that one should strive after God through hesed and in so doing, he acquires this attribute of God and comes to resemble his Creator. Just as God clothes the naked, as it says: And the Lord God made for Adam and his wife garments of skins and

19

clothed them, so man should do likewise. Just as God visits the sick, as it is written: And God appeared
20 unto him, so you visit the sick. God buries the dead, as it is written: And God buried him in the
21 valley, so you should do likewise. God comforts the mourners, as it is written: And it came to pass after
the death of Abraham that God blessed Isaac, thus you should do likewise.

We see by this passage that Gemilut Hasadim includes clothing the naked, visiting the sick, burying the dead, and comforting the mourners. They will be discussed in detail later on in this section. They are mentioned here only by way of definition of hesed and to explain the meaning of the verse: You shall walk after the Lord your God.

Furthermore, we need to understand that hesed is what one should do and not what one must do as commanded by law. If the examples cited above were legal prescriptions, then they could not come under the category of hesed. The Talmudic reference says that one should cloth the naked, visit the sick, etc. because God does these things; it does not say that one must do them. In any case it is incumbent upon a man to adhere to the law. This is neither hesed nor what is meant by "walking after God". It is only when one acts according to his own free-will

and knowledge, without legal compulsion that we can say he is doing hesed and "walking after God". If, for example, states Judah Low "one should give charity to a poor man, it cannot be said that he walks in the ways of God, for if there were no poor man in distress it is possible that he wouldn't do it.

Only when one does kindness of his own free-will and knowledge and is not obliged to do it, can it be said that he walks in the ways of God."²³ This is hesed. This is acting according to the principle of *למען שיהיה* -- going beyond the requirements of the law, and in so doing, one resembles his Creator. Indeed, of all God's attributes, hesed is the highest as revealed by the verse: ²⁴ For His kindness endureth forever. Hesed is the essential attribute of God and the only one that man can possess. Man cannot, for example, possess the attribute of justice, for unlike God it is possible that he may render a false judgment, or sin in judgment unwittingly. Hesed, then, is the only attribute which man can possess and it is through kindness that he can exalt himself and elevate himself to God. It is hesed as we have said that makes for the purification of matter, and in so doing, brings man to resemble his Maker.

The concept of "Elevation" is graphically depicted²⁵ by the Midrash. R.Abin said: consider how great is

the power of those who practice lovingkindness, for they shelter neither in the shadow of the wings of the earth, nor in the shadow of the wings of the morning, nor in the shadow of the wings of the sun, nor in the shadow of the wings of the Cherubim, nor in the shadow of the wings of the Hayyot, nor in the shadow of the wings of the Seraphim, but in the shadow of the wings of God, as it is said: How precious is Thy lovingkindness O God, and the children of men take refuge in the shadow of Thy wings.²⁶ Here is a picture of the universe consisting of seven elevations, with earth the lowest and God the highest. And they who practice lovingkindness soar above all six to dwell under the wings of the Shechinah where they receive Divine protection and care. Like Abraham too who showed kindness to Sarah, they are worthy of old age because they do kindness to others.²⁷ And Abraham was old, well stricken in age ---And these are the days of the years of Abraham's life which he lived, a hundred threescore and fifteen years.²⁸ Thus we see that the reward for practicing lovingkindness is Divine protection and longevity.

Judah Low then presents a discussion on the Torah and its purpose. In Sota²⁹ R. Simlai explained: the Torah begins with lovingkindness and ends with loving-kindness. It begins with lovingkindness as it is written: And the Lord God made for Adam and his wife garments of

50

skins, and clothed them ; and it ends with lovingkindness,
as it is written: And He buried him in the valley. ⁵¹

The explanation is that non-existence (i.e. רָצוֹן), the absence of good) cannot cleave to Torah because the Torah is good, and that which is evil cannot cleave to good. Nor can we say that the Torah is not eternal in spite of the references to the "beginning" and "end" of the Torah. For since both the beginning and end are good, it is attached to God who is good, and thereby the Torah is eternal.

It is fitting that since both the beginning and end of Torah are hesed that the main principle of Torah should be goodness. Were it not for the fact that man needs justice and law, there would be no law at all. That is, it is only because man sins and thus violates the law that the four capital punishments exist. Not the law, but hesed is the main principle of Torah, so that goodness and kindness should prevail in the end and all evil vanish. The various punishments mentioned in the Torah are not ends in themselves. They are prescribed for a purpose, viz; that evil may be removed through these punishments and good finally come to the world. Here we have Judaism's conception of chastisements as purifiers--to cleanse from sin. This we have learned is accomplished through Gemilut Hasadim, and since both the beginning and the end of Torah are lovingkindness,

the chastisements mentioned therein are to serve this purpose of purification and removal of sin.

³²
The Midrash also advances many reasons for the creation of the world. Some Rabbis maintain that it was created for the sake of Abraham, or Moses, or the Torah. But underlying all these reasons is the idea of hesed. Since God Himself possesses hesed as His highest attribute He could not have created an imperfect world. Since the Benefactor is good, then of necessity the bequest must be good. If ^{God} ~~creation~~ were not good then Creation would not have been fitting for Him. Creation mirrors the Creator and the Creator mirrors Creation. Once again we have a fundamental tenet of Judaism: the goodness of God and the goodness of His Creation.

II

The author begins this section with a discussion on the relative merit of Torah and Gemilut Hasadim-- of study and practice. In Abodah Zarah¹ the Rabbis taught: When R. Eleazar b. Perata and R. Hanina b. Teradion were arrested, R. Eleazar b. Perata said to R. Hanina b. Teradion: Happy art thou that thou hast been arrested^{on} one charge; woe is me, for I am arrested on five charges. R. Hanina replied: Happy art thou who hast been arrested on five charges but wilt be rescued; woe is ~~me~~ who, having been arrested on one charge will not be rescued; for thou hast occupied thyself with (the study of) Torah as well as with acts of lovingkindness, whereas I occupied myself with Torah alone. R. Huna said: He who occupies himself with the study of Torah is like one who has no God, for it is said: Now for long seasons Israel was without the true God and without a teaching priest and without the law.² What is meant by 'without the true God'? It means that he who only occupies himself with the study of Torah is like one who has no God.

Judah Low explains this passage by stating that the Rabbis mean that the study of the Torah alone does not assure Godliness. The study of the Torah is important for intellectual growth and development for it is an

intellectual pursuit. This in itself, however, is not all-important nor is it to be regarded as the final goal of one's strivings. It is only as one performs the Divine commandments, the Mitzvot that he can acquire Godliness. If one limits or restricts his activities solely to the study of the Torah, then as the Sages say: "he is like one who has no God", for God is to be sought after in the performance of good deeds. This is not to say that the study of the Torah is unessential or of little value, except insofar as it fails to motivate one in the direction of actual practice. Nor, says the author are we to believe that one who studies Torah does not perform the Mitzvot (God forbid). We are only to understand that he needs to perform a deed which is connected with the Torah, and that deed is Gemilut Hasadim. There are several reasons states Low why Torah and Gemilut Hasadim go together. One is that whereas Torah cleanses the intellect from sin, Gemilut Hasadim cleanses the body of sin. Secondly, we have learned that the beginning and the end of Torah are acts of lovingkindness. Thirdly, the numerical value of both is the same, viz; six hundred and eleven. And when one proceeds to occupy himself with hesed it can no longer be said that his study of Torah is only intellectual, because he is performing a deed which is connected with the Torah. Torah and Gemilut

Hasadim declares Low, form one great Whole, and there is nothing higher than this.

The author gives a brief explanation of the concept of "good" in terms of actual practice. In Peah³ it states: These are the things whose fruits a man enjoys in this world while the capital is laid up for him in the world to come: honouring father and mother, deeds of lovingkindness, and making peace between a man and his fellow. These three types of action states Low defines the three aspects of good. The first, honouring father and mother and similar matters is obligatory for all because it is prescribed by the Torah.⁴ The second, Gemilut Hasadim, is the complete opposite of the first for it is not prescribed by the Law, but is performed *לפני אדם או רב*, going beyond the requirements of the law. The third, making peace between a man and his fellow is obligatory, but not to the same degree as is the first for it is not a legal prescription. On the other hand, however, it is more obligatory than the second because Gemilut Hasadim is outside the law completely. Nonetheless, we must regard the making of peace between a man and his fellow as slightly obligatory because of the sad consequences which may result from strife and controversy. The author's love of peace, and his realization of the danger of discord to individual and group living is revealed by his statement: "When strife is in the

world it destroys the position and the structure⁵ completely".

Judah Low next refers to chapter *אבות*⁶ which states: In three respects Gemilut Hasadim is superior to Zedakah: charity is performed with money but loving-kindness can be performed with personal service and money. Charity can be given only to the poor; loving-kindness both to the poor and rich. Charity can be given to the living only; lovingkindness can be done both for the living and the dead (by attending to their funeral and burial). Low comments on this passage by saying that Gemilut Hasadim is viewed from the standpoint of the giver who engages in lovingkindness regardless of whether one asks for hesed or not. Charity, on the other hand, is viewed from the standpoint of the receiver who may be in distress and needs assistance. He may not actually ask for alms, but the fact that he is in distress and requires help, makes it the same as if he did ask for it. Then too, unlike one who engages in lovingkindness, the charitable man gives only his money to one who is in need, but it cannot be said that he gives of his very person or is rendering personal service. When, for example, one visits the sick, this is called hesed because the visitor is giving of himself--his very being is involved in this act. The charitable man, however, does not give

of himself but of that which is outside himself, viz; his money. We also learn that charity is only for the poor, whereas lovingkindness can be performed for all regardless of their financial status. The wealthy man does ^{need} not charity, but one can still do hesed for him. He who engages in lovingkindness states Low, does so because he is inherently good. It is his own innate goodness which motivates him to do hesed. Finally, as the Talmud states, Gemilut Hasadim extends even to the dead whereas Zedakah is confined to the living. Only the living need and receive charity; both the living and the dead, however, need and receive loving-kindness. And the reason that Gemilut Hasadim is considered such a great virtue states Low, is because it reveals the goodness of the doer.

The author also discusses another important difference between lovingkindness and charity. R.Eleazar ⁷ states: Gemilut Hasadim is greater than Zedakah for it is said: Sow to yourselves according to your charity, but reap according to your kindness. ⁸ If a man sows, it is doubtful whether he will eat (the harvest) or not, but when a man reaps, he will certainly eat. R.Eleazar further stated: The reward of charity depends entirely upon the extent of the kindness in it. This explains, says Judah Low, that not only is there doubt concerning a reward for charitable action, but if the recipient

of charity is not worthy of receiving it this cannot be called Zedakah. Gemilut Hasadim, however, is done for its own sake and the reward for lovingkindness is that the doer is himself good and merits a reward even though the recipient is not worthy to receive hesed. R. Eleazar's additional statement that "the reward of charity depends entirely upon the extent of the kindness in it", has reference to the manner in which one is benevolent. If, for example, states Low, one gives charity in a pleasant and generous manner, he then possesses the attribute of goodness. It is then that the charitable man is acting with hesed and his giving can truly be called "Zedakah". When, however, the bequest is presented in an unpleasant and miserly fashion, this is not Gemilut Hasadim for lovingkindness concerns the goodness that is in man, and he who gives charity in this manner does not possess the attribute of goodness. Consequently, he does not receive a reward for his charity because there is no hesed in his giving. Thus we see that the manner in which charity is given determines whether or not there is hesed in the giving, which in turn determines whether or not the giver receives a reward for Zedakah.

III

Judah Low begins this section by stating: "The virtue of kindness is the foundation of the world and the foundation of the throne of His glory"¹. The author bases this statement upon a Midrash² which comments on the verse: Maschil of Ethan the Ezrahite. I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever. They said to Ethan: upon what does the world stand? He said to them, upon kindness, as it is said: His throne is established upon kindness.⁴ To what is this comparable? To a chair that had four legs. One was unsteady because it was short. He took a stone and supported it. Thus the throne of God was unsteady until He supported it. And with what did He support it? With kindness, for it says: I said the world is built on kindness.⁵

In commenting on this Midrash, Low asks why it is that only hesed supports the world and God's throne. Might we not think for example that mishpat could accomplish this end? No, states Low, it is impossible for the world to stand before God by the attribute of justice because "God is strict in justice even to a hair's breadth".⁶ Were God to judge the world by mishpat alone then He would be separated from the world like a king is separated from his people when he performs judgment among them.

The idea which the author undoubtedly wishes to convey is that if God, whom we address as "The Merciful One" were to judge the world without hesed, then He would be completely removed from His creatures and His presence would not be manifest to them as One whose "throne is established upon kindness". This, however, is impossible, for if God did judge the world according to the attribute of mishpat, the world, like the chair mentioned in the Midrash would not have stability; in truth, the world could not exist. Just as one will place a stone under a chair which is unsteady in order to give it support, so too God judges the world according to the attribute of hesed and thereby gives it stability. Thus it is, that the world receives stability from God who is completely merciful; and to maintain its stability, yes, its very existence, the world cleaves unto God, not because of His mishpat, but because of His hesed.

We may also ask, what is Israel's foundation? Upon what does it rest so as to receive stability? This support we learn is the merit of the fathers. In the event, however, that the merit of the fathers should fail, where might Israel derive support so that it does not fall? This support is derived from the very source which assures the stability of the world--hesed.
7
In the Midrash, R. Judah b. Hanan said in the name of R. Berechyah: if you see that the merit of the fathers

is perverted and the merit of the mothers depart, cleave unto acts of lovingkindness, as it says: for the mountains may depart...this is the merit of the fathers; and the hills be removed...these are the mothers; but My kindness shall not depart from thee.⁸ Thus we see that Israel's foundation is always assured, if not through the merit of the fathers and mothers, then through Israel's own deeds---Gemilut Hasadim. So doing, God rewards Israel with hesed. It is middah keneged middah.

This principle of middah keneged middah⁹ is illustrated by a passage in Moed Katan which states: If one makes lament, others will lament for him; if one assists at burial, others will bury him; if one bears the bier, others will bear him. This is only fitting states Low, because one should be rewarded in accordance with the hesed he performs. The author makes an analogy between one who practices lovingkindness and a stream. A small stream may be connected to a large river. If this stream supplies water to a near-by pit, immediately the river replenishes the stream with exactly the same amount of water which it furnished to the pit. So it is with one who cleaves unto God by practicing lovingkindness. When one performs hesed for others, so God performs the very same hesed for him. He who possesses this attribute states Low is worthy of the greatest reward.

In Baba Metzia R. Joseph commented on the verse:

And thou shalt show them the way they must walk therein
and the work that they shall do. ¹¹ And thou shalt show
them ---this refers to their house of life; the way---
this means the practice of lovingkindness; they must
walk---to visiting the sick; therein--to burial;
and the work---to strict law; that they shall do---
to acts beyond the requirements of the law.

The author explains that "house of life" refers to the world to come which all should regard as the ultimate goal toward which they direct their every effort. He also points out that we have three types of action mentioned here: (1) lovingkindness, which may take the form of giving of one's possessions to another; (2) Visiting the sick, which is more imperative than the former since the life of a sick person is in danger and he needs assistance; (3) Burial is yet greater than visiting the sick for it is an act which must be performed in any case. (We note that this particular Talmudic passage from Baba Metzia makes a distinction between lovingkindness, visiting the sick, and burial, whereas the last two are generally included in the first). As to 'strict law' and 'acts beyond the requirements of the law', we learn that Jerusalem was destroyed only because judgments were given in accordance with strict Biblical law, and not according to the principle

of לִבְנֵי אֱשֵׁרֶת (Livy). Here again we see the application of of midah keneged midah. Although Jerusalem had many sins states Low, in explaining this passage, it was not destroyed because of these sins but because the judges adhered to the strict law. Thus God did likewise; He did not show mercy and as a result Jerusalem was destroyed.

IV

The author devotes this section to a discussion of specific acts of lovingkindness. He begins first with hospitality to wayfarers. In chapter ¹ /'JON R.Johanan states that hospitality to wayfarers is as great as early attendance at the house of study. R.Dimi declares that it is greater. Rav says that hospitality to wayfarers is greater than welcoming the presence of the Shechinah. Low explains R.Johanan's statement by saying, that just as early attendance at the house of study renders honor to the Torah, so hospitality to wayfarers renders honor to man who is created in the image of God. As to R.Dimi's statement, the author declares, that whereas early attendance at the house of study renders honor to the Torah, hospitality to wayfarers renders honor to God Himself. Man who is created in the image of God brings glory to the Shechinah when he extends hospitality to wayfarers and this is greater than the Torah. Low explains Rav's statement by saying that in receiving the Shechinah it is impossible to behold the Divine Presence Itself, for it is written: Man shall not see Me and live.² Not so, however, with hospitality to wayfarers, for when one brings a man into his house he actually beholds his face. It is in this manner that it may be said that one beholds the Shechinah, because the host is gracious to

one who is created in the image of God. One attaches himself to the wayfarer by providing for his needs, and so doing he attaches himself to God.

The author next cites a passage from chapter ^{7th}³ which reveals the merit of hospitality to wayfarers.

R.Johanan said on the authority of R.Jose b. Kisma: Of great(importance) is the mouthful(of food given to wayfarers), since it alienated two families from Israel, as it is written:because they met you not with bread⁴
and water in the way ye came forth out of Egypt.

R.Johanan stating his own views said: It alienates those who are near, and draws near those who are distant; it causes God's eyes to be averted from the wicked and makes the Shechinah to rest even on the prophets of Baal. "It alienates those who are near", (this is deduced) from Ammon and Moab. "And it brings near those who are distant"--from Jethro. For R.Johanan said: As a reward for (Jethro's saying) call him that he⁵
may eat bread, his descendants were privileged to sit in the Hall of Hewn stones.

The author explains that when one acts like Jethro who gave Moses refreshment when he came to his house, he is performing a most important deed. The trunk of a tree states Low, gives sustenance to all the branches, and every branch which is near to the trunk gives more than the one which is distant. The trunk, or main source

of sustenance of life is God, and he who gives of his bread to another (i.e. to one who is distant) is like the branch which is near the trunk. In giving to others he is near to God. Ammon and Moab, however, who were near alienated themselves because they were not hospitable to Israel and thus removed themselves from God. The wicked, as we know, are also removed from ~~from~~ God. When, however, they extend hospitality to others, they acquire the attribute of hospitality of God, and this causes God's eyes to be averted from them. Yes, even idolaters--the servants of Baal succeed in having the Shechinah rest upon them if they engage in hospitality to wayfarers. Thus we see how great indeed is the hesed of פִּיחִי/אֱלֹהִים: (1) It brings near to God those who are far, and (2) removes those who are near. (3) It acts as a redemptive measure for the wicked, and (4) is universalistic in nature in that even idolaters receive Divine favor when they engage in it.

The next act of lovingkindness which Low discusses is visiting the sick. We have learned that even though a poor man may not ask for charity because he is ashamed it is as though he had asked. Not so, however, in the case of a sick person. Although he could request that he be visited, under no circumstances is he to do so. Visiting the sick should be a spontaneous act without any word from the patient. The same immediate response

which should prevail in attending the dead should exist in visiting the sick.

The seriousness of failing to visit the sick is revealed by the statements of R.Akiba and R.Dimi in chapter ⁶ $\gamma \gamma / \mu \mu \rangle / \gamma \gamma / \mu \mu$. R.Akiba said: He who does not visit the sick is like a shedder of blood. R.Dimi said: He who visits the sick causes him to live, while he who does not visit the sick that he should die.---"that he should die!" can you really think so? But(say thus): He who does not visit the sick prays neither that he may live nor die.(Through the lack of his prayers which might have been accepted he is said to cause his death). Judah Low explains that when one visits the sick he seeks mercy for him. In fact, a plea for recovery and life is the very purpose of the visit. One cannot, however, make a plea for mercy on behalf of a sick person by remaining in his own home. This can only be accomplished through the actual deed of $\rho' / \mu \mu \rangle / \gamma \gamma$.

We learn too that there is a reward in store for one who visits the sick. He cannot be delivered from death, but he is, as R.Judah ⁷ in the name of R.Samuel said delivered from the punishment of Gehenna. It is customary for friends to visit each other when they are in good health, and especially when one of them is ill. It is through visiting the sick that the visitor brings honor and joy to his sick friend. He helps to relieve

his sufferings and to save his sick friend from death insofar as it is possible for him to do so. Because *דקור חולין* can accomplish these things, he who fulfills this commandment is delivered from the punishment of Gehenna.

If a Sage is ill then far more is expected of the visitor. The Sage is a man of superior intellect and spirituality. The visitor needs to pray so fervently on his behalf that he makes himself sick in the process. In making himself sick, however, he removes himself from all matter. We have a picture here of spiritual ecstasy whereby the visitor makes intercession for the Sage with such fervor and devotion that he is completely carried into the realm of the spirit.

The author next discusses in rather brief form, another act of lovingkindness--attending the dead.

R. Judah said: he who sees a deceased and does not attend him transgresses, since whoso mocketh the poor blasphemeth his Maker. And if he attends him, what is his reward?

R. Abayhu said: it is written: he that is gracious to the
¹⁰
poor, lendeth unto the Lord. The expression "blasphemeth
his Maker", states Low, applies to those who do not
perform deeds connected with ordinary life,--daily
occurrences like death. Therefore, if one does not concern
himself with honoring a deceased by attending to him,
he blasphemes God, "because death is commonplace in
¹¹
the world which God created". Low then explains the

other Scriptural verse by saying that the hesed which one performs in being gracious to a deceased is to be regarded as a loan to God insofar as the deceased cannot repay him. It is therefore incumbent upon God to repay the one who is gracious.

We have seen that it is of utmost importance to visit a Sage in the time of his illness. So too is it of extreme necessity to mourn for him at the time of his death. R. Judah¹² said in Rav's name: He who is slothful to lament a Sage, deserves to be buried alive. Low explains that the law is very stringent in this matter and imposes the most severe punishment upon one who fails to observe this commandment. Once again we observe the application of the principle, middah kenered middah---one cannot disregard the law with impunity, it is measure for measure.

Causing the bride and groom to rejoice is the last act of lovingkindness which the author discusses in this section. Here we have Judaism's conception of marriage as a sanctified relationship. The union of man and woman Low states, is perfect and exalted. From the standpoint of nature they are different, but when they are united in wedlock they become as one, for the Divine seal is placed upon them. We derive this from the fact that the yod in elohim and the heh in sholem combine to form God's name.

It is just because matrimony is a sanctification,

and a state of absolute perfection, that it is fitting not only to cause the bride and groom to rejoice, but also that the rejoicing be of an exalted nature. This perfect state of rejoicing is expressed in the five voices: the voice of joy and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the voice of the one who says, 'Give thanks to the Lord'.¹³ When one derives enjoyment from the wedding feast and doesn't make the groom and bride rejoice, he negates this perfect state of rejoicing as we learn in Berakot¹⁴ by transgressing against these five voices. When, however, states R. Joshua b. Levi¹⁵ one makes them rejoice, his reward is the Torah which was given in five voices, as it is written: And it came to pass on the third day, when it was morning, that there were thunders(voices) and lightnings and a thick cloud upon the mount and the voice of a horn exceeding loud.¹⁶And when the voice of the horn waxed louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him by a voice.¹⁷ Low explains that there was no perfect state of being until the Torah came into the world. Torah, like the union of the bride and groom is a perfect, Divine state of being, and he who makes the bride and groom rejoice merits the Torah,---it is the attraction of like for like.

R. Abayhu¹⁸ states that causing the bride and groom to rejoice is like a thanks-offering, as it is written:

and they who bring a thanks-offering to the house of the
Lord.¹⁹ The thanks-offering we present to God states Low,
is composed of opposites like leaven and unleaven,
and God unites them, for He is One and prevails over all.
Indeed, offering opposites to God proves that He is One
because He makes them one. In like manner, when one
causes the bride and groom to rejoice, these opposites
(man and woman) become one through God who unites them,
and in this manner also God is One.

V

Accompanying a person on a journey also belongs to acts of lovingkindness. This does not apply to a place which is inhabited or to a road which is heavily traveled upon because evil things do not prevail where man is in power. (The author does not define what he means by "evil things" but we might assume that he refers to wild animals which could not readily prevail against a person in a thickly populated settlement or on a road which bears great traffic). Rather, it is incumbent upon one to escort a person through a place which is not a settlement because danger constantly lurks there. R. Akiba had said that he who does not visit the sick is like a shedder of blood. So too, he who does not escort a person under the circumstances just mentioned is like a shedder of blood. This is so because the shedding of blood destroys the Divine image in man. This Divinity in man is deserving of honor and receives it when a person is escorted on a journey. When, however, an individual permits another to venture forth alone, he not only fails to honor the Divine image in man, but actually takes it from him, and in this manner he is like a shedder of blood.

The individual who fails to perform this hesed adheres to the strict letter of the law in lieu of going beyond

the requirements of the law. Low bitterly denounces such persons, for he states, that because they are so exacting, ultimately they come to rob and commit violence. They do not possess the liberal spirit at all, and if the time should come when they personally are involved in a matter, and desire something, they will seize it by force. The people of Sodom he states, are a good example of how violence manifests itself when the spirit of liberality is absent. Scripture tells us that the men of Sodom were¹ evil and sinners.

The men of Sodom declares Low, became so evil that finally they came to pervert the law and do the opposite of what the law required. Even their judges were corrupt as the Rabbis² say: there were four judges in Sodom named Shakrai, Shakurai, Zayyafi, and Mazle Dina. (Soncino: These are fictitious names meaning Liar, Awful Liar, Forger and Perverter of Justice). The Torah, however, refers to four righteous types of judges when it speaks of men of valor, fearers of God, men of truth, and haters of gain.³ Man, says Low, is composed of body, soul, intellect, and his money. Judges who are "men of valor" are strong where the body is concerned. They are not given to flattery or favoritism even though they confront the greatest of the great. They who were "fearers of God" are strong where the soul is concerned. The soul, states Low, is very powerful and when it prevails one is not even afraid of God. Those who fear God, however, are not

influenced by their soul and do not pervert justice. "Men of truth" love the intellect and love truth which is intellectual and will not falsify. "Haters of gain" are not influenced by monetary considerations; i.e. they are not given to accept bribes. Not so the men of Sodom; they possessed none of these qualities, but represented the opposite of these four types.

By refusing to go beyond the requirements of the law, the men of Sodom were led from one transgression to another. The Rabbis⁴, for example, tell us that whenever a poor man came to Sodom everyone gave him a coin upon which he wrote his name, but the mendicant never received any bread from them. Why? Because the poor would consume the bread, whereas if they gave him coins with their names on them, there was always the possibility that they might get them back. Nor was this all. They would impose the death penalty upon anyone who dared to give away bread, or any other commodity which could not ultimately be retrieved. One time a woman did give some bread to a poor man and the Sodomites daubed her with honey, placed her on a parapet, and the bees consumed her.

One Rabbi taught that the reason Scripture called them "wicked" or "evil" was because they were evil with their bodies (immoral) and "sinners", because they were sinners with their money (uncharitable). But regardless of the particular interpretation, the fact remains that the men of Sodom were vile, cruel to their fellowmen,

and committed the greatest sin of all by blaspheming God, which is to be regarded as denying the Unity of the Creator. Surely, states Low, such conduct is the direct antithesis of hesed, for kindness is when one is concerned with the welfare of his fellow and keeps himself from inflicting injury upon another. This is shown in chapter h'UN⁵ which states that the pious men of former generations used to hide their thorns and broken glasses in the midst of their fields at the depth of three handbreadths. R.Shesheth used to throw them in the fire, and Raba threw them into the Tigris. But according to another teacher it is better to hide them so that they cannot be found at all.

The conclusions which we can arrive at as a result of Low's explanations of the passages cited and from those which I did not mention are that we should ever strive to keep ourselves far removed from becoming like the men of Sodom. We must not transgress the law, but neither must we adhere to the strict letter of the law, for it was this action which led the men of Sodom to commit violence against their fellowmen and to pervert the law. We are admonished by the author to practice hesed-- to interpret the law liberally, and to do more than just what the law requires. So doing, declares Low, one can then attain perfection in a threefold manner: (1) he can be perfect with his Creator; (2) perfect with himself; and (3) perfect with others.

CHAPTER THREE

CHARITY

I

Judah Low begins the discussion on Charity with the verse: He that pursueth after righteousness findeth¹
life, righteousness and honor. In commenting on the first part of the verse, the author quotes a passage from chapter ² נ/נ which states: Why is the face of the Gimel turned toward the Daled? Because it is fitting for the benevolent to run after the poor. Why is the roof (lit:the foot) of the Daled stretched out toward the Gimel? Because he(the poor) must make himself available to him(and not trouble his benefactor too much to find him). And why is the face of the Daled turned away from the Gimel? Because he must give him(help) in secret (as though with averted face) lest he be ashamed of him. Low explains that it is necessary for the benevolent man to pursue after the poor until he receives charity, and this is why Scripture states:"pursueth after". Such conduct reveals that the charitable man is inherently good.

He who is charitable "findeth life" because wherever there is charity there is life. This means that since charity serves the purpose of sustaining an individual it is the essence of life, and he who gives charity which is life, is deserving of life. Even though opponents should assail him they shall not prevail over him,

"for in a place of charity which is life, he will not find death".

"He will find righteousness". As with hesed so with zedakah. If one shows mercy to the poor they will be merciful to him, and the God of mercy will also show him mercy. This is as Scripture says: "He will show thee⁴
mercy and have compassion upon thee"⁵". R.Isaac in commenting on this verse declares, that if a man is anxious to give charity, God will furnish him the money whereby he may dispense his benevolence. In explaining this statement, Low alludes to a fountain which, as it sends forth its waters constantly receives a fresh supply from the main source. And the more the fountain sends forth its waters, the more the source gives to it. So too, we may regard the charitable man as the fountain and God as the source. As he gives charity, so God constantly furnishes him with more money which he can use for charitable purposes. The more he gives to others, the more God gives to him to continue his benevolence. R.Nahman b. Isaac,⁶ however, states, that he who pursues after righteousness finds righteousness in that God sends him men who were fitting recipients of charity so that he may be rewarded for assisting them. The author explains that if zedakah does not contain "zedek" (righteousness) it cannot be called charity but only destruction. The zedek in this case is that the recipients must be worthy individuals, and where they are not worthy to receive

charity, the "giving" cannot be called zedakah.

R. Joshua ⁷ said that he who does charity habitually is worthy of sons who are wise, wealthy and versed in Aggadah. In this way man "findeth honor". Here too we see the application of middah keneged middah, for when one is benevolent, God gives him children who are benevolent. When they are wealthy they will give to others as did their father. Their benevolence, however, shall not be confined to financial contributions alone. They shall also benefit others through their wisdom and their knowledge of Aggadah. This is the great reward of the charitable man and the manner in which he shall be honored. God will bless him with children who will carry on his fine tradition of benevolence, but they shall yet go beyond their father in blessing mankind not only materially, but intellectually as well.

II

In Tractate Ketuboth, chapter ¹נמ the Rabbis comment on the verse: Happy are they that keep justice, that do righteousness at all times.² Is it possible to do righteousness at all times?---This, explained our Rabbis of Jabneh(or as others say R.Elizezer), refers to a man who maintains his sons and daughters(Soncino: this is a charitable act, since legally they have no claim upon him for maintenance) while they are young. R.Hisda(with the case of a father who refused to maintain his children) said,'Turn a mortar for him upside down (an improvised platform) in public and let one(the father) stand on it and say:The raven cares for its young but that man(meaning himself) does not care for his children.

The author explains that nature demands that a father should provide for his children, and he who fails to do so overthrows the order of Creation. Man, states Low, is like a receptacle which receives things just as the mortar receives the pestle. In this case, man must receive his children,i.e. he must provide for them. When he fails to do so he becomes like an inverted vessel. It is for this reason that the Talmud says that such a man should stand upon a mortar that is turned upside down, for this represents one who refuses to maintain his children.

In chapter ³ *ḥilḥ ḥnḥ* R. Abba said in the name of R. Simeon: he who lends money is greater than he who performs charity (Rashi: because one generally lends a larger sum than he would give to charity, and that may suffice to make the poor man independent), and he who forms a partnership (lit: who throws money into a common purse) is greater than all. Low explains that there is something incomplete or imperfect about charity, because even after one has received charity he still lacks something. The author is not entirely clear in his evaluation of a loan being superior to charity other than saying, that there is not such a great imperfection in a loan as in an outright charitable bequest. The difference appears to be one of degree, ^{rather} than of kind. The best method of dispensing funds however, is by putting money in a common purse, for then the taking of the money is neither embarrassing nor degrading for the receiver. Giving funds in this manner, states Low, shows beyond any doubt that the deed itself is very lofty and virtuous.

⁴
R. Joshua b. Korhah said: whoever turns away his eyes from one who appeals for charity is considered as if he were serving idols. Low explains that whereas God is called the "Fountain of Life", for the fountain sends forth its waters continually without interruption, idols are called "broken cisterns" because they do not possess the ability to give to others. Indeed, the fact

that they are broken makes them defective and unable to hold water. Thus it is impossible for them to give anything at all. So too the uncharitable man. He is defective like the idol, and being uncharitable he departs from God completely. Nor does God cleave unto him, for he is considered as attaching himself to idols which like himself do not give to others. Idols may bear a divine name states Low, but they cannot rightfully be called "Divine" because unlike God, the real Divinity and "Fountain of Life", they do not, because they cannot give to others, and giving to others is the mark of true Divinity.

Scripture states: Beware that there be no base thought in thy heart...and thine eye be evil against thy needy brother, and thou give him nought; and he cry unto the Lord against thee and it be sin in thee. ⁵ Low explains that Israel is one people having One God, as we say: "Thou art One and Thy Name is One and who is like Thy people Israel one in the land". ⁶ Therefore, if one turns away his eyes from a man who appeals ~~from~~ for charity, he cuts himself off from Israel which is one people having One God. And if one departs from this Unity in not giving charity to his brother it is considered as if he cleaves unto idolatry completely.

The author next discusses the implications of the word "Zedakah". The children of Israel are brothers he states just like the *3* and the *7* and the *7* and the *7*

are brothers. Furthermore, they are one people for they received one Law at Sinai and they are one because they have ~~had~~ One Father. We learn too that great is the reward of one who observes the commandment of charity, for he inherits this world and the world to come. This world is represented by the ם in םקזז, for the world was created by the ם ('ם = God). The ז in םקזז shows that through the performance of charity an individual becomes an absolute righteous one (זמל'קזז). The zadde has a yod attached to its top which is for God's great Name. "This is why it is said that God is destined to be a crown upon the head of every righteous one"⁷. The uncharitable man, however, does not acquire this world as shown by the ז in זקזז. The ז stands for ז (poor) and the uncharitable person instead of acquiring this world will inhabit Gehenna in the world to come. "He descends below as shown by the ך whose foot descends below to Sheol to see that the feet⁸ of the one who strays (from charity) descend unto death".

The word "zedakah" also determines, states Low, the amount one should give for charity. There is a hint in the word that under all circumstances one should give at least a tithe. If, for example, one possesses a ק (i.e. 100 coins) he should make a ז out of it, (i.e. keeping 90 coins for himself and giving 10--one tenth for a tithe). If he desires to be more generous, he

should make a $\frac{1}{5}$ out of the $\frac{1}{5}$, which means giving one-fifth.
 If, say the Rabbis ⁹ one is generous beyond a fifth, he himself may need charity. There is also a hint in the word, that one who possesses an amount equivalent to the numerical value of zedakah(199) is permitted to ask for charity.

The author once again makes a comparison between the fountain which gives abundantly of its waters, and receives a fresh supply from the main source, and the Baal Zedakah who is ever benevolent and whose funds are replenished in ever increasing amount from the main source--God. He adds, however, that just as the fountain which does not send forth its waters becomes polluted and its waters lie stagnant, so too the wealthy man who hold on to his money and does not give to others is like a polluted fountain; he contaminates himself, and there is no blessing forthcoming from God. Furthermore, wealth is to be regarded as a surplus, something additional, and devoid of good. Thus we learn in chapter נע"ח ה"ג : ¹⁰
 the salt (the preservative, the safeguard) of money is diminution. (Soncino: נ"ח i.e. spending it in the exercise of charitable and benevolent deeds). (A variant of נ"ח is נ"ח --kindness). This means, states Low, that when wealth remains idle it becomes contaminated just like meat which is not used comes to have an offensive odor. That which is the salt,--that which gives existence to wealth is its use for charitable purposes. Nor is this all.

The strict measure of the law is imposed when one possesses an excessive amount of wealth, for it is not proper that it be in one's possession. When, however, the wealthy man decreases his funds by giving to the poor he then does not possess an excessive amount and is thereby delivered from the strict measure of the law. And when we substitute qoh for roh we see that the safeguard of wealth is kindness. When one performs hesed he gives existence to his wealth, for it is for this purpose, and this purpose alone that wealth is created. In truth, roh is really qoh for in doing hesed one decreases his wealth by dealing kindly with others. When the wealthy man utilizes his funds in this manner, he remains pure, his wealth has existence, and God whom he serves, blesses his with added monies to continue his benevolence.

III

1
In Baba Bathra R. Johanan pointed out that it is written: Riches profit not in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivereth from death; and it is also written: Treasures of wickedness profit nothing, but righteousness delivereth from death. Why this double meaning of righteousness?--The one delivers from the punishment of Gehinnom, and one delivers him from an unnatural death. Which is the one which delivers him from the punishment of Gehinnom? The one in connection with which the word 'wrath' is used, as it is written: A day of wrath is that day. What kind of charity is that which delivers a man from an unnatural death? When a man gives without knowing to whom he gives, and the beggar receives without knowing from whom he receives. How then is one to do? He should put his money into a charity box.

Low explains that since the charitable man gives life, it is fitting that he should receive life by being delivered from Gehinnom, and from an unnatural death. We must bear in mind however, states Low that whereas all charity delivers one from Gehinnom, only charity done in secret delivers one from an unnatural death. The performance of this type of charity enables one to abide in the shelter of the Most High. Concerning

him it is said: O thou that dwellest in the covert
of the Most High and abidest in the shadow of the
Almighty...⁵
For He will deliver thee from the snare
of the Fowler.⁶ It is charity which nullifies death,
for whereas death is of the natural world, charity
is a Divine deed and belongs to the realm of the spirit.
This is illustrated in part by the case of Benjamin the
⁷
Righteous who was supervisor of the charity fund.

One time when a woman appealed to him for funds so as
to buy food for her family, Benjamin informed her that
the charity box was empty. Instead, however, of dismissing
her immediately, he gave her money from his own pocket.
Thereupon God added twenty-two years to his life.

Low concludes this section by saying that some
maintain that poverty comes to afflict those who have
sinned, while others declare that such matters as having
children and sustenance are due to chance--to circumstances
beyond one's control. The author does not debate the
question here but states, that regardless of the cause
it is incumbent upon the charitable man to maintain
and support the poor. It is the same in regard to a
sick person. Even though Heaven may decree that one
becomes ill, it is man's responsibility to cure him,
for when one supports the poor or cures the sick he
is doing the will of God.

IV

Low begins this section with a passage from Bathra¹ which states: He who gives a small coin to a poor man obtains six blessings, and he who aids him with words of comfort obtains eleven blessings. Low explains that whereas a coin is of temporary significance, words of comfort have a permanent value for they can be offered continually. Therefore, he who gives charity in the form of words of comfort (which is also the giving of life to a poor man) obtains more blessings than he who gives money.

²
R. Dosthai the son of E. Jannai preached: Observe that the ways of God are not like the ways of man. How does man act? If a man brings a present to a king, it may be accepted or it may not be accepted; and even if it is accepted, it is still doubtful whether he will be admitted to the presence of the king or not. Not so God. If a man gives but a coin to a beggar, he is deemed worthy to receive the Divine Presence, as it is written: I shall behold Thy face in righteousness.³ Charity, states the author, is the real attribute of God, and from the point of view of zedek in charity, it is fitting that one should behold God's face. Beholding God's face means to cleave to zedek because God's real attribute is called

"face".

In chapter *1/2N7' (7 127)*⁴ the Rabbis taught concerning a man who loves his neighbor, who befriends his relatives, marries his sister's daughter, and lends a coin to a poor man in the hour of his need, concerning him Scripture says: Then shall thou call, and the Lord⁵
will answer, thou shalt cry and He will say, 'Here I am'.
It is fitting states Low that one should cleave unto his relatives and neighbors and give charity to them for they are one's brothers, and when one befriends them, he immediately draws near to God. Indeed, God is "near" to (a relative of) man and when one is near to his relatives as is fitting for him, then God is near to him. But how is it possible for God to near one who alienates himself from his relatives and does not heed their plea for help? God is near to an individual only insofar as he is near to his fellowmen, especially those nearest and dearest to him.

⁶
In evaluating charity, R. Assi said: Charity is considered the equivalent to all the other religious precepts combined. While it is true that the performance of all the commandments means doing righteousness, zedakah is the only one which contains the essence of righteousness (zedek) as shown by its name. This is the reason why charity is considered the equivalent to all the other religious precepts combined.

We learn too that he who causes others to do good is greater than the deer, for when charity is made compulsory, it eliminates controversy and strife and enables one to remain on good terms with the Government. The quarrelsome person does not act generously but adheres to the line of the law. When, however, all are compelled to engage in charitable pursuits, generosity results and strife ceases. Thus Scripture states: the work of righteousness (zedakah) shall be peace.⁷

Each amount which one gives to charity regardless how small, combines to form one large sum. While the performance of other commandments are to be thought of as entities or units in themselves, charity is viewed in a different light. God does not consider each, separate coin that one may give to charity, but only the cumulative amount of all of them is regarded as zedakah.

⁶
In the Midrash it was taught in the name of R. Joshua: more than the master of the house does for the poor man, the poor man does for the master of the house, for thus⁹ Ruth said to Naomi: The man's name with whom I wrought. It is not written, "who wrought with me", but "with whom I wrought" because of the piece of bread which he gave me. Low explains that when the master of the house gives generously to the poor, the poor causes God to be generous to the master of the house. "He who opens the fountain and brings forth its waters for his vineyard and his field, does more for the owner of the fountain ~~of the~~

than the owner does for him when he gives him water for
¹⁰
 his vineyard". Thus we see that the giving of charity
 is of greater benefit to the giver than it is to the
 receiver for the former then receives from God.

¹¹
 Low next quotes a Midrash which states: Nothing
 is harder to bear than poverty, for he who is crushed
 by poverty is like one to whom all the troubles of the
 world cling and upon whom all the curses in Deuteronomy
 (28.15-65) have descended. Our Teachers have said: If all
 the troubles were assembled on one side and poverty
 on the other, poverty would outweigh them all. The author
 explains that chastisements are imposed when one departs
 from the normal course of human behavior--when one
 disturbs the order in the world, and therefore, chastise-
 ments represent a change in the normal order of world
 affairs. This change, however, is not as far-reaching
 as in the case of poverty, for poverty is complete
 non-existence(devoid of any good). This is why they said
 that poverty would outweigh them all. Furthermore,
 declares Low, one will be judged or compensated accord-
 ing to the manner in which he treats the poor. This is
¹²
 shown by what R. Jose ¹⁵ said: ya'an ubeya'an; the word
ya'an(/r')-"because", has the same letters as ani('r)-
 "a poor one". Therefore, states Low, we may understand
 that "because"(/r') even because" one was charitable
 to the poor he shall be justly rewarded. If, however,
 he was not benevolent, then the strict law shall judge

him harshly. In either case, however, it is "because" one acted toward the poor in either a charitable or uncharitable manner that he shall be compensated accordingly.

The importance of Zedakah for Israel and for salvation is seen in chapter ¹⁴ /f/h which states: Jerusalem will be redeemed only through charity, as it is written: Zion shall be redeemed with justice, and they that return of her with righteousness.¹⁵ They said further: charity is great for it brings near the redemption, as it is written: Keep ye justice, and do righteousness for My salvation is near to come, and My righteousness to be revealed.¹⁶ Jerusalem shall be redeemed through charity, because Israel is exalted through charity, and it shall also bring near the redemption.

V

The concluding section of this Chapter is devoted to a discussion of usury. Before discussing the main theme, however, the author deals with the commandment of lending. Scripture states: If thou lend money to any of My people even to the poor with thee.¹ Is it possible that the "if" with which this verse begins makes lending optional? The Torah also says: Thou shalt surely lend him.² Now, if lending is compulsory why is the word "if" used? Scripture explains that this commandment is dependent upon what is written after it: Thou shalt not be unto him as a creditor.³ Low states that it is necessary for the lender to keep himself far removed from the borrower so that the latter may not feel uneasy and distressed in his presence. Therefore, Scripture does not mention the commandment of lending at the time the loan is made for it is not known then whether or not the lender is actually fulfilling the commandment in not appearing as a creditor to the borrower.

⁴The Gemara tells us that if there is a poor man and a wealthy man, the poor man takes precedence, as it is written: even to the poor with thee.⁵ Low explains that since Israel is one people it is necessary to lend even to the wealthy because "they cannot be called one

people' if one cannot borrow from the other"⁶. In any case, the poor man takes precedence because his life depends upon the loan, and if one does not lend to him it is as if he had deprived him of his life. Low also states that the poor man who is a resident of the same community as the lender takes precedence over a poor man who is not a resident of that community. The author explains this by drawing a parallel from the limbs of the body. "A limb", he states, "which is made one by having another limb of like matter joined to it, is better than a limb made one by having a limb of unlike matter joined to it"⁷

To illustrate the principle of borrowing as being a great virtue, Low mentions a Midrash⁸ which gives us a picture of the phenomena of the natural world borrowing from one another. The day borrows from the night, and the night from the day; the moon borrows from the stars, and the stars from the moon. The light borrows from the sun and the sun from the light. This Midrash, states Low, shows that the world itself was created by this principle of borrowing. Were it not so, creatures would constantly be in strife with one another. This would furnish the heretics with an opportunity to say that the world is not one, for it would appear as if the world was divided and this would cast suspicion upon God's Unity. But when people borrow from one another it shows that they are one, and that God would created them is One and

Unique. Indeed, when the children of Israel receive from one another without imposing any restrictions upon themselves, they are one, united people.

It is usury, however, which inflicts injury upon the debtor in that the lender receives an amount of money over and above what he originally lent. Scripture calls ^{usury} *pej* because it is "biting" (נכ'ל) like the bite of a snake. Whereas charity spells the preservation of life, the taking of interest represents the denial of life. While the Torah contains but one negative commandment in the case of theft: Thou shalt not steal ⁹, it contains many negative commandments in the case of usury. With the gentiles, states Low, it is just the opposite, and here he reveals one of the laws of the non-Jews of his day. They prescribe the death penalty for theft, but impose no penalty at all for usury. With the Jews says Low it is entirely different. Even though a borrower should give interest of his own free-will, he transgresses a negative commandment. The law refers primarily to usury, and it is a violation of a negative commandment albeit the interest be given voluntarily by the borrower. No other people says the author takes such a view of usury. We recognize too that the taking of interest destroys the unity in Israel. Just as Israel and the idolatrous nations negate one another, so too Israelites negate one another when they exact interest.

The importance of observing the commandment concerning usury can be seen from what the Rabbis say: Anyone who takes upon himself the yoke of the commandment of usury, takes upon himself the yoke of the kingdom of God. Indeed, Israel was brought forth out of Egypt so that they might keep the commandment of usury. He who acknowledges this commandment acknowledges the exodus from Egypt, and vice versa. The explanation, states Low, is that of all the commandments, usury is the greatest yoke upon man. This is so because the lender may be willing to make a loan but doesn't want to do so unless he can charge interest and thereby make a profit from his loan. But when one assumes this yoke, he takes upon himself the yoke of God, "and it is as if he had fulfilled all the commandments of the Torah, for the entire Torah is also the yoke of God".¹⁰ When, however, a man refuses to lend without exacting interest, he does not take upon himself the yoke of the kingdom of God and it is as if he had denied the entire Torah. Indeed, when one takes interest it is considered that he has broken the yoke of all the commandments, for all of them together form the yoke of God. This is so because the numerical value of *רבי* is 612. And when one transgresses the commandment of usury it is as if he himself had taken interest on the loan. Consequently, in addition to the sin of usury, the punishments associated with the remaining 612 commandments are added to him. And why is the taking of interest

like denying the exodus from Egypt? Because Israel went forth from Egypt possessing an exalted elevation in which there was neither injury nor biting like usury. Therefore, to take interest is to negate and destroy this exalted position--to deny the exodus itself.

11

The sinfulness of usury is illustrated by a Midrash which states that when a man transgresses any of the other prohibitions and then stands before God in judgment, some of the angels plead on his behalf and some accuse him. But when a Israelite who lent on interest stands before God in judgment, none of the angels come to his defense. Low explains that it is possible that at least some merit might be found in a sin which one committed, but in the case of usury there is absolutely no merit whatsoever--it is totally devoid of good. The very fact that the Rabbis maintain that he who lends on interest is like one who denies the exodus from Egypt bears this out, for had there been no exodus, "it would have been as if all Israel had not been Israel". Therefore, he who engages in usury makes Israel appear as if it had no existence at all. Surely, no one can come to the defense of so sinful a person.

15

The Midrash ¹⁴ comments on the verse: you shall not lay upon him interest. Do not bite the poor man like the serpent bit Adam, and uprooted him and his descendants. The serpent's enticement of Adam to disobey God, whereby he and his descendants were uprooted from their home

in the Garden of Eden, is figuratively designated biting. Similarly, the creditor exacting interest, eventually seizes the debtor's hands, thus driving him out of his home. Likewise, you should not look upon the poor man who has houses or fields or vineyards, and then seek an occasion to snatch them from him. Therefore, it is written: you shall not be unto him as a creditor.¹⁵

You shall not bite him like the serpent who was cunning to do evil. This Midrash makes it very clear as to why usury is like the bite of a snake, and the injury which it can inflict ^{upon} ~~by~~ the debtor.

Theft is not as evil as usury for the former is usually of a temporary or sporadic nature, whereas the latter is part and parcel of business practice. One who robs may not be completely devoid of good but he who exacts interest is. He is like the serpent who enticed Adam and brought him to the point of death. God did not ask the serpent why he did this because such a question is futile in the case of one who is defective and devoid of good. Such an individual possesses no merit at all which would justify a plea on his behalf. He can expect but one fate:-the severe judgment of the law.

One example of a fate in store for such a culprit is that he shall not be included in the future resurrection. This is illustrated by a Midrash¹⁶ which states that when Ezekiel resurrected the dead, all except one man arose. The prophet said: "Sovereign of the Universe,

what is the nature of this man?" God answered: "he engaged in lending and exacting interest. He shall surely die". This is the fate in store for one who is completely defective and who renders Israel's position imperfect by his activity. Low warns that one should always be conscious of the great punishment attached to the transgression of the commandment of usury and not listen to his inclination which would entice him to exact interest. He should not consider the temporary profit which may accrue to him in this world because logic and intelligence show that there can be ~~there~~ no existence for his money when it is procured in this infamous manner. The author concludes this chapter with the hope that "God may deliver us from this great sin, and from the rest of the sins, great and small.
17
Amen".

CHAPTER FOUR

POWER OF THE INCLINATION

I

The author begins this chapter with the verse:

If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat, and
if he be thirsty, give him water to drink, for thou
wilt heap coals of fire upon his head and the Lord will
reward thee.

^I This verse, states Low, teaches that one should not withhold food from his enemy but should provide him with sustenance. It is by showing such kindness that the enemy ceases his opposition. Indeed, he ceases to be an enemy and the giver finds favor in his eyes. And when Scripture says: "thou wilt heap coals of fire upon his head" it does not mean in the literal sense. It does not imply that one should actually destroy his enemy by fire. On the contrary, says Low, it means that one should destroy his enemy through kindness. To use our modern expression: "to kill one with kindness".

There are those who say that when one gives bread to his enemy, the latter can longer continue his opposition against him because he is ashamed to do so. In other words, it is inconceivable that a person should persist in opposing one who deals kindly with him. And not only does the giver destroy his opponent through kindness, but as Scripture says, he receives a reward from God. This is so, declares Low, because the giver does not respond to the

actions of his enemy in kind. He goes to the other extreme; his enemy opposes him but he shows him kindness. It is for this reason that the giver secures a reward from God. The Talmud, however, points out that the giver causes his enemy to be at peace with him. Thus we learn in Tractate Megillah² that Esther invited Haman to the banquet because she thought that by dealing kindly with him he would cease his opposition. In consequence of this, we learn in chapter פ"ה in reference to our Scriptural passage: Do not read 'will reward thee' (רִפְּתֶיךָ) but 'will cause it to be at peace with thee' (רִפְּוֵתֶיךָ).³ This is because God does not desire to see any strife exist among His creatures and extends aid to this end. God provides the giver with sustenance whereby he can satisfy the needs of the enemy and thus negate his opposition.

4

This principle is illustrated by a Talmudic passage which tells us that the enemy referred to in the above-mentioned verse is the Evil Inclination which entices man to sin. Indeed, say the Sages, there are two Inclinations mentioned in every place. There is the Evil Inclination of transgression which is in man's body and produces physical lust and immorality. There is also the Evil Inclination of idolatry which afflicts man's soul. And just as one can destroy his opponent by providing him with his bread, so too one can destroy the Evil Inclina-

tions of the body and soul by providing them with food. The word "hungry" in the Scriptural verse refers to the Evil Inclination of the body, and the word "thirsty" to the Evil Inclination of the soul. The appetites of both are very great and can be satisfied and the Inclinations negated through one type of food--Torah. Torah represents the bread given to the Evil Inclination of the body, and the water given to the Evil Inclination of the soul. And just as a man's opponent will oppose him so long as he fails to supply his wants, so too will the Evil Inclinations keep the body and soul in a defective state. Once their appetites are satisfied, however, the body and soul are removed of any imperfection.

The power of Torah to negate the Evil Inclinations⁵ is borne out by what is mentioned in Kiddushin : My son, if this repulsive wretch (רשע) meets thee, drag him to the schoolhouse: if he is a stone he will dissolve; if iron, he will shiver into fragments, for it is said: Is not My word like fire? saith the Lord, and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?⁶ Low explains that it is incumbent upon man to be jealous to perform the positive and negative commandments of the Torah. It will not be an easy task however, for the Evil Inclination will always seek to frustrate man's efforts. It will attempt to make man like itself, hard and callous as a stone, so that he will not observe the positive command-

ments. When, however, man is not enticed by the Evil Inclination so that he observes the positive commandments, he causes it to dissolve. The Evil Inclination is also compared to an iron which is of a destructive nature. When man sins by transgressing a negative commandment, he has been enticed by the Evil Inclination and becomes like it, i.e. an iron which has a crushing, destroying power. This Evil Inclination, however, which produces degradation in man can be negated through the study of Torah, because Torah is perfect and the Evil Inclination has dominion over man only insofar as he is imperfect. Just as Gemilut Hasadim enables one to rise above crass materialism and attain bodily perfection, so too Torah enables one to conquer the Evil Inclination and attain intellectual perfection.

The author once again refers to the Evil Inclinations of Unchastity and Idolatry. There is a Biblical verse which states: Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters,
that send forth the feet of the ox and the ass. The
 Evil Inclination of Idolatry states Low, is referred to by the use of the word "ox" because Israel made an *ve* *ser*.
 The word "ass" (*ayn*) refers to the Evil Inclination of Unchastity because unchastity is a materialistic (*ayn*) and abominable action. The word "feet" refers to degradation for "foot" is often used as a synonym for a low estate. We learn in Abodah Zarah that in order to study the words of Torah one must cultivate in oneself the

(habit of) the ox for bearing a yoke and of the ass for carrying burdens. Low explains that one should send forth the degradation that is in both of them and cleave to the Torah. Man should make the temptations of his soul and body subservient to the intellect through the study of Torah. The general principle is that through the study of Torah man guards himself from the enticement of the Evil Inclination so that it cannot compel him to sin.

The author concludes this section by alluding to the various names by which the Evil Inclination is known. In chapter *Shn*⁹ it states: the Evil Inclination has seven names. God called it Evil, Moses called it Uncircumcised; David called it Unclean, Solomon called it Enemy; Isaiah called it Stumbling-Block, Ezekiel called it Stone, and Joel called it Hidden One. The author explains that these seven names represent various stages or degrees which gradual diminish from the highest(evil) to the lowest(amount of evil). In the same manner, declares Low, there are seven stages of people:(1) The worst is he who sins and has no guilty conscience whatsoever.(2) There is a man who, although having the opportunity to sin finds it difficult to do so.(3) There is one who considers sin a stumbling-block.(4) There is one who opposes sin and hates it completely.(5) There is he who says to sin, "Turn aside, turn aside, O unclean one".(6) There is a greater individual who considers sin uncircumcised, and

regards the work of sin as strange and contemptible.

(7) The finest person is he who regards the sinful one as if he were not a man and as if he were completely devoid of good.

II

Judah Low begins this section with a passage from ¹ Baba Bathra which states: the Evil Inclination did not rule in the fathers because ~~it~~ it is written concerning them: כי, כי, כי. Of Abraham it says: And the Lord had blessed Abraham in all things.² (כי); Isaac said: I have eaten of all.³ (כי); Jacob said: I have all.⁴ (כי). Low explains that each one of the fathers was not just a particular individual unto himself but was all-inclusive and all-perfect because the entire Israelitic nation stemmed from them. It was for this reason that the Evil Inclination could not rule in them for it holds sway only where there is imperfection and this ^{was} not found in the fathers. In like manner there are those who say that the Evil Inclination did not rule in David because he too was all-inclusive in that all the kings came forth from him and he was the head and father of the monarchs. Moses, however, was a particular individual and therefore subject to the enticement of the Evil Inclination.

It is known, states Low, that the Evil Inclination stirs itself up to a greater degree in the Sage and in Israel than in one who does not attain great perfection. It is true that the Sage acquires intellectual perfection but unlike the fathers he does not acquire perfection

in everything. This is because the entire world does not fall into the intellectual realm. Consequently, his existence is imperfect because it is not all-inclusive or all-embracing like that of the fathers. Furthermore, declares the author, neither the Sage nor Israel possess the intellect that is fitting for them, for in this world of imperfection one cannot possess an absolutely perfect intellect. Israel, for example, has an exalted, Divine level but it cannot be an absolutely perfect one in an imperfect world. Thus it is that the imperfection of this world cleaves to the Sage and Israel and the Evil Inclination arouses itself in them more and more. Thus we see that the higher an individual or a people ascends into the intellectual realm or acquires an exalted position, the more they are exposed to the work of the Evil Inclination.

In chapter *Shema*⁵ R. Johanan describes the nature of the Evil Inclination by saying: there is a small organ in man; the more one satisfies it, the more hungry it is, and the more one makes it hungry, the more it is satisfied. Low explains that when one is attracted to his Evil Inclination it shows that he is hungry and that his lust is unfulfilled. And when man capitulates to the desire of his Inclination in wanting to fulfill his lust, the more it adds to his imperfection. When, however, the Evil Inclination is hungry and man does not satisfy it,

i.e. he governs his Evil Inclination instead of it governing him, then it is as if man were perfect and he is compared to the fathers who were all-righteous, so that the Evil Inclination did not rule in them.

⁶
Raba described the Evil Inclination by saying that first he is called a passer-by, then he is called a guest, and finally he is called a man (Doncino: an inmate, an occupier of the house). Low explains that while it is true that imperfection cleaves to man, it is impossible for it to do so completely for then man would be unable either to attain perfection or have existence. At first the Evil Inclination may be like a traveller which passes by man. If, however, one is attracted by his Inclination it comes to lodge with him temporarily like a guest who resides for a time in one's home. But when man gives himself over to his Inclination completely, then it is called a man who dwells in the house permanently, and eventually supplants the man as the master of the house.

A similar description of how the Evil Inclination works is found in another Talmudic passage which states:
⁷
at first the Evil Inclination is like a thread of a spider but ultimately becomes like a cart rope, as it is said: Woe unto them that draw iniquity with cords
⁸
of vanity, and sin as it were with a cart rope.
If man permits the Evil Inclination to take hold of him, it draws him to itself, and at first binds him

only lightly as with the thread of a spider. The more, however, that man is brought under the influence of his Evil Inclination, the tighter and stronger the band becomes until it is like a cart rope which one cannot break and man cannot liberate himself from the power of the Evil Inclination.

Low has already stated that the Evil Inclination arouses itself more in those who attain to the level of perfection than in those who are far removed from it--- that the more righteous one is, the stronger is the Evil Inclination in him, and the more evil he is the weaker it appears. He now proceeds to explain this by quoting ⁹ R. Judah b. Illai who said: in the future God will bring the Evil Inclination and slaughter him before the righteous and before the wicked. To the righteous it appears as a high mountain, and to the wicked as a strand of hair. The righteous cry: "how were we able to subdue a high mountain like this?" The wicked cry: "how was it that we were unable to subdue a strand of hair like this?" We can understand from this passage states Low the reason why God called the Inclination "Evil". This is because God is the Absolute Good and the Inclination being the absolute Evil is the complete opposite of God. The Evil Inclination always appears very large to those who are its opposites, but very small to those who are similar to it. Thus we see that the righteous who are the complete

opposite of the Evil Inclination regard it as a high mountain, while the wicked who bear a resemblance to it consider it as a strand of hair.

10

We also learn from R. Isaac that man's inclination renews itself against him every day, as it is said: for the imagination (inclination) of man's heart is only evil every day. 11 The explanation is that since the Inclination renews itself every day it comes to exert a more profound influence upon man with each passing day. Nonetheless, we are not to regard it as being part and parcel of man like his faculties of sight and hearing (which we cannot consider as renewing themselves every day) but it is outside man. It is just because the Evil Inclination does not have primary existence like the faculties mentioned that it renews itself every day. Furthermore, states Low, the power of renewal which the Inclination possesses is not a natural phenomenon but supernatural, for we cannot apply the term "renewal" to the natural world. This power of renewal of the Evil Inclination is the power of Satan, the power of the angel of death.

Low concludes by saying that there is a difference between one who brings himself into the power of the Evil Inclination and one who is enticed by it. The former is inherently evil because he has completely surrendered himself to his Inclination so that it masters

him entirely. This one cannot enter into God's chamber.¹²
The latter, however, who committed a sinful act was,
it is true, enticed by the Evil Inclination but he himself
cannot be regarded as evil. Unlike the former, he did
not consciously or voluntarily surrender his entire being
into the power of the inclination, but only erred in that
his inclination enticed him.

III

In chapter ¹לעזר (1/2) it states: He who sacrifices (i.e. resists or conquers) his evil inclination, and (having been induced to sin) confesses his sin over it, Scripture imputes it to him as though he had honored God in this world and in the world to come, for it is written: Whoso offereth the sacrifice of confession² honoreth Me. It is not written 'לעזר' but 'לעזר' (לל)--in this world and in the world to come. Low explains that when one confesses his sin he renders honor to the One, absolute God. For when the Evil Inclination which is the opposite of the Good Inclination is in the world, it appears (God forbid) that there are two creators--one of evil and one of good. This is as the heretics say:--it is impossible for both evil and good to emanate from one source.

It is for this reason that we learn in Berakot ³: R. Levi b. Nahmani said in the name of R. Levi: one should always stir up the Good Inclination against the Evil Inclination.---If it goes away, good, and if not, let him recite the Shema. One may ask, what is the connection between reciting the Shema and removing the Evil Inclination? The answer is that when one recites the Shema God who is One removes the Evil Inclination and only the

Good Inclination remains. In this manner one renders great honor to God, for then the argument of dualism is dissipated and God's Unity remains inviolable.

In chapter ⁴ /102/1077 Raboah asked: why is it written: The manarakes give forth fragrance? This is an allusion to the young men of Israel who never felt the taste of sin; and at our doors are all manner of precious ⁵ fruits, is an allusion to the daughters of Israel who tell their husbands about their doors (Soncino: Euphemism. They are thus able to abstain during the woman's menstrual periods). Another reading: Who close their doors from their husbands (chastity. They are ever faithful). We learn from this, states Low, that exalted indeed are they who conquer their inclination. These young men of Israel who succeed in doing so acquire eminence; they are known far and wide just like fragrance of which everyone is conscious. Indeed, they are called possessors of fragrance just because fragrance is known afar off. It is also written about those who conquer their inclination: A good name is better than precious oil. ⁷ Yes, and only the mighty one is he who resists his inclination and every mighty one is an eminent personality, as it is written: he had a good name among the three ⁸ mighty men.

⁹
The last chapter of Pesachim also tells us:
concerning three does God make proclamation every day:

a bachelor who lives in a large town without sinning, a poor man who returns lost property to its owner, and a wealthy man who tithes his produce in secret (i.e. without ostentation). The author explains that when God makes proclamation concerning these individuals He does so because they have complete fear of Him--they would not commit transgression. Sin, states Low, grows out of three conditions: (1) want, (2) abundance, (3) strife. It is only natural that a poor man should be attracted to sin, especially if he has nothing to eat. But if he refuses to steal, knowing that he could do so without being apprehended, he is a man who possesses complete fear of God. We know too that if wealth is to have existence then it must be used for the welfare of others. Now, if a wealthy man tithes his produce in a modest, unostentatious manner, realizing that he is only fulfilling his duty, then he too possesses fear of God. Likewise, a bachelor. The author states that it is extremely difficult for a bachelor to conquer his Evil Inclination, especially if he lives in a large city, because temptations are greater for him seeing that city dwellers are more pleasure seeking and sensual than rural dwellers. If such an individual who lives in a metropolitan center is not influenced by its myriad temptations, then surely he too possesses the fear of the Lord.

10

We learn from Tractate Tamid¹⁰ that Alexander of Macedonia asked the Sages of the South, what should a man do in order to keep himself alive? They answered, let him kill himself. Then he asked, what should a man do in order to kill himself? They answered, he should keep himself alive. Low explains that when a man is ruled by his Evil Inclination so that it keeps his body alive to satisfy its lusts, then he should kill himself, for the Evil Inclination is poison; it is the angel of death. To keep himself alive he should kill himself. It means, that when one does not acquiesce to his physical desires he keeps himself alive, for the Evil Inclination which is death, departs from him. Furthermore, when a man kills himself in this world of physical desires then he keeps himself alive for the world to come where the lusts of this world do not exist. If, on the other hand, one keeps himself alive in this world, then he will die in the world to come for a lustful creature has no place in the future world. Thus we see, states the author, that he who is attracted to the lusts of this world will inherit death, as the Rabbis said: "Jealousy, lust and ambition take a man from this world".¹¹ But he who removes himself from the desires of this world will inherit life in the world to come.

IV

Low begins the last section of this chapter by saying that even though one be righteous and pious, he should regard the removal of the Evil Inclination as a very difficult task. It is a task which cannot be accomplished through man's efforts alone. Man is like a prisoner who cannot free himself without the aid of others. Man should pray to God continually that He remove the Evil Inclination from him. In the last chapter of Kiddushin¹ we learn that Pelimo used to say every day, 'An arrow in Satan's eyes!' The author explains that in this manner Pelimo was able to oppose Satan and prevail over him, for when one opposes another it is like shooting an arrow at him and thus driving him away. Nonetheless, man's own strength is not comparable to that of Satan's (i.e. the Evil Inclination, the Tempter) and he alone is not able to conquer it. It is for this reason that the Talmud tells us that Pelimo should have said to Satan,² "the Lord will rebuke thee O Satan". Without God's help man is powerless to conquer his Evil Inclination. Yes, he should oppose it with all the strength at his command, remembering at the same time that Divine intervention is indispensable for its final overthrow.

In chapter /ע"ז/ ³ /כ"ה/ R. Judah b. Nahmani expounded:

What is the meaning of the verse: Trust ye not in a friend,
put ye not confidence in a familiar friend. If the Evil
 Inclination says to thee: Sin, and God will pardon thee,
 believe it not, for it is said: "Trust ye not in a
 friend", and "friend" (חן) means none other than the
 Evil Inclination, as it is said: For the inclination
(imagination) of man's heart is evil (חן). (Soncino:
 Only the vowels differentiate חן - friend from חן - evil).
 And "familiar friend" means none other than the Holy One
 blessed be He, as it is said: Thou art the familiar friend
of my youth. Perhaps one may ask: "who testifies against
 me?" One Rabbi says the stones, beams and rafters of
 his house will testify against him. Another says the
 two ministering angels that accompany him. Still another
 Rabbi declares that a man's soul and limbs testify
 against him.

The author explains that one should not trust his
 Evil Inclination for it would entice him to believe
 that he could sin without Divine retribution. Nor should
 one put his faith in his intellectual prowess as the
 philosophers would have man do, and believe that he
 can go astray without being punished by God. These two
 things, viz; the Evil Inclination and the intellect
 cause man to err. And if one's intellect leads him
 to err in this direction then he should remember that
 the stones, beams and rafters of his house will testify

against him. This teaches us states Low, that if man is righteous then there is a house and an exalted place awaiting him in the world to come. But if one is wicked then he shall inherit an evil place. And here the author states one of the essentials of Judaism: "All is according to man's deeds--he can cleave unto virtue or he can cleave unto vice"⁷. As a free agent, man can make his choice, and that choice shall determine the type of dwelling he will inhabit in the future world. One Rabbi said two ministering angels will testify against him. If they protect him, this testifies to his righteousness, but if they depart from him, this shows that he is wicked. Another Rabbi said man's soul testifies against him. Low explains that the Rabbi wishes to convey the idea that God placed a pure, undefiled soul in each man. If he is righteous, the soul remains as God gave it; if he is sinful, the soul is defiled, and in this manner it testifies as to his wickedness. Another Rabbi said that man's limbs testify against him. The limbs, states the author, are the identification marks which reveal man's character. When he is righteous, he appears in the Divine image, but when he is wicked he is like cattle. Thus it is that man's limbs reveal whether he is good or evil and bear testimony accordingly.

⁸
The Midrash states: there are four desires: the desire of woman is for her husband, as it is said:

9

And thy desire shall be to thy husband. The desire of the Evil Inclination is for none but Cain and his companions, as it is written: and unto thee is its desire.¹⁰ The desire of rain is for nought but the earth, as it states: Thou hast remembered the earth(the rains) that desire her.¹¹ And the desire of God is for none but Israel, as it states: And His desire is toward me.¹²

We know, states Low, that the Evil Inclination is attracted to the wicked because ~~evil~~ evil is drawn to evil. It is for this reason that the Midrash states: "the desire of the Evil Inclination is for none but Cain and his companions". We have also seen that it arouses itself in the righteous, like in the Sage and Israel more than in the wicked. The difference, however, between the two is one of time and circumstance. It arouses itself in the righteous when the moment is propitious, but its presence is only temporary. But it is attached to the wicked permanently. This attraction of like for like is also seen by the fact that God who is the Absolute Good desires that which is good and cleaves to it. Therefore it states: "the desire of God is for none but Israel". But this attraction is also manifest where there are two separate things and the one is perfected by the other. This can be illustrated, states Low, by the desire of woman for her husband. The wife is imperfect like matter, but by having a desire

for her husband, she receives perfection for he is like the form which gives perfection to matter. Then, too, there is the example of the giver desiring the receiver. This applies to the rains which cannot give their abundance without a receiver--the earth.

In chapter ¹³ (111) R. Simeon b. Eleazar said: He who breaks his vessels in his anger, and rends his garments in his anger, and scatters his money in his anger, regard him as an idolater, for such are the wiles of the Evil Inclination. Today he says to him, 'Do this'; tomorrow he tells him, 'Do that', until he bids him, 'Go and serve idols'. The author states that concerning an individual who does these evil things, one cannot ask: "why do you do them?" It is because he is possessed of the Evil Inclination and is inherently evil even to the point of doing evil to himself. In tearing his garments he inflicts injury upon his body, for his garments are necessary for bodily protection. Breaking his vessels his soul sustains injury because the vessels are for his needs, and the soul which is the active power in man's body is responsible for producing these needs. And when one scatters his money, he inflicts injury upon the intellect because man's heart depends upon his purse. Thus it is that when man destroys these three things he injures his entire being--his body, soul, and intellect. This individual is regarded as

an idolater because just as idolatry removes one from God, so the Evil Inclination removes one from God when he is attached to it, and it is as if he worshipped another deity. Indeed, we may consider idolatry and the Evil Inclination as one and the same thing for both are evil and serve only for destruction.

¹⁴
In chapter 7/177 R. Jose Ha-gelili says: the Good Inclination judges the righteous, the Evil Inclination judges the wicked, and average people judge one another. The author explains that the Good Inclination is the distinctive quality in the righteous which prompts them to do good. The Evil Inclination is the distinctive element in the wicked which prompts them to do evil. In average people, however, both the Good and Evil Inclinations are at work.

¹⁵
In Nedarim R. Ammi b. Abba said: what is the meaning of the verse: there was a small city, and few men in it, and there came a great king against it, and besieged it, and he built great bulwarks against it. ¹⁶ "A small city" refers to the body; "and few men in it" to the limbs.

"And there came a great king against it and besieged it" refers to the Evil Inclination; "and he built great bulwarks" refers to sin. Now there was found in it a

¹⁷
poor wise man refers to the Good Inclination; and he ¹⁸
by his wisdom delivered the city refers to repentance and good deeds. Yet no one remembered that same poor

19
man for when the Evil Inclination gains dominion,
none remember the Good Inclination.

The author explains that man is called a "small city" for just as the city is made up of many peoples so man consists of many parts, like the limbs, heart, etc. The Evil Inclination is called "king" because it desires man to be his own master, arrogant, neither fearing God nor serving Him as do the ministering angels who are God's messengers. The "bulwarks" are the iniquities which the Evil Inclination entices man to commit and which hold him captive. The Good Inclination is called "a poor man" for its purpose is to have man serve and fear God and be humble like the poor. It is also (i.e. the Evil Inclination) called "old" because a man, albeit he may have grown old, may not have benefited by experience in seeing that the evil consequences which befall other wicked individuals will also befall him for committing transgressions. Such a person who fails to learn from the experiences of others is called "foolish". This is like just, Amalek, Sihon and Og who followed in Pharaoh's footsteps in arraying themselves against Israel instead of realizing that they too would be brought low as was their predecessor, the ruler of Egypt. The Good Inclination on the other hand, is called "wise" because the wise man say the Rabbis is "he who considers what may result from his actions". He realizes full well that

20

judgment awaits him if he sins, and will strive to keep himself from erring. If he should sin, however, the wise man will make repentance. And when the Evil Inclination gains dominion none remember the Good Inclination because they are two opposites, and it is impossible for two opposites to be in one bearer. It is only when the Good Inclination departs from man entirely that the Evil Inclination then entices him to sin.

²¹
We learn in the Gemara that God repented that He had made four things and they are: the Chaldeans, the Evil Inclination, the Ishmaelites and the Exile. Our concern here declares Low is only with the second one. The question may be asked: "why did God create it to begin with?" The answer is that God did not intend that the Evil Inclination should be an end in itself; it was created only as a means to an end. In other words, even though we have learned that the Evil Inclination is vile and destructive, it nonetheless was created to serve a purpose. This ²²is seen from the Midrash which states that were it not for the Evil Inclination, man would not build a house, or have children, or engage in business. Thus we see that the Evil Inclination was created for the sake of the Order of the world. After Creation, however, it came to have existence for itself in the hearts of men, and this is why God repented that He had created it.

23

In chapter נ"ד(נ) it says: man is obliged to say a blessing over the evil just as he says a blessing over the good, as it is said: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart (קדק)²⁴--with your two inclinations, the Good Inclination and the Evil Inclination. We learn from the word קדק states the author, that the lamed refers to the heart because the meaning of lamed is learning (למד). It is the heart which contains wisdom and knowledge, as the Midrash²⁵ states: Do not read למד but למד = למד, / למד, למד. Even the construction of the ל declares Low shows that it represents the heart because it is through knowledge and understanding which are in the heart that one ascends ever higher. And just as knowledge is in the heart as revealed by the ל so also the two למד in קדק show that the Good and Evil Inclinations are in the heart. Nonetheless, it is only by means of the former that one can attain unto perfection, and man should strive to remove the latter. Thus we see, states Low, that in the word "heart" (למד) one of the למד falls out, and the ל that remains stands for the Good Inclination. Yet, one may come unto God through the Evil Inclination if he prevails over it and removes it. Thus the verse says: "with all your heart" (קדק). And when man prevails over his Inclination, then, as the Midrash²⁶ tells us, he is more meritorious than the angels because

they have no Evil Inclination to contend with. The author concludes this chapter with the hope that "God may make²⁷ us worthy and deliver us from the Evil Inclination".

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY

CHAPTER TWO

In examining the chapter on Gemilut Hasadin we noticed that the underlying concept of hesed was that of acting beyond the requirements of the law. The law should not be violated, but neither should adherence to it be regarded as the criterion for piety. Pious action consists in performing those deeds for which the law makes no special provision, i.e. they are not legal prescriptions. This is hesed which is of a reciprocal nature, for when one conducts himself according to this principle, he may expect like treatment both from God and man. It is hesed too which purifies and minimizes the matter in the body and acts as an atonement for sin. Just so the Torah, which is truth acts as an atonement for sin committed by the intellect.

When an individual performs kindness he does that which he should do and not that which he must do. He acts of his own free-will and knowledge and thereby walks after God. Just as Israel is exalted and elevated above the nations when it performs hesed, so too the individual who practices hesed soars aloft unto God and comes thereby to resemble and imitate his Maker. Just as God is abundant in lovingkindness, so too is

he who walks after God. Indeed, it is hesed which is the essential attribute of God and the only one which materialistic, erring man can possess.

We learn too that although the Torah purifies the intellect, the study of Torah alone does not make for piety. It is not enough for one to engage only in scholarly pursuits; his piety must be demonstrated by specific deeds appropriate to the study of Torah. Torah must lead to practice, and the practice must take the form of acts of lovingkindness. It is only as one practices hesed that his study of Torah can be viewed as of greatest value.

The author also calls our attention to the Talmudic passage which states that Gemilut Hasadim is superior to Zedakah because it can be performed with personal service and money, for the poor and rich, and for the living and the dead. Zedakah, on the other hand, is performed only with money and is only for the poor and living. And it is because hesed reveals the inherent goodness of the doer that he merits a reward albeit the recipients are not worthy to receive kindness. We cannot, however, call "giving" charity unless the recipients are worthy to receive it--there must be "zedek" in zedakah. Thus we see, that whereas hesed depends upon the doer, charity depends upon the worthiness of the receiver.

Hesed too, is of great merit for it is the support upon which the world rests. Were God to judge the world in terms of strict justice it could not have existence. It is hesed too which supports Israel when the merit of the fathers and mothers fail. And when Israel, like the individual practices hesed, God also acts toward them according to this attribute. It is the rabbinic doctrine or principle of middah keneged middah which we find at many points in this chapter.

One of the specific acts of lovingkindness which the author discusses is hospitality to wayfarers. The performance of this deed is extremely important for so doing one honors the Divine image in man, and brings himself near to God. When he fails to perform this deed, it is as if he had destroyed the Divine image and becomes like a shedder of blood. Hospitality to wayfarers brings near to God those who are far, and failing to practice it removes those who are near. Nor is it to be regarded as an approach to God exclusively for Israel. Even foreign peoples and nations can come near to God by practicing hospitality to wayfarers.

Visiting the sick is another act of lovingkindness of great importance. Through it one honors the Divine image in man and approaches unto God. Failing to do so as in the case of hospitality to wayfarers is to destroy the Divine image and to become like a shedder of blood.

It is through the visit alone that one can bring cheer to the sick person and it represents a plea for his life and restoration to good health. Bikkur Holim must be a spontaneous and immediate response; the patient should not have to request that he be visited.

Causing the groom and bride to rejoice is another example of hesed. It is an exalted and sanctified act like marriage for both represent a Divine state of being. He who performs this deed merits Torah, for as we learned, both the perfect state of rejoicing and the Law were given in five voices. It is marriage too states Low, which offers one of the proofs for God's Unity. Only God who is One can unite opposites like man and woman who are different by nature but who become one through holy matrimony.

The final act of lovingkindness which the author discusses is accompanying a person on a journey. As in the case of hospitality to wayfarers and visiting the sick, it brings honor to the Divine image in man, but failing to do so, makes one appear as a shedder of blood.

In the concluding part of this chapter Low assails those who adhere to the strict letter of the law as did the ~~Sodomites~~ Sodomites and were led to commit violence and theft. Hesed, he states, in man's concern with the welfare of his fellowman and this can only be accomplished through a liberal interpretation of the law.

CHAPTER THREE

We learn in the chapter on Charity that it is necessary for the charitable man to pursue after the poor until he receives charity. Zedakah gives life to the poor, and he who is charitable finds life, so that albeit opponents should assail him they shall not prevail against him. Furthermore, the charitable man is rewarded and honored by the greatest blessing that can be bestowed upon man--he comes to have children who carry on the fine work of their father. Nor is this all. God also rewards the benevolent individual by providing him with funds with which to continue his charitable activities. God, the "Fountain of Life" gives abundantly just as a river sends forth its waters to replenish a stream which gives its waters to a nearby fountain.

Although charity gives life it is not the greatest form of benevolence. Lending is on a higher plane for then the receiver does not have the sense of dependency as when he receives an outright charitable gift. Putting money into a common purse, however, is better than lending for then the receiver suffers no embarrassment whatsoever. Charity of any type delivers one from the punishment of Gehenna, but only charity done in secret,

as putting money into a common purse delivers one from an unnatural death.

It is extremely important for one to engage in charitable activities. He who can but does not do so, is like a fountain whose waters become stagnant. Furthermore, one should ever regard his wealth as a surplus, not to be accumulated for personal use, but for ameliorating and improving the conditions of the less fortunate. It is only when wealth is used for benevolent purposes that it can be said to have existence. "The safeguard of wealth" as we learned "is its diminution". It is especially important for a Jew to befriend his relatives by giving them charity, for only in this manner can God be near to those who help their near of kin.

We learn too that Low is bitterly opposed to usury. Lending, he says, can only be valid when the lender does not appear as a creditor to the debtor. Israel, declares Low can only be called "one people" when they borrow from one another without any restrictions, just as the phenomena of the natural world borrow from one another. It is borrowing from one another which prevents people from ~~ng~~ engaging in strife and theft so that they steal the property of others. Were they not to adhere to this principle it would give the heretics an opportunity to say that the world is not one and it would cast suspicion upon God's Unity.

Usury, declares the author is the most unpardonable of sins. It is deadly, and biting like the bite of a snake, inflicting injury upon the debtor, and, as it were, depriving him of his life. Even though interest be given by the borrower without any compulsion from the creditor it is still regarded as a sin. When, however, one observes the commandment regarding usury he takes upon himself the yoke of the kingdom of God and it is as if he had fulfilled all the commandments of the Torah. One may be forgiven for committing most any transgression except that of usury. He who is guilty of this nefarious deed will find no one to plead on his behalf. Low concludes by admonishing us always to be conscious of the sin of exacting interest and not to be enticed by the Evil Inclination to commit this transgression.

CHAPTER FOUR

In this chapter the author compares the Evil Inclination to an enemy which can be appeased when its hunger is satisfied. One can negate his opponent when he deals kindly with him by providing him with his food. In like manner, man can prevail over his Evil Inclination through the study of the Torah. Although the Evil Inclination may seek to frustrate him, man should ever seek to fulfill the commandments of the Torah. So doing, he prevents the Inclination from enticing him to commit sin.

The Evil Inclination holds sway only where there is imperfection as is found in a particular individual. In view of the fact, however, that the Patriarchs were all-inclusive and all-righteous in that the entire Israelitic nation came from them, they were not ruled by the Evil Inclination. And when man succeeds in governing his Inclination he may then be compared to the Fathers.

We learn too that the more perfect and less materialistic a person or a nation like Israel, the more they are subject to the will of the Evil Inclination. Indeed, the more righteous one is, the greater the Inclination appears to him as something very difficult to overcome.

To the wicked, however, it appears as something small and very easy to overcome. To the righteous the Evil Inclination is a constant challenge which must be met. It looms large to the righteous, states Low, because the righteous man is the complete opposite of the Evil Inclination. It is for this same reason that God who is the Absolute Good calls the Inclination Evil.

We must remember too that while at first the Evil Inclination may take only a slight hold upon man, its grasp becomes stronger the more one succumbs to it. Indeed, states Low, the Evil Inclination possesses the supernatural power of renewal. Unlike the faculties of seeing or hearing it is able to renew itself against man every day so that it comes to exert a more profound influence upon him.

It is incumbent upon man to fight his Inclination with all the strength at his command, realizing at the same time that to remove it is an extremely difficult task. To accomplish this end, man must have Divine help. Just as a prisoner states Low requires outside help to free him from prison, so man cannot completely remove the Evil Inclination without God's help. Man should always know, however, that as a free, moral agent he possesses the ability to choose between good and evil, unless of course the Evil Inclination has gained complete mastery over him.

The author concludes by calling our attention to a Midrash which states that the Evil Inclination does serve a good purpose. It was created, not to have existence for itself, but if it did not have existence men would not marry, beget children, build a home or engage in business. It was only when men permitted the Evil Inclination to rule in them, thereby giving it existence for itself that God repented that He had created it. The author voices the hope that God may deliver us from the Evil Inclination.

The ideas which Low expresses in these Netivot offer ample proof of the pious nature of the man. As I read his explanations of the various rabbinic references I could not help but picture him as a saintly soul who desired all men to adhere to a code of morality and ethics which would spell greater religiosity and happiness for mankind. His ideas of lovingkindness and charity, coupled with his admonition that man ever strive to guard himself against the Evil Inclination reveal not only his own nobility of character, but his hope that the Jew, Israel, and all men might pursue after God continually. He respected the law and desired that all do likewise but he favored a liberal interpretation of the law. Yet he realized that adherence to the law alone did not assure pious action. Man must ever devote himself to the performance of those noble

deeds which are not mentioned in the Torah or are not prescribed by the law. One must do more than just what is required of him by legal prescription. This is hesed and this is what the author desired that man set as the standard for noble conduct, so that through humanity he might aspire unto God.

REFERENCES

REFERENCES

CHAPTER ONE

1. Bloch, Chayim, The Golem, p.86
2. Chones, S.M., Toledot ha-Poskim, p.63
3. Horodezky, S.A., "Jehuda Lowe(Liwa) Ben Bezalel",
Encyclopedia Judaica, Vol. 8, p.1013
4. Grunwald, M., "Judah Low(Lob, Liwa) Ben Bezaleel",
Jewish Encyclopedia, Vol. 7, p.354
5. Graetz, H., History of the Jews, Vol. 4, p.639
6. Perels, Meir, "Megillath Juchassin Mehral miprag. Die
Deszendenztafel des hohen Rabbi Low".
Tr. and ed. by S.H.Lieben, Jahrbuch der
Judisch-Literarischen Gesellschaft,
Vol. XX, p. 316
7. Grunwald, M., History of the Jews of Vienna, p.86
8. Grunwald, M., "Judah Low", etc. p.354
9. Marx, Alexander, "A Jewish Cause Celebre in Sixteenth
Century Italy", p.186, n.176
10. Grunwald, M., "Judah Low", etc. p.354
11. Ibid., p.355
12. Bloch, C., op. cit. p.32
13. Chones, S.M., op. cit. p. 64
14. Horodezky, S.A., op. cit. p.1017
15. Grunwald, M., "Judah Low", etc. p.355
16. Bloch, C., op. cit. p.32
17. Ibid., (see opposite p. 32)

*
REFERENCES

CHAPTER TWO

I

1. Proverbs 16.6

2. P.170,1.5

3. Ibid.,1.9

4. Ibid.

5. פנים מאורח חדין: מחדר אלק, דחם דזרחים, לא אפי ייחק וקדוץ -
קרן ודסקי, יו"ד, מלון (שפון) וחדרית, p. 1010

6. Ginzberg, Louis, "Some Observations on the Attitude
of the Synagogue Towards the
Apocalyptic-Eschatological Writings",
Journal of Biblical Literature,
Vol. 41, p.125

7. P.170,1.17f

8. Abot 2.6

9. Berakot 8a

10. Job. 36.5

11. Psalm 55.19

12. Proverbs 14.34

13. Isaiah 33.15f

14. Genesis 26.5

15. Gen. 18.19

16. Sota 14a

* All page references to the Chapters of this thesis are
to the Stettin Edition, 1665

REFERENCES

CHAPTER TWO

I

17. Deut. 12.5
18. Deut. 9.3
19. Gen. 3.21
20. Gen. 18.1
21. Deut. 34.6
22. Gen. 25.11
23. P.173,1.5ff
24. Psalm 106.1; 107.1; 118.1-4.29; 136.1-26
25. Ruth R. 5.4
26. Psalm 36.8
27. Gen. 24.1
28. Gen. 25.7
29. Sota 14a
30. Gen. 3.21
31. Deut. ~~34.6~~ 34.6
32. Genesis R. 1.4

REFERENCES

CHAPTER TWO

II

1. Abodah Zarah 17b
2. II Chronicles 15.3
3. Mish. Peah 1.1
4. Exodus 5.12; Deut. 5.16
5. P.176,1.10f (from bottom)
6. Sukkah 49b
7. Ibid.
8. Hosea 10.12

REFERENCES

CHAPTER TWO

III

1. P.180,1.1
2. Yalkut Shemoni and Midrash Psalms on Ps.89.1f (slight variation)
3. Psalm 89.1f
4. Isaiah 16.5
5. Psalm 89.3
6. P.181,1.3
7. Yalkut Shemoni on Isaiah 54.10
8. Isaiah 54.10
9. Moed Katan 28b
10. Baba Metzia 30b
11. Exodus 18.20

REFERENCES

CHAPTER TWO

IV

1. Shabbath 127a
2. Exodus 33.20
3. Sanhedrin 103b
4. Deut. 23.5
5. Exodus 2.20
6. Nedarim 40a
7. Ibid.
8. Berakot 18a
9. Proverbs 17.5
10. Proverbs 19.17
11. P.188,1.13
12. Shabbath 105b
13. Jeremiah 33.11
14. Berakot 6b
15. Ibid.
16. Exodus 19.16
17. Exodus 19.19
18. Berakot 6b
19. Jeremiah 33.11

REFERENCES

CHAPTER TWO

V

1. Genesis 13.13
2. Sanhedrin 109b
3. Exodus 18.21
4. Sanhedrin 109a
5. Baba Kamma 50a

REFERENCES

CHAPTER THREE

I

1. Proverbs 21.21
2. Shabbath 104a
3. P.198,1.2
4. Deut. 13.18
5. Baba Bathra 9b
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.

REFERENCES

CHAPTER THREE

II

1. Ketuboth 50a
2. Psalm 106.3
3. Shabbath 63a
4. Baba Bathra 10a
5. Deut. 15.9
6. קריאת שמע, י"ד, תפילת מנחה וקריאת שמע
7. P.201,1.13 (from bottom)
8. Ibid. 1.10 (from bottom)
9. Ketuboth 50a
10. Ibid. 66b

REFERENCES

CHAPTER THREE

III

1. Baba Bathra 10a-10b
2. Proverbs 11.4
3. Proverbs 10.2
4. Zephaniah 1.15
5. Psalm 91.1
6. Psalm 91.3
7. Baba Bathra 11a

REFERENCES

CHAPTER THREE

IV

1. Baba Bathra 9b
2. Ibid. 10a
3. Psalm 17.15
4. Yebamoth 62b
5. Isaiah 58.9
6. Baba Bathra 9a
7. Isaiah 32.17
8. Leviticus R. 34.8; Ruth R.5.9
9. Ruth 2.19
10. P.210,1.8ff
11. Exodus R. 31.14
12. Ruth R. 5.9
13. Leviticus 26.45
14. Shabbath 159a
15. Isaiah 1.27
16. Isaiah 56.1

REFERENCES

CHAPTER THREE

V

1. Exodus 22.24
2. Deut. 15.8
3. Exodus 22.24
4. Baba Metzia 71a
5. Exodus 22.24
6. P.211,1.16
7. Ibid. 1.4f (from bottom)
8. Exodus R. 31.15
9. Exodus 20.15; Deut. 5.17
10. P.213,1.20f
11. Exodus R. 31.14
12. P.214,1.9
13. Exodus R. 31.13
14. Exodus 22.24
15. Ibid.
16. P.Rabbi Eliezer, ch.33; Yalkut Shemoni, Vol. II, par. 875
17. P.215 (last line of chapter)

REFERENCES

CHAPTER FOUR

I

1. Proverbs 25.21f
2. Megillah 15b
3. Sukkah 52a
4. Yoma 69b
5. Kiddushin 30b
6. Jeremiah 23.29
7. Isaiah 32.20
8. Abodah Zarah 5b
9. Sukkah 52a

REFERENCES

CHAPTER FOUR

II

1. Baba Pathra 17a
2. Genesis 24.1
3. Gen. 27.33
4. Gen. 33.11
5. Sukkah 52b
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid., 52a
8. Isaiah 5.18
9. Sukkah 52a
10. Ibid.
11. Gen. 6.5
12. Niddah 13b

REFERENCES

CHAPTER FOUR

III

1. Sanhedrin 48b
2. Psalm 50.23
3. Berakot 5a
4. Erubin 21b
5. Song of Songs 7.14
6. Ibid.
7. Ecclesiastes 7.1
8. II Samuel 23.29; I Chronicles 11.24
9. Pesahim 113a
10. Tamid 32a
11. Abot 4.21

REFERENCES

CHAPTER FOUR

IV

1. Kiddushin 61a
2. Ibid., 81b
3. Hagigah 16b
4. Micah 7.5
5. Genesis 3.4
6. Jeremiah 3.4
7. P.421,1.13f
8. Genesis R. 20.7
9. Gen. 3.16
10. Gen. 4.7
11. Psalm 65.10
12. Song of Songs 7.11
13. Shabbath 105b
14. Berakot 61b
15. Nedarim 32b
16. Ecclesiastes 9.14
17. Ecc. 9.15
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid.

REFERENCES

CHAPTER FOUR

IV

20. Abot 2.9
21. Sukkah 52b
22. Gen. R. 9.7; Ecc. R. 3.11
23. Berakot 54a
24. Deut. 6.5
25. Beth ha-Midrash, Vol. 3, p. 34-- אהליון על דברי חקיהו
26. Leviticus R. 1.1
27. P.426, (last line of chapter)

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bloch, Chayim, The Golem, Vienna, 1925
- Chones, S.M., Toledot ha-Poskim, Warsaw, 1929
- Ginzberg, Louis, "Some Observations on the Attitude of the Synagogue Towards the Apocalyptic-Eschatological Writings", Journal of Biblical Literature, Vol. 41, pp. 115-136, New Haven, 1922
- Graetz, H., History of the Jews, Vol. IV, Philadelphia, 1894
- Grunwald, M., History of the Jews in Vienna, Philadelphia, 1936
- "Judah Low(Lob, Liwa) Ben Bezaleel", Jewish Encyclopedia, Vol. 7, pp. 353-355
- Horodezky, S.A., "Jehuda Lowe(Liwa) Ben Bezaleel", Encyclopaedia Judaica, Vol. 8, pp. 1011-1018
- Judah Low Ben Bezaleel, Netibot Olam, Yosefow ed., 1836
Stettin ed., 1865
- Marx, Alexander, "A Jewish Cause Celebre in Sixteenth Century Italy"(Reprinted from Abhandlungen Zur Erinnerung An Hirsch Perez Chajes), Vienna, 1932
- Ferels, Meir, "Megillath Juchassin Mehral miprag. Die Descendenztafel des hohen Rabbi Low", Tr. and Ed. by S.H.Lieben, Jahrbuch der Jüdisch-Literarischen Gesellschaft, Vol. XX, pp. 315-336, Frankfort a.M., 1929