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## THE CONCEPT OF PRAYER IN SAADIA AND BACHYA

by Minard Klein

The purpose of this paper is to determine the concepts of prayer in the thinking of two Jewish philosophers of the Middle Ages, Saadia Gaon and Bachya ibn Pakuda; to see if they are consistent in their philosophies as reflected in their prayers; and, to compare their concepts in order to see the differences and similarities.

Prayer for Saadia Gaon in his philosophy was a part of the larger problem of religion which he was attempting to reconcile with philosophy. Thus his main concern was with the attack on religion from without. Bachya, on the other hand, was occupied with the problem of the corrosion of religion from within. It was his job to purify religion and strengthen it. Therefore, he dealt with prayer more intensely than did Saadia. That it had a rational basis played a much smaller part in his approach than in Saadia's. It might be said that Saadia saw prayer in the light of logic primarily, why we must pray and how it is to be done. Bachya saw prayer primarily in the light of devotion, how we must pray and why it is to be done. The difference between the two men lies in the area of their emphasis.

Although Saadia and Bachya approach prayer from different avenues, it is surprising how similar their concepts are. Both were rationalists in their philosophy, although they were adherents to different schools of thought. Bachya is visibly influenced by Saadia both in establishing a rational basis for prayer and in utilizing Saadia's terminology of rational and revealed commandments. However, Bachya went further with prayer by defining it as a duty of the heart and a duty of the limbs. For Saadia, prayer was a matter of the logic of the intellect mainly. For Bachya, it was derived through the logic of the heart. Each had to deal with it in his own particular way in order to complete the task he had set for himself.

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by

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## Table of Contents

Introduction	1
I. Saadia's Concept of Prayer in Light of His Philosophy	3
II. Saadia's Philosophy in Light of His Prayers	20
III. Saadia's Use of Liturgy in His Siddur	25
IV. Bachya's Concept of Prayer in Light of His Philosophy	29
V. Bachya's Philosophy in Light of His Prayers	45
Notes	56
Bibliography	63

## INTRODUCTION

Man has always felt the necessity of communing with God. Whether sunk in the depths of despair and fear or standing on the summit of reverence and gratitude, man has always felt compelled to pour forth his inmost feelings before Him Whom he senses but cannot see. Through the verbalization of these sentiments and emotions a bridge is constructed, and the distance between finite mortal and Infinite Creator is spanned. Prayer is the link uniting with God and God with man.

The history and growth of the Jewish religion are reflected in the mirror of its prayers. The encounter between man and God in its various stages contained in the history of Israel are seen in the prayer compositions. The development of man himself, from a creature who calls upon God out of need only to a selfless being who proclaims the glory and magnificence of the Lord out of awe and admiration, is also seen in Jewish prayer. But the true significance of prayer lies in not what it passively reflects but in the concepts that it actively proclaims. It is also this function of prayer which has helped to make Judaism a way of life. Precisely because the Jewish people have prayed and have been aware of the concepts contained in their prayers, have they been able to live and keep living regardless of the obstacles they have encountered during the centuries. Prayer has served as a bedrock of trust and confidence and also a continual source of inspiration to the Jewish people throughout their long history.

Prayer is found in the various literature of the Jewish

people aside from the specially composed prayer books. The Bible, the Mishnah and Talmud, and the works of the medieval Jewish philosophers either contain prayers or make reference to them, thus giving recognition to the important role of prayer in Judaism. Aside from many references to prayer, the Bible contains the first and still the most magnificent prayer book, the Book of Psalms. The Talmud devotes a special section to prayer in its Tractate "Berakoth". Many of the philosophers such as Saadia Gaon, Solomon ibn Gabirol, Bachya ibn Pakuda, and Jehudah Halevi were also poets. Their compositions should undoubtedly reflect their particular philosophy. It is the purpose of this paper to determine the concepts of prayer in the works of two of these philosophers, Saadia Gaon and Bachya ibn Pakuda; to see if they are consistent in their philosophy as reflected in their prayers; and to compare their concepts of prayer in order to see the differences and the similarities.

## CHAPTER I

## SAADIA'S CONCEPT OF PRAYER IN THE LIGHT OF HIS PHILOSOPHY

It must be recognized, states Saadia, that the creation of all things by God was purely an act of bounty and grace on His part.<sup>1</sup> In analyzing this statement, one sees that there are several very important conclusions involved in it. One is that God does exist. Another is that God is the Creator. And a third conclusion is that only God's beneficence and love are His reasons for creation and that He did it out of His own free will and not because some other force caused Him to do so. It shall first be our task to show Saadia's proofs for the above conclusions.

If the world existed from eternity or if it proceeded to develop from some type of prime matter which existed from eternity there is no proof for the existence of God. But if the world was created in time or if it developed from a prime matter which was created in time there is proof for the existence of God for this means that the world was created out of nothing. Since nothing is capable of creating itself it follows that there must have been someone who created it. Thus if it can be shown that the world is not eternal we shall have proof for the existence of God. And we shall use Husik's definition of God "...an intelligent being acting with purpose and design, and the cause of the existence of everything in creation."<sup>2</sup>

The world is not eternal since it is finite in magnitude and cannot therefore contain an infinite power. Hence the



world came into being in time since the force or power within the world which keeps it going is finite and must one day be exhausted. This also shows that this power could not have gone on from eternity.<sup>3</sup>

A second proof is that minerals, plants, and animals are made up of parts and elements. The heavens consist of spheres, one within the other. The spheres are studded with stars. But composition implies a time when composition took place. Thus the parts must have been there first and somebody put them together. Hence the world as we see it is not eternal.<sup>4</sup>

Saadia's third proof states that substance and accident is a special form of composition which is universal. Plants and animals are born or sprout, grow and decay. These manifestation are the accidents of the plant or animal's substance. The heavenly bodies have various motions, lights, and colors as their accidents. But these accidents are not eternal since they come and go. Hence the substance bearing the accidents, without which they cannot exist, are also temporal like them. Hence our world is not eternal.<sup>5</sup>

The fourth proof shows that nothing which is subject to time can be eternal. Past time itself cannot be eternal. If it were, it would mean that an infinite time has elapsed down to our day. But this cannot be since a contradiction of terms ensues. What already is accomplished cannot be infinite. Infinity is possible only as a potentiality, for example, we may speak of a given length as infinitely divisible. Although one may mentally continue dividing it forever, it can never be said that an infinite number of divisions has been made. Thus, not

only the world, but even time itself must have begun to be.<sup>6</sup>

Up to this point, only part of our problem has been solved. We have seen that the world came into being in time. But there exists the possibility that it may have developed from out of a pre-existing eternal matter. Saadia's reasoning to counter this possibility follows along these lines. If there were some type of eternal matter which existed prior to the world, the origin of the world may be explained in two ways. One possibility is that there is nothing outside of this matter and the world which developed from it. This explanation is not acceptable because it would mean that an unintelligent dead thing is the cause of intelligence and life in the world. Another possibility is that an intelligent being made the world out of prime, eternal matter. Neither is this possible, for the matter, like the maker of the world, is eternal and thus is independent of him and therefore is not subject to his will to adapt itself to his purpose. Thus he could not make the world out of it. Thus the only alternative that is now left is that the author of the universe is an intelligent being, who alone is eternal. He alone is responsible for the creation of the world, which he created ex nihilo, out of nothing.<sup>7</sup>

Now after having shown Saadia's proofs that the world is not eternal and had to come into being in time and that creation was ex nihilo we can return to our original conclusions that were derived from Saadia's first statement. God does exist. He is the Creator of the universe. By His own will did He perform the act of creation.

Could there be two Gods? No, since a unitary effect cannot be the result of two independent causes. If one is responsible for all, the existence of the other is superfluous since there is nothing left for him. If an effect consists of two parts, we have not one but two effects. But the universe in one and its parts cannot be separated. According to Saadia's philosophy, God's most essential attributes are Life, Omnipotence, and Omniscience. Thus it would be inconsistent with the character of deity if one god wished to create something and could not without the help of the other god since he would not be omnipotent. If one were able to conceal something from the other, neither would be omniscient.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, the existence of two Gods is impossible. There is only one God who exists.

Since we have been shown that there is no force or cause outside of God which can create or can compel Him to create, perhaps we might wonder what motivated God in the creation of all things. Saadia gives three answers. The first would be to say that God created them without motive. But this could not be the answer since the very definition of God means that He is purposeful in His works and that He does not act wantonly. It is the second and third answers which are acceptable. God intended to manifest and reveal His wisdom. He intended to benefit His creatures by the use of all these things so that they might obey him.<sup>9</sup> It might be well at this point to elaborate somewhat upon the manner in which God reveals His wisdom to man. This is done through the issuance of commandments and prohibitions. They are divided into two classes, the rational

and the revealed. The rational are those, the approval or disapproval of which are implanted in our minds and the conclusion of which we arrive at through logic. The revealed commandments and prohibitions consist of things neither the approval or disapproval of which is decreed by reason on account of their own character, but God imposed them upon us in order thereby to increase our reward and happiness.<sup>10</sup> Prayer falls under both categories. Reason demands that we thank God for His kindness towards us, but reason does not define how this gratitude is to be expressed or at what time or in what form it is to be shown. Hence, there was need for divine messengers who defined it and designated it as prayer and assigned to it certain set times and gave it a particular formulation and prescribed a specific posture and direction (facing towards the Temple in Jerusalem).<sup>11</sup>

We have mentioned that reason demands that man thank God for His goodness towards him. This follows the logic that whoever does something good be compensated either by means of a favor shown him, if he is in need of it, or by means of thanks if he does not require a reward. Since this is one of the general demands of reason - and Saadia equates Divine Wisdom and reason - it would not have been seemly for the Creator to neglect it in His own case.<sup>12</sup> Now God is not in need of compensation for His goodness since need refers to the physical. But God is incorporeal for in the proof of His existence were God Himself corporeal the question would remain what was the cause of Him. Since God is the cause of all body, He is not body and thus is ultimate since we cannot go beyond Him.

Being incorporeal, God is not subject to bodily accidents such as need for bodily accidents involve body.<sup>13</sup> Since we see that God needs no compensation or reward, it is logical to expect that thanks be given to Him. Since man is a rational creature because God has endowed him with wisdom which distinguishes him above the rest of creation we may assume that he recognizes the logic in giving thanks to God. But even so it was still necessary for God to command His Creatures to serve Him and thank Him for having created them. For God follows Divine Wisdom. Divine Wisdom is equated with reason. Reason demands that he that is wise does not allow himself to be treated with contempt or not to be insulted.<sup>14</sup> Man, by not thanking God for His goodness towards Him, would be acting in an insulting or disgraceful manner towards his Creator. It was therefore necessary for God to forbid His servants to conduct themselves in such a way towards Him. Hence, a commandment to praise Him was issued by God to man. This is the sentence in Deut. 10:3 which reads, "He is thy praise." Saadia interprets this verse as the duty of prayer.<sup>15</sup> תְּהַלֵּל, thanksgiving, for what has occurred in the past is one of the functions of prayer.<sup>16</sup> To sum it up, logic demanded that God command man to thank Him, and being a rational creature man recognizes this necessity and thanks God through prayer.

It follows then that in his giving thanks to God man recognizes His omnipotence. In his Siddur, Saadia speaks of תְּהַלֵּל as this recognition of God's ability, and classifies it as one of the functions of prayer.<sup>17</sup> In keeping with Saadia's philosophy, we must at this point state that logic tells us



that in recognizing God's omnipotence, we must also recognize that He is omniscient and that He is living. For our reason tells us that only he that possesses the power can create, and that only one that is alive has the power, and that whatever is created and well made can emanate only from one who knew, before he made it, how the thing to be created was to come into being.<sup>18</sup> In what manner does man make evident his recognition of God? Mainly through his submissiveness and humility before God. (This is indicative of the mood in which man should pray.) Submission of man to God's will is both a revealed and a rational commandment. Through reason man recognizes God as omnipotent, omniscient, gracious, just, and logical. Thus he realizes that God's works, though they may be beyond his comprehension, are ultimately for the highest purpose. His prayers therefore will contain such understanding. The example of a revealed commandment dealing with man's submission to God's will is one that deals indirectly with prayer. God commanded man to construct a Tabernacle. Not that God needs a tent and a curtain and lamps that give light and sounds of music and the offering of incense and fragrant odors and gifts of grain and wine and oil and fruits and other such things. For we already have been shown through reason that God, being incorporeal, cannot have assigned to Him the accident of need.<sup>19</sup> But God's sole aim in issuing an injunction to this effect was that His servants indicate their submissiveness to Him by presenting to Him the best that they possessed, and the best that they possess is meat and wine and music and incense and grain and oil and all that are pleasant. Of this, however, they were

to bring only a little bit, in accordance with their capacity. He, on the other hand, would recompense them amply in accordance with His ability. He would also deliver them from misfortunes, as no one outside of Him could protect them, because of their obedience.<sup>20</sup> Another example of a revealed commandment dealing with prayer is given by Saadia. The Jews were bidden to honor the dwelling place of the "Shekinah" by means of their substance, namely with silver and gold and precious stones and other things of value. In return, God was to recompense them by causing divine revelation to manifest itself from that place. Likewise it was to become a place for accepting the prayer of the nation in any mishap that might befall it. Saadia deduces this from Scripture when, at the time of the building of the Temple, <sup>Solomon</sup> enumerated the various instances in which prayers were to be offered in it. Thereupon God said to him: "I have heard thy prayer and supplication that thou hast made before Me" (I Kings 9:3)<sup>21</sup>

Thus if man prays he obeys God's commandment and is rewarded. If not, he is punished. Man, therefore, has a twofold purpose in worshipping God. One is that reason prompts him to do so. The other is for the sake of reward. The latter is in keeping with the attribute of the goodness of God, Who wishes to recompense His creatures for obeying His commandments. It is to man's advantage that God gave him commandments and prohibitions to obey for in keeping them he must expend energy and effort, and reason tells us that a person who achieves some good by means of the efforts he expends for its attainment obtains double the advantage gained by him who achieves

this good without ~~any~~ effort but merely as a result of the kindness shown him by God.<sup>22</sup>

A third branch of prayer described by Saadia in his Siddur is petition, תפלה.<sup>23</sup> This type of prayer deals what is to occur in the future. This to Saadia represents the most extensive type of prayer since it is only a revealed commandment, but also a rational commandment which is derived from the multitudinous demands and needs of the man to know what is to take place in the future.<sup>24</sup> Thus, the three main branches of prayer are thanksgiving, recognition, and petition.

How do we know that if man prays and thus obeys God's commandment he will be rewarded? This follows from the attribute of God's justness. Man will not be rewarded in this world but will be recompensed in the world to come.<sup>25</sup> As a ~~proof~~<sup>proof</sup> of this Saadia points out that Daniel delivered himself up to the lions on account of the prayer that he uttered to his Master. Surely if it had been his conviction that there was no reward except that which is obtained in this world, what would there have been left for him to look forward to after being devoured by the lions?<sup>26</sup> This proof seems rather weak in the light of Saadia's previous reasoning in regard to the philosophical problems which confronted him. Perhaps Daniel's great faith in God had nothing to do with expecting a reward.

Saadia, in speaking of the world to come, states that men will still be charged with the obligation of rendering service to God.<sup>27</sup> For sound reason would not allow itself to be completely divested of commandment and prohibition. If anything like that were feasible in the world to come ~~and~~ it would



likewise have to be so in this world. Ergo, men will be obliged to carry out such duties in the world to come as acknowledging the sovereignty of God, not to make insulting remarks about Him or ascribe to Him unworthy attributes.<sup>28</sup> In addition to these, continues Saadia, Scripture speaks of another type of service prescribed by revelation, such as the establishment in their land of a specific place where they will be required to travel at every appointed season; this will take the place that the Sabbath and the new moon have with us at present and enable them to serve God in whatever manner he may prescribe for them so that they may not remain without the means of worshipping Him.<sup>29</sup> We can conclude from the above that revealed commandments deal with ritual law.

On the other hand, they who are being punished in the hereafter will not be given the opportunity for divine service because of the punishment to which they will be subjected, and because such service might bring about a transfer from their state of perpetual torment. If they were given a chance after death to return from their wicked way, it would not be in keeping with God's justice for He promised to reward the righteous and punish the disobedient. If He did not punish the disobedient what point would there be in the righteous being obedient?<sup>30</sup> Thus we learn that man will have no opportunity in the world to come to pray for forgiveness. He must do so in this world. We also learn that Saadia's picture of the world to come is not one in which man will simply receive his happiness by being there. Man must continue to pray to God in order to fulfill his obligations.

What distinguishes man from the rest of creation is the wisdom with which God has endowed him.<sup>31</sup> Wisdom is an essence of the soul.<sup>32</sup> Through wisdom or rational speculation the soul arrives at the knowledge of God. The more it contemplates God, the more it comes to love Him. Its love will prompt the lips to utter what it feels. The utterances will be of a logical nature. The man with a soul that loves God will laud and praise Him justly and uprightly, not by attributing to Him exaggerations and absurdities. For instance, he will not praise God for being able to cause five to be more than ten without adding anything to the former, nor for being able to put the world through the hollow of a signet ring without making the one narrower and the other wider, nor for being able to bring back the day gone by in its original condition. For these things are all absurd.<sup>33</sup> Rather he will praise Him for His essential attributes such as He is eternal, that He always was and never will cease to be and not with mundane attributes. He will assert that God is truly One in essence, having no associates, and will affirm that He is loving and enduring. Moreover, he will declare that God is able to do everything, and that He knows everything with a perfect knowledge. He will affirm that God is the original Creator of everything, and that He does not produce aught that is vain or wasteful.<sup>34</sup> He will also say of Him that He commits no injustice or violence. In addition, he will declare that God deals out unto His servants only what is good for them. Nor will he impute that God is subject to change or alteration. Still more will he assert that God's kingdom will not cease or disappear, and

he will also affirm that God's command is always obeyed and irreversible. Moreover, he will declare that it is obligatory to praise His good and exalted qualities. Yet he must bear in mind the fact that for all the laudatory descriptions given of Him and all the praises bestowed upon Him, He is elevated and exalted and far removed from all that.<sup>35</sup> Thus we see that for Saadia prayer is arrived at through philosophical contemplation of God and the universe, and in prayer one must carry through with a rational and logical approach. But in order to complete his service to God in regards to worship, man must carry out the revealed commandments which deal with ritual law such as the observance of the Sabbath and holidays, the wearing of the fringes, etc.

Saadia's philosophy tells us that God does answer prayer. First of all we know that God is close to and interested in man. Otherwise He would not have made him the intended goal of creation.<sup>36</sup> We also know that through His omnipotence, God is able to answer prayer. But God is a God who follows Divine Wisdom reason. He does not deal in absurdities. Therefore, the prayer that man wishes to be answered must not <sup>contain</sup> such absurdities or be unreasonable in nature. Only God Himself can know whether the prayer is fit to be answered since He is omniscient and He knows what is ultimately best for him who prays, while man cannot possibly know. Hence, if one asks does God answer prayer the answer would depend upon the reasonable or unreasonable nature of the prayer. In regard to this, God alone is the final judge. However, in some cases God does not answer prayer because the pain to which the servant of God is

being subjected serves as a form of trial. When the servant asks his Master to inform him why He has brought this trial upon him, it is a rule with Him, says Saadia, not to inform him.<sup>37</sup> Otherwise, he would not be undergoing a trial in the fullest sense of the word were he to be informed.

Saadia enumerates seven conditions wherein prayer may not be accepted.<sup>38</sup> One of these is that the prayer was offered after the decree was issued against the servant of God in reference to a certain matter. We have already seen that God is a just God and His decrees are accordingly just. The prayer in effect would have God become unjust. This is neither reasonable nor logical. Hence the prayer could not be accepted.

A second condition wherein prayer may not be accepted is that sincere intention is absent from it. Here Saadia touches upon "kavono". One who prays without sincere intention is called a "renegade" by Saadia. The "renegade", when participating in prayer and supplication without having firm conviction or certainty in his heart, is nothing more than deceitful and mendacious in his utterance. He belongs to the class of people of whom Scripture says, "But they beguiled Him with their mouth and lied unto Him with their tongue." (Ps. 78:36) Such a person is one through whom the name of heaven is desecrated. It is not difficult to see why the prayer of such a person is not acceptable. The prayer is not logical because the heart and the mind are not in accord with each other. God does not accept illogical prayers.

The third condition is that the individual who utters the prayer does not heed the words of the Torah. God issued

the commandments and prohibitions because He deemed that they were best for man's happiness. One who rejects the Law also rejects the idea that God knows best. Thus he rejects an important attribute of God, the attribute of omniscience since it is through omniscience that God decides what is best for man.<sup>39</sup> By denying God's omniscience, one denies that He is living and is omnipotent.<sup>40</sup> Thus he denies God. It is not logical for God to accept the prayer of one who denies Him.

A fourth reason may be the inattention, on the part of him who prays, to the requests of the needy. It is not reasonable to expect God, who is able to help us, to answer the prayer of one who is in a comparable position with regard to aiding his fellow man, and does not do so. Prayer, then, not only involves the individual with God, but indirectly involves the individual with his neighbor.

The fifth condition wherein prayer may not be accepted is allowing one's self the use of forbidden wealth. Again, this involves man's relationship to his fellowman. One cannot expect to oppress or to enslave his neighbor, either his body or his property, as a means of increasing his personal possessions and material wealth and then expect God to answer him when he finds himself in a similar position of distress. It is unreasonable and not logical. God works only according to logic and reason.

The sixth is praying in a state of impurity. It is not logical for God to answer the prayer of one who is in a state of sin. Tantamount to doing so would be the approval of God for such acts.



The seventh and last condition is praying without having repented. For Saadia, the terms of repentance are four in number: the renunciation of sin; remorse; the quest of forgiveness; and the obligation not to relapse into sin.<sup>41</sup> Thus it is necessary for one to recognize that he has sinned and feel remorseful before he petitions God for forgiveness. This is saying nothing more than that he is sincere in his intention of offering prayer. We have already seen that prayer is not acceptable unless sincere intention is present.<sup>42</sup>

Does God force anyone to pray? This is not possible since there would have been no point in issuing commandments and prohibitions concerning prayer. Man has the choice of increasing his happiness and reward through his own free will. But will not God's foreknowledge that a man will pray in of itself cause the act? It is true that man never acts contrary to God's knowledge, but it is not God's foreknowledge which causes the act. It is man's own free will which determines this act. God's foreknowledge might be described as of a passive nature.<sup>43</sup>

The best time to offer prayer is early in the morning at sunrise.<sup>44</sup> This is because this time of day is most precious to man. It behooves man to offer to God that which is most precious to Him.<sup>45</sup>

Saadia deals with an important practical and personal problem when he discusses the importance of prayer in relation to the exclusion of living a normal life. Many people maintain that man's highest endeavor in this world ought to be to dedicate himself to the service of God. That is, he ought to abandon all worldly cares, fasting by day and arising at night in

order to pray, in the belief that God will provide for his needs and sustenance. Saadia agrees that such service provides great pleasure, and joy and gladness. He even says that all epithets that might be ascribed to it cannot praise it sufficiently. Still, an objection must be raised against this view because of the remark of its proponents that one should not engage in any other activity but devote himself exclusively to this one. If a person were not to concern himself with food, his body could not exist. If he did not procreate, there would be no offsprings. If all members of a generation agreed upon such a course, divine worship would die together with them. The duty of serving God is supposed to be carried out by parents, their children, and their children's children.<sup>46</sup> Thus, once again we see that worship of God is to be carried out in a logical manner.

Those who advocate this idea of the exclusive worship of God and the reliance upon Him to provide them with the food and welfare of their bodies have left out this important consideration; namely, that a special means and manner has been established by God for the attainment of everything. If they are correct in their assumption that reliance on God is to be universally applied, they must include it in the realm of worship. If so, they would depend on God to cause them to acquire the reward of the hereafter without worshipping Him. Therefore, just as this is inconceivable because worship has been established by God as a means for the attainment of the attainment of the hereafter, so too, it is impossible to dispense with the effort to earn a livelihood and marriage and

other occupations that have been designed by God as means conducive to the welfare of mankind.<sup>47</sup>

On the other hand, Saadia states the following with regard to those who claim that the necessities of livelihood interfere with praying. The needy, who are compelled through circumstance to default in their prayers and divine service, are excused only to the extent of the requirements of their livelihood. For anything that exceeds these limits, however, they are held accountable.<sup>48</sup>



## CHAPTER II

## SAADIA'S PHILOSOPHY IN LIGHT OF HIS PRAYERS

The purpose of this chapter is to determine whether Saadia carried through the ideas of his philosophy in the compositions of his own creation. The following are excerpts from two of Saadia's original prayers as found in "The Morning Prayer of Rab Saadia Gaon" contained in his Siddur.<sup>1</sup> The translation is my own.

God's Transcendence and Incomparability

"Thou alone art God, One who is transcendent beyond all things. Thou art far removed from all blessings and even distant beyond all praises and more high than all laudations though endless and numberless they be. No image can be compared unto Thee nor can any likeness be equated with Thee. In all that is found there is none like unto Thee, and besides Thee there is no God."<sup>2</sup>

The Eternality and Uniqueness of God

"Thou hast been from everlasting, and Thou hast no associate. Thou art eternal, and there is no other with Thee. A habitation is the God of old, and no one else standeth with Thee."<sup>3</sup>

God's Attributes of Life and Omniscience

"Thou art a living God and hast no number of days. Thou art omniscient, and the wise man does not fully comprehend Thee.

From Thy mouth has come forth the knowledge and understanding, and no teacher did instruct Thee."<sup>4</sup>

### God Is Omnipotent and Unchanging

"Riches and honor come from Thee, and not as a gift didst Thou take them. Thou rulest over all, and Thy kingdom from another Thou didst not receive. Strength and might are in Thy hand, and Thy majesty shall never diminish. Thy wisdom and Thy understanding shall not increase nor lessen, nor shall Thy kingdom change for it is an eternal kingdom. Thy strength and glory shall not alter, nor shall Thy years cease. For Thou art the God of the universe and when Thou counselest who shall frustrate? And when Thou plannest who shall change it? And shouldst Thou give tranquility unto a people who is able to cause them to act wickedly? In hiding Thy face who can make Thee approve? Indeed, he whom Thou blessest is blessed. Forever does Thy word stand, and Thy kingdom and faithfulness is from generation to generation."<sup>5</sup>

### God's Immanence

"All who seek Thee will find Thee in their heart, and all who search for Thee will find Thee in their thoughts, and in their innermost soul art Thou nigh unto them."<sup>6</sup>

### Man's Submissiveness to God

"Our souls belonging to Thee serve us as faithful witnesses and our bodies in truth do testify and teach that we are the clay and Thou art our Asker; Thou art the Creator and we are

the work of Thy hand. For all of this we give our thanks unto Thee, O Lord our God and God of our Fathers. Thou art our God before whom we bow and prostrate ourselves, offering prayer and supplication, giving praise to Thy glorious Name and extolling Thee in Thy marvelousness. We ask from Thee our life and the bread of our portion, the knowledge of our heart, and the healthfulness of our body; to forgive our sins and to redeem our soul from all anguish, for we know Thou canst do all and that no device is too hard for Thee."<sup>7</sup>

#### Man's Recognition of God's Creative Power

"Thou art the Lord God who set the sun to shine by day and the laws whereby the moon and stars shine by night." Thou art the Lord God who stretched forth the earth upon the waters. Thou art He who established the mountains by His strength and the hills with the might of His power, Who laid the foundations of the depths, of the streams, and of the valleys."<sup>8</sup>

"Thou art the Lord God who gathered as a mound the waters of the sea, and set the bottom of the sea in its depths, placing the sand as a boundary line for the sea - an everlasting statute that shall never pass. Thou art the Lord God who covered the heavens with clouds, and prepared the dew for the earth; who causest the mountains to sprout forth with grass and waterest the mountains from its springs; who plantest trees of all species in the earth, and causest grass and herbage to come forth so that man might work to bring forth food from the ground; who givest seed to the sower and food to him that eats."<sup>9</sup>

"Thou art the Lord God Who createst all living beings, the earth and all that is upon it, the seas and all that is in them. Thou art the Lord God Who hast created man from the dust of the earth. In skin and flesh didst Thou clothe him and with bones and sinews Thou didst weave him. Thou didst set within him life and loving kindness, and with Thy spirit of goodness, which Thou didst give him, Thou didst endow him with understanding."10

"Thou art the Lord God and Thou givest life to all for with Thee is the fountain of life. Thou art the God Who rulest the world in His might, and in all places Thine eyes do see. There is no man who can hide himself in the dark places for Thou wilt perceive him. No man can escape from The spirit for whither shall he flee from Thy Presence?"11

#### God's Justice

"Thou art a king Who lovest justice and establishest uprightness in which there is no wickedness; Who does not show favor neither acceptest bribery. As Thou hast reckoned so has it come to pass, and as Thou hast counseled so will it be established."12

#### God Harkens To Prayer

"True it is that to him who recountest the mighty acts of the Lord Thou wilt hearken to all of his praise. Still we are but able to mention only a small part of them, even according to our strength. Indeed, from the heavens wilt Thou hear us and Thou wilt send us salvation and wilt be favorable unto us

for Thou art a God who hearest prayer."<sup>13</sup>

#### Reward And Punishment in the World to Come

"Verily, O Lord our God, didst Thou create this world as a temporary habitation in order to test in it all the children of men with the statutes and ordinances that Thou didst command them and with the life and the good and the death and the evil which Thou didst set before them. Existing is the world to come to recompense in it all of Thy godly ones with a good reward, and to punish in it with the vengeance of the covenant those who have dealt treacherously with Thee."<sup>14</sup>

#### Prayer As the Quest For Forgiveness

"May it be Thy will O Lord our God to be merciful unto us with regard to our sins and to pardon us because of our transgressions and to forgive us for our iniquities according to the greatness of Thy kindness for many have been our backslidings. We have sinned, we have transgressed, we have done wickedly, we have rebelled, we have turned aside from Thy beneficent ordinances. O for Thy sake, accept us and our penitence; cleanse us from our sins and purify us from our transgressions. Then shall we be of those who have returned unto Thee with all their hearts and whose sins Thou rememberest no more."<sup>15</sup>

Not all of the various ideas of Saadia's philosophy are contained in these selections from his prayers. But from examination of number that are, it is safe to say that Saadia is consistent in his philosophy as reflected in his prayers.

## CHAPTER III

## Saadia's Use of Liturgy in his Siddur

No study of Saadia's attitude towards prayer would be complete unless it included some remarks about one of his monumental contributions to Judaism, his Siddur.<sup>1</sup> For it is through his Siddur that the mind and the heart of the man are reflected. His great intellect gave him a deep insight into the religious needs of the Jewish people of his day. His heart is revealed through the original composition of beautiful prayers. His Siddur is indeed a product of both.

The purpose of his Siddur was not academic, he tells us. He is not interested in affirming its contents through Scripture or bringing proof of its commentary from the Mishnah and the Talmud. Rather was it composed "for learning and understanding."<sup>2</sup> What prompted him to do so was that in his travels he became aware that with regard to prayer the people were erring in a threefold fashion; in negligence, in addition, and in omission. He, therefore, felt obliged to correct this situation.<sup>3</sup>

His goal is to collect the prayers and blessings current in his day, the Galut. He will return them to their original and proper order. He will divide his subject matter into two sections - the obligations dealing with the special days of the year and with the obligations of the ordinary days. He also will provide a petition and a hymn as a supplement should they wish to be used.<sup>4</sup> This is the task he sets for himself.

Thus we see that Saadia's program was one of religious



education. That he had in mind the average man of his cultural environment as the reader of his Siddur is evidenced by the fact that side by side with the Hebrew commentary runs an Arabic commentary. The omission of scholarly discussions in his Siddur also warrants this conclusion.

The arrangement of Saadia's Siddur once again shows his logical and systematic frame of mind. He begins his main subject with the daily prayers for the individual with an explanation of the hours they are to be recited, and he indicates the various postures the prayers take. Then follows the daily prayers for the congregation with a commentary as to what the reader will say and the responses of the congregation.<sup>6</sup> Then come two original compositions, both of a petitionary nature.<sup>7</sup>

Saadia's next section deals with the special prayers that man uses whenever the occasion arises. These he has divided into two sections; those dealing with the physical such as eating, drinking and working; and those dealing with the sensorial such as seeing, hearing, and smelling. These he subdivides with explanations of each until a highly elaborate system is the result.<sup>8</sup>

Now come the prayers for the special days: the Sabbath<sup>9</sup>, the New Moon<sup>10</sup>, the Festivals<sup>11</sup>, and the Fasts.<sup>12</sup> Chanukah and Purim, about which he has little to say, come after the Festivals.<sup>13</sup> Saadia certainly makes an excellent teacher. Concerning the special days, he gives a short summary of the commandments and prohibitions relevant to each. For Passover, he even includes the Haggadah.<sup>14</sup>

Rosh Hashonah is included in the list of Festivals.

Saadia goes to great lengths to discuss exactly the description of the sounds which the blowing of the Shofar produces. He even presents a diagram showing the relative length of the notes.<sup>15</sup> Thus we have found a reference to music in prayer by Saadia. Saadia, in his philosophical work, *Beliefs and Opinions*, has a chapter on the various types of musical beats<sup>16</sup>, and the effects they have on the impulses of man's soul. Perhaps there is a relationship between the sounds of the Shofar and the musical beats he mentions.

The next to last section of Saadia's *Siddur* is concerned with the Fast Days, of which Yom Kippur is the most important.<sup>17</sup> The commentary remarks upon the mood of these days i.e., forgiveness for sins, repentance, and confession.

The last section deals with the studying of the Torah in public and in private.<sup>18</sup> The benedictions for the Torah and Haftarah, how many sections are to read, and the readings for the special Sabbaths and Festivals are all mentioned here.

All in all, Saadia's *Siddur* is a remarkable project. He sets as his goal the bringing of understanding to the great mass of people. And he certainly should have succeeded in his aim. Anyone who was the least bit familiar with the liturgy could have followed Saadia's *Siddur* because of its logical presentation of the subject matter. More than that, the average person could have gained a greater and better knowledge of the laws concerning prayer and worship thanks to Saadia's clear and concise explanations. Thus Saadia's concept of prayer as revealed in his *Siddur* is that prayer is a means of attaining the knowledge of God and man's duties to Him. It is also a



method whereby the Jewish people may learn of their history and their own special customs and ceremonies.

## CHAPTER IV

## BACHYA'S CONCEPT OF PRAYER IN LIGHT OF HIS PHILOSOPHY

How to instill in the heart of the Jew a sincere love for the service of God is the purpose of his work, "The Duties of the Heart", Bachya tells his readers.<sup>1</sup> From this we may deduce that the role of prayer in Bachya's philosophy is to be directed towards this goal.

Bachya organizes his approach in a very orderly fashion. He begins by stating that God's greatest gift to man, besides having created him, was to bestow Wisdom upon him. It is through Wisdom that man comes to the service and the love of God. Wisdom is composed of three divisions. The first deals with essential and accidental properties of material bodies; the second deals with the science of mathematics; and the third division deals with the highest of all sciences, theology.<sup>2</sup> It is the latter which is most essential to religion, and it is incumbent upon us to study it in order to gain an understanding of our religion.<sup>3</sup> We may come to understand our religion through the three-way path which God has provided for us; through the intellect, through the Torah, and through the traditions of the prophets and sages.<sup>4</sup> Now the science of the Torah is subdivided into the science of external conduct and the science of inward life. The science of external conduct deals with the knowledge of practical duties. The science of inward life deals with duties concerning the heart, such as feelings and sentiments.<sup>5</sup> Bachya then reflects the influence of Saadia by applying the latter's device of rational and

revealed commandments to the practical duties. Some of these duties reason alone would have dictated even though the Torah would not have made them obligatory. The others depend upon the authority of Revelation since our reason cannot fathom their purpose. As for the duties of the heart, they are all rational.<sup>6</sup> They are both positive and negative in nature. The existence of God, His Unity, creation ex nihilo, the obligation to worship Him with all our hearts, and to have complete trust in Him are some examples of positive duties. Negative duties of the heart include the opposite of these and moreover such ones as not to covet, not to bear grudges, and not to think of forbidden things. The positive and negative duties of the heart, all of them, have this common characteristic; they are not visible. Only God is able to judge a person's true motives.<sup>7</sup>

For Bachya, the fulfillment of all precepts rest upon the duties of the heart. It would be impossible to perform external duties in the proper manner should there be a shortcoming in the observance of the duties of the heart.<sup>8</sup> With regard to prayer, the application of this statement would mean that the utterance of any blessings must come from a desire of the heart, not simply because there is an appointed occasion when these prayers and blessings are to be said. Each time then, when a prayer or blessing is uttered, whether the time is set or not, is to be a new experience for the individual. The desire of the heart makes it so.

That the duties of the heart are obligatory for us to fulfill may be shown from the following. First, reason tells us

that man is composed of body and soul, and both are due to God's goodness. Accordingly we are obligated to worship God in a visible and an invisible manner. Visible worship falls under the category of the duties of the limbs, such as wearing of the fringes, the erecting of the Tabernacle, praying and fasting. The duties of the heart, such as meditation upon God's unity, accepting His service, and humbling ourselves before Him, represent invisible worship. But the visible worship of God cannot be acceptable unless there is a desire of the heart to perform them.<sup>9</sup> From this we learn that the performance of ritualistic observances are not to be merely mechanical, but in order to be acceptable must rise from a sense of sincere intention prompted by that type of inward feeling. Surely, says Bachya, if God imposed external duties upon us, then it is unreasonable to think that the choicest elements of our beings, the heart and the mind, would not share in serving Him since there would be no complete service of God without their participation.<sup>10</sup> Thus "kavono" is a necessary companion to prayer. Lip service alone is unacceptable since it would be unaccompanied by an inward desire. "If the sentiments of our hearts contradict the professions of our lips, and our physical activities are not in accord with the convictions of our souls, the service we render to God is not perfect, for He does not accept service that is spurious."<sup>11</sup> "The aim and value of the duties of the heart consist in their securing the equal cooperation of body and soul in the service of God, so that the testimony of heart, tongue, and other bodily organs shall be alike, and that they shall support and confirm, not

contradict or differ from, each other."<sup>12</sup>

Returning to the statement that the duties of the heart are incumbent upon us, we derive this from a second source. The Torah enjoins man as to the necessity of the duties of the heart. References in Scripture, which are many, include the following. "To love the Lord, thy God, with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy might."<sup>14</sup> "Thou shalt not take vengeance nor bear a grudge."<sup>15</sup>

Thirdly, tradition tells us so. "Heaven regards the intention"<sup>16</sup> and "Do His will as if it were thy will, that He may do thy will as if it were His will"<sup>17</sup> are examples found in Rabbinic literature.

Bachya insists that if you are a man of intellect and understanding, it will not suffice you to learn about the duties of the heart from the Torah and from tradition alone. Rather must you reinforce your conviction through the use of your intellect and employ it in reflecting upon this subject.<sup>18</sup> Thus prayer is not only a commandment; it is a logical conclusion at which one arrives through his rational faculties. Saadia holds a similar view in his philosophy regarding this.

So far we have seen that Bachya is a moralist whose religious and ethical views are based upon rationality. Bachya's concern is with the strengthening and purifying of religion from within. To this end he uses philosophy. It is therefore necessary for him to demonstrate the rational proofs for the existence of God and that He is the Creator of all in order that through the intellect we may come to understand and appreciate our religious duties.

The arguments which Bachya employs and the method that he uses once again show the influence of Saadia. First he shows that the world must have come into being in time. Hence it had to have a Creator. Of the three proofs which he brings, two may be found in Saadia's philosophy. One is that a thing cannot make itself.<sup>19</sup> The other is that the number of causes cannot be infinite.<sup>20</sup> The third proof is that elements existed before the composite did. Because of their essential character the elements do not join or coalesce. Therefore, the composite must have been brought into existence and therefore could not be eternal. It follows then that the composite had to have a Maker to whom it could owe its existence. Hence the existence of God.<sup>21</sup> Bachya also says that it would be just as ridiculous to say that the world came into being by accident as it would be to say that ink poured upon a blank piece of paper could form itself into legible writing as though written with a pen.<sup>22</sup>

The fundamental doctrine concerning God is His Unity. Bachya presents seven arguments as his proofs. Among these is the proof through cosmology, that design and order are evident in the universe and that the uniformity which exists could not be due to more than one Creator.<sup>23</sup> Another is that the world had to have at least one Creator since it has been proved that creation ex nihilo took place. He who says that it had more than one Creator would have to show proof for his statement.<sup>24</sup> Bachya continues on with other proofs of God's unity and then with His essential attributes. It is not necessary for us to go into detail regarding the rest of His philosophical proofs for we are not concerned with reconciling religion and



philosophy, but simply to establish a rational basis for the understanding of our religion. Bachya now turns from the outward philosophical direction to the inward ethical and moral direction. He names the ten steps leading upward to God. They are the existence and Unity of God; the examination of created things; the service of God; trust in God; wholehearted devotion to God; humility; repentance; spiritual accounting; abstinence; and, love of God.

Now that one comes to understand the proofs for God's existence and unity, he will appreciate God's kindness for having brought him into being, and he will thank Him. This is only natural since reason would require such action to be demonstrated from a beneficiary to his benefactor.<sup>25</sup> Saadia, too, makes the same statement that it is only logical for man to thank God because He is his benefactor.<sup>26</sup> Bachya then proceeds to give illustrations of the various classes of men who render benefit to another human being. No matter whether it be a father's beneficence to his child or a master's to a slave still the motivation comes from self-interest in one way or another. The father is interested in seeing his seed continue; the master is interested in improving his capital for which he needs his slave's work.<sup>27</sup> Even so, reason requires the beneficiary to thank the benefactor though he recognizes the truth of the situation. Then how much more is an individual to give thanks and praise to God who is far beyond such a thing, who has no motive of self-interest, whose gifts are of a permanent nature, and who wishes to benefit man only as an expression of His grace and lovingkindness.<sup>28</sup> If, as Bachya

states, "the tongue is the heart's pen and the mind's messenger"<sup>29</sup> then prayer is a means of expressing one's praise, gratitude, love, and respect of God.

The more that one studies, the more humble will he become. For he will come to recognize the various ways in which God has manifested His wisdom and His kindness. The complex structure of the universe, the very structure of man himself, the order of nature, the giving of the Torah, all of these will cause man to recognize God's magnificence and in contrast, his own weakness. Therefore, he will become humble and submissive in God's Presence. His prayers accordingly will reflect his adoration for God's magnificence and his submissiveness to God's power.

Now man's submission to God may arise out of two different types of sentiment. His submission may be induced by fear, hope, necessity, or compulsion. Or on the other hand, his submission may arise from the conviction that it is his duty to glorify and exalt the person to whom submission is due.<sup>30</sup> Both types are deserving of salvation in the world to come.<sup>31</sup> But the latter is the higher type of service for it is arrived at through the intellect and thus is a duty of the heart. Such is prayer. True prayer does not come from the fear of punishment if one does not pray or hope for a reward if he does. It comes from a desire on part of the soul to strive with all its might to serve God for its own sake as a result its intellectual comprehension of God.

Man is continually receiving benefits from God. But a long time elapses before his mind is mature enough to recognize the



services he should render in return for them. Therefore it is one's duty to call attention to the duties of the heart and the duties of the limbs which make the service of God complete whether it be to his family or his neighbors. This is to be done so that one will not be without religion until he comes to recognize the validity of the service of God through his own mental prowess.<sup>32</sup> Prayer then must be taught to one until he can recognize its truth through his own intellect. This includes both the invisible worship of God and the outward concomitants of ritual.

We have mentioned that prayer helps for salvation in this world and in the world to come.<sup>33</sup> But the idea of Reward and Punishment should not be an additional reason for man to pray. Here Bachya differs with Saadia. Bachya is concerned with the inward purity of religion, and his purpose is to show that true worship of God will lead to what he considers man's highest goal - the love of God. What motivates man towards this goal is his realization of God's goodness and kindness towards him. No ulterior motive is involved. Man should ever remember the rabbinic maxim, "Be not like the servants who work for their Master ~~not~~ for the sake of reward."<sup>34</sup> Whole-hearted devotion to God is something to be practiced for its own sake. Bachya categorizes men into ten classes with regard to their service of God. The seventh class consists of those who serve God because they believe they will be rewarded. The tenth and highest class are those who know there is reward and punishment in both worlds and still worship God without thought to these promises. Theirs is the highest type of service because it

comes from a desire to serve God for the sake of love.<sup>35</sup> Should one take additional religious duties upon himself, provided he is fulfilling those obligatory upon him and the additional ones come from a love of God, then he will be rewarded accordingly. Hence additional praying leads to a greater recompense.<sup>36</sup> Bachya thus says that one does receive additional reward for additional praying but that this should not be the motivation for prayer.

Is it really possible for man to reach this highest step to do the service of God? Is it possible for one to thank God for His bounty without hoping for that bounty to be increased? It is if man will keep three things in mind: not to think of self-gain when worshipping; that God's goodness does not depend on man's prayer since He manifested His goodness to man before he could pray; and, that man is small in the sight of God and is dependent upon Him and not vice versa, and that <sup>He</sup> is continually benefitting man.<sup>37</sup> Reflection on these three matters will remove the obstacles in order to reach the top rung in the ladder to God. With regard to thinking of self-gain during worship, although your outward appearance may give no sign that your thoughts are thus, God will requite you in all that His omniscience observes in you. For God knows both the hidden and the revealed equally well, and it follows that He will judge according to His knowledge.<sup>38</sup>

As one must not think of being rewarded by God when he worships, so must he not worship with the thought in mind that it will find favor in the sight of his fellow man. Evidently Bachya has in mind the "hazanim" for he refers to those who

compose new liturgical hymns,<sup>39</sup> and lead religious services.

Bachya has difficulty answering the problem of Free Will. He admits it is difficult to reconcile the difference between God's control over everything and man's apparent choice in matters. He advocates that man should live as though he did have free will.<sup>40</sup> Thus man may pray or not pray as he so desires. Prayer and free will are interrelated in the following way. Prayer has three stages. The first is the choice to pray. The second is the intention to carry out that choice. The third is to bring the decision into physical activity and thus make the act a complete one. Again this is Bachya's definition of a complete act - one in which both heart and body are engaged. The first two stages of prayer, the choice and the intention are within man's own power. The third is lies in the realm of God's power. Should a man choose to pray and resolve to carry out that decision but is unable to do so for some physical reason, then he will be rewarded in the same fashion as though he did carry it out.<sup>41</sup> If man does pray, it is certainly not because God forces him to. For if God forced man to pray it would be because He needed prayer. Bachya points out innumerable times that God showed his goodness and beneficence to man even before the latter could pray. He therefore does not need man's adoration and thanks.. Man is low and humble in origin. God is great and the Creator of all. What need does he have of man at all? It was God's love and kindness which prompted him to show man His beneficence, and nothing else. Therefore, he does not need man's prayer.

Trust in God for Bachya does not mean that man is to

become completely dependent upon God to supply him with all his necessities. Rather it means that man should strive to take care of himself and his family, should obey the duties of the heart and the duties of the limbs, with the faith that God will *help him carry out all he intends to do. And prayer will* show this trust in that the individual relies upon God as his Guide and Protector throughout life. Prayer expresses the faith that God is loving and attentive to the individual's interest. Prayer admits the confidence in the dispensation of God's justice as perfect justice.<sup>42</sup>

Once again we see agreement between Saadia and Bachya, this time in the realm of complete dependency upon God. Both hold that man should not abandon everything else in this belief. There are certain duties which must be carried out by man and these he must do.

Whole-hearted devotion to God is necessary for him who would worship God in truth. Three deterrents present themselves as obstacles in this matter: want of understanding of God and His beneficences; want of understanding of God's commandments and laws; and, the suggestions of the evil inclination which led him to live for this world only and not the world to come.

Ignorance of God on the part of the worshipper is comparable to idolatry. For he who is worshipping must have in mind some human being from whom he expects benefit or hurt. Thus he is not serving God, but a mortal<sup>43</sup> With regard to prayer, it would be a denial of God's unity to associate any other being with Him while worshipping. This means both the utterance of another's name along with God's Name or worshipping

God while believing in another.

Ignorance of the Torah restrains from whole-hearted devotion because the Torah contains the modes of worship and how they are to be performed. Even though one may be aware of God and His goodness still he will not know what prescribed course to follow.<sup>44</sup>

The evil inclination raises doubts concerning certain accepted truths and weakens one's trust in God. One's religious service is thus impaired because one comes to believe that the worship of God is neither a duty or is meritorious.<sup>45</sup>

Humility is a prerequisite to the love of God. When a man prays there should be no pride or haughtiness both in his heart and in his outward manner. He should not consider his act of worship as of any account compared to what he owes God which is many times greater than the deed.<sup>46</sup> One circumstance which will produce humility is when a person falls ill. He will first turn to human beings and ask for aid. Seeing they cannot help him, he will supplicate God.<sup>47</sup> Thus prayer is not only adoration and thanksgiving but also petition.

Prayer plays a large part in repentance. True repentance consists of the four following steps: regret on part of the penitent for the sins he committed; renouncing and abandoning his sins; confessing and beseeching forgiveness for having committed them; pledging that he will not repeat the offense. Thus in repentance, prayer takes the forms of remorse in speech, confession, supplication, and even the form of a vow. Bachya states with regard to the latter "by means of speech covenants are made.....between God and his servants."<sup>48</sup> Surely when a



man prays for forgiveness and vows not to repeat his sin, that vow is regarded as part of his prayer.

Part of supplication for forgiveness includes fasting by day and praying by night.<sup>49</sup> Later on we shall see why Bachya. In contrast to Saadia believes praying by night is better.

When the above four constituents of repentance are fulfilled, God will forgive the sinner and overlook his transgression.<sup>50</sup> Thus the question as to the efficacy of prayer is answered. God does hearken to prayer. But it would seem that the others forms of prayer, namely adoration, praise, and thanksgiving are efficacious from the standpoint of the effect they have on him, and not on God. Through them man comes to feel the nearness and the glory of God. And the prayers through which man approaches God in repentance are efficacious for man in that they relieve him of guilt feelings for transgressions committed and they help him psychologically in resolving not to repeat them in the future.

In his eighth treatise on "Spiritual Accounting", Bachya says that "a person should take account with his soul concerning the various kinds of religious activities."<sup>51</sup> These religious activities fall into one of three classes: those dealing exclusively with the duties of the heart; those consisting of duties of the heart and bodily activity, such as prayer and the study of the Torah; and, the third group consists of physical activity alone except for the feeling of devotion when we begin to perform them. Examples of the last class are the wearing of the fringes and fixing the Mezuzah.<sup>52</sup> In the performance of the duties of the heart, one must remove all other



thoughts except that which devotes his heart to God. Prayer falls into the second class in which both the duties of the heart and duties of the limbs are engaged. A person should pray in the following manner. "He should disengage his body from other activities that refer to this or to the next world, and free his mind from all thoughts that would distract his attention from prayer; then, after having cleansed himself and washed off anything dirty or foul and moved away from all offensive odors and similar objectionable things, he should take to heart who it is to whom he intends to offer his prayer, what he seeks therein and how he is to address his Maker both as to choice of words and of theme. For know that words are uttered with the tongue and are like a shell, while meditation on the words is in the heart, and is the kernel. Words are the body of prayer and meditation on their meaning is the spirit. If one prays with his tongue and his heart is otherwise engaged, his prayer is like a body without a spirit, or a shell without a kernel, because his body is present but his heart is not with him while he is praying.....and if a person is saying prayers and his heart is empty of the contents of the prayer, the Almighty will not accept his prayer, which was only mechanical, a mere movement of the tongue."<sup>53</sup> Bachya then calls attention to the fact that the Amidah is concluded with the sentence, "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable before Thee, my Rock and my Redeemer."<sup>54</sup> Thus if a person thinks of any worldly matter while praying, it would be insulting to God to ask that his prayer be acceptable since whole-hearted devotion would be lacking.<sup>55</sup> Bachya

sums up devotion in prayer as "the soul's longing for God, humbling itself in His presence, exalting its Creator, offering praises and thanksgiving to His name, casting all its burdens on Him."<sup>56</sup>

It was necessary to set prayers down because most people find it difficult to pray spontaneously in a worthy fashion since it is not easy for one to recall exactly what to say, and because thoughts change rapidly making it difficult for the individual to repeat prayers in the proper order.<sup>57</sup>

The religious activities in which only the body is engaged, like the wearing of the fringes and the erecting of the Tabernacle, should begin with directing the heart towards God before performing the precept so that the act will be complete one with the idea in mind of obeying God's commandment.<sup>58</sup>

The highest type of prayer will come from the individual who entertains the highest type of love for God. There are three types of love a servant has for his Master. The first type stems from the gratefulness the servant feels for his Master's beneficence to him. The second type of love comes from the gratitude of the servant because the Master has been merciful and compassionate in overlooking the transgressions of the servant. But the third type of love and the purest is the love which comes from the recognition of the Master's great and exalted character and reverence for his innate nobility, and not because the servant hopes to receive anything or because he fears his master.<sup>59</sup> The prayers we offer will reflect the type of love we have for God.

Bachya says that if one has drunk a fourth of a log of

wine he should not pray immediately after but should wait awhile before reciting his prayers.<sup>60</sup> The reason is evidently that he would not be engaging in prayer with complete devotion.

Prayer at night is better than prayer during the day. First of all a man is less likely to think of his business affairs during the night than he is during the day. Then there are fewer people abroad at night who might distract him both with conversation and with flattery. There is less noise at night and the senses are better able to concentrate. Thus one is able to meditate better.<sup>61</sup>

The duties of the heart are never-ending. They are incumbent upon man at all seasons, all hours, all moments and under all circumstances.<sup>62</sup> Prayer too, since it is a duty of the heart, as well as a duty of the limbs, may be said at all times and under all circumstances. Outward ritual observances are performed at definite times.

The true lovers of God will praise and glorify Him for His aid in helping them accomplish what they have. "And when their intent has not been visibly realized because of their inability to carry it out, they excuse themselves before God and resolve to execute it when they will be able. They look forward to the time when the Creator will aid them and give them the opportunity to fulfill their purpose. They beseech Him for this with a pure soul and faithful heart. This is their highest wish and the final aim of their petitions to God."<sup>63</sup>

## CHAPTER V

## BACHYA'S PHILOSOPHY IN LIGHT OF HIS PRAYERS

Bachya appended to his "Duties of the Heart" two original compositions, one an "Addition" and the other a "Petition". Selections will be made from these in order to determine if the author was or was not consistent in his philosophy as shown in his prayers. The English translation appears in this edition of "Duties of the Heart".

God's Unity

"I understand, O Lord my God, by the light of knowledge where-with Thou hast favoured me, that Thou art One, Thou alone; One without relation, or comparison; one without commencement or termination; One without a second confronting Thee; One that is not like the one that is the first of the numerals; One that is not like one of the numbered; One that is without conjunction, combination or addition; One that is without separation or division; One that is without anyone preceding Thee. For whatever beside Thee is called one is in truth not one, nor may it truly be entitled a unity, since it is composed of units, built up of separate entities, divisible into separate things, and has a commencement and termination, a beginning and an end, a rear and a front, relation and similarity, and also has a second opposite it, another resembling it."<sup>1</sup>

God the Creator

"Thou hast created the root of everything out of nought and the ~~form~~ of whatever is formed from the non-existent. Thou hast joined them by Thy spirit and they became united. By Thy word Thou didst set the foundation-stone so that it become an existing world. By Thy bidding Thou didst establish the heavenly sphere to encompass the universe. Also earth and wind has Thou established; water and fire didst Thou possess; out of fire didst Thou create the ministers around the throne of Thy glory, and out of wind, the hosts of messengers on high. Thou didst make a division between waters and waters. Thou didst set a limit and boundary to the gathering of the waters of the earth, that they should not break forth. Thou didst make the earth yield herbage with all species of seeds and pleasant plants. Out of the light Thou didst form luminaries and stars in the celestial spheres, to rule by day and by night, bursting forth by day with song to their Maker, and giving forth hymns by night to their Master, declaring that the All-wise created them and testifying that the Almighty formed them."<sup>2</sup>

#### The Gift of Wisdom

After all this, Thou didst form man for Thy glory and didst ~~at~~ create a weak mortal who calls on Thy name. Into his nostrils Thou didst breathe a soul, precious, pure, and bright, wise and understanding, acquiring instruction and wisdom, learning knowledge and discretion, declaring that Thou hast formed it and testifying that Thou hast created it. By its means, every wise-hearted man, using intelligence, will realize Thee,



and a man of understanding will reflect and find Thee."3

### Creation Ex Nihilo

"And because Thou bearest all and createst all out of naught, givest life to all, and from Thee all cometh and everything is Thy work, praise is befitting unto Thee."4

### God's Excellence

"And it is a statute incumbent on Thy creatures that they shall praise and chant before Thee: "Great is the Lord and highly to be praised and His greatness is unsearchable" (Psalm 145:3). For Thou art high and everything is low in Thy presence. Thou art exalted; everything bows down before Thee. Thou art praised, and all praise Thee. Thou art extolled, and all extol Thee, Thou art righteous, and everything declareth Thy righteousness. Thou art glorified, and everything glorifieth Thee. Thou art Sovereign, and everything proclaimeth Thy sovereignty. Thou art mighty, and everything relieth on Thy might. Thou art great, and everything poureth forth speech concerning Thy greatness. Thou art awe-inspiring, and everything speaketh of Thy awe-inspiring deeds. Thou art powerful, and everything speaketh of Thy abounding power. Therefore, it is seemly to glorify Thee 'For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same, great is my name among the nations' (Malachi 1:11)."5

### Man's Humility and Dependence Before God

"And if I am <sup>of</sup> too little worth to offer a prayer to him who



is high and exalted and am too poor to declare the wondrous deeds of the Great One who is unsearchable, since I am but dust and ashes, corruption and worm, a cage full of deceits, an abhorred vessel full of shame and humiliations, nevertheless, I know, O Lord, that Thou wilt not despise the affliction of the poor, nor hide Thy face from him, and when he crieth unto Thee Thou wilt be entreated of him. And what is weak man? What is his speech before Thee, and what his praise? It would be deemed as naught and without form in Thy presence, were it not that Thou hast exalted him by Thy commandments, glorified him by Thy testimonies, honored him by the declaration of the unity of Thy name, made him know Thy joyousness with some apprehension of Thy holiness and given him permission to pour forth speech and utterances of joy before the throne of Thy glory."6

### Tract in God

"Therefore I considered my ways, investigated my paths, weighed my activities and gave heedful attention to the end of all my desired objects; - and lo! everything is vanity and vexation of spirit. Its end is formless; its conclusion, confusion. So I longed to turn my footsteps to Thy tabernacle, to take refuge beneath the wings of Thy glory and join in Thy service. I know that it will be well with them that fear Thee, and Those who set their hopes in Thee will not be put to shame; nor will they that seek Thee be confounded; and whoever trusts in Thee - in a secure place shall he dwell, and his seed shall be established before Thee."7

### Devotion in Prayer

"O Lord, open Thou lips, and my mouth shall declare Thy praise' (Psalms 51:17). Make my speech clear, prepare my heart, arouse my soul, direct my meditation, and correct my wandering fancies. Heed my utterances, give ear to my words, hear my prayer. May my cry draw nigh unto Thee, and my supplication come unto Thee, while I stand to declare Thy praise, give utterance to Thy righteousness, recount Thy wonders, set forth Thy loving-kindness, tell Thy truth, as long as my soul abideth within me and the spirit of life is in my nostril, before my sun will darken and the lamp of my soul be extinguished, and my mortal body returneth to the earth whence it was taken and my spirit goeth to Thee for judgment."<sup>8</sup>

### Confession and Supplication for Forgiveness

"We have trespassed in word and deed. We have despised the statute in committing trespass. We have robbed justice and righteousness. Our course has been like a hedge of thorns. We have annulled covenant and statute. We have multiplied transgressions to an unlimited degree. We have abandoned the good that has taught. We have plotted wickedness which Thou hatest. We have framed falsehood and deceit. We have counselled iniquity and guilt. We have spent our days in the follies of this world. We did not remember that Thou wouldst bring to judgment concerning every secret thing. We rejected the discipline of knowledge and have been foolish, without wisdom and knowledge. We have turned away from Thy

righteous judgments and abandoned the ways of Thy statutes. We turned to all things that we desired and have sunk in the depths of our lusts. We closed our mouth, not giving rebuke; but our mouths opened wide, shrieking iniquitous utterances. We have been perpetually backsliding. We have abhorred every rebuker.

May it be Thy will, O Lord our God and God of our fathers, to forgive and pardon us for all our iniquities and transgressions."<sup>9</sup>

The above selections show enough of Bachya's philosophy and are expressed in such a way for us to safely conclude that he is consistent in what he believes and what he says.

## CONCLUSION

Although Saadia and Bachya approach prayer from two different avenues, it is surprising how similar their concepts are. Saadia's main concern was with the attack on religion from without. His task lay in trying to reconcile religion with philosophy. Hence, he dealt with prayer only as a part of the larger picture of religion. Bachya, on the other hand, was occupied with the problem of the corrosion of religion from within. It was his job to purify religion and strengthen it. Therefore, he dealt with prayer more intensely than did Saadia. That it had a rational basis played a much smaller part in his approach than in Saadia's. It might be said that Saadia saw prayer in the light of logic primarily, why we must pray and how it is to be done. Bachya saw prayer primarily in the light of devotion, how we are to pray and why it is to be done. The difference between the two men lies in the area of their emphasis.

Saadia and Bachya, although adherents to different schools of thought, were both rationalists in their philosophy. As a matter of fact, Bachya is visibly influenced by Saadia both in the method of establishing a rational foundation for prayer and in utilizing Saadia's terminology of rational and revealed commandments. However, Bachya went further with prayer by defining it as a duty of the heart and a duty of the limbs.

The duty of prayer is derived through the intellect for both Saadia and Bachya. Both saw prayer in its different

forms of thanksgiving, adoration, and praise to God for His goodness to man. Both recognize petition as an important form of prayer. Saadia stresses petition as the largest and most general type of prayer for, as he sees it, man's greatest concern is with the uncertain future rather than with the present blessings he enjoys. Therefore, he prays mostly with the petitionary formula "May it be Thy Will".

Bachya stresses adoration and praise rather than petition. Since God is always manifesting His goodness to man, man should be concerned in recognizing God's present gifts. By doing so, he becomes more constant in his devotion and strives more intensely to ascend the ladder to its highest run, the love of God.

Saadia holds that man has Free Will and therefore has in his hand the power to pray or not. Bachya does not know whether Free Will belongs to man but advocates for man to live as though he did have it. What is in man's power is the choice to pray and the intention to carry it out, but the actual physical activity of prayer lies in the hands of God.

Both men say that praying leads to reward. Bachya emphasizes that prayer should not be employed to this end. Saadia's thinking shows this to be a reason for man to pray.

The greatest emphasis in prayer is placed upon devotion by Bachya. Saadia mentions insincere intention while praying as a reason why prayer is unacceptable. He, in no way, elaborates upon this point as did Bachya.

The way of repentance is almost identical in the philosophies of both these men. Prayer, in the form of both confession and supplication for forgiveness, is an integral part of repentance. Saadia and Bachya both emphasize additional praying as a means of beseeching God for forgiveness, and Bachya also suggests fasting with prayer.

The Torah is important with regards to prayer, both men say. Saadia declares that a man who prays and does not heed the words of the Torah will not have his prayer accepted. Bachya tells us that through the Torah we will learn the different modes of worship.

Both mention humility and submission as important attitudes during prayer. Since this is a means of purifying religion, Bachya elaborates upon it more than Saadia.

The outlook upon set prayers is more or less the same for Saadia and Bachya. The former composed his Siddur because there existed in his day additions, omissions, and negligence in the prayers. He desired to correct this situation. The latter believed in a set order because he thought that a person could not remember exactly what to say since one's thoughts change so rapidly.

A minor point of difference between Saadia and Bachya was when the best time for prayer was. Saadia believed the early morning because it showed a sacrifice on man's part since he had to rise early. \* Bachya believed prayer to be purer



at night since there were less distractions.

Both men show prayer to be efficacious. The efficacy of prayer is not limited to the realm of the Divine, but prayer also has its effect upon man. In the reasoning of Saadia, man himself must realize that he must offer only logical prayers not absurd ones. And man's concern for his fellow plays a role as to whether his prayer is accepted. For Bachya, prayer is efficacious to man because of its psychological effect in that he must have certain attitudes within before he can attain to the service of God.

One distinction noticed between Saadia and Bachya was this. One could predict as to what type of prayer Bachya would compose by his approach to prayer in his philosophy. However, this cannot be said of Saadia. Prayer seems to be just another piece fitted into his highly systematic structure of thought. But the composition of his prayers belie this statement for they are deeply moving and emotionally appealing and reveal the poetic soul of the man.

In the final analysis, it must be said that Saadia and Bachya are quite similar in their concepts of prayer with the main difference between the two lying in the realm of emphasis. Bachya emphasized prayer as a means of cleansing and bolstering religion. Saadia recognized it as a part of a larger problem, religion, which he was trying to reconcile with philosophy. It might be said that Saadia approached prayer through the logic of the intellect. Bachya approached it through the logic

of the heart. Each had to deal with it in his own particular way in order to complete the task he had set for himself.

Prayer today remains as it always was- an outpouring of the spirit of man before his **C**reator and **M**aker. Its forms of adoration and praise express man's awe at the continual revelation of God to man in His many ways. Its supplications and petitions express "man's revelation to God", of his needs and his hopes. Its form of thanksgiving is a continual inspiration to strive both inward and upward so that his life may reflect his gratitude to God by becoming at one with God. When man comes to realize that prayer was created for him and not for God then it will be truly efficacious.

Footnotes

Chapter I

1. Saadia Gaon. The Book of Beliefs and Opinions. Translated by Samuel Rosenblatt. New Haven, Yale University Press, 1948, p. 137.
2. Isaac Husik. A History of Mediaeval Jewish Philosophy. Philadelphia, The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1948, p. 29.
3. *ibid.*
4. *ibid.*, p. 30.
5. *ibid.*
6. *ibid.*
7. *ibid.*, p. 31.
8. *ibid.*, p. 33.
9. Saadia, *op. cit.*, p. 86.
10. *ibid.*, p. 140.
11. *ibid.*, p. 145.
12. *ibid.*, p. 139.
13. Husik, *op. cit.*, p. 32.
14. Saadia, *op. cit.*, p. 139.
15. סדור רב סעדיה גאון. יוצא לאור על ידי ישראל דודוון ז"ל, שמחה אסף, יששכר יואל, ירמליס, תש"א. מביא לסדור, קטע ג
16. *ibid.*
17. *ibid.*
18. Saadia, *op. cit.*, p. 101.
19. See p. 7.
20. Saadia, *op. cit.*, p. 176.
21. *ibid.*

22. *ibid.*, p. 137.
23. סדור רב סעודה גאון, *op. cit.*, קטע ג
24. *ibid.*, קטע ד
25. Saadia, *op. cit.*, p. 326.
26. *ibid.*, p. 327.
27. *ibid.*, p. 353.
28. *ibid.*
29. *ibid.*
30. *ibid.*, p. 354.
31. *ibid.*, p. 180.
32. *ibid.*, p. 243.
33. *ibid.*, p. 134.
34. *ibid.*
35. *ibid.*, p. 135.
36. *ibid.*, p. 181.
37. *ibid.*, p. 214.
38. *ibid.*, pp. 223ff.
39. See p. 2.
40. *ibid.*
41. Saadia, *op. cit.*, p. 220.
42. See p. 15.
43. Husik, *op. cit.*, p. 32.
44. Saadia, *op. cit.*, p. 251.
45. See p. 3
46. Saadia, *op. cit.*, p. 395.
47. *ibid.*, p. 397.
48. *ibid.*, p. 233.

## Chapter II

1. דף מ"ז והלאה, סדור רב סעדיה גאון, op. cit.,
2. *ibid.*, דף מ"ז
3. *ibid.*
4. *ibid.*
5. *ibid.*, דף מ"ח
6. *ibid.*, דף מ"ח והלאה
7. *ibid.*, דף מ"ט
8. *ibid.*, דף נ"
9. *ibid.*, דף נ"א
10. *ibid.*, דף נ"ב
11. *ibid.*, דף נ"ג
12. *ibid.*
13. *ibid.*, דף ס"
14. *ibid.*, דף ס"ה
15. *ibid.*, דף ס"ח<sup>8</sup>

## Chapter III

1. *ibid.*, סדור רב סעדיה גאון
2. *ibid.*, p. 11.28 to p. 12.4.
3. *ibid.*, p. 10.21 to p. 11.1.
4. *ibid.*, p. 11.9:27.
5. *ibid.*, p. 13 to p. 34.
6. *ibid.*, p. 35 to p. 46.
7. *ibid.*, p. 47 to p. 81.

8. *ibid.*, p. 82 to p. 109.
9. *ibid.*, p. 110 to p. 126.
10. *ibid.*, p. 127 to p. 130.
11. *ibid.*, p. 131 to p. 254.
12. *ibid.*, p. 258 to p. 343.
13. *ibid.*, p. 255 to p. 257.
14. *ibid.*, p. 135 to p. 149.
15. *ibid.*, p. 217.
16. Saadia, *op. cit.*, pp. 402ff.
17. סדור רב סעדיה גאון, *op. cit.*, p. 258 to p. 343.
18. *ibid.*, p. 358 to p. 374.

#### Chapter IV

1. Bachya ben Joseph ibn Paquda. Duties of the Heart. Translated by Moses Hyamson. New York, Bloch Publishing Co, Inc., 1925, p. 26, Vol. V.
2. *ibid.*, p. 1, Vol. I.
3. *ibid.*
4. *ibid.*
5. *ibid.*
6. *ibid.*
7. *ibid.*, p. 3, Vol. I.
8. *ibid.*, p. 4, Vol., I.
9. *ibid.*
10. *ibid.*
11. *ibid.*, p. 12, Vol. I.
12. *ibid.*



13. Deut. 11.13.
14. Deut. 6.5:6.
15. Lev. 19.18.
16. Sanhedrin 106b.
17. Pirke Aboth 2.4.
18. Bachya, op. cit., p. 9, Vol. I.
19. See p. 4.
20. See p. 4f.
21. Bachya, op. cit., p. 32, Vol. I.
22. *ibid.*, p. 33, Vol. I.
23. *ibid.*, p. 34, Vol. I.
24. *ibid.*, p. 36, Vol. I.
25. *ibid.*, p. 30, Vol. II.
26. *ibid.*
27. *ibid.*, p. 31, Vol. II.
28. *ibid.*, p. 32, Vol. II.
29. *ibid.*, p. 20, Vol. II.
30. *ibid.*, p. 38, Vol. II.
31. *ibid.*
32. *ibid.*, p. 35, Vol. II.
33. See p. 35.
34. Pirke Aboth 1.3.
35. Bachya, op. cit., p. 53, Vol. III.
36. *ibid.*, p. 65, Vol. III.
37. *ibid.*, p. 63, Vol. II.
38. *ibid.*, p. 75, Vol. II.

39. *ibid.*, p. 69, Vol. III.
40. *ibid.*
41. *ibid.*, p. 33, Vol. III.
42. *ibid.*, p. 1 to p. 52, Vol. III.
43. *ibid.*, p. 56, Vol. III.
44. *ibid.*
45. *ibid.*, p. 57, Vol. III.
46. *ibid.*, p. 10, Vol. IV.
47. *ibid.*, p. 6, Vol. IV.
48. *ibid.*, p. 20, Vol. II.
49. *ibid.*, p. 40, Vol. IV.
50. *ibid.*, p. 38, Vol. IV.
51. *ibid.*, p. 69, Vol. IV.
52. *ibid.*
53. *ibid.*, p. 70, Vol. IV.
54. Psalm 19.15.
55. Bachya, *op. cit.*, p. 71, Vol. IV.
56. *ibid.*
57. *ibid.*, p. 72f, Vol. IV.
58. *ibid.*, p. 73, Vol. IV.
59. *ibid.*, p. 30, Vol. V.
60. *ibid.*, p. 21, Vol. V.
61. *ibid.*, p. 41, Vol. V.
62. *ibid.*, p. 6, Vol. I.
63. *ibid.*, p. 43, Vol. V.

## Chapter V

1. *ibid.*, p. 53, Vol. V.
2. *ibid.*
3. *ibid.*, p. 54, Vol. V.
4. *ibid.*, p. 57, Vol. V.
5. *ibid.*
6. *ibid.*, p. 58, Vol. V.
7. *ibid.*, p. 55f, Vol. V.
8. *ibid.*, p. 53, Vol. V.
9. *ibid.*, p. 59, Vol. V.

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