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עֵקֶב Eikev

Deuteronomy 7:12-11:25

וְהָיָה | עֵקֶב תִּשְׁמְעוּן אֶת הַמִּשְׁפָּטִים הָאֵלֶּה וְשִׁמְרֵתֶם וְעָשִׂיתֶם אֹתָם
 12 And if you do obey these rules and observe them
 וְשִׁמְרֵי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיךָ לְךָ אֶת־הַבְּרִית וְאֶת־הַחֹסֶד אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע לְאֲבוֹתֶיךָ:
 carefully, your God יהוה will maintain faithfully
 for you the covenant made on oath with your
 fathers:

Akeidat Yitzchak 46:1:8 Even though gentiles are commanded to observe the seven Noachide laws, one of which is the establishment of a system of social legislation, they are at best to be treated as amateurs when it comes to their fitness to administer Jewish law, even if they are familiar with it. In view of all this, we can understand the verse in Proverbs 21,3, "he who has carried out righteousness and justice is dearer to G-d than a sacrificial offering." A wealthy man once had to go on a journey, and did not want to leave behind his assets for fear that something could happen to them during his absence. He converted all his assets into diamonds, which he carried with him on his journey. When accosted by robbers who wanted to know the value of the diamonds, he disclaimed knowledge of their true value, saying they were merely glass baubles, worth pennies. The robbers decided not to kill the man for the sake of these worthless baubles. Later, when the same traveller displayed his merchandise at a fair in the city, the traveller, of course, demanded the real worth of these diamonds from any prospective purchaser. When the robbers found out, they said to the traveller "why did you tell us that they were practically worthless?" The traveller explained that when he had found himself on the threshold of death, his diamonds did indeed not represent any value to him. Now, however, when he was in different circumstances, these same diamonds had once more become very valuable to him. Thus it is with the reward for the mitzvot performed in this world. Their reward value is very shortlived. But in the world to come, the real worth of the reward will become evident. The ordinary Jew may find himself in circumstances when he feels justified to describe his jewels as mere baubles. David, on the other hand, could state that he had never treated "the judgments" as worth less than their true value. He said that even at times when it seemed pointless and unrewarding, and he found himself in great distress, "I carried out the justice and righteousness." Therefore, G-d tells us not to look upon the judgments as something trifling, not deserving our best efforts.

Akeidat Yitzchak 5:1:10 Rabbi Levy is quoted in Leviticus Rabbah 20 as saying "if the heel of man outshines the sun, will not his face outshine it even more?" This means that if the reward man receives as a result (eykev, heel) of using his free will for constructive purposes elevates him to a status exceeding that of the planets (which are performing G-d's will in an involuntary manner), this is proof that man himself, i.e. "his face," the seat of his faculties, outranks the planets. An artist who fashions two plates, one for himself, the other for an outsider, will surely take greater pains with the plate he intends for himself. Similarly, G-d. Man who is to serve Him, was fashioned with more care than the sun which is merely to serve man and G-d's other creatures. Planets do not require intelligence to carry out their functions. The duties of man however, are such that he requires intelligence as well as other faculties to carry them out, something the planets are not equipped with.

Derashot HaRan 10:29 And there are three considerations which cause me special concern in respect to two sins that men are constantly guilty of — the first, vows and oaths; and the second, causeless hatred. What leads me to say this is that I find even one of these considerations to intensify a transgression and make it more serious. The first consideration is the severity of the sin in itself, its being comparable to idol worship, murder, and adultery. The second, the fact that one constantly falls into it. The slightest thing in the world if it is doubled over many times, becomes extremely strong — as we see a constantly redoubled strand of flax to be stronger than a fiber of iron. And, as our sages commented on the verse introducing this parshah (Devarim 7:12): "And it shall be ekev you hear" — (Tanchumah Ekev 1): "If you hear [observe] the slight mitzvot that one is prone to tread down with his heel [ekev]." And this is the intent of (Psalms 49:6): "Why should I fear in the days of evil? The sin of my heels encompasses me." That is, I do not fear the major transgressions, for I do not go astray in them, but I do fear the lesser ones, which, because one regards them as minor, he transgresses constantly, as a result of which they are transformed to the severest of the severe. Repetition of a sin, then, intensifies and strengthens it. The third consideration — its being a sin to which man's nature is not prone.

For a man can offer some rationalization for what his nature is prone to, as it is written (Ibid 51:6): "Behold, I was shaped in sin, and in sin did my mother conceive me." And our sages have stated (Yoma 19b): "And what does the Holy One Blessed be He say? — (Bereshith 4:7): 'Sin lies at the door [of life]'" But a man cannot rationalize what he is not naturally prone to. And if even one of these three factors in itself intensifies and strengthens a sin, how grave must a

transgression be in which they are all combined! And in the sin of vain and false oaths I see men constantly going astray in these three areas. They take oaths on anything and everything until it becomes virtually a custom or force of habit for them to do so — and they do not take heed as to whether they are swearing truly or falsely. There is no doubt that this transgression in itself is one of the gravest in the Torah, for concerning it it is written (Shemot 20:7): "For the L-rd will not absolve..." Those who swear falsely have been likened to those who incur the penalty of cutting-off [kareth] or the judicial death penalty, for it is as if they deny the Holy One Blessed be He. They imply that what they are swearing to is as true as the Holy One Blessed be He, and if they swear falsely, see what they have wrought! This sin, then, is found to be severe in itself and in point of its being constantly repeated. For there is no end to the oaths that the habitué pours forth from his mouth. And as to the populace in general, they pour forth literally a flood of oaths. There is no rationalizing this sin because the nature of man is not prone to it. This one transgression, then, is found to contain all three elements which place the stamp of gravity on any sin whatsoever. Community oaths are also extremely severe, and they require amendment. And causeless hatred also falls into this class in that it is a transgression that one constantly persists in and that affords no benefit or enjoyment to a man which would cause his nature to incline towards it. It is for this reason that our sages placed causeless hatred over and against three transgressions: idol worship, illicit relations, and murder — for man's nature inclines more to these three than it does to causeless hatred (to explain the how and why of this would take too long) and because it is only once in a long while that one succumbs to them, whereas one constantly succumbs to causeless hatred.

Nefesh HaChayim, Gate I 20:11 And from there, after that he drew [it] upon his soul-Ruakh and soul-Neffesh, to purify all of the limbs/organs of his body, from his head until his feet, per the context of "and it will be when to the heel you will attend" (Heb.; v'haya eikev tish-m'oon) (Devarim 7:12), commandments that a person repeatedly visits (Heb.: dahsh) with his heels, and those are the hooves of the animal soul-Neffesh b'heimeet (Neffesh b'heimeet (lit.: animal soul-Neffesh) typically refers to the soul-Neffesh of the soul-Neffesh, essentially the lowest part of the soul-Neffesh. This part of the soul-Neffesh animates the physical body.). And this is what is stated (in Va-yikra Rabba 2 and in Kohelet 7) that the ball of his heel would eclipse [the sphere of the solar disc] [*].

וְאֵהָבָהּ וּבְרַכְתָּהּ וְהִרְבֵּתָהּ וּבְרַכְתָּהּ פְּרִי-בִטְנָהּ וּפְרִי-אֲדָמָתָהּ הִגְנָהּ
וְתִירֶשֶׁת וּיְצִהֶלָהּ שְׁגֵר-אֶלְפִיךָ וְעִשְׂתֶּרֶת צֹאנֶךָ עַל הָאָדָמָה
אֲשֶׁר-נִשְׁבַּע לְאֲבוֹתֶיךָ לֵאמֹר לְתֶת לָךְ: 13 [God] will favor you and bless you and multiply
you—blessing your issue from the womb and your
produce from the soil, your new grain and wine and
oil, the calving of your herd and the lambing of
your flock, in the land sworn to your fathers to
be assigned to you.

Akeidat Yitzchak 9:1:11 If repentance has to commence at the place where the sin was committed, only the fig tree could provide the leaves, seeing that it had been instrumental in man's fall (assuming that the fig tree was the tree of knowledge). Man hid, i.e. he considered himself beyond the sphere of Divine attention, just as the animal kingdom of which he now felt a part was outside the domain of G-d's personal supervision. Only when addressed by G-d directly did man perceive that he had been wrong in his assumptions. This in turn led to complete repentance, recognition of his error. G-d's rhetorical question "How could you feel naked unless you had eaten from the tree I told you not to eat from or you would become mortal," meant "You came out of earth's lap naked and you will return to earth naked." Adam replied, "True, I ate, but I was obliged to eat since the woman You gave me, gave me to eat." This stamps man as an ingrate, and woman who argued that her having succumbed was due to the serpent's enticement, claimed that her sin was natural, almost preordained. It is man's task to "hit the snake on the head," to neutralize its ability to mislead us and to distort the powers of our imagination. The snake's way is underhanded, it attacks the unprotected rear. It is our task to smash it head-on. Having abused our intelligence, we are condemned to attain our perfection via the route of gaining our sustenance through toil and sweat. The animal kingdom, having remained true to its instincts, does not need to fend for a living and finds its needs readily provided for (see Rabbi Eliezer at the end of tractate Kidushin). "On your belly you will move," i.e. even things suitable for you, you will find only with difficulty. This is the penalty for the serpent which had not been true to its instincts. The enmity between woman and the serpent is the disdain felt by people of sincere convictions (Torah) for those who adhere to all kinds of physical self-indulgence. The ability to crush the power of imaginary enjoyments will be greater than the power of those enjoyments to seduce, though that power will be great. The painfully slow process of pregnancy and giving birth, has its parallel in the equally gradual growth of perception of true values. Constant vigilance against falsehoods portrayed as true values in life renders such growth painful. Woman's mentor will henceforth be her husband, and he will be predominant in her thinking. "To Adam He had said," He called him Adam on account of the qualities he had originally been equipped with. When true to his

purpose, the earth will be blessed by his conduct, and will yield its fruit willingly. When untrue, such as during this episode, man's ascendancy over earth as a superior is naught, hence the earth does not feel it needs to respond to man's efforts. The right to use nature for his own ends is based on man's doing so in the service of his Creator. Only then does earth also serve its Creator by serving man. "For you are dust," the intellectual faculties per se must not be viewed as ruach hakodesh, holy spirit. Through their being used constantly to fulfil tasks set for us by G-d, they gradually evolve, gain spiritual content, and ultimately—as in Jacob's dream with the ladder—may be transformed and become truly spiritual intellect. Adam was a pious man, who separated from Eve for 130 years once he had realized that he had brought mortality into the lives of the human species. During this period, he fasted and placed fig leaves on his flesh as a form of atonement. There are three kinds of repentance, corresponding to three types of sin. 1) Fasting is an antidote for errors committed through contamination of one's intellect through certain kinds of food or drink, which induce heretical views. 2) Sexual continence, in this case from his wife, who had seduced him into sinning. 3) The fig branches that tormented his body. When Adam called his wife chavah, he expressed the recognition that she had misled him, an act of repentance on his part. When G-d fashioned the leather coats for man, this was a sign that their repentance had been accepted. In the same way as leather garments are good for protecting the body, the light of Torah protects man's eyes. Both together are the way G-d in His kindness enables us to overcome the mortality which had resulted from eating of the tree of knowledge. Compare Onkelos on Leviticus 18,5 "When you observe the Torah, you will live forever."

G-d's Torah restores life to the condemned. (10) Rabbi Meir's version of the spelling of the word or with an aleph expresses the same thought that Onkelos stated on the verse in Leviticus.

14 בְּרוּךְ תִּהְיֶה מְכַלְהֵעִמָּי לֹא־יִהְיֶה בְּךָ עֶקֶר וְעִקְרָה וּבְבִהֶמְתֶּךָ: You shall be blessed above all other peoples: there shall be no sterile male or female among you or among your livestock.

Akeidat Yitzchak 33:1:6 Man's life is lived on two planes. He lives privately within the circle of his family, and he lives as a member of society, and must interact with such society in greater or lesser measure. The good he does must be divided then between the good he does within the family circle, and the good he does by contributing to the well being of the community he lives in. He will receive rewards for both his good deeds within the family circle and for the good deeds performed as part of society. To the extent that the good performed as part of society benefits everyone in that society equally, the reward can be collective. Since every member of that society benefitted equally by the input of good, so the reward is the kind that lets everyone benefit equally. Output is commensurate with input. The promise of the Jewish people living together in security, enjoying economic prosperity etc., is a reward for such good deeds performed by dint of being part of a certain society. It is a reward for the physical part of man, but it is allocated on a collective basis. Reward for the spiritual part of the input of everyone involved, is based on the degree of dedication that each person's contribution represents. It is in the nature of things that every individual brings a different degree of kavanah, intent, dedication to the performance of his mitzvot. That is why our sages say that in the world to come everyone will occupy a level of his own. Since there are many commandments which can be fulfilled only collectively, the building of the temple for instance, the reward for such mitzvot, spiritual though it may be, will be collective. The time for receiving a reward for such mitzvot performed collectively, but not because such mitzvot benefit society (called by our sages yishuv ha-olam), is in the post-messianic era, but on this earth when ideal conditions for physical life will exist. In all cases however, the reward for the degree of the spiritual input by each individual into each mitzvah, regardless if it is of the kind that can only be fulfilled collectively or if it is fulfilled individually, is in olam haba.

15 וְהִסִּיר יְהוָה מִמֶּךָ כָּל־חָלִי וְכָל־מַדְוֵי מִצְלִיִּם הָרָעִים אֲשֶׁר יָדַעְתָּ לֹא יִשְׁיִמָּם בָּךְ וּנְתָנָם בְּכָל־שֹׁנְאֶיךָ: will ward off from you all sickness; [God] will not bring upon you any of the dreadful diseases of Egypt, about which you know, but will inflict them upon all your enemies.

Derashot HaRan 10:22 I would say that our present state of affairs corresponds closely to the above situation, and that is why I opened with this parashah — to draw the following parallel: Our ancestors did not witness the chastisements of the L-rd to the degree that we have witnessed them. In their days the land was inhabited and at peace, and life followed its natural course. The negev and the shefelah were inhabited, and, together with this, "their little finger was thicker than our thighs." And if there were a few among them who were enticed by the vanities of the world this would not be cause for surprise. But we have been witness to the chastisements of our G-d for thirteen years now, a complete reversal of the natural order of things. For the evil [the Black Plague] descended in that year [1348] upon most of the inhabitants of the earth, bringing upon them unusual afflictions which it is impossible to attribute to the workings of nature. Every

enlightened individual must acknowledge them as "the finger of G-d." For the sicknesses common to man may be attributed to his nature, unlike strange, exotic illnesses, which must be regarded as the punishment of G-d to man in His constant surveillance of him. And this is intimated in this parashah, as it is written (Deuteronomy 7:15): "And the L-rd will remove from you every illness, and all of the sore afflictions of Egypt that you knew He shall not place upon you, but He will place them upon all of your foes." "Every illnesses" refers to ailments common to man. In respect to these it is written "And the L-rd will remove from you every illness," their being almost endemic to man in the proneness of his nature to them, whereas in respect to the afflictions of Egypt "remove" is not stated, those afflictions not arising from man's nature so as to necessitate their being removed; He assures them rather that they will not be placed upon them. The affirmation is to be inferred from the negation — for after having been assured that even the conventional illnesses would be removed, they really required no assurance that those sore afflictions to which men are not naturally prone would not be visited upon them. But assurance and intimation are herein combined, the implication being that if they do not heed the words of the L-rd these afflictions will be visited upon them. The language of Scripture, then, agrees with what is dictated by intellect — that sore, exotic afflictions are not the adventitious byproducts of man's nature, but rather "the finger of G-d." And it is such afflictions that we witnessed with our own eyes, reaching out and engulfing all in that year, until in the space of just one year the world underwent a more radical change than it had ever undergone previously in the course of two hundred years. And in many places it happened as it happened with Dathan and Aviram, many men — they and all that was theirs — being completely wiped out, until their inheritance reverted to their foes. I am not saying that this happened because of their sins, but that it happened. And we, too, in these days and in this time are being constantly alarmed by reports that in lands not at all distant from ours there are happening things of the kind which happened in our land and which we witnessed with our own eyes. This being so, how can our evil inclination and our deceitful imagination make any claim upon us? How can they arouse us to rebellion and drive us from domicile in the inheritance of the L-rd? Is it not our own eyes that have seen the chastisements of the L-rd our G-d and His strong hand exhorting us not to fall prey to false, temporal vanities? Is it not easy for us to return to the Holy One Blessed be He with a whole heart, as dictated by our intellect, unimpeded by any hindrance or deterrent, untrammelled by the Satan or by any evil intercessor?

Duties of the Heart, Eighth Treatise on Examining the Soul 3:156 When the intelligent man will look and contemplate how the Creator tests people with the troubles of this world we mentioned, and that he was saved from them, and spared from their tumults, even though he deserves them - his praise will increase for the favors of G-d on him, and he will hurry to repent and seek forgiveness for his past sins and iniquities which the Creator has concealed for such a long time, and he will run to cling to the service of the Creator, out of fear of them (the punishments he deserves) and so will avert them, as written "If you will diligently hearken to the voice of the L-ord your G-d... I will put none of these diseases upon you, which I have brought upon the Egyptians" (Shemos 15:26), and "the L-ord will remove from you all illness, and all of the evil diseases of Egypt which you knew, He will not set upon you, but He will lay them upon all your enemies" (Devarim 7:15), and one of our early pious ones would say to his disciples: "see, the serpent does not kill, rather it is sin that kills" (Berachos 33a), and David, peace be unto him, said: "You shall tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the serpent shall you trample under foot. Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore I will deliver him" (Tehilim 91:13).

וְאַכְלֵת אֶת־כָּל־הָעַמִּים אֲשֶׁר יִהְיֶה אֱלֹהֶיךָ נֹתֵן לְךָ לֹא־תַחֲנוּם עִינֶךָ 16 You shall destroy all the peoples that your God delivers to you, showing them no pity. And you shall not worship their gods, for that would be a snare to you.

Akeidat Yitzchak 41:1:4 Since the nourishment provided for the various species of the universe is commensurate with their respective needs, it is axiomatic that the most advanced species are provided with the most advanced form of nourishment available. Normally, the type of food provided for a species is on a level that is one degree lower in the order of life than the species to be fed by it. Since we have stipulated elsewhere that the order of creation proceeded from the simple towards the more sophisticated, it follows that the lowest form of life derives its food supply from primordial matter. This would be immediately below it in the order of creation. After all, the lowest form of existence is primordial matter. Next would be the four basic elements, all of which rank equal in the scheme of created matter. Therefore, air, fire, earth and water act respectively as nourishment for plant life, the latter being of a more sophisticated nature than the basic elements. If plants need rain or water to sustain them, this is in accordance with such natural order as we have described. On the other hand, development, growth of the inert form is possible only through the infusion of an amalgamation with any or all of the basic materials contained in primordial matter. When a

creature of a certain level in the world of matter receives its nourishment, or part of it, from a category more than one rung lower than itself, this is a curse. When we are told that the serpent in addition to feeding on plants, also feeds on earth, a lower form of created matter, this is a curse. (Genesis 3,14). Also man,-as long as he had been restricted to a vegetarian diet- (Genesis 1,29) was not yet at the elevated level where his food supply was only one category lower in the scheme of things than he himself. Possibly, the verse (Genesis 1,28) "and have dominion over the fish in the sea, over the fowl in the air and over every living thing that creeps on the earth," was in fact permission to also feed on an animal diet. The fact that such an animal diet was withheld till after the deluge, could have been the result of the original sin.

The gradual decline of animals into becoming carnivorous beasts, is merely a form of corruption paralleling the corruption of man during the period preceding the deluge. This is why Isaiah predicts in chapter eleven, that all these carnivorous beasts will undergo a change of nature in the post messianic era. Since the Jewish people have attained the stature of am segulah, "precious nation," their nourishment does not only include the category immediately below them in the world of matter, but even part of their own category. G-d describes this in Deut.7,16, when the Torah says "you will consume all the nations the Lord your G-d gives you, your eyes shall have no pity on them." This refers to our having been granted permission to ensure our continued existence and well being at the expense of gentile nations worshipping idols and practicing other perversions. When we find that the Talmud Pessachim 49, states that the ignorant is not permitted the consumption of meat, this may mean that any person who has not qualified to be a member of the human race "in good standing," is not allowed to use the immediately lower category of life to serve as the material that satiates his appetites. To make indiscriminate use of creatures only a single category less sophisticated than ourselves, we must first prove that we ourselves live up to our own destiny, are intelligent creatures, chay ha-medabber.. Both Bileam (Numbers 24,8), Joshua and Caleb (Numbers 14,9) describe Israel as "consuming" its enemies. There are humans whose way of life places them sufficiently below us that they may serve as our life sustainers. Food, after all, is an aspect of life sustaining matter. On the other hand, food too far below our rank would drag us down to its level; therefore, insects etc. are forbidden. Since cannibalism is prohibited as despicable, the references above refer to our right to dispose of these nations as we see fit. A human being may fit into one of three categories. 1) He may be so ignorant that he has difficulty putting thoughts into words. 2) He may be capable of putting his thoughts into words, but his thoughts are so banal and mundane, that he only achieves basic purposes such as union with a mate, ("he shall cleave to his wife and they shall become one flesh") 3) He may belong to the select group who use the power of speech to express lofty thoughts, whose ideas are capable of standing on their own without physical sustenance. Of this group it is said "if he will live, he will die, but if he will die, he will live." (Yalkut Shimoï Bereshit 14) Dilution of the spiritual with the physical is apt to impair the spiritual to the point of death, whereas refinement of the spiritual to the exclusion of the physical, will result in life eternal. People of that category require two kinds of nourishment, one for the physical part of their beings, the other for the spiritual part. Our rabbis refer to this as "two tables." The physical part can be nourished successfully by a vegetarian diet, meat being forbidden to it, since it derives from the same level of creature. In such a type of person, the spiritual part is not considered integral to the total personality. Their intellect, being of the world of the spirits, does not require physical sustenance just as none of the spirits require this. This is the reason such individuals as Chanina survived on as little as a kav (6 eggs' volume) of carobs from Sabbath eve to Sabbath eve. (Taanit 24) This indeed may have been G-d's wish when He created original man in whom the spirit, intellect reigned supreme before the fall. The food par excellence for people of such stature would be bread, (compare Proverbs 17,1, "better dry bread than meat obtained in an environment of strife")

Concerning the "second table," the substance required by the spiritual part of such men is the product of his good deeds.

In the words of Isaiah 3,10, "hail the just man for he is well off; he shall eat the fruit of his works." The meaning is allegorical, just as in Psalms 128,2, "you who eat the fruit of your labours," namely the good deeds you have performed sustain you into the hereafter, into kingdom come. When the Lord provided Manna for the Jewish people in the desert, it had been hoped that everyone would qualify as belonging to the highest category of person outlined above. If that had been so, the physical part of the Manna would have sustained the reduced needs of their bodies. Since the quality of that food was such that it could be completely assimilated by their bodies, none of it having to be excreted, only a small quantity would have been needed. The spiritual part of their personalities would have been sustained by the many lessons to be learned from the composition, the quantity, the manner of delivery, by the time at which the Manna was to be gathered etc. The fact that G-d did provide meat in answer to the request of the Jewish people, but in a manner much less gracious than the way in which the Manna was provided, leads one to believe that the supply of the quail was a one time occurrence. It was merely meant to demonstrate that it was indeed G-d who had taken the people of Israel out of Egypt, not Moses and Aaron, as the Israelites had been complaining. The very fact that the people are once more reported as having demanded meat, (Numbers 11,4) proves that meat had not been part of their diet all along. Further

proof that meat was an exceptional provision, lies in the fact that it came unaccompanied by such ordinances as the manner in which it had to be slaughtered, specific quantities for each person, how long it could be preserved etc., all details that had been spelled out about the Manna. When the Torah talks about "bread," and uses Manna as proof that "man does not live by bread alone, but by all that issues from the mouth of the Lord," (Deut.8,3) bread is a synonym for nourishment, and the lesson is that nourishment of a physical kind is solely for our physical parts, (elevated man category three) Observance of the instructions (motza pee hashem) accompanying such food are the nourishment for our spiritual part. It will be shown that this too was the nature of the food supplied to Adam in the garden of Eden.

Akeidat Yitzchak 77:1:12 Midrash Tanchuma on Parshat Eykev, and Midrash Shocher Tov comment on Proverbs 5,6, and Job 28,16, respectively. We find in those verses references to the mysterious way in which Torah sometimes reports the sequence of events. In the words of the Midrash, the apparent lack of cohesion is deliberate, as otherwise "every reader could heal the sick or revive the dead." We should ask therefore, why the sages endeavoured altogether to find meaning in the order in which events have been related? The truth is that our sages did not mean that there is absolutely no order in the sequences of the Torah's teachings; rather they teach that G'd arranged things in a manner that safeguarded certain secrets that He has reserved for Himself. (Isaiah 44,7) "Who but I can declare it and set it in order for Me, since I appointed the ancient people." This verse forms the background to our Midrashim. The enquiry why a particular event is reported at a particular point in the sequence of events, is quite legitimate, regardless of the general rule *eyn mukdam*, that the Torah does not claim to report events in the chronological order in which they occurred. That rule means, that even when the Torah does report events in historical order, this does not mean that the Torah's purpose is exhausted by having conveyed to us a little bit of history. Dissemination of slanderous information may stem from a variety of motivations. 1) A person may slander someone else in order to make himself look good by comparison. 2) On the other hand, someone may spread negative information about a third party, having no ulterior motive at all. The latter type is the real *ba-al lashon hara*, spreader of evil gossip. The first type is simply a glory seeker, the slander being incidental to his purposes. When the Talmud Erchin 15, describes animals approaching the snake asking the reason it attacks humans, it compares the lion and the wolf with the snake. The two former either wish to still their hunger, or at least to devour the prey. The snake however, seems to poison just for the fun of it, deriving no visible benefit from its action. Korach was not a classic example of a slanderer, since he merely used slander to enhance his own stature, and to further his ambition to become a leader. For this reason, Korach is described in our classic sources as a dissident, a quarreler. The spies, however, are described as "slanderers." Since Miriam's sin, though not as severe as that of the spies, was also in the nature of slander, the story of the spies follows that of the punishment of Miriam, to alert us to the fact that the spies had not absorbed the lesson contained in Miriam's punishment. (1) If the Torah skips the introduction about the circumstances that preceded the dispatch of the spies, in this instance, it is precisely to make sure that we would not confuse the issue, and would notice that the issue was the sin of *lashon hara*, slander. (2) The reason twelve men were sent, was to provide the maximum chance of success. People endowed with all the good qualities cited in the Parshah, would command enough moral fortitude to prevail over their human weaknesses, if anyone could. Their eventual report would be accepted without prejudice, since they represented a cross section of the people. Should the mission fail, it would not be due to inadequate planning. The princes mentioned in Parshat Nasso, having already assumed their respective functions, were not allowed to absent themselves from their posts for such an extended period. The Torah describes the twelve spies as each being a *nassi*, prince, in order to show that they were not inferior to the twelve princes whom we know already. The fact that Joshua is only ranked fifth amongst them, shows that all of them had been very eminent people at the time of their appointment for this task. That the Torah does indeed list them in the order of their qualities seems borne out by the fact that the order in which they are listed corresponds neither to the order of the "flags" of the encampment, nor to the order of birth of the various sons of Jacob whose tribes they represented. The Talmud Sotah 34, discusses the various names and comes to the conclusion that their various names contained hints of their eventual disloyalty to G.d. Since this is obviously an exercise in hindsight, the original selection must have been based on the positive qualities each one of the spies had displayed prior to his being chosen for such a fateful mission. The fact that Caleb and Joshua could not even persuade their own respective tribes to accept their minority report, shows that the spies had not been chosen for any popular following they might have enjoyed. (3) The verse dealing with the name Joshua must be understood as follows. "These are the names of the men...except for Hoshaya of the tribe of Ephrayim, whom Moses later used to call Joshua." (which is the name by which he is known to us in most instances when we read about him.) Observing the goodness of the land, entailed four separate considerations. 1) Did the inhabitants appear robust and healthy? 2) Was the terrain easy to cultivate and was there an abundance of it? 3) Were there urban centres the inhabitants were happy in and proud of? 4)

Did the soil yield abundantly, and was the produce of high quality? (4) Moses wanted the spies to pay attention to all these factors, so that they would look forward to this all soon being theirs. (compare verses 18-20) Concerning the type of cities, whether open or fortified, Moses wanted to point out that if these people still lived in fortified cities, this reflected a lack of self confidence on their part. This would give Israel a psychological advantage when setting out to attack them. The book of Joshua in chapter 6,1, reports that Jericho was completely sealed off from the inside and the outside. Immediately afterwards we are told that the inhabitants had already reached the point of despair. Although it was early in the season, and the orchards would therefore be under close scrutiny by their respective owners, Moses instructed "fortify yourselves," i.e. get a hold of yourselves and take from the fruit to taste it. Moses' insistence stemmed from his conviction that the land was excellent. The fact that the nachal eshkol, valley of the grape cluster, was so named, was only in commemoration of the spies' visit. It proves that the grapes found there were not of exceptional quality. (verse 24) They were merely representative specimens of the quality the land produced. (5) The spies brought the fruit back in order to lend credibility to the report they were about to issue. When Moses saw the fruit, he was lulled into a false sense of security, overlooking the fact that they were not making their report to the commander-in-chief, but to the nation as a whole. The Torah indicates this by describing the spies as returning from latour, from touring the country, from emphasizing its good points. When one emphasizes weak points such journeys are described as rigul, spying. The opening remarks seemed to confirm Moses' optimism. (verse 27) As soon as they uttered the word eless however, they aborted their entire mission. The fruit became an instrument to describe the desirability of the land, and to contrast this with the physical prowess of its inhabitants. From having been reporters, they suddenly assumed the role of advisors. The careful description of who lived in the land, i.e. Amalek in the South, the presence of giants, three nations in the mountains, Canaanites by the sea and the river Jordan, all these remarks were designed to create the impression that conquest of such a country was not feasible. They did not yet dare to spell this out, however. When Caleb, knowing the tenor of their remarks, interrupted, he did so to give Moses a chance to be heard, and to create a climate in which his own report would at least get a hearing. For that reason he made it appear as if he too had something to complain against Moses' adventurous policy of attacking such physically superior residents of the land of Canaan. In fact, he hoped that by giving his own report, emphasizing his firm belief that Israel could conquer the land, he could squelch the despondency his colleagues had evoked with their innuendos about the hopeless nature of such an undertaking. He thought that the other spies would not dare come out openly against such a campaign in the very presence of Moses. At that point, however, the other spies started to use their arguments outright. They portrayed the presence of the giants (32-33) as proof of the futility of starting a war, citing the fact that these giants included men who had survived the deluge. To contrast this with their own feeling of inadequacy, they referred to their having felt like grasshoppers by comparison to those super-men. The fact that these giants had observed twelve strange men help themselves to grapes from their orchards without the owners having become galvanised into some form of counter action, they conveniently overlooked. On the contrary, they allowed it to be taken as proof that these men were not in the least bothered by such action. They considered any danger from Jewish spies as no greater than the threat posed to them by grasshoppers. They considered the country's fertility as only due to the superhuman efforts of these giants. By describing the land as one that devours its inhabitants, they hinted that ordinary people could not survive that climate.

The reason there is no preamble to the despatch of the spies, is that the very mission, having as its objective the collection of factual observations, was perfectly permissible. What was wrong was that the people, upon return of the spies, allowed them to present their interpretation of what they had seen, and that they believed those interpretations.

The people's belated concern (14,3) was only a cover for their, true motivation, that of despising the land G'd was offering to them. (14,31) The positioning of verse three, in which the people describe their own fate and that of their families, makes it appear that they preferred their families' deaths to their own dying by the swords. They do not describe the fate of their wives and children as the result of their own death in action. They express their preference to whatever fate would await them in Egypt. They go so far as to suggest the appointment of a leader for such a return. G'd's answer to all this is quite appropriate. He says, in effect: "your children will enjoy that which you have despised."

But you who have consigned yourselves to damnation either way, and who are already considering yourselves as corpses, you will drop dead in the desert. (7) Joshua and Caleb rent their clothing, confirming only that the land was indeed excellent. Since this had been all that they as spies had been asked to report on, they expressed the conviction that if He wished, the Lord would surely bring them to that land subject to His considering them fit for this. (6) When the people realised that the whole logic of their position had been challenged by Joshua and Caleb, they did not react with reason but with their basest instincts, trying to still the voice of conscience by attempting to murder the authors of a report they did not like. They were restrained only by the appearance of the Divine glory that scared them. Moses, who continued to remonstrate with them, could not sway them. (Deut. 1,29-33) At that point G'd despaired of their ever

demonstrating true faith, and decided to let them all die at once, meaning to replace them with a new people, with Moses as its patriarch. Moses used the well worn argument that the impression such action would produce on outsiders like the Egyptians, would be counterproductive to His image. Our sages describe active forces in terms of the masculine gender, whereas they describe passive ones in terms of the feminine. It does not matter in this context whether the mashpia, the active force is actually of the male gender or vice versa, in the case of the mushpa the passive force being actually of the female gender. In that sense, G'd is always the mashpia, and everybody or everything relative to Him is always the mushpa. When Moses in 15, 11, says to G'd "if this is what You are about to do to me," and he uses the feminine gender for the word "You," the sages interpret this to mean "You will undermine Your own strength." The idea is that he argues that G'd would henceforth appear as the mushpa instead of as the mashpia, G'ds traditional role. This is the reason Moses prayed "now let the power of the Lord be great," to demonstrate that "Your" strength is indeed the source of all Power. When Israel, speaking to Moses at the time they received the ten commandments, said to Moses "you speak to us," employing the feminine pronoun in referring to Moses the man, the human being, (Deut. 6,23) they convey the same idea. They are saying that although they will then be hearing the voice of G'd only from the mushpa instead of from the mashpia, at least they would survive. (8) The fact that the argument Moses used is of the utmost significance, is proven from the words of Ezekiel, in chapter thirty six. Concerning the advent of the redemption in the future, G'd is quoted as saying "Not for your sake do I act, family of Israel, but for the sake of My holy name that you have desecrated etc." Moses, as distinct from the sin at the golden calf, invoked the attribute of adnut, Omnipotence of G'd when he appealed for forgiveness. He had realised that after all the many acts of rebellion by the Jewish people, the kind of forgiveness which is total, could not be expected as an immediate outcome of his prayer. He therefore refers to the fact that G'd had previously raised the level of the sin to a lesser category - compare verse 19- "as You have raised this people until now, ever since they have come out of Egypt." G'd responds by saying "I have forgiven, exactly in accordance with your words." (the limitations you yourself have set) This is "for the people." However, the perpetrators will have to pay an immediate price and die by the plague. (verse 37) The entire nation who had witnessed G'ds miracles at the time of the Exodus in their adult years, would henceforth no longer qualify for similar miracles at the time they would conquer the land of Canaan. They have forfeited forever the right to such revelations of G'ds power on their behalf. This was a punishment on an individual level, though at first glance it might have looked collective, since none of them would enter the holy land. The individual nature of the punishment would manifest itself when each one of them would die on a different date. However, "the wicked congregation," i.e. the ten spies, would all die at the same time at once, receive collective punishment. (9) The need for the next generation to wait forty years to enter the holy land, is directly related to the sin of the parent generation. As long as some of the former remain alive, as living testimony to the disloyalty of their covenant with G'd, the miraculous protection of G'd cannot be extended to their children when they would try to enter the holy land. The ratio of forty years for forty days is again an expression of G'ds consideration for His people. Since the spies had taken forty days before returning with a negative report, G'd allows a year for each day of delay, spreading the punishment over a period of forty years, instead of letting everybody die at once. In this manner, the whole nation would learn that G'd is merciful even when He administers punishment. He does not thin out the ranks of the people all at once, but gradually, so as not to allow their decreased numbers to become an invitation to attack by their enemies. If G'd could be merciful even in such circumstances, what tremendous display of G'ds goodness must the people have forfeited by their conduct? G'd hastens to confirm the decree by swearing an oath (verse 28). He is only too aware that the people will be overcome by a feeling of remorse and will try to sway Him from His declared intention. (10) Since repentance induced by fear, duress, does not wipe the slate clean, the people did not deserve the presence of the holy ark in their midst in the campaign they now planned. The very fact that they dared to go ahead without it, showed that they still had not appreciated who it was that alone would guarantee their success. If we are taught in the book of Joshua that the sin of one man, Achan ben Karmi, who had not yet been punished for his crime, could be the cause of the whole Jewish people suffering defeat at the hands of the small city of Ai, what would happen when a whole army of unrehabilitated sinners would face the might of the Canaanites? (compare chapter 7)

17 כִּי תֹאמַר בְּלִבְבְּכֶם רַבִּים הַגּוֹיִם הָאֵלֶּה מִמֶּנִּי אֵיכָּה אוּכַל לְהוֹרִישָׁם: Should you say to yourselves, "These nations are more numerous than we; how can we dispossess them?"

Akeidat Yitzchak 99:1:10 Individual heresy, discussed in our Parsha also, (29,17 et al) may be understood thus. Man is compared to the tree of the field (Deut. Just as a garden may contain many trees, some bearing fruit though poisonous, although all are drawing their nourishment from the same brook flowing nearby, so the waters of Torah too, being the source of our sustenance do not produce the same results in all people. Where there is a rotten core, even the purest

form of nourishment can become contaminated. Our Parshah deals with individuals who may have a rotten core, in whom even the study of Torah sooner or later leads to undesirable results. This is why the Talmud in Chullin 133, tells us that students of bad character should not be given instruction, as it would be foolish to accord honour to a fool, or worse still, to further heresy. The fool is he who professes to believe that the strictures we read in the Torah apply only to believers, to people who had first affirmed the tenets of the Jewish religion. They think that those who have never accepted the Torah as a yardstick for their personal conduct, are exempt from G'ds retribution. It is to such individuals that the Torah addresses itself in our chapter. Contrary to what they think, such people will be singled out for special attention. They would not even be able to enjoy the blessings bestowed by G'd on His people due to the people's overwhelmingly loyal adherence to G'd and His Torah. In verse eighteen, the thought processes of the evil hearted people are described. "In order that the well watered confer its benefit on the dry by mere proximity." The Torah describes the following scenario: Two fields thrive, due to the presence nearby of a natural water supply. A third field nearby requires artificial irrigation. The owner of the third field, relying on the proximity of his field to the other two which enjoy a natural source of water supply, neglects to irrigate his field by failing to install the necessary mechanism. The Torah, by describing the punishment of such a farmer as particularly harsh, i.e. "He will wipe out his name," (29,19) stresses that this kind of penalty is reserved for individuals. In exploding the myth that since the community will prosper, the individual cannot suffer regardless of his conduct, the Torah merely applies to Israel the promise of G'd after the deluge. Likewise, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah had taught this lesson about evil minded communities. The Torah completes the chapter by explaining that the function of the Jewish Court of Law is to act as G'ds representative for crimes committed publicly, but that transgressions which occur in private, and cannot be dealt with by the judiciary, will be taken care of by G'd personally.

18 לֹא תִירָא מֵהֶם זָכַר תִּזְכֹּר אֶת אֲשֶׁר-עָשָׂה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְפָרְעֹה וּלְכָל-מִצְרָיִם: You need have no fear of them. You have but to bear in mind what your God יהוה did to Pharaoh and all the Egyptians:

Akeidat Yitzchak 51:1:7 The upshot of all this (David's outpourings in Psalm 119) is that mitzvah performance must become as automatic to us as life itself. Therefore, the Mishnah in Avot 3, 10, says that "whosoever forgets part of his studies has sinned gravely," since the Torah has provided memory joggers. The word "Talmud" in that Mishnah refers to knowledge of the commandments and their performance. Unless a person has tried and failed to remember, he is guilty of a sin. If he did the latter, he is subject to the saving grace of pen yassuru mi -levavcha, lest they depart from your heart, as long as he did not contribute to forgetting them. (Deut. 4,9) G-d lays tefillin, phylacteries, or created the rainbow, so that His memory should be jogged by visible symbols. If, in the words of the Midrash, it is good enough for Him to jog His memory, it is certainly incumbent upon us to do so. The concept of "G-d's Torah is perfect," (Psalms 119,8) implies that the law of G-d is beyond blemish at any time in history; nothing in it can therefore be devoid of purpose at any time. This is so even if the application of a particular commandment is restricted to certain individuals such as priests. Even the occurrence of a million to one shot such as a ben sorer umoreh, an obstinate gluttonous teenager whose parents take him to Court to be executed, or a commandment which by definition could only be performed once in history in the desert, has significance far beyond that unique opportunity to perform it. David assures us in the first of the Psalms that he who truly desires Torah and studies same, is like a tree securely planted next to a never failing water supply. Such a tree will not wilt etc. If this is true of the person who studies Torah, how much more must Torah itself be meaningful in all its details. This is the reason that the mitzvot of the tabernacle and priestly garments which are of limited duration, emphasize again and again "it is an eternal statute in front of Me forever," or the use of the word tzav. The Talmud in Kiddushin 29, states that any commandment associated with the word tzav is a commandment that applies forever. Examination of those laws reveals that there are many instances where this rule simply does not stand up in the light of history. We must understand the Talmud to mean that though the details of the commandments in question helped us fulfil them at times when they proved physically capable of fulfilment, we derive the major benefit from these commandments through the lessons we learn from the concepts that these mitzvot represent. It is these concepts that remain valid forever. This is the meaning of Deuteronomy 29,8, "observe the words of the covenant, carry them out so that you will gain insights from all that you do." Similarly Deut.4,6, "it is your wisdom and your insight." Unfortunately, as the Rambam already observes in his "Moreh," most people never concern themselves with such matters and want to get close to the king without ever having seen the king's palace, as it were. Granted that performance of the mitzvah, since it is G-d's command, is praiseworthy. Nevertheless it is far from the ultimate that we are capable of achieving. Whatever the tabernacle teaches is as relevant today as ever, just as basic concepts do not lose their relevance because they cannot always be applied instantly. If the Torah commands that we

help an enemy load his beast, thereby teaching important moral lessons, these lessons do not lose their relevance because we have no enemies or because we never encountered an enemy in circumstances where this commandment could be performed. David says in Psalms 51, 19, "the (real) sacrifice to G-d is a broken spirit." It is the spirit in which G-d is approached that matters. The Talmud Menachot 106, explains the verse in Leviticus 7,37, "this is the teaching of the Torah concerning the total offering, the gift offering and the peace offering," as meaning that he who labours studying the laws of these offerings, does not actually have to bring them in order to achieve the personality development that these offerings are meant to help us achieve. The idea is that just as performance plays its part in awakening the mind to what, why and how one is doing, so the study of the laws pertaining to these observances accomplishes the same thing. We should not therefore bemoan earlier times when through the performance of mitzvot such as yovel, the Jubilee year, we could come closer to G-d. Let us look now at the "memory" element surrounding the commandments of the priestly vestments. Concerning the ephod, apron it states "Aaron should wear the names of the children of Israel before G-d on his shoulders as remembrance." Concerning the choshen, the breastplate, we find a similar quote. A similar purpose is common to all the priestly garments. Clothing as such is symbolic of acquired traits. Already in the wording of the commandments there is a reference to the concepts of midot, character traits, which we discussed at the beginning of this chapter. (Leviticus 6,3) mido bad; or in Judges 3, 16, "under his madim;" or in Psalms 133,2, "descending according to midotav." So we observe the term midah being used for garments, illustrating the essential nature of garments, at least when worn by priests. The first impression that one receives when meeting another person is that of the clothes he wears. It suggests his occupation, certain of his behavioral traits etc. Even our prophets in praising the Lord, use the simile "You are garbed in Splendour." (Psalms 104, 1) Or, "resplendent in His garments" (Isaiah 63, 1) Secondly, people wear different sets of clothing for the Sabbath and weekdays. Even in ancient times, Esau had "his precious clothes" (Genesis 27, 15) or (Ruth 3,3) Ruth who put special garments for a special occasion. By wearing different clothing on the Sabbath, every Jew signals that he assumes different character traits on the Sabbath. In Hilchot Derech Eretz, the halachah stipulates that ordinary clothing be worn for the performance of mundane tasks, whereas festive clothing should be worn when performing mitzvot between man and His Maker. This is the meaning of Isaiah chapter 58. Compare also chapter 63. Thirdly, just as man is never completely nude, so he is never completely devoid of mitzvot. Therefore, all of Israel, priests and ordinary Israelites alike, have the duty to be garbed in special garments. This is why a whole nation is referred to as a kingdom of priests, to imbue all garments with a reminder of the symbolic significance of garments as such. Therefore, the Torah says in connection with the tzitzit, fringes, "when you see it, you will remember the commandments" (Numbers 15,39). "A garment adorned with tzitzit will remind you of all the commandments of G-d to carry them out, ibid." Whenever white garments are mentioned by our sages, it refers to the moral condition of the wearer of such garments. For instance, we have the parable of the king who invites his servants to partake of a meal in his palace without specifying the date and hour the meal is to take place. The intelligent servants remained within the vicinity of the king's palace, saying that it would be foolish to roam around elsewhere since they had no urgent business elsewhere. The foolish ones carried on business as usual, citing as their reason that they would not receive any food for which they had not worked. Suddenly, the king issued a summons for his servants to attend the party. The intelligent ones entered the palace suitably attired, whereas the foolish servants arrived dirty and dishevelled. The king was well pleased with the first group, of course, but was very angry at the second group. Therefore, he seated the first group and left the second group to remain standing and watch the others partake of the feast. This is how Rabbi Meir's son-in-law explained the following verse in Isaiah 65, 13, "My sons will eat, and you will starve; My sons will drink, but you will remain thirsty." Another version explains the meaning of Kohelet 9,8, "at all times your garments should be white, and oil should be on your head," as referring to tzitzit and tefillin respectively. The Aggadah in Baba Batra 74, concerning the meal of the righteous in the future, featuring salted meat of the female leviathan and well aged wine, may also be understood allegorically as referring to the garments worn by the tzaddikim in their lifetime, namely Torah and Mitzvot. More about this Aggadah in chapter 60.

19 המַסֵּת הַגְּדֹלָת אֲשֶׁר־רָאִיו עֵינֶיךָ וְהָאֵתָת וְהַמַּכְפָּתִים וְהַיָּד הַחֲזָקָה וְהַזֶּרֶע הַנִּטְוִיָּה אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאָךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ כִּי־עָשָׂה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְכָל־הָעַמִּים אֲשֶׁר־אָתָּה יָרָא מִפְּנֵיהֶם: the wondrous acts that you saw with your own eyes, the signs and the portents, the mighty hand, and the outstretched arm by which your God הוֹדִי liberated you. Thus will your God הוֹדִי do to all the peoples you now fear.

Nineteen Letters 11:2 They furthermore tend to ennoble thy inner character that it become pure and free of all that could drag thee down from the high pinnacle of thy holy mission. They bid thee put aside pride and desire of sensual pleasure, to respond sympathetically to the sorrow or joy of all beings, and to embrace them all in thy love as children

of thy God. These injunctions are but the applications of the principles demonstrated as true in the revelations given in the actions, in the mighty deeds, of God. His commandments are but the expressions of these principles; revealed as concepts, not as mere incomprehensible behests; whosoever desires truth will accept them.

20 וְגַם אֶת־הַצִּרְעָה יִשְׁלַח יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ בָּם עַד־אֲבֹד הַנִּשְׁאָרִים וְהַנִּסְתָּרִים מִפְּנֶיךָ: Your God הוהי will also send a plague (plague Others “hornet”; meaning of Heb. ir’ah uncertain. Cf. Exod. 23.28.) against them, until those who are left in hiding perish before you.

21 לֹא תֵעָרֵץ מִפְּנֵיהֶם כִּי־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּקִרְבְּךָ אֶל גְּדוֹל וְנוֹרָא: Do not stand in dread of them, for your God הוהי is in your midst, a great and awesome God.

Akeidat Yitzchak 90:1:4 Joseph's brothers say to their father: "recognise whether this is the coat of your son or not." (Genesis 37,32) We are told to remember what Amalek did to us. (Deut. 25,17) We are told not to fear nations surrounding us. (Deut 7,18-21) Since we are human beings, not just animals, it is expected that we can refine certain characteristics, are not limited to instinctive reactions. If one can learn to compensate for the weakness of certain of one's senses, then surely one can find means to reinforce certain character traits. A blind man develops a more acute sense of hearing. A shortsighted person can improve his vision by the use of spectacles. A person suffering from certain character weaknesses must also find means to compensate for this. Using one's power of imagination, one can imagine situations that make one's phobias seem unjustified and ridiculous. The process of thought association with specific objects is known to be an excellent memory jogger. These aids must be applied when we are asked to observe certain commandments involving remembrances. Seeing the tzitzit reminds us of other mitzvot such as kilayim, forbidden mixtures. This has been discussed at greater length in chapter sixty five. Awareness of the importance of memory joggers may have led some prophets to find common denominators for certain mitzvot, and thus make it easy for us to have these short summaries constantly at our command. Isaiah manages to condense Torah into two slogans, "observe justice and perform righteousness." (chapter 56) Chabakuk manages to sum it up in a single slogan, "the righteous will live by his faith" (2,4). No doubt the purpose of these apparent over simplifications is simply to provide a constant reminder, which when triggered will remind us of all the other mitzvot which are incumbent upon us to perform. When the Talmud (Ketuvot 30) tells us that all is in the hands of Heaven except the contracting of colds and heatstrokes, we know very well that both those phenomena are natural phenomena and as such not subject to our control. In fact, no remedy has yet been found for the common cold. Nevertheless, the sages are telling us that if one falls victim to those two ailments, this is due to negligence on the part of man, to wilful over-exposure etc, and cannot be blamed on outside forces. Just as one can control colds and heatstrokes, so, by employing memory properly, one can reinforce one's senses of trust and confidence in the help of G'd, no matter what the circumstances. This is what David said (Psalms 27,1) "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?, The Lord is the source of my strength, of whom shall I be afraid?" He means that if his attitude is based on remembering G'ds many past acts of kindness and assistance, why would he be afraid of anyone in the future? In the same vein, Moses tells the people: "you are today about to cross the Jordan in order to dispossess people greater and more powerful than you etc." (9,1). This calls for faith and confidence based on the recollection of all the past triumphs achieved through Divine intervention. The foremost memory jogger is the keriyat shema, which for that reason has been included in our daily prayers three times. We will examine the passage in detail to gain a better understanding of its significance. The following questions suggest themselves:

22 וְנִשְׁלַח יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֶת־הַגּוֹיִם הָאֵל מִפְּנֶיךָ מֵעַתָּה מֵעַתָּה לֹא תוֹכֵל כְּלָתָם מֵאִתָּה פְּתִירָה עָלֶיךָ חַיַּת הַשָּׂדֶה: Your God הוהי will dislodge those peoples before you little by little; you will not be able to put an end to them at once, else the wild beasts would multiply to your hurt.

23 וְנָתַנָּם יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְפָנֶיךָ וְהֵמָּם מִהוּמָה גְּדֹלָה עַד הַשְׁמָדָם: Your God הוהי will deliver them up to you, throwing them into utter panic until they are wiped out.

24 וְנָתַן מַלְכֵיהֶם בְּיָדְךָ וְהָאֲבֹדֶת אֶת־שְׁמָם מִתַּחַת הַשָּׁמַיִם לֹא־יִתְּצֵב אִישׁ בְּפָנֶיךָ עַד הַשְׁמָדָךְ אֹתָם: [God] will deliver their kings into your hand, and you shall obliterate their name from under the heavens; no one shall stand up to you, until you have wiped them out.

Akeidat Yitzchak 33:1:8 Some problems in the text: 1) Why does Jacob seem to commence with the blessing twice, once with the words "Gather so I may tell you what will befall you in the end of days" (Genesis 49,1) and again in the next verse "Assemble and hear sons of Jacob, listen to Israel your father?" 2) When Jacob exclaims regarding Shimon and Levi, "I will divide them in Jacob and disperse them in Israel," we do observe that the tribe of Levi was dispersed forthwith. We do not however, read anywhere about the dispersal of Shimon. Why is this? 3) The blessing of Yehudah becoming the hereditary carrier of the monarchy, seems limited to the arrival of "Shilo." Why? 4) Why are the names of the sons of Zilpah positioned between those of the sons of Bilhah in these blessings? 5) Issachar's blessing in verse 14 and 15 seems contradictory. "He saw that repose was good, so he inclined his shoulder to carry heavy burdens." Surely this sounds illogical! 6) The blessing for Dan seems puzzling; "Like a serpent...biting the horse's heel" on the one hand, and on the other "in Your salvation, O G-d, I trust?" 7) Who are the owners of arrows "who hated Joseph?" In what way were the blessings Joseph received more generous than the ones received by his father? 8) Why are so many details recited about the cave of Machpelah? 9) In Chapter 50,1, we hear about assipha and geviyah. The normal word for death, i.e. meetah is missing. Why? 10) Why does the Torah have to tell us that when the brothers went to Canaan to bury their father, they left their livestock in Egypt? Whoever has heard of livestock being part of a funeral procession? 11) Why do we need to be told that the Canaanites appreciated that Jacob's passing was a cause of national mourning in Egypt? 12) The word loo normally means "who would give that." When the brothers voice concern that, now that their father is dead, Joseph might display hostility towards them, the choice of this word in verse 15 seems quite misplaced. 13) Why do the brothers beg for forgiveness twice? 14) When Joseph says to them in an attempt to calm their fears, "Am I in place of G-d?" this suggests that only his fear of G-d prevented him from taking his revenge. This surely was not the best way to reassure his brothers? 15) Why do we need to know that Joseph's grandchildren, resp. great-grandchildren were born on his knees?

- 25 פסילי אֱלֹהֵיהֶם תִּשְׂרֹפוּן בָּאֵשׁ לֹא־תַחַמְדוּ כֶסֶף וְזָהָב עֲלֵיהֶם וְלִקְחֹתָ לָךְ פֶּן תִּנְקֹשׁ בּוֹ כִּי תִעָבֶת יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ הוּא:
- 26 וְלֹא־תָבִיא תִעָבָה אֶל־בֵּיתְךָ וְהָיִיתָ חָרָם כְּמֹהוּ שֶׁקָּץ | תִּשְׁקָצְנוּ וְתִעָב | תִּתְעַבְנוּ כִּי־חָרָם הוּא:
- 25 You shall consign the images of their gods to the fire; you shall not covet the silver and gold on them and keep it for yourselves, lest you be ensnared thereby; for that is abhorrent to your God הוהי.
- 26 You must not bring an abhorrent thing into your house, or you will be proscribed like it; you must reject it as abominable and abhorrent, for it is proscribed.

Akeidat Yitzchak 27:1:12 (1) There is no firm evidence that the city of Shechem mentioned in the books of the prophets is identical with the town near which Dinah was raped. There are pointers that suggest that this was not the same city. If the brothers were tending sheep at Shechem while their homes were at Chevron, Shechem must be presumed to have been less than a day's walk away. It is unreasonable to assume that Jacob sent Joseph all by himself on a journey of several days, as would have been the case if Shechem mentioned there were identical with the Nablus of today. In particular, seeing that so much bloodshed had taken place there, it would have been irresponsible to send a seventeen-year old into such hostile country all by himself. Even the brothers themselves were hardly likely to provoke the local population by grazing their flocks in their vicinity. We must assume therefore that Ir Shechem means the city of Shechem in the same sense as Ir David means "the capital of David's kingdom." The author explains how to dispose of apparently contradictory comments by the Talmud in Sanhedrin 102. (2) The reference to Dinah being a daughter of Leah is undoubtedly complimentary. The Torah, by referring to her ancestry, emphasizes that she had nothing but the best of intentions, that her excursion did not indicate a departure from traditional Jewish conduct. The repetition of the three expressions "He took her, he lay with her, he forced her" indicate that she remained uncooperative during all three phases of what is being described; she did not weaken in her resistance in any way. The reason three actions are mentioned is because Jacob's family suffered three indignities: A) The shame suffered by the whole family; B) The damage done to the girl's innocence and the loss of her virginity; C) The physical pain caused Dinah when she had to submit to violence. The punishment for the first of these indignities prescribed by the Torah is boshet, compensation in financial terms. The second indignity which reduced Dinah's value as a prospective bride in the compensation for the victim. It is noteworthy that Dinah did not lose her appeal for Shechem on account of any of the indignities he had heaped upon her. "He cleaved to the daughter of Jacob" (34,3). The family of Jacob had not become sullied in his eyes; he loved her just as before (not like Amnon who lost all his desire for Tamar once he had raped her). Shechem tried to talk

softly to Dinah's heart to help her recover from her pain. (3) The order in which the Torah describes the arrival of the sons, after Chamor had already arrived at Jacob's house, is to exonerate Jacob from any implication in his sons' subsequent actions, since there had not been an opportunity for them to consult. That is why Jacob on his deathbed refers to "in their secret counsel let my soul not be involved" (Genesis 49,6). It is to underscore that he had not been a party to their plan. Obviously, the sons could not have heard about the event while being in the field. Therefore, we must understand the sequence of events thus: (34,7) "When the sons came home and heard what a shameful act had been perpetrated against Israel, namely that a daughter of Jacob had been slept with, something that could not be tolerated." (4) Chamor uses the future course of events in order to compensate for an injustice that could no longer be undone. He emphasizes that he does not only want to legitimize his relations with Dinah, but goes far beyond this, and this constitutes a great honor for Jacob. The king offers the freedom of the country to Jacob's family. The sons' reason for deceiving Chamor has already been discussed in the first part of this chapter. (5) When the brothers use the term tame, defiled, when referring to the rape and subsequently suggesting a compromise, they are already using deceit, since they conveyed the impression to Chamor and Shechem that they had calmed down already and that their suggestions therefore could be taken at face value, could be believed. An exact examination of the text reveals that in fact the brothers did not breach any contract, nor did they retract from their original position. This is the reason Onkelos translates the word mirmah, slyness, deceit, simply as chochmah, cleverness, wisdom. They said, "We cannot do this thing, to give our sister to a man with a foreskin because it is a shame for us to forgive such an act." Chamor understood them to mean that the words "we cannot" refer only to the foreskin, not to the shame they had suffered. Similarly, Chamor understood their statement "if you will become like us," as referring only to the rite of circumcision, whereas the brothers used it in a wider sense meaning that they would have to embrace all aspects of the brothers' lifestyle and religion. Thereby they served notice that they were not going to forgive anything. We note that nowhere did the brothers promise that Dinah would become Shechem's wife. They only spoke in general terms, "our daughters," "your daughters," etc., and threatened to leave the neighborhood with their sister if their demands were not complied with. When Chamor reported in his city on these discussions, he represented the rape episode as having been resolved, and emphasized the future advantages to be gained by intermarrying with Jacob's family. The unexpected acceptance by the townspeople of the terms offered may have convinced the sons of Jacob that heaven had indicated its approval for their plan of revenge. (6) Possibly the "third day" referred to was the third day of the week, i.e. Tuesday, but in reality the first day after the circumcision. This day is under the constellation of Mars, and signals bloodshed. (7) The brothers had to prevent the wives and children from raising an alarm in the neighboring towns after they had killed the males. Therefore, the females and children had to be taken captive. Since abandoning the herds made no sense, and since their undertaking had evidently enjoyed the help of heaven, they felt entitled to acquire the livestock etc. The repeated outcry "May our sister be treated like a harlot?" underscores that to revenge such a misdeed, considerations of personal safety that are normally valid criteria, and which were part of the objections raised by Jacob, were not valid now. (8) Until now Jacob had not been certain that his dream about the ladder had been of a prophetic nature; he only became sure now that G-d spoke to him and identified Himself as having been the One to whom Jacob had made the vow at that time. (9) He was intent to remove any trace of idols that had been part of the loot his sons had taken from the city of Shechem and Chamor, and to remove any impurity acquired through contact with such idols. To this end, he instructed all his people to change their garments. Of course, the exhortation included the order to desist from any idolatrous practices that might have been picked up by his sons due to their contact with the idol worshippers. (12) The death of Deborah, a fine woman, may have been the final chapter in the sons' repentance of the whole Dinah episode, since we have a tradition that the death of righteous people provides atonement for the survivors. Inasmuch as all of Jacob's sons could qualify for the heritage promised to their forefathers, G-d repeats "to your descendants I will give the land," meaning to all of them, not like Esau or Ishmael who did not qualify though they too had been descendants of Isaac and Abraham respectively. (10) Contrary to the normal custom of a pupil departing from his master, in this case G-d departed from Jacob, the latter still remaining in his place. This suggests that Jacob's task had not yet been completed, prompting him to erect the monument and fulfil payment of his vow. It was here that the betrothal of Israel and G-d took place, later to be consummated by chuppah, a wedding ceremony at Mount Sinai. Details of this whole process will be discussed in Chapter forty-eight. (11) At the beginning of Rachel's labor, the midwife encouraged her saying, "Do not worry, this too will be a son for you." This gave rise to Rachel naming the child before she had even seen it. (13) It seems that Jacob had not been home at the time Reuben had rearranged the furnishings in Bilhah's bedroom. Reuben would not have dared to do this otherwise. The statement that the sons of Jacob were twelve may indicate that at that juncture Reuben lost his status as the firstborn, no longer counting as two (since the firstborn normally receives a double portion of the father's estate). More likely however, the Torah may stress that Reuben remained a full member

of the Jewish people.

Guide for the Perplexed, Part 3 37:6 We have explained in our large work that it is prohibited to round the corners of the head, and to mar the corners of the beard, because it was the custom of idolatrous priests. For the same reason, the wearing of garments made of linen and wool is prohibited: the heathen priests adorned themselves with garments containing vegetable and animal material, whilst they held in their hand a seal made of a mineral. This you find written in their books.

Guide for the Perplexed, Part 3 37:8 It is easily understood why it is prohibited to derive any benefit whatever from an idol. For sometimes a person buys it with the intention to break it, but keeps it, and it becomes a snare to him. Even if he broke it, recast it, and sold it to a heathen, he must not use the money which he received in exchange for the idol:

because people frequently mistake accidental circumstances for essential causes: thus most people say of a certain person that he has become rich and wealthy after having dwelt in a certain house, or bought a certain animal or vessel; and that these things were a blessing to him. In the same way a person may be successful and make a good profit on the business in which he employed the money received for the idol; he might then think that the idol was the cause of his success, and that the blessing of the money received for it brought him the profit; he would then believe in the idol: a belief which is just the reverse of the chief object of the Law, as is clearly seen in every word of it. For this same reason, we are forbidden to turn to our use the covering of the idol, its offerings and vessels. We are thus guarded against the idea [of ascribing our success to idols]. In those days the belief in the stars was very strong; it was generally assumed that life and death, good and evil, depended on the stars. The Law employed therefore strong means, as covenant, witnesses, great oaths, and the abovementioned [blessings and] curses, in order to overthrow that belief. We are thus commanded to abstain from taking any portion of the idol, and deriving any benefit from it: and God tells us that if money received for idols be mixed with any person's property, it will bring loss and ruin to that property. This warning is contained in the words: "Neither shalt thou bring an abomination into thine house, lest thou be a cursed thing like it" (Deut. 7:26). How much more wrong must it be to believe that there is a blessing in idols. When you examine all the precepts that relate to idolatry, you will find that their reason is obvious, and that they serve to make us abandon this evil belief, and keep at the greatest possible distance from it.

8

- 1 כל־הַמִּצְוָה אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי מְצַוְךָ הַיּוֹם תִּשְׁמְרוּן לַעֲשׂוֹת לְמַעַן תַּחֲיוּ וְרַבִּיתֶם וּבִאתֶם אֶת־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר־נִשְׁבַּע יְהוָה לְאַבְתִּיכֶם:
1 You shall faithfully observe all the Instruction that I enjoin upon you today, that you may thrive and increase and be able to possess the land that יהוה promised on oath to your fathers.
- 2 וְזָכַרְתָּ אֶת־כְּלִי־הַדֶּרֶךְ אֲשֶׁר הוֹלִכְךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ זֶה אַרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה בְּמִדְבָּר לְמַעַן עֲנִתְךָ לְנִסְתָּךְ לִדְעַת אֶת־אֲשֶׁר בְּלִבְךָ הַתְּשֹׁמֵר מִצְוֹתָיו אִם־לֹא:
2 Remember the long way that your God יהוה has made you travel in the wilderness these past forty years, in order to test you by hardships to learn what was in your hearts: whether you would keep the divine commandments or not.

Akeidat Yitzchak 19:1:31 (1) Since fulfilment of the commandment to circumcise himself and all the male members of his household simultaneously could put his whole household in jeopardy in the event of a hostile attack, Abraham might have decided to temporarily move close to his allies Aner, Eshkol, and Mamre, in order to discourage any attack. Therefore, it is reported where G-d spoke to Abraham. Even though Abraham was only in temporary quarters, he qualified for the vision. That Abraham had greatly risen in stature is clear from the fact that he did not have to move from his seat when G-d spoke to him, as he had on previous occasions. Our sages say that G-d came to visit Abraham on the third day of his being sick due to the effects of the circumcision (Baba Metzia 86). Since Abraham and Sarah hosted what looked like very ordinary individuals in such a generous fashion, it was fitting that the reward for such hospitality should be announced by one of the guests himself. (2) This is the reason why all the details of this act of hospitality are worth recording. Abraham could have skipped having dinner guests this once, in view of his state of health; he could have withdrawn into his tent long before the travellers had a chance to reach him. Instead, he ran forward, imploring them, as if they were doing him a favor by dining with him, instead of his doing them a favor by inviting them. (3) He begged one of them to interrupt his journey, so as not to be guilty of detaining all three of them. However, the hospitality offer was extended to all three of them, so that they would not misinterpret his first statement as "Please do

not pass by." The dot on the word "my lord", indicates that what these men were going to say to Abraham later, would be a message from the Shechinah, the Divine Presence. Abraham offered little, to prove that he did not mean to delay his guests unduly, knowing that had they really been interested in food, they would not have chosen to take a route that bypassed population centers with ample food supplies. However, he emphasized the quality of the bread which, since it refreshes the heart as proven in many other places in the Bible, restores one's spirits also. By rushing about personally and attending to all the details, he caused his guests a minimum of delay. The angels followed the talmudic dictum, "When in Rome, do as the Romans do" (Bereshit Rabbah 48). When Moses went to heaven, he did not eat or drink; when the angels came to earth, they ate and drank. The fact that their eating is especially mentioned teaches that one is to conform with local customs. Their purpose in eating, of course, was to derive the spiritual nourishment contained in the food. Just as abstinence from certain types of food is prescribed because of the negative influence of such food on our spiritual equipment, so consumption of the right kind of food at the right time and in the correct amount is of benefit to our spiritual equipment (compare Chapter 32). Further details about this can be found in Numbers Chapter 28, in connection with the daily offerings. (4) The fact that Abraham is described as standing in a position enabling him to wait on the travelers and to observe them in detail, is to show that they really did eat the food served to them. (7) After all these efforts on Abraham's part, the angels enquire after Sarah. They want Abraham present for the message, so that from the criticism they will voice about Sarah's attitude, Abraham will realize that he himself should have been subject to similar criticism from G-d at the time G-d had made the promise to him, although at that time G-d had not voiced such criticism. When the prophet Elisha asked the woman what he could do for her (Kings II Chapter 4), he had been inspired by the tidings Abraham and Sarah had received in our Parshah in return for their hospitality. He assumed that the woman and her husband would qualify for a similar reward, just as later proved to be the case. (5) We must assume that Abraham had indeed not told Sarah about her becoming a mother, in order for G-d to tell her directly. Perhaps he felt that if she heard such a promise only second hand, she would be even more incredulous than he himself had been when G-d had told him directly. G-d had reserved this moment to criticize Abraham, and that is the reason he was asked, "Why did Sarah laugh?" Her denial may be understood as follows. When one's conduct is questioned by someone superior to oneself, it is seemly to appear bashful and to ask rhetorically and deprecatingly "Could I really have been guilty of such a misdemeanor?" Sarah's "denial" then and the "fear" mentioned is the reverence Sarah felt for the words of the angels. Or, as Maimonides says, the fact that she had no idea that these men were angels made her discount their words. Only after she realized that these men had been able to read her mind did she become afraid. She denied only having laughed at the fact that the prediction had been made in the name of G-d. When the angels departed, Abraham accompanied them, unaware that he was in fact impeding their task in Sodom. The angels on their part refrained from discussing their mission until G-d said, "Shall I hide from Abraham etc." Thereupon they began to discuss it, no longer concerned if Abraham was listening. (8) Two preconditions are needed to allow one to be present when the judge makes his judgment. 1) An intimate relationship with the accused, such as being father, mother, master, servant etc. 2) An individual who is truly searching for justice. In the first case, the father is allowed to be present since he could assist in the defense of his son; in the second case, such a third party would learn moral lessons from the judgments imposed and instill those lessons in his own environment. In Abraham's case, he qualified on both counts. He was destined to become the father of a multitude of nations, and thus had a paternal interest in other human beings; also as a truth-seeking individual, he would instruct his household and environment in ways to apply the judgments he had observed in the making. G-d decided to view Abraham in this role, because having made all the promises to Abraham, his involvement in the decision-making process about the punishment for the people of Sodom etc., would ensure further that all G-d's promises concerning Abraham's seed would be fulfilled. The expression yadativ, for I know him, instead of hikartiv, is not accidental. The latter expression is used when one knows someone intellectually, understands how his mind works; the former refers to knowing how someone's heart, someone senses work. It is clear that when G-d speaks, He always uses yadati, since He has such intimate knowledge of all of us. The difference between G-d's "knowledge" and our "knowledge" is that man arrives at an understanding of a whole only after having comprehended the parts and then combining knowledge of the parts to obtain an overview of things. The reverse applies to G-d. He has a knowledge of man's whole personality. Only on special occasions does He examine the constituent parts of man. In this instance, G-d was well aware of the character and actions of the Sodomites. (9) This knowledge was reinforced by the complaints of the victims of the Sodomites. G-d still had to check if these complaints constituted exceptions to the general behavior of the Sodomites within their city. If so, i.e. "as its outcry that has come to Me," if indeed all the Sodomites participated in that kind of behavior, that would mark their end, their destruction. If not, other kinds of retribution might be in order. The test then would be the way the Sodomites would treat the angels that had come to Lot (strangers to the townsfolk). Contrary to the view held by some, that nissayon, test, is designed to make the meritorious

person emerge victoriously from such test, and that those unable to prove themselves, G-d does not bother to test at all. I do not believe that that is the function of tests. When G-d gave the Israelites the man, heavenly bread, the Torah writes, "In order to test them if they will walk in My teachings or not" (Exodus 16,4). We observe in that instance that some people failed the test. Similarly, the case of the false prophet, the appearance of which is described by the Torah as a test of the people's true faith (Deut. 13,4). We know that numerous people failed such tests when confronted by false prophets at various times in our history. Here, too, the arrival of these strangers at Lot's house is made the final test of the population's attitude. This will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter. (10) When Abraham overheard the conversation between the angels, and they had departed from him, he decided to remain standing before G-d to approach Him on behalf of the people who appeared doomed. Since the angels had obviously had permission to discuss their mission in Abraham's presence, Abraham felt obliged to engage G-d in conversation about it. His opening remarks were as follows, "Since You obviously will not destroy the righteous together with the wicked, if by chance there are fifty righteous people, will You really rather destroy than save the place on account of the fifty righteous people within it?" The few innocents left to themselves, especially if minors, would ultimately suffer the same fate as the adults that had been killed, and thus G-d's justice would appear as not having distinguished between the guilty and the innocent (the example of Nineveh being saved on account of the innocent children who needed parents to look after them is discussed in Chapter 13 in a slightly different context). Abraham referred to two possibilities: a) chalilah, unthinkable, to kill both the guilty and the innocent simultaneously; b) It would not appear just even if the innocent would die merely because their environment had been destroyed and they had been left to fend for themselves in impossible circumstances. (11) Abraham chose the number fifty as an opening gambit, because on the one hand, forced migration by such a group of people is a major hardship, whereas a larger number of people form a self-contained unit and can easily form a new community. Fifty are not yet enough to survive comfortably on their own strength and resources. (12) When Abraham saw that G-d concurred readily, he surmised that there simply were not fifty good people in Sodom; therefore, he lowered the target figure gradually. The justification "since I have started to speak already," signifies that he is aware he has already overstepped the bounds of propriety, that he is asking lifnim mishurat hadin, something beyond the demands of justice. As the numbers get smaller, and removal of so few people from the city is less of an upheaval, Abraham each time justifies his continued pleading on behalf of the innocent. Once it had become clear that there was only Lot that could be saved, saving him rather than saving the city became the easier solution. The mention of G-d departing from Abraham indicates that, for the moment, Abraham's prophetic powers had ceased to be operational. False prophets, however, never experience the difference between the time G-d is in contact with them and when they have been tuned out.

Akeidat Yitzchak 21:1:9 Trials may have three purposes: 1) The examiner wants to establish beyond doubt the truth of a theory, such as the medicinal qualities of a herb he has discovered. For that truth to be established, the herb must be given to a patient. This is what Gideon did in the threshing ground (see Judges Chapter 6). 2) The person undergoing the test wants to prove to himself that he is capable of passing. In this latter event, the examiner may have been perfectly aware of the examinee's abilities, but he is willing to allow the demonstration of the student's prowess. An action is called shalem, whole, when it has been proven in practice. Though G-d knew very well that Abraham would pass this test, it was important to demonstrate to Abraham that he had indeed displayed obedience at a time it counted most, when it conflicted with all he had learned about G-d's ways in the past. This category of test is the most common we encounter in the Bible. 3) The examiner wishes to prove to outsiders the quality of the person who passes the test. At first glance, the akeydah seems to fit only the second category of the tests listed. Even a large audience watching Abraham preparing to slaughter Isaac and withdrawing the knife at the last moment, would not credit Abraham with having passed a tremendous test; even were a prophet to inform that audience of the reason Abraham had behaved as he did, their reaction might be that the whole spectacle had been a deliberately staged stunt. Obviously, the akeydah could not fit Category One, since He is omniscient and did not require proof for Himself. It would appear then that this test only served the purpose of convincing Abraham of his own ability to display obedience. The even greater achievement would be to divorce Abraham from any formerly held philosophical convictions. Only by commanding an act that represented the height of foolishness when viewed from a philosopher's point of view could the total loyalty of Abraham to his G-d be demonstrated beyond question. The inner turmoil that might have been caused in a person of lesser stature might have been replaced in Abraham's case by the thought that he might have done something to forfeit the promise of future generations based on Isaac, and that only by sacrificing Isaac could he, Abraham, atone for whatever wrong he had committed. Abraham's act then could no longer be construed as self-seeking or motivated by the hope to increase the merit of his descendants, since by his very act he destroyed those descendants. Imagine a king

who had promised one of his noblemen that the king's daughter would marry the nobleman's son, and that said nobleman's son would succeed the king to the throne. Sometime later, the king orders both the nobleman and his son into battle against an enemy country. When the nobleman went into battle, knowing that if the king's son is killed in battle all the king's promises would prove worthless, he had demonstrated an act of supreme loyalty. The nobleman's conduct proved to all and sundry his unselfishness and sincere loyalty to the king. Abraham demonstrated at the akeydah that he placed spiritual values and accomplishments beyond any material successes. Were this not so, even the threat of suffering physical punishment at the hands of G-d would not suffice to make Abraham kill his son with his own hands. But even concerning Category One of the purpose of tests listed above, this too may apply. Having designed a test that resulted in the refinement of Abraham's faith, loyalty and obedience, G-d does create a new knowledge, and therefore a new person, one that had not existed before. So the "now I know" that the Torah reports G-d as having said refers to a person not previously at the height of his spiritual powers. Concerning the third category, that of convincing outsiders of the mettle of the person undergoing the test, this too might apply. Ever since the act of the akeydah has been recorded in the Torah, it is as if it had been witnessed by millions. Interestingly, the story of the binding of Isaac has never been challenged as a historical fact. Just as we are told that the miracle Moses performed at the sea of reeds instilled faith in Moses forever, there are other events which leave their indelible mark. The akeydah fulfilled also the third purpose that may sometimes be the objective in arranging trials and tests.

Guide for the Perplexed, Part 3 24:4 The trials mentioned in Scripture in the [six] passages, seem to have been tests and experiments by which God desired to learn the intensity of the faith and the devotion of a man or a nation. [If this were the case] it would be very difficult to comprehend the object of the trials, and yet the sacrifice of Isaac seems to be a case of this kind, as none witnessed it, but God and the two concerned [Abraham and Isaac]. Thus God says to Abraham, "For now I know that thou fearest God," etc. (Gen. 22:12). In another passage it is said: "For the Lord your God proveth you to know whether ye love," etc. (Deut. 13:4). Again, "And to prove thee to know what was in thine heart," etc. (ibid. 8:2). I will now remove all the difficulties.

Guide for the Perplexed, Part 3 24:6 Having shown that the term "to know" means "that all people may know," we apply this interpretation to the following words said in reference to the manna: "To humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldst keep his commandments, or not" (Deut. 8:2). All nations shall know, it shall be published throughout the world, that those who devote themselves to the service of God are supported beyond their expectation. In the same sense it was said when the manna commenced to come down, "that I may prove them whether they will walk in my law or no" (Exod. 16:4); i.e., let every one who desires try and see whether it is useful and sufficient to devote himself to the service of God. It is, however, said a third time in reference to the manna: "Who fed thee in the wilderness with manna, which thy fathers knew not, that he might humble thee, and that he might prove thee, to do thee good at thy latter end" (Deut. 8:16). This might induce us to think that God sometimes afflicts man for the purpose of increasing his reward. But in truth this is not the case. We may rather assume one of the two following explanations: either this passage expresses the same idea as is expressed in the first and second passages, viz., to show [to all people] whether faith in God is sufficient to secure man's maintenance and his relief from care and trouble, or not. Or the Hebrew term *le-nassoteka* means "to accustom thee"; the word is used in this sense in the following passage: "She has not accustomed (*nisseta*) the sole of her foot to set it upon the ground" (ibid. 28:56). The meaning of the above passage would then be: "God has first trained you in the hardships of the wilderness, in order to increase your welfare when you enter the land of Canaan." It is indeed a fact that the transition from trouble to ease gives more pleasure than continual ease. It is also known that the Israelites would not have been able to conquer the land and fight with its inhabitants, if they had not previously undergone the trouble and hardship of the wilderness. Scripture says in reference to this: "For God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt. But God led the people about, through the way of the wilderness of the Red Sea; and the children of Israel went up harnessed out of the land of Egypt" (Exod. 13:17, 18). Ease destroys bravery, whilst trouble and care for food create strength; and this was [also for the Israelites] the good that ultimately came out of their wanderings in the wilderness.

Nineteen Letters 11:1 Toroth. — Instruction or doctrines. — Manifold are the lessons which these important constituents of the Divine system teach us. They comprise the instructions derived from the historically-revealed manifestations of Divine truth and which it is our duty to elevate into principles of our life. They teach us to know God in his unity and as summoning us to comprehend our existence in all its many-sidedness and to unite all our powers, abilities, and conditions in subordination to the One. They teach the active service-duty of all beings, including man, who must learn to look upon himself as one of the host of ministering attendants of Deity and willingly join their ranks. His will in this respect is revealed as unchangeable for all ages. Our experience is to serve us as education; the fear of

God is to be taught us by the recognition of His illimitable greatness, the love of God by consideration of His unending mercy and kindness, unshakeable trust in Him by appreciation of His eternal faithfulness.

וַיַּעֲנֵךְ וַיִּרְעַבְךָ וַיֹּאכְלֶךָ אֶת־הַמָּן אֲשֶׁר לֹא־יָדַעְתָּ וְלֹא יָדָעוּ
אֲבֹתֶיךָ לְמַעַן הוֹדִיעְךָ כִּי לֹא עָלִיהֶלֶחַם לְבַדּוֹ יִחְיֶה הָאָדָם כִּי
עַל־כָּל־מוֹצֵא פִי־יִהְיֶה יִחְיֶה הָאָדָם: 3 [God] subjected you to the hardship of hunger and then gave you manna to eat, which neither you nor your ancestors had ever known, in order to teach you that a human being does not live on bread alone, but that one may live on anything that הוֹדִיעַ decrees.

Akeidat Yitzchak 32:1:5 When a person sits down to a se-udat mitzvah, a meal serving a religious purpose, he consumes a meal that does more than merely nourish his body. The more tangible the food, the more it serves to strengthen the body; the more refined, almost intangible, the more it nourishes the soul. When the Torah tells us that the Almighty derives satisfaction from our sacrifices, and this satisfaction is described as reyach nichau-ach ishe lashem, the sweet smelling fragrance of the fire offerings for the Lord, the idea is not that the smell of the fat and blood constitute spiritual nourishment for G-d, but rather that man submitted to the will of G-d. He was anxious to fulfil His wishes. The sacrifice serves as a prop to evoke that feeling of good will that keeps the Shechinah in our world. Similarly, participation in a meal with a Talmid Chacham, a Torah scholar, is equated with participating in a meal with the Shechinah, since the Torah scholar represents the immortality of the mind and spirit of man and their independent and enduring nature. Conversely, a meal at which several people partake without their exchanging words of Torah to lend it some spiritual significance, is rejected by the Shechinah and considered a table full of vomit (Avot 3,4). The above demonstrated that man does not live merely by bread, but that compliance with the revealed will of G-d contributes to man's physical as well as his spiritual well being. The gist of the comment "one does not talk during the meal" then would be, "Do not be fooled by the fact that the soul appears to feed on physical food, thereby proving that it is as mortal as the body it inhabits." We know that even "Jacob" did not die, and that there is more to consumption of a meal than merely the absorption of calories.

Akeidat Yitzchak 3:11:3 In the directive telling man what kind of food to consume, man is allocated the two advanced forms of vegetation, whereas the more simple, i.e. grass, is reserved for the animals. We observe in this directive the ownership relationship being defined. Man, in order to survive, has ownership claims on plant life. The reason the consumption of meat was not permitted at this stage, will be explained in Parshat Noach. The expression "it was good," is not used with respect to the creation of man, since until his death, the issue remains in doubt. Depending on his lifestyle, his existence may turn out to have been worthwhile (good), or otherwise. We have read in Midrash Tanchuma on Parshat Toldot, that "G'd does not associate His name with the living," meaning that while alive, one cannot be certain that a person will maintain his moral plateau, will remain a tzaddik. Rabbi Meir, on the other hand, says that "death" is good. What he means is that only after death is it possible to know whether someone's life has been "good." The Psalmist expresses it by saying (Psalms 116,15) "the death of the righteous is precious in the eyes of the Lord." We do not agree that the reasons advanced for omission of the "He saw that it was good" following the report of the creation of man are adequate. Since the Torah reports that man was indeed created betzalmo in the image of G'd, his creation was obviously good since one cannot ascribe any deed to G'd that is other than successful, ergo "good." Why else would G'd have invested so much effort in man's creation personally? On the contrary, since even the creation of the animals had been termed "good," the creation of man surely was no less?

Akeidat Yitzchak 41:1:4 Since the nourishment provided for the various species of the universe is commensurate with their respective needs, it is axiomatic that the most advanced species are provided with the most advanced form of nourishment available. Normally, the type of food provided for a species is on a level that is one degree lower in the order of life than the species to be fed by it. Since we have stipulated elsewhere that the order of creation proceeded from the simple towards the more sophisticated, it follows that the lowest form of life derives its food supply from primordial matter. This would be immediately below it in the order of creation. After all, the lowest form of existence is primordial matter. Next would be the four basic elements, all of which rank equal in the scheme of created matter.

Therefore, air, fire, earth and water act respectively as nourishment for plant life, the latter being of a more sophisticated nature than the basic elements. If plants need rain or water to sustain them, this is in accordance with such natural order as we have described. On the other hand, development, growth of the inert form is possible only through the infusion of an amalgamation with any or all of the basic materials contained in primordial matter. When a creature of a certain level in the world of matter receives its nourishment, or part of it, from a category more than one rung lower than itself, this is a curse. When we are told that the serpent in addition to feeding on plants, also feeds on

earth, a lower form of created matter, this is a curse. (Genesis 3,14). Also man,-as long as he had been restricted to a vegetarian diet- (Genesis 1,29) was not yet at the elevated level where his food supply was only one category lower in the scheme of things than he himself. Possibly, the verse (Genesis 1,28) "and have dominion over the fish in the sea, over the fowl in the air and over every living thing that creeps on the earth," was in fact permission to also feed on an animal diet. The fact that such an animal diet was withheld till after the deluge, could have been the result of the original sin.

The gradual decline of animals into becoming carnivorous beasts, is merely a form of corruption paralleling the corruption of man during the period preceding the deluge. This is why Isaiah predicts in chapter eleven, that all these carnivorous beasts will undergo a change of nature in the post messianic era. Since the Jewish people have attained the stature of *am segulah*, "precious nation," their nourishment does not only include the category immediately below them in the world of matter, but even part of their own category. G-d describes this in Deut.7,16, when the Torah says "you will consume all the nations the Lord your G-d gives you, your eyes shall have no pity on them." This refers to our having been granted permission to ensure our continued existence and well being at the expense of gentile nations worshipping idols and practicing other perversions. When we find that the Talmud Pessachim 49, states that the ignorant is not permitted the consumption of meat, this may mean that any person who has not qualified to be a member of the human race "in good standing," is not allowed to use the immediately lower category of life to serve as the material that satiates his appetites. To make indiscriminate use of creatures only a single category less sophisticated than ourselves, we must first prove that we ourselves live up to our own destiny, are intelligent creatures, *chay ha-medabber*.. Both Bileam (Numbers 24,8), Joshua and Caleb (Numbers 14,9) describe Israel as "consuming" its enemies. There are humans whose way of life places them sufficiently below us that they may serve as our life sustainers. Food, after all, is an aspect of life sustaining matter. On the other hand, food too far below our rank would drag us down to its level; therefore, insects etc. are forbidden. Since cannibalism is prohibited as despicable, the references above refer to our right to dispose of these nations as we see fit. A human being may fit into one of three categories. 1) He may be so ignorant that he has difficulty putting thoughts into words. 2) He may be capable of putting his thoughts into words, but his thoughts are so banal and mundane, that he only achieves basic purposes such as union with a mate, ("he shall cleave to his wife and they shall become one flesh") 3) He may belong to the select group who use the power of speech to express lofty thoughts, whose ideas are capable of standing on their own without physical sustenance. Of this group it is said "if he will live, he will die, but if he will die, he will live." (Yalkut Shimo'i Bereshit 14) Dilution of the spiritual with the physical is apt to impair the spiritual to the point of death, whereas refinement of the spiritual to the exclusion of the physical, will result in life eternal. People of that category require two kinds of nourishment, one for the physical part of their beings, the other for the spiritual part. Our rabbis refer to this as "two tables." The physical part can be nourished successfully by a vegetarian diet, meat being forbidden to it, since it derives from the same level of creature. In such a type of person, the spiritual part is not considered integral to the total personality. Their intellect, being of the world of the spirits, does not require physical sustenance just as none of the spirits require this. This is the reason such individuals as Chanina survived on as little as a *kav* (6 eggs' volume) of carobs from Sabbath eve to Sabbath eve. (Ta'anit 24) This indeed may have been G-d's wish when He created original man in whom the spirit, intellect reigned supreme before the fall. The food par excellence for people of such stature would be bread, (compare Proverbs 17,1, "better dry bread than meat obtained in an environment of strife")

Concerning the "second table," the substance required by the spiritual part of such men is the product of his good deeds.

In the words of Isaiah 3,10, "hail the just man for he is well off; he shall eat the fruit of his works." The meaning is allegorical, just as in Psalms 128,2, "you who eat the fruit of your labours," namely the good deeds you have performed sustain you into the hereafter, into kingdom come. When the Lord provided Manna for the Jewish people in the desert, it had been hoped that everyone would qualify as belonging to the highest category of person outlined above. If that had been so, the physical part of the Manna would have sustained the reduced needs of their bodies. Since the quality of that food was such that it could be completely assimilated by their bodies, none of it having to be excreted, only a small quantity would have been needed. The spiritual part of their personalities would have been sustained by the many lessons to be learned from the composition, the quantity, the manner of delivery, by the time at which the Manna was to be gathered etc. The fact that G-d did provide meat in answer to the request of the Jewish people, but in a manner much less gracious than the way in which the Manna was provided, leads one to believe that the supply of the quail was a one time occurrence. It was merely meant to demonstrate that it was indeed G-d who had taken the people of Israel out of Egypt, not Moses and Aaron, as the Israelites had been complaining. The very fact that the people are once more reported as having demanded meat, (Numbers 11,4) proves that meat had not been part of their diet all along. Further proof that meat was an exceptional provision, lies in the fact that it came unaccompanied by such ordinances as the manner in which it had to be slaughtered, specific quantities for each person, how long it could be preserved etc., all

details that had been spelled out about the Manna. When the Torah talks about "bread," and uses Manna as proof that "man does not live by bread alone, but by all that issues from the mouth of the Lord," (Deut.8,3) bread is a synonym for nourishment, and the lesson is that nourishment of a physical kind is solely for our physical parts, (elevated man category three) Observance of the instructions (motza pee hashem) accompanying such food are the nourishment for our spiritual part. It will be shown that this too was the nature of the food supplied to Adam in the garden of Eden.

Akeidat Yitzchak 41:1:6 No doubt the portion dealing with Manna is of fundamental significance, since it relates to man's ultimate destiny and salvation. The impediments to achieving final goals are twofold, and stem from people having either too much or too little. Of the two impediments, having too much is undoubtedly the greater impediment on our path towards salvation. A surfeit of worldly goods acts as a greater hindrance to our achieving our spiritual goals than a shortage of such material possessions. We know of many poor people who became great Torah scholars, whereas only a few Jews managed to combine both material wealth and great spiritual leadership in one person. Among those blessed with wealth, some have used it to provide comforts for their families, others, such as the tribe of Zevulun, to enable others to pursue a life of Torah study not interrupted by the need to earn a livelihood. However, the vast majority were snared by material wealth to feed their own greed. As a result, all the good their wealth might have accomplished was wasted. Of the latter people, David says (Psalms 78,33) "they have ended their days in vanity, their years in confusion." Deuteronomy 8,11 -14, warns of the dangers of wealth which can lead one astray. (1) Because G-d was aware of the dangers inherent in wealth, He provided Israel with bread from heaven on a day to day basis. This was to teach them the lesson that He was the great Provider, and that food serves specific objectives, that its accumulation is not an end in itself. Only in this way can one expect to be fed at "the two tables." (2) When G-d provides the Manna, the temptation not to serve G-d because one is busy earning one's livelihood ceases. On the other hand, by not receiving excess food or material wealth, the temptation to wheel and deal, amass fortunes etc are robbed of their very basis, and the impediment to serving G-d due to preoccupation with one's worldly possessions is removed from such an individual. This is the meaning of the words "in order to test you if you will go in the way of My teachings or not." (Exodus 16,4) (8) By providing a double portion for the Sabbath already on Friday, the sanctity of the seventh day is emphasized, for without preparing for that day ahead of time, no prepared meals would be possible on the Sabbath. The lesson is also taught that accumulation of worldly goods is justified when these goods serve a holy purpose, (more about this in chapter 55) (3) When the Jewish people noted a layer of fine particles, they believed it was the Manna which people knew of. That is why the verse cites "they said to one another it is "Manna," because they had not realised what it really was." They had been wrong! Moses pointed this error out to them, explaining that this was not a medication, but food. Moses said "this is the bread G-d has given to you to eat," i.e. it is not what you thought it was. Since, however, they had already named it, the name stuck to it. Since it was difficult to get the Israelites to change the name of that food, we find repeated occasions when Moses refers to it by name, with the added comment "which neither you nor your forefathers knew," or, "who feeds you Manna, which neither you nor your forefathers knew. (Deut. 8,3; 8,16) All this is to let us know that although the Israelites named the food "Manna," it is not identical with the Manna generally known. (4) The essence of the heavenly gift which was absorbed by the body one hundred per cent was, that it was to serve exclusively as food, not as an object of trade or barter. That is why Moses said "gather from it each according to the amount he needs to consume, namely one omer per head." When the Israelites did so, each one estimating the amount he required, he found upon returning to the camp that what he had collected was exactly one omer for each head in his family. The wonderful lesson was that it had been demonstrated that rich and poor require exactly the same amount of sustenance. (5) He who thought that he had collected "a lot," hamarbeh, as well as he who thought he had collected a little, ha-mamit, realised at the end of his respective life that each of them had had exactly enough. The rich person cannot take his wealth with him, and the poor has not been deprived since he has had enough until the day he died. (7) They were not allowed more than one day's supply to comply with the principle of baruch hashem yom yom, may the Lord be blessed daily, to teach us to have faith that G-d will be here to provide for us tomorrow also. The fact that some people starved themselves in order to leave some for the morrow, was not a form of asceticism, but was proof they were miserly. Just as there are many men who because they deny themselves luxuries being miserly with themselves, succeed only in providing generously for the second husbands of the widows they leave behind, so the Israelites were to be taught that self denial for the wrong reason is self defeating. The fact that the Manna melted as the sun became hot, was to dissuade greedy people who might come back to collect the left over quantities. The very crystal like nature of the Manna when freshly collected, gave rise to the belief that it would be easy to keep and preserve. This is the reason all these points are described in detail. (8) (6) Moses had obviously not told the people beforehand that a double ration would be found on Fridays. Moses then told them that if they prepared it for the

Sabbath right away, not on the next day, it would keep. "He who labours on the eve of the Sabbath, will eat on the Sabbath," i.e. he who labours in this world will reap a double reward in the world to come. The verse (Exodus 16,26) "on the seventh day is the Sabbath there will not be any on it," teaches that any good deeds accumulated in this life is food stored up for consumption in the hereafter. "Today to prepare it, and not tomorrow to prepare it." (Avodah Zarah 3) (9) Just as there were people who tried to keep what they had already collected for later, so there were some who went out on the Sabbath to collect. They did not want to miss any, in case there would be some. G-d's anger at these people stemmed from the fact that the lesson of the double ration they had already received on Friday had been lost on them. They were not concerned with their well being in the hereafter, but lived only for the material blessings available in this world. Moses upbraided these people saying "here G-d made you a gift of the Sabbath." Their refusal to see the centrality of the Sabbath legislation to the whole fabric of Judaism, was indeed a most serious offence. The visible Providence of G-d in connection with the Manna demonstrated that the Sabbath legislation is indeed fundamental, its observance a keystone in Judaism.

Akeidat Yitzchak 47:1:12 The fact that Moses went without food or drink for forty days, though at first glance beyond comprehension, becomes easier to understand in light of the following. Those who indulge in physical pleasures, even for long periods at a time, always seem to feel that the length of their enjoyment was too brief. Inversely, he who is granted spiritual fare of the kind that Moses was privileged to receive, feels that the time thus occupied has been far too brief. Therefore, the thought of food and drink was hardly likely to intrude upon Moses's thoughts while he was so privileged. David proclaims (Psalms 119,71) "I am well off that I was afflicted so that I could study Your statutes." In other words, not only did the affliction not hurt him, but it actually helped him to learn G-d's statutes. Something similar happened to Moses while on the Mountain. Afflictions per se become meaningless when in the presence of something far greater. When angels are described as eating, as in the case of the guests that came to Abraham, they do not in fact eat, but only appear to do so. When Moses is within the confines of the Shechinah, he does eat, but appears not to eat, since the significance of eating and drinking recedes so far into the background of his consciousness as not to count. Various Midrashim which endeavour to detail the kind of food Moses consumed, all make the same point in varying degrees. It is that Moses rejected food and drink so as not to lose the spiritual nourishment during the time and concentration that he would have had to devote while consuming physical food.

Akeidat Yitzchak 57:1:6 The Yalkut Shimoni on Ezekiel item 358, relates the following: "They asked 'wisdom' what is a suitable punishment for the sinner? 'Wisdom' replied "evil will pursue the sinners." (Proverbs 13,21) When they asked 'prophecy' the same question, 'prophecy' replied "the person who sins will die" (Ezekiel 18,4) When they asked 'Torah', the answer was "he will bring an offering and obtain forgiveness." When they asked G'd, G'd said "let him repent and confess and he will obtain atonement," as we know from Hoseah 14,2, "take with you words and return to the Lord" This is also the meaning of the verse in Psalms 25,8, "good and upright is the Lord, therefore He instructs the sinners in the path of life." It is apparent that the sages wished to explain the four approaches possible to the problem of sin. Human 'wisdom' perceives it as related to the inadequacy of the sinner on the one hand, and the overpowering stature of the One sinned against on the other. Since the sinner is so lacking in worth, once he has sinned, he is perceived as automatically and irreversibly pursued by the evil that his sin has evoked. Rehabilitation is not conceived possible, because of the unbridgeable chasm between puny man and the great Lawgiver and Creator. Therefore, the decree in Samuel I- 2,31-33, envisioning the irreversible punishment that the house of Eli would become victim of. The next point of view, espoused by 'prophecy', incorporates an understanding of the human personality based on revelation, and appreciates that each individual is to be judged on his own merits without setting in motion a chain reaction of punishments involving untold future generations. Thus 'prophecy' sees the death of the sinner himself as the fitting punishment for his inadequacies. Similarly, Solomon says (Kohelet 3,8) "there is one that is alone, without a second one, he has neither son nor brother." It is to this statement that 'prophecy' referred, when it said that the sinner alone would die, neither his son or brother will have to bear the burden of the sin of the sinner. Compare Ezekiel 18,4. The father/son relationship between G'd and His people is stronger than the father/son relationship between biological fathers and their sons, because G'd is our common Father. "You are sons to the Lord your G'd." (Deut 14,1) G'd can restrict punishment to each individual nefesh, personality, not as human wisdom would assume, that all punishment would ipso facto involve also subsequent generations of the sinner. (Chapter 99 will deal in greater detail with the obligations of the subsequent generations to embrace Sinaitic laws.) This then is the answer of 'prophecy', inasmuch as it represents the highest spiritual and intellectual level man is able to attain on his own. However, considering that the study of Torah broadens man's horizon, the additional insight gained by study of Torah produces the answer "let him bring a sacrifice and atone," to our original question. All the Rishonim agree that this recipe for obtaining forgiveness

will alert man to the nature and severity of the sin, since when he sees what happens to the animal, he will say to himself "here but for the grace of G'd, go I. "He will thus acquire a deeper reverence for G'd and His commandments. We observe how Cain, when G'd told him "the voice of your brother's blood cries out to Me," and the punishment decreed, (Genesis 4,11-13) became aware of the vastness of sin, until he himself admitted "my sin is too great to bear." Due to the severe nature of the punishment, the true nature of the sin is sometimes revealed to the sinner. Just as the drunkard who enters a bar and gets drunk, does not realise what is wrong with him until he is asked to pay for what he has consumed, so the sinner. Solomon, in Proverbs 23,31, puts it this way: "when he sets his eyes on the cup," i.e. when he drinks only what he can afford, instead of falling victim to the allure of the wine's colour," only then can he walk upright." The reason that the animal sacrifice does not normally atone for intentional sins, is twofold. 1) Not to advertise that people who enjoy good reputations are capable of forgetting their duties to such an extent that they sin deliberately. 2) When a superior being, one that possesses the gift of speech, sins, it can hardly expect that an inarticulate animal or worse, some lifeless object, could serve as compensation, atonement for his sin. Only the sinner himself can properly be sacrificed on the altar through repentance, fasting, confession, suffering and the performance of good deeds, as expressed by Isaiah 58. In that chapter, Isaiah describes the nature of a meaningful fast day. Michah,6,7, offers scathing criticism of those who are content to offer up their firstborn in atonement for their sins, when nothing less than their own lives would really be capable of atoning for them. Only the sinner's complete transformation can achieve atonement. Our sages also said concerning the house of Eli, that not sacrifices but only Torah and good deeds could bring about their rehabilitation. (Rosh Hashanah 18) When the fourth example of the Yalkut quoted earlier has G'd saying "let the sinner repent," that refers to the sinner who has sinned knowingly. Since G'd, in His goodness desires the rehabilitation of the sinner, He shows them the way. The precise nature of teshuvah, repentance is discussed further in chapter 100. The type of sacrifice involving atonement is not too difficult to understand then, whereas a second category including peace offerings, vows, gifts etc. is much more difficult to understand. In fact, they are so difficult to comprehend, that Maimonides in chapter 32 third part of his Moreh, writes that the purpose of these sacrifices is sublimation. We are to dedicate them to G'd rather than to a lesser deity, as had been commonplace among the pagans. According to Maimonides, none of these sacrifices has intrinsic value. Maimonides' attitude on these matters has been severely criticised by many scholars including Nachmanides, as is well known. All the arguments offered by those scholars were not new to Maimonides, of course. Nonetheless we find his commentary inadequate. The same applies to the arguments of Yehudah Halevi in the Kuzari. (I have omitted the author's detailed rebuttal of Maimonides' arguments as well as his rebuttal of Yehudah Halevi's arguments. Ed.) We prefer to think that animal sacrifices, even when not for the purpose of atonement, help man to perfect himself through appreciation of the the why, where, how and what he is instructed to offer. In other words, there is a symbolism in the legislation pertaining to each category of sacrifice. Also the nation as a whole is strengthened by the offerings of the communally paid for sacrifices prescribed in the Torah. Just as the nefesh chayah, "soul" of man is distinct from his "physical life force," so is the food required for the former distinct from the food required by the latter. The former derives its sustenance from matters spiritual, as shown by Moses who went without food or drink for forty days at a time while on Mount Sinai on three separate occasions. Every se-udat mitzvah, a meal occasioned by a mitzvah celebration, contains elements designed to fortify our "soul," feeding the spiritual part of us from the sanctified portions of such a meal. The partaking of food primarily designed for our bodily needs, also strengthens the spiritual part of us if the circumstances and intent causing such food to be consumed are related to the performance of G'ds will. If we eat-for instance- in order to be better able to serve G'd, then our "soul" automatically derives sustenance from such eating. (see Proverbs 23,1-3. Compare also chapter thirty two.) The presence of G'd is assured not because we feed the shechinah, but because through our proper intent and care when offering sacrifices (i.e. feeding our national "soul") we become fit for the shechinah to continue to reside near us. This is the rey-ach nicho-ach lashem, the sweet smelling odour to G'd, that results whenever "My will" is done. (see Sifrey on Parshat Pinchas.) Since the Torah does not state the reasons explicitly, the first of the princes (Numbers 7) was especially complimented on having perceived some of the functions of the sacrifices on his own. (compare Midrash Rabbah Numbers 17 "Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair said etc.")

Akeidat Yitzchak 91:1:6 Now that the land of Canaan, -i.e. wife number one,- is about to be restored to the Jewish people, normal economic factors will provide the people's sustenance, instead of the miraculous help from the king. Israel is warned not again to neglect its soul, the unseemly wife, while enjoying the companionship of wife number one, delighting in her physical endowments. Moses' warning about the need to observe all the mitzvot now that Israel is about to enter the holy land, is a reminder that the period of dependence on the king's largesse is drawing to a close. The king warns that neglect of the rules He had laid down would be viewed as a serious act of ingratitude for past

favours. Such ingratitude could lead to Israel forfeiting the land itself. Should the nation ask how they could ensure their economic survival if they had to be constantly occupied with spiritual matters such as studying the Torah, they are reminded that they had learned during forty long years that the pursuit of material values is not the only way to ensure one's economic success in the world. "Remember the way your Lord guided you,...He fed you the manna...your clothing did not rot..." The whole purpose of allowing wife number one to be kidnapped, was to demonstrate that survival is possible without all these accoutrements. On the contrary, harm and failure will result from neglect of our spiritual equipment, rather than from our neglecting our business in favour of Torah study and mitzvah performance. We find this type of warning in Avot 6,2, "woe to the creatures because of the insult they heap upon Torah." Neglect of Torah spells retribution according to the midah keneged midah, measure for measure principle. "He who tries to divest himself of the yoke of Torah has the yoke of government and bureaucracy imposed upon him." (Avot 3,5.) If one encounters certain difficulties in life, one often does not have to search very far for the reasons. It is usually due to an imbalance in the way one has handled one's priorities. Torah study, mitzvah performance, have to be given equal time with the pursuit of one's economic goals. Nourishment of the soul is not provided by the same source as nourishment for the body. A healthy body is needed to enable the souls to function at full capacity. For that reason, all reasonable efforts have to be made to provide the body with proper sustenance. We know that Torah and mitzvot are the primary food for the soul from Solomon (Proverbs 6,23) "for the mitzvah is like a candle, whereas the Torah is like light itself." In the Torah (Deut 8,3,) we are told "man does not live by bread alone, but by everything which emanates from the mouth of G'd does man live." Onkelos renders Leviticus 18,8, as follows: "You shall observe My statutes and My social laws so that man ensures eternal life for himself when he carries them out." The expression "to live thereby," accordingly refers to sustenance for our spiritual half. All the commandments that become applicable upon entry into the holy land, give sustenance to the spiritual part of the Jew. The land is described as one in "which you do not eat bread therein out of scarceness" (Deut 8,9). It is a land that does not demand so much physical labour that its inhabitants cannot find enough time to devote themselves to their spiritual tasks. Verses 11-14 are the warning not to immerse ourselves too deeply in the effort to acquire material riches. This could lead to forgetting G'd's goodness and the purpose for which we travelled forty years through the desert. Whereas, notwithstanding G'd's generosity, our own contribution to economic stability is required, or at least permitted, we must never forget what it is that gives us the strength to perform economic miracles. Should we fail to remember, our fate will be the same as that of the nations whom we are replacing in Canaan. If any reminder were needed as to by whose grace conquest of the country was accomplished, reference is made to the relative physical and numerical strength of Israel vis a vis the nations it has conquered. Those nations had inspired such awe in any would be conquerors, that to credit our success merely to our own strength would be sheer lunacy. G'd is also anxious to disabuse us of the thought that it was our moral superiority that led to our successful conquest. He points out that it was the wickedness of the land's inhabitants that caused them to be dispossessed. Already at the time of Abraham, G'd had promised that fulfilment of G'd's promise to him had to await the inhabitants' cumulative level of sin reaching a stage that would give G'd legal justification to dispossess them. (Genesis chapter 15) Israel's own waywardness is recalled, to remind them further that it was not their righteousness that led to the conquest of the land of Canaan. Precisely because G'd had forgiven so many of their past misdemeanours in the desert, they had to be warned now that they could not count on G'd being indulgent with them in the future. Also, the argument which Moses had used successfully up to now, namely that demise of the Jewish people would be interpreted by the nations at large as the Jewish G'd's inability to make good on His promise to his people, would no longer be valid. Once Israel had conquered the land of Canaan, G'd would have demonstrated His ability to deliver on His promises. The difficulties in this Parshah stem from the apparent lack of logical sequence in which it is written.

Duties of the Heart, Fourth Treatise on Trust, Introduction 23 (1) The alchemist requires special materials to perform his operation, without which he cannot do anything. These materials are not found at all times and in all places. But for one who trusts in G-d, his sustenance is assured and can come through any means of all the means of the world, as written "[And He fed you with manna, which you knew not, neither did your fathers know]; That He might make known to you that man does not live by bread alone..." (Devarim 8:3). For at no time and in no place are the means of obtaining his livelihood withheld from him, as you know already from the story of Eliyahu and the ravens, or with the widow and the cakes and water (Melachim 17:9), or the story of Ovadia with the prophets, where he said "I hid among the prophets of G-d, 100 men, 50 in each cave, and I fed them bread and water" (Melachim 18:13), and "Young lions suffer want and are hungry, but those who seek the L-ord lack no good" (Tehilim 34:11), and "Fear the L-ord, His holy ones; for there is no want to those who fear Him" (Tehilim 34:10).

Guide for the Perplexed, Part 3 17:7 Fifth Theory.—This is our theory, or that of our Law. I will show you [first] the view expressed on this subject in our prophetic books, and generally accepted by our Sages. I will then give the opinion of some later authors among us, and lastly, I will explain my own belief. The theory of man's perfectly free will is one of the fundamental principles of the Law of our Teacher Moses, and of those who follow the Law. According to this principle man does what is in his power to do, by his nature, his choice, and his will; and his action is not due to any faculty created for the purpose. All species of irrational animals likewise move by their own free will. This is the Will of God; that is to say, it is due to the eternal divine will that all living beings should move freely, and that man should have power to act according to his will or choice within the limits of his capacity. Against this principle we hear, thank God, no opposition on the part of our nation.

Guide for the Perplexed, Part 3 17:9 The different theories are now fully explained to you; everything in the varying human affairs is due to chance, according to Aristotle, to the Divine Will alone according to the Ashariyah, to Divine Wisdom according to the Mu'tazilites, to the merits of man according to our opinion. It is therefore possible, according to the Ashariyah, that God inflicts pain on a good and pious man in this world, and keeps him for ever in fire, which is assumed to rage in the world to come, they simply say it is the Will of God. The Mu'tazilites would consider this as injustice, and therefore assume that every being, even an ant, that is stricken with pain [in this world], has compensation for it, as has been mentioned above; and it is due to God's Wisdom that a being is struck and afflicted in order to receive compensation. We, however, believe that all these human affairs are managed with justice; far be it from God to do wrong, to punish any one unless the punishment is necessary and merited. It is distinctly stated in the Law, that all is done in accordance with justice; and the words of our Sages generally express the same idea. They clearly say: "There is no death without sin, no sufferings without transgression." (B. T. Shabbath, 55a.) Again, "The deserts of man are meted out to him in the same measure which he himself employs." (Mish. Sotah, 1:7.) These are the words of the Mishnah. Our Sages declare it wherever opportunity is given, that the idea of God necessarily implies justice; that He will reward the most pious for all their pure and upright actions, although no direct commandment was given them through a prophet; and that He will punish all the evil deeds of men, although they have not been prohibited by a prophet, if common sense warns against them, as e.g., injustice and violence. Thus our Sages say: "God does not deprive any being of the full reward [of its good deed]" (B. T. Pes. 118a) again, "He who says that God remits part of a punishment, will be punished severely; He is long-suffering, but is sure to exact payment." (B. T. Baba K. 50a.) Another saying is this: "He who has received a commandment and acts accordingly is not like him who acts in the same manner without being commanded to do so" (B. T. Kidd. 31a); and it is distinctly added that he who does a good thing without being commanded, receives nevertheless his reward. The same principle is expressed in all sayings of our Sages. But they contain an additional doctrine which is not found in the Law; viz., the doctrine of "afflictions of love," as taught by some of our Sages. According to this doctrine it is possible that a person be afflicted without having previously committed any sin, in order that his future reward may be increased; a view which is held by the Mu'tazilites, but is not supported by any Scriptural text. Be not misled by the accounts of trials, such as "God tried Abraham" (Gen. 22:1); "He afflicted thee and made thee hungry," etc. (Deut. 8:3); for you will hear more on this subject later on (chap. xxiv.). Our Law is only concerned with the relations of men; but the idea that irrational living beings should receive a reward, has never before been heard of in our nation: the wise men mentioned in the Talmud do not notice it; only some of the later Geonim were pleased with it when they heard it from the sect of the Mu'tazilites, and accepted it.

Leadership in the Wilderness; Authority and Anarchy in the Book of Numbers, Part I, Chapter 6; The Aspiration Postcard 30 In Deuteronomy, the manna is not portrayed as a food of wonder but is itself a test of faith: "He [God] subjected you to the hardship of hunger and then gave you manna to eat, which neither you nor your fathers had ever known, in order to teach you that man does not live on bread alone, but that man may live on anything that the Lord decrees" (Deut. 8:3). The purpose of this food was to enhance the sense of transition and to curb the human pleasure of eating for more transcendent goals; ultimately, the Israelites needed more than physical nourishment to endure. Ironically, the purpose of the manna was not so much as food, but to teach less dependence upon food. Receiving manna daily from heaven would force the Israelites to merit and deserve this gift, as the Talmud records the question of a group of students to their teacher, "Why did not the manna come down to Israel once annually?" The teacher responded with a parable:

Nefesh HaChayim, Gate I 16:10 And they also said: "for the sake of Israel...", as we will explain, for as a result of man's involvement with and his reasoning in the holy Torah, he attains the sparkling of the light of the aspect of soul-Neshama within him, to make him intelligent in the depths of her holy secrets, and then is given the name Israel, as is known in the Zohar. "...But by all that comes out of God-YHVH's mouth" (Devarim 8:3)—it is the aspect of man's

soul-Neshama, His breath (blessed be He), they will also vivify and maintain all of the powers and worlds, for she is also the highest and the innermost of all the worlds, and this is 'the Holy One blessed be He and the Torah and Israel are all bound one to another', and that they said: " 'In the beginning... (Heb.: Bereshit)' is for the sake of Torah, who [fem.] is called "first (Heb.: rei-sheet)", and for the sake of Israel who are called "first (Heb.: rei-sheet)".

Torat HaOlah, Author's Introduction 7 Therefore, Haza"l instituted that we read every day the verses of the Tamid offering, and to repeat the mishnah Eizeh Meqoman, in order to establish this utterance in the place of bringing sacrifice, it being well-known that humans do not subsist on such things alone, but by all that God decrees. This is the way Rabenu Bahiya put it at the end of [his commentary on parashat] Vayakhel: "Know that the story of the Tabernacle and its vessels, and investigation into them, their usage and shapes and handling, even though the Temple is no longer standing, is a great mitsvah... so how much more so if we merit to really grasp the issue and to be enlightened as to one of its hidden aspects, as King David z"l said on the subject of the hidden and revealed: "Walk around Zion, circle it, count its towers, note well its rampart, enter its citadels, that you may tell it to a future generation" (Tehillim 48:13-14).

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| <p>שְׁמִלְתָּ לֹא בָלְתָה מְעִלְיָ וְרַגְלְךָ לֹא בָצְקָה זֶה אַרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה:</p> | <p>4 The clothes upon you did not wear out, nor did your feet swell these forty years.</p> |
| <p>וְיָדַעְתָּ עַם-לִבְבְּךָ כִּי כְּאִשְׁרֵי יִיסֵר אִישׁ אֶת-בְּנוֹ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ מִיִּסְרָהּ:</p> | <p>5 Bear in mind that your God הוה disciplines you just as a householder (householder See the first note at 1.31.) disciplines his son. (as a householder disciplines his son See the second note at 1.31.)</p> |

Akeidat Yitzchak 63:1:4 Although as a rule the parable is used to help the reader or listener understand a difficult subject by means of illustrating concepts familiar to him, there are occasions when the parable is used in reverse. An example of the former usage is the verse "as a father chastises his son, so does the Lord chastise you." (Deut. 8,5.) On the other hand, the line "you will be like G'd, knowing good and evil," (Genesis 3,5) is an example of the use of the parable in reverse. Although we have no concept of the essence of G'd, we do understand the concepts of "good" and "evil," ergo it helps to define G'd by saying that this knowledge is one of His attributes. Or, as the Talmud Berachot 10, says "just as G'd fills the universe, so does our soul fill our body." The subject "G'd" can be brought closer to our understanding, although the essence of G'd remains a mystery. Drawing conclusions from the known microcosm regarding the nature of G'd, the great unknown, is only possible with the aid of the Torah, G'd's revealed law. Since Greek philosophers have no such terms of reference they cannot draw any valid conclusions. The latter, observing three kinds of life in our world, i.e. plants, animals and humans, and noting that man comprehends all three kinds of life, concluded that man has three souls, one each to enable him to comprehend the various forms of life respectively. They did not realise that a single soul can govern all three aspects of life, (provision of food, motion and intelligent planning) Shimon the Just tells us that since man is heir to such a tripowered soul, one that governs vegetable, animal and human abilities, he must therefore assume a threefold moral obligation corresponding to his endowments. These obligations are the promotion of Torah, Avodah, i.e. service in matters relating to the man/G'd relationship and the performance of kind deeds, i.e. building social relationships with his fellow human beings. This is a suitable introduction to the whole tractate of Avot. When the Talmud says "the kingdom of earth is similar to the kingdom of Heaven," (Berachot 58) the meaning may well be that just as we find in the "upper" world both purely spiritual beings as well as bodies, (galaxies) although the essence of that world is spiritual, abstract, so we find in our "lower" world creatures possessed of spiritual capabilities, although by definition these creatures belong to an essentially physical world. Human beings have been equipped with a soul to aid them in performing their physical functions properly, just as the galaxies have been equipped with bodies to enable them to perform their spiritual functions properly. At the same time, just as there are completely disembodied spirits in the "upper" world, so there are completely lifeless bodies in our "lower" world, such as stones etc. Just as the planets in the galaxies have bodies to help them perform the tasks assigned to them by the Creator, so the animal kingdom has a kind of "soul" to help it perform the task assigned to it by the Creator in the scheme of things in our world. It is however, impossible to classify the soul of man as having been designed to serve his body, else one would have to believe that man's soul perishes at the same time his body dies, seeing it has no longer a function to perform. In that latter event, man would hardly possess an advantage over the animals. Rather, man is to be viewed as the counterpart to the angels, who appear in human form on occasion, i.e. equipped with a body, in order to perform a task that requires them to become visible to man. We refer to such apparitions as have been granted to Hagar, Lot, Gideon, Manoach and others.

In all those instances, the bodies were corollaries to the angels' spirits. By the same token, man, or especially Jews, have been given a body to assist their souls to perform their tasks. The task of the Jewish people is to perform a mission on behalf of G'd, and the task of the High Priest is to do the same in an even more intensive and specific manner. The High Priest wears the special garments when he performs service in the holy Temple. These garments are worn only once, and were not passed on even to his successor. They had to be removed immediately upon termination of the respective service performed in the Temple. Angels appeared in one kind of human garb only once, since each angel was entrusted with only one mission at a time. A number of Midrashim elaborate on this parallel between the "upper" world and our own world down here. (Vayikra Rabbah 21) Once we accept this comparison, the statement that the Jewish people are to be a kingdom of priests illustrates the functions we are to perform even better. The function of the Jewish people is to act as messenger/priest for mankind. We are given a special equipment to help us perform this task, i.e. Torah etc. If we abuse this equipment for personal advancement instead of employing it to perform our tasks, we are guilty of treason both vis a vis G'd and vis a vis mankind. Our punishment in such an eventuality will reflect the severity of the crime.

Akeidat Yitzchak 77:1:6 We are told by the Midrash that G'd gave Israel three gifts, all of which were acquired through some deprivations. 1) Torah. 2) The land of Israel. 3) olam haba, eternal life in the hereafter. (Shemot Rabba 81) The scriptural proof for this quoted in the Midrash mentions deprivations yissurim in each case. These gifts are ours only if we practice a measure of self restraint. If, in the pursuit of Torah, someone becomes so one-sided that he neglects his debt to society, or fails to appreciate the world around him, he is guilty of Solomon's famous dictum "do not be too righteous." (Kohelet 7,16) Even Torah knowledge can be retained only through continence and self restraint. The Talmud says that every new born baby forgets all the Torah it has learned in the mother's womb, due to an angel striking it at the moment of birth. (Nidah 30) The idea behind this is as follows. While within the mother's womb, the fetus receives exactly what it needs, no excess. Under such conditions it can absorb Torah without impediment. When transferred to our world, these conditions change, and the pursuit of the physical, material, interferes with the acquisition of the spiritual values. The gift of olam haba is received via yissurim because the whole object of mussar, the root of the word yissurim, is to pave the way for life. Olam haba is life in its ultimate definition, attainable, naturally only via such a route. If one may be allowed to oversimplify, morality is nothing but a form of self restraint. In Jeremiah chapter 35, Yehonadav ben Reychav is held up as a shining example of someone who instructed his family to practice the noble art of self restraint concerning a variety of physical pleasures and material acquisitions. In appreciation of that family's having heeded their patriarch's instructions, G'd assures that family that they will provide leading personalities for the Jewish people for all future generations. Arichut yamim, longevity, is defined by our sages as participation in the life which is kullo aruch, of an unending infinite duration. The chapters of the Torah legislation dealing with the shemittah, yovel, ma-asser priestly gifts etc., are aimed at teaching us to practice self restraint when exploiting the bounty the land has to offer. The owner who wants to sell his slave at a good price, will overfeed him prior to the sale, to create the illusion that the slave is in good health and physical strength in the eyes of the prospective purchaser. The negative effects of that slave having been force-fed, will show up only after the sale has been concluded. A father who does not wish to part with his sons, will raise them on the kind of diet that assures their continued well being, and that builds up a resistance against harmful foreign elements in their bodies. (Deut. Rabbah 3) The menorah, candelabra in the tabernacle, was made with beaten gold. The trumpets were made out of beaten silver. The two cherubs on the lid of the holy ark were made of beaten gold. We observe that the purity of these vessels was achieved only after they had been hammered. Only then did the respective raw materials assume its enduring format. The trumpets represent the gift of the land of Israel, since they were employed to herald the Jewish people's approach towards that country. The menorah represents the gift of Torah, spiritual illumination. The cherubs symbolise olam haba, the world in which the angels abound, a world of the spirit, ruach.

Akeidat Yitzchak 88:1:9 (1) When Moses had asked G'd to allow him to cross the Jordan, he wanted to make sure that the conquest of the West Bank would proceed along the same lines, eliminating all survivors who could pose a threat to the Jewish people in the future. (2+3) In Numbers 33,55-56, G'd had warned that His assistance would be predicated on the degree of absolute war Israel would wage against those inhabitants. Had Israel remained under the leadership of Moses after they crossed the Jordan, all the problems that developed later would not have occurred. His request then was not for his own sake, but for the sake of the people. He begged for a continued display of G'ds greatness, His strong hand, His unparalleled Power as displayed in the wars against Sichon and Og. (4) Since the people were not worthy of that degree of success, Moses could not be allowed to cross the Jordan, since G'd could not have denied Moses such a degree of success. However, only the physical crossing was denied Moses, not the view of the country. In order to placate me, Moses tells the people, Hashem told me to ascend the mountain and see the expanse of the land of Israel. Concerning

the conquests, however, G'd instructed him to command Joshua, making it plain that Moses had asked for the role of leading the conquest of the land. Moses is told that he should do his utmost to prepare Joshua for his task. G'd would then fulfil what He had promised Moses after the episode of the golden calf, when Moses had stood in the crook of the rock and G'd had assured him "in view of the whole nation, I will perform miracles." In this, G'd had referred to the arrest of the sun and the moon in their respective orbits during the term of Joshua's leadership of the people, as well as other lesser miracles. The people's fear, that if G'd did not respond favourably to Moses' prayer, there would be no chance that He would respond to the likes of them, is put to rest by Moses. He points out that they have survived the anger of G'd on the occasion of the sin at Baal Peor, and that the merit of the multitude in any case is much stronger collectively than that of any individual, however great that individual. This was what had enabled them to survive at that time. Moses points out that their success and survival is not conditional on his physical presence in their midst, but rather lies in their observing the laws that Moses had been teaching them before his death. In the event they had failed to appreciate the connection between the life giving power of observing mitzvot, Moses points out that precisely those of whom it could be said "you who have cleaved to the Lord your G'd" are the ones who are alive and well today. (see commentary chapter 83) In contrast, when one person sins, he may have to pay for his transgression. This is why Moses' sin resulted in his having to die prior to entry into Eretz Yisrael. This was due partly to the fact that Moses' error had had repercussions on the people. "G'd was angry at me because of your words." Even though they were the cause of his error, his personal merit did not suffice to reverse the decree of death against him. At this point, Moses returns to making laudatory comments. He points out that the observance of the commandments by the whole people prior to the sin of Baal Peor was the merit that had enabled the majority of them to escape the fatal consequences of the avodah zarah, that their idol worship would otherwise have had. Only the closeness between you and your G'd that you had established by means of observing mitzvot, enables you to survive to this day." Reminding the Jewish people of the revelation at Mount Sinai, he recalls that at that time they had not seen any visible signs of the deity. Theirs was a different religion; they were not in need of visible symbols of G'd. Visible symbols serve as intermediaries, reduce the closeness, the direct line between man and his Creator. Therefore, apart from the fact that none of them wield independent power, they constitute a downgrading of hashgachah peratit, and in the case of the Jewish people are a form of idol worship. Other nations who have not been the beneficiaries of hashgachah peratit, G'ds direct guidance, may employ these celestial spheres to approach the Creator, but not Israel. It is Israel's function to enjoy the direct guidance of G'd. Moses contrasts the value of the multitude's merit when he says anochi meyt, I am about to die, with ve-attem ovrim, "yet you will cross the Jordan." This merit of the multitude is effective however, only against such sins as do not involve the breaching of G'ds covenant with the people. Since, in the case of the sin at Baal Peor, their idol worshipping had not been due to philosophical religious considerations, but had merely been the by product of the weakness of the flesh, the urge to commit immoral sexual acts with the daughters of Moab, that merit did protect most of them. For all these reasons, the uppermost requirement for survival of the nation is the maintenance of the closest possible relations with G'd. (5) The sequence commencing with the paragraph "when you will beget children" (4,25), describes the never ending loving concern of G'd for Israel as a whole. All the retributions listed in the paragraph serve only one purpose. Israel will be forced to throw itself on the mercy of their G'd for psychological reasons, will repent, hoping for forgiveness. The promise that in such an event forgiveness will be available, is to reassure Israel that they need never lose the special relationship established between them and their G'd during their stay in Egypt and the subsequent Exodus. All punishments will have as their aim what a father aims at when he punishes an errant child. The reassurance that lies in verses 31-40, answers the unspoken question of Israel that if G'd has seen fit to keep His people in exile close to two thousand years already, it is hard to believe that He will awaken one day and restore us to our former glory. Moses says that since G'd is an kel kannu eysh ochlah, a jealous G'd, consuming fire, one could have expected a swift and utter annihilation of the Jewish people once His patience had been exhausted. The reference to the Egyptian experience teaches that after two thousand years of human history G'd had established a special relationship with one people. That had been a first in the annals of mankind. The eventual redemption of the Jewish people, when it comes, will therefore be less astounding than their selection had been in the first place when it had taken place.

Akeidat Yitzchak 93:1:6 Since it is the Torah's purpose to warn against all these temptations, Torah being the antidote is known by three names corresponding to the three types of temptation. "Chayim," life, "Torah," teaching, "mussar," discipline. Inasmuch as Torah is the antidote against all dangers, it is called "life." "For she is your life." (Deut. 32,47 et al) Inasmuch as Torah is the antidote to all deceptions and misrepresentations, it is called "a teaching", "instruction", something that teaches true values. Inasmuch as Torah is the antidote against bad habits and a tendency to indulge oneself, it is called "a discipline." "Know this day that just as a father disciplines his son, so your G'd disciplines you."

(Deut. 8,5 et al) Solomon sums it up in Proverbs 6,23, "for the commandment is a lamp, the law is light itself, and reproofs are the way of life." Only the pursuit of all three aspects of Torah will guarantee man the proper exercise of free choice granted him by his Maker.

Derashot HaRan 9:14 All of this because the beginning of repentance is that a man place his sin before his eyes, as it is written (Psalms 51:4): "And my sin is always before me." And it is also written "until they are guilty," for so long as they do not acknowledge their guilt they will not be cured. And this is the intent of (Hosea 7:1): "When I heal Israel, then the transgression of Ephraim will be revealed and the evils of Shomron..." Now this is indeed cause for wonder, for the very opposite would seem to be dictated, as it is written (Jeremiah 50:20): "In those days and at that time the transgression of Israel will be sought, but it will not be there; and the sins of Judah, but they will not be found." If so, how can it be stated here that when Israel is healed, the transgression of Ephraim will be revealed! The verse, however, is to be understood as follows: The Prophet is comparing the forgiving of a sin to a doctor's coming to heal a grave wound over which has formed a surface coating of skin and flesh, the boil lurking beneath. That doctor will not begin to be able to heal the wound unless the patient allows him to open it, widen its edges, and bare its core. This is what the Blessed One is saying. At the time when Israel is healed, their sin will have to be revealed, for otherwise it cannot be healed. However, just as when the skillful doctor has opened the wound, widened its edges, and healed it, the wound will be sought and not be found, in the same way, after Israel has performed a perfect repentance and been cured of its sin, the sin will be sought and not be found. The administration of the treatment, however, requires the revealing of their sins; they cannot be cured otherwise. This is the intent of "until they are guilty" — that is, until they acknowledge themselves as guilty and bare their sins to Me. Then they will seek the L-rd and say (Hosea 6:1): "Let us go and return to the L-rd; for He has torn and healed us. He has smitten us and He will bind us up" — unlike the king of Ashur, who had the power only to do evil but not good, as it is written (Isaiah 10:5): "Woe, Ashur, the rod of My anger!" The verse continues (Hosea 6:2): "After two days, He will revive us. On the third day He shall lift us up and we shall live before Him." That is, when they will have repented completely after having placed their sins before their eyes, then all the days of their affliction, though extremely long, will be considered only as two days, all of their afflictions seeming as nothing in proportion to their sins — as is, indeed, the case. This is the intent of the statement: He will revive us from the days of affliction and exile, which amount to two days relative to our sins. The idea corresponds to (Ezra 9:13): "For You, our G-d, have been sparing, below our sins; and You have given us deliverance such as this." That is, the Blessed One does not exact payment of a man according to his sins, but far below them, as it is written (Deuteronomy 85): "And know in your heart that just as a man chastises his son, so the L-rd your G-d chastises you."

Derekh Hashem, Part Two, On Specific Modes of Providence 1 From that which is very discernible about His providence, may He be blessed, is that the foundations of all of the arrangements of His providence are righteous law and precise justice. And [this] is like the matter that is stated (Psalms 45:7), "your royal scepter is a scepter of righteousness." And it is [likewise] written (Proverbs 29:4), "By justice a king sustains the land." However we know that the true desire of the Holy One, blessed be He, is only to do good. And note that He loves His creatures like a father loves his son. Yet by reason of the love itself, it is appropriate for a father to discipline his son in order to benefit him in the end - like the matter that is stated (Deuteronomy 8:5), "as like when a man disciplines his son, the Lord your God will discipline you." So it comes out that the judgement and the verdict itself flows from a place of love; such that the discipline of the Holy One, blessed be He, is not the blow of an enemy or one taking revenge, but rather the discipline of a father that wants the good for his son, as we wrote. Indeed, there are two matters that come out of this: The first is that the discipline itself is sweetened and not harsh or cruel. For the love that is with it mixes the judgement with mercy. And the second is that sometimes when the time requires it, the Master, blessed be He, will completely pass over the letter of the law, and act with mercy. And [this is] like the matter that is stated (Exodus 33:19), "and I will have grace upon whom I will have grace, and I will have mercy upon whom I will have mercy." But behold, since the Holy One, blessed be He, wanted the free choice of man in his actions; and, according to the righteousness of His law, the reward to be paid to a man according to his deeds - He surely, as it were, subjugates His direction to the deeds of man, such that He only cause good or bad according to [man's] deeds. However, in truth, the Master, blessed be He, is surely not subjugated to any law and does not require anyone else and is not acted upon by anything. Hence when He wants to use His preeminence, he surely acts and directs [the world] as He wants, without any compunction or hindrance at all. However regarding [His] normative direction, He directs [the world] according to the subjugation that we mentioned.

Yet when His Wisdom decrees that it is appropriate to go beyond the letter of the law, He certainly uses His preeminence to pass over sin and rectify any damage with His great power. It comes out that there are two types of providence here: The providence of God, may He be blessed, and the providence of Dominion and Unity. For behold, He

normally presides with normative providence, to judge all of his creation; whereas He [only occasionally] presides with the providence of Dominion to preserve the creation with His power and ability - so that it not be destroyed by the evil acts of people.

וְשָׁמַרְתָּ אֶת־מִצְוֹת יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לָלֶכֶת בְּדַרְכָּיו וּלְרַאֲהָ אֹתוֹ: 6 Therefore keep the commandments of your God יהוה: walk in God's ways and show reverence.

כִּי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ מְבִיאָךְ אֶל־אֶרֶץ טוֹבָה אֶרֶץ נָחָלִי מַיִם עֲיִנַת וְתַהֲמַת יִצְאִים בְּבִקְעָה וּבְהָר: 7 For your God יהוה is bringing you into a good land, a land with streams and springs and fountains issuing from plain and hill;

Akeidat Yitzchak 41:1:3 Shemot Rabbah 25, interprets Isaiah 33,16, "He dwells in high places," as referring to the statement in the Torah (Deuteronomy 8,7) "for the Lord your G-d brings you to a good land, a land of rivers, fountains and deep waters springing forth in valley and mountain" to a table set in THE garden as in Psalms 116, "I will walk in front of the Lord in the land of the living." The Lord is pictured as sitting at the head of the table above the ancestors; all the righteous sit around at His feet, as it says "and they are sitting at Your feet receiving Your words." (Deuteronomy 33,3) G-d will present before them all manner of fruit from the garden of Eden, and feed them from the tree of life. After that, they will all bless their host, and ask G-d to assign the honour of reciting grace. G-d bestows this honour on the archangel Michael; the latter, in turn bestows it on the archangel Gabriel. Gabriel accords the honour to the ancestors, who in turn accord it to David. They say that the king they have chosen for themselves shall pronounce the blessing for the King of Kings. They present the chalice to him, and David, holding the chalice proclaims "I am lifting the cup of salvation and I will proclaim the name of the Lord."

Akeidat Yitzchak 41:1:7 When Shemot Rabbah 25, suggests that in answer to the question of why we observe the Sabbath, we should point out the fact that no Manna fell on the Sabbath, it means that we have seen proof that He created the universe in six days and rested on the seventh day. The falling of the Manna was associated with three miracles, (a) it did not fall on the Sabbath, to teach the sanctity of the Sabbath; (b) the fact that the daily ration collected was exactly adequate for each individual, there was no shortfall. This teaches that one should not chase after material goods and seek to accumulate them; (c) the double portion that fell on Fridays, teaching that the Sabbath was the day of rest, and that only those people would eat it who had prepared for it on Sabbath eve. The lazy people would starve.

Compare Isaiah 65,13, "behold, My servants will eat, but you will starve!" (See Shabbat 153) (10) Since "seeing is believing," keeping a day's supply of Manna bottled up for future generations would reinforce the belief of future generations of Jews that Manna had indeed been also been spiritual nourishment, and as such had benefitted even the later generations. (11) The repetition of "they ate Manna for forty years etc.," is to emphasize that both their physical and their spiritual needs were met by consuming Manna during all these years. Alas, when the Manna stopped, and there was no longer visible evidence of G-d's Providence, Israel began to depart from the level of Torah observance it had practiced up to that point. The Midrash quoted at the outset reflects the lesson of the Manna. Before explaining this in detail, we must understand some of the details in the parable. Why had G-d placed the table in the garden of Eden and not in the desert? Where were the angels Michael and Gabriel, if G-d sat the head and the righteous at His feet? Why did they divide the fruit of the garden and the fruit of the tree of life into separate courses? How does one accord honour to G-d if one portrays Him as asking others to recite grace? This is especially curious in view of the fact that that honour was declined by most of those who had been invited to say grace? Since the angels did not participate in the meal, how could they possibly have been asked to recite grace? What prompted David to bless G-d more than the other participants at that meal? Since G-d's activities both within nature and when supernatural, are all designed to afford man a greater understanding of who He is, what He is, the extent of His power etc., eating at His table is symbolic of being allowed to share some of these insights. This is the reason the Midrash quotes the verses in Isaiah 33,16-22, in which G-d is featured as the Provider of parnassah, livelihood. When these verses describe how G-d established Israel in the choice land of Israel and Jerusalem, this refers to the Manna. Just as the Manna was food par excellence, so the land of Israel was soil and climate par excellence, providing the best in crops and agricultural products. Its advantages were similar to the advantages of Manna over ordinary food. Proverbs 30,7-9, expresses our attitude to earthly belongings.

"Do not make me too poor or too rich." This is the reason that parnassah became known as shulchan aruch (see haggadah sheI Pessach) The term means that all necessities are at hand. The "fruit" represents the food for the body of elevated man, referred to earlier in this chapter. The bodies of such people are to be treated as separate from their spirit, and therefore rate vegetable matter as their proper nourishment. The fruit from the tree of life represents food offered to the mind and spirit. Since the latter is also the nourishment that sustains angels, it was quite in order for

them to recite grace for what they had received from their Host. Honouring G-d by allowing Him to choose the order of who should recite grace, is a way of saying that G-d's involvement in all that goes on in our world is not merely indirect, He being the ultimate Source, but that it is immediate. He remains in charge, overlords all that goes on in our world.

Since the angels Michael and Gabriel had not been listed as guests participating at that meal, their mention may symbolise two different stages of human development. Michael is symbolic of the primordial intellect, something that represents merely man's potential. Gabriel, on the other hand, symbolises the mind and spirit that have matured, achieved their potential. According to Chagigah 16, these are the two angels that accompany man at all times, never leave him. G-d first asked Michael to recite grace, since he first and foremost is in need of the nourishment offered, and has to acknowledge what he has received from the Lord. Next comes the angel Gabriel, who has to give thanks for the spiritual sustenance received. It is this which enables the most refined part of man to achieve its perfection. Next in line are the ancestors who, though they owe many of their moral and ethical achievements to their own efforts, could not have done so without the nourishment (guidance) provided by Him. The ancestors in turn ask David to give thanks, since he is the king chosen by them; it is fitting that the human representative of Royalty, acknowledge the Royalty of the entire universe by this manner of thanksgiving. David was especially representative, since G-d had assisted him in an unparalleled manner. Therefore, it is he who says "I will pronounce the benedictions." It is worthwhile to recall another aggadah in Pessachim 119. In that instance, at the feast G-d prepares for the righteous in the future, "on the day

He performs kindness with the offspring of Isaac," G-d offers the honour of reciting grace first to Abraham, who declines, citing inadequacies having sired Ishmael. Then Isaac declines, because he had sired Esau. Jacob also declines feeling inadequate having married two sisters during their lifetimes, something later on prohibited by Torah law. Moses declines not having been worthy to enter the holy land, whereas Joshua declines for not having been worthy to have a son. David, however, accepts the honour with alacrity. Actually, David had better reason to decline seeing he had transgressed Torah laws in effect during his lifetime. The answer, however is as stated. No one had received a cup so full of salvations, i.e. no one else had experienced so many acts of G-d's Personal Providence as had David. It was fitting therefore that he, more than anyone else should lift the chalice in thanksgiving to the Lord. David's entire lifestyle of praising the Lord in song, reflects his constant awareness of all G-d's kindness he had experienced. Having appreciated the foregoing, we can understand the inner connection between the Midrash with the Manna in the desert. (12) When

Israel reached the oasis Refidim, which contained all the necessities of life except water, they thought that this was proof that Moses had acted on his own all along. They believed that Moses had finally miscalculated, having forced Israel to march through the desert. They challenged Moses to produce water. They argued that if G-d was indeed the force behind every one of Moses's instructions, surely they were entitled to a miracle. Moses, realising that it was not really water they had requested, but that they had made the availability of water an issue to discredit his leadership, upbraided them for "trying the Lord." If you have a quarrel with me, he said, do not bring the Lord into it. Moses was not angry at the request for water, but at the pretext this request served for. Only after the pangs of thirst grew stronger, and the people were actually afraid of perishing from thirst, did Moses call upon G-d to ask for help. This was both because the people were thirsty, and because he felt threatened personally. When the people accused Moses of taking them out of Egypt into a deathtrap, they did not refer to G-d, against whose leadership they would not have complained.

Moses presented the people's case against himself as apparently justified. If succor would not be forthcoming, he argued, the people would be entitled to stone him, as is the fate of a false prophet. So as to remove such doubts from the people's mind, he was commanded to take the elders with him when he would perform the great miracle of producing water from the rock by means of the very staff that had up to now served to produce plagues, afflictions and death on the Egyptians. The episode of Massa and Merivah taught the lesson that G-d continued to guide the everyday lives of the Jewish nation.

Akeidat Yitzchak 48:1:4 Since the Torah has gone to some considerable length to underline that the Jewish people never saw an image at the revelation, meaning that G-d is completely abstract, the idea of building a tabernacle for such an abstract entity, seems completely baffling. The Rabbis moreover have made a point of referring to G-d as makom, place, on occasion. They wanted to drive home the point that G-d is not bound by space "place," but that He is the Maker of everything spatial, everything connected with "space" or "place." When we recite in the kedushah, emulating the angels in Ezekiel 3, 12, "blessed the majesty of G-d mi-mekomo," this may be understood as "because He is the foundation, basis of all." The word does not mean "from His place" as we commonly translate it in other contexts. It follows that the sanctuary we build here on earth is purely symbolic, though governed by the strictest halachot, rules of conduct. If the concept of the sanctuary is one that embodies ideas expressed symbolically, then details of the construction and everything else connected with it are also full of symbolism. The author treats the subject in detail. We summarise only

some of the highlights.

Akeidat Yitzchak 67:8:6 The Torah frowns on excessive pursuit of material goods. Therefore we read "if you will listen to My commandments...you will gather in your harvest." This means you engage in necessary activities to assure yourself of your livelihood. Selling oneself to another person in order to gain financial security, and to escape one's responsibilities, is frowned on. The fact that even the most private possessions such as wife and children acquired during servitude, continue to belong to the master, demonstrates that the Torah's message to us is to rely on G'd and not on man. After all, it is He who has commanded the children of Israel "for to Me are the children of Israel servants." He did not take us out of Egypt in order for us to become slaves again. The pursuit of worldly goods is a waste of time, since we leave the world as naked as we came into it. (Job 1, 21, "I came naked out of my mother's womb, and naked will I return there.") The whole paragraph dealing with the Jewish servant can be understood allegorically as reflecting man's experience in this world. He enters alone, leaves alone, leaves his acquisitions behind, and when he expresses the desire to attach himself to a human master, he is brought to elohim, to be forcefully reminded of his error. In the seventh decade of his life, his vitality ebbs, and as he approaches his death, i.e. the time he returns to the grave, he does so chinam, chofshi, without any encumbrance. This is either due to physical decline or because of lack of energy to go on living. The wheel has turned, as a wheel is always apt to do. What had once been thought to be a continuous upward curve, has peaked and become a downward movement. (compare Exodus 21, 2-6) Man will wind up as a servant "forever" to his "Master" in the world of infinity. The purpose of the Torah has always been to liberate mortal man from the inevitable and depressingly terminal state of merely physical existence here on earth. Accepting the yoke of Torah is an incomparably easier burden than living with the thought of the futility of all earthly existence. One of the ways to achieve freedom from the obsessive character of the greed to amass more and more material, i.e. useless wealth, is the Torah's emphasis that one should be satisfied with the necessities of life. All the Torah's promises of reward for performing G'ds commandments are of this nature. "I will grant you rain at the appropriate time;" "you will gather in your grain harvest." "You will eat, be sated and bless the Lord." Performance of G'ds commandments will enable us to feel "satiated" when we have eaten. The greatest lesson in this respect was the experience of man, the heavenly bread the Israelites ate in the desert. This taught reliance on G'd, the futility of amassing for the future as long as one is under the loving care of G'ds Personal Providence.

Akeidat Yitzchak 77:1:5 Anyone who interests himself too much in his comfort, can do so only at the expense of neglecting useful things and by not allocating enough time to the pursuit of the things his mind is capable of. On the other hand, he, who concentrates most of his energies on the pursuit of purely intellectual matters, will sacrifice some comfort and the attainment of useful things in the process. What is to be aimed at then, is the proper balance between the three disciplines. Anything that interferes with the pursuit of that objective is the fourth discipline, teshukah, adherence to the yetzer hara.. Our sages have described remedies against this teshukah for all the three disciplines. 1) If one is overly interested in one's bodily comfort, the regulatory device is the woman, i.e. one's wife. In other words, marriage is a regulator, safeguarding man against the excessive pursuit of physical comforts, gratifications. 2) The teshukah of rain is that it is restricted to falling on the earth. (in this way the danger of excess rain creating a deluge is regulated) 3) The teshukah of the Almighty (His wide ranging intellect) is that it is concentrated on Israel. This is a voluntary restriction that G'd imposes on Himself. 4) The teshukah of the yetzer hara is that it is restricted to Cain and the likes of him. This shows that even the yetzer hara is subject to self imposed limitations.(see the text of this in Bereshit Rabbah 20) Since all excesses in any of the aforementioned three areas are anathema to G'd, He gave the Jewish people a land, which, in the words of the Torah, supplies all our needs without leading to our indulging in excesses in any area. We read in Deut. 8,7, "for the Lord your G'd brings you to a good land, a land of wheat and barley, rivers etc., where you will not eat bread in paucity; you will not lack anything therein, you will be satisfied and bless the Lord. Be careful that you do not forget the Lord, and over-indulge..." In the paragraph quoted above, we can clearly see that the mitzvot are to act as built in regulators against excessive pursuits of material objectives. The Talmud Menachot 43, points out that the promise of the adequacy of that land to meet our needs, is followed by the line "what is it that the Lord your G'd asks of you, except to observe all the commandments etc." The word mah- is to be read as mey-ah, i.e. one hundred. There is a hint in this that we are to recite one hundred benedictions daily. Israel's trek through the desert for forty years taught them that man and be-er, the manna and the well, were adequate sustenance, that over-indulgence in food and drink were not our purpose.

אֶרֶץ חִטָּה וְשֵׁעֶלֶה וְגִנָּן וְתֵאֵנָה וְרִמּוֹן אֶרֶץ-זֵית שֶׁמֶן וְדִבְשׁ: 8 a land of wheat and barley, of vines, figs, and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and honey;

Leadership in the Wilderness; Authority and Anarchy in the Book of Numbers, Part I, Chapter 6; The Aspiration Postcard 33 The Food of the Future, the Dream of the Future Returning to the aspiration postcard of the future, Moses offered an image of food: “a land of wheat and barley, of vines, figs and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey; a land where you may eat food without stint, where you will lack nothing” (Deut. 8:8). The pleasant images utilized in this verse are a far cry from pungent slave foods or from manna’s barely tolerable sameness in the complaints of the Israelites. Deuteronomy’s promise is not one of flesh, but one of agrarian riches, returning us at once to the Garden of Eden’s heady pleasures. It is not one of stinging and acrid vegetables, but of sweet and abundant fruit grown over time.

The root vegetables they asked for in the middle of the wilderness were just that. They came from the ground and symbolically represented their desire to stay in one place, yet this root produce would only last them one season. After one harvest, its benefits were gone. Planting trees takes longer and requires the capacity to see what is not yet in existence. The oft-quoted and beautiful talmudic parable of a traveler and a tree comes to mind. The traveler saw an old man planting a tree that he would never live to see flourish. When the traveler questioned why he was planting, the old man responded: “I did not enter a desolate world. Just as those before me planted for me, thus will I plant for those who come after me.” (Ta’anit 23a.) This is the ultimate statement of stewardship: to see a future not yet visible and prepare it for others whom you will not see. The image of more stable vegetation – trees rather than root vegetables – is another important contrast that created a compelling aspiration postcard. The vision of arriving at the destination is not the only thing Deuteronomy 8 contains; it offers a future that will continue to yield bounty time and again. Patience on the part of the Israelites would solve their problems in a much more munificent way than even they had imagined. You must be patient when you plant a tree.

אֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר לֹא בְּמִסְכָּנָהּ תֹאכְלֶיהָ לֶחֶם לֹא־תִחְסֹר כָּל־בָּהּ אֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר
אֲבִנֶיהָ בְּהָל וּמִהַרְרֶיהָ תִּחְצֹב נְחֹשֶׁת: 9 a land where you may eat food without stint, where
you will lack nothing; a land whose rocks are iron
and from whose hills you can mine copper.

Akeidat Yitzchak 91:1:6 Now that the land of Canaan, -i.e. wife number one,- is about to be restored to the Jewish people, normal economic factors will provide the people's sustenance, instead of the miraculous help from the king. Israel is warned not again to neglect its soul, the unseemly wife, while enjoying the companionship of wife number one, delighting in her physical endowments. Moses' warning about the need to observe all the mitzvot now that Israel is about to enter the holy land, is a reminder that the period of dependence on the king's largesse is drawing to a close.

The king warns that neglect of the rules He had laid down would be viewed as a serious act of ingratitude for past favours. Such ingratitude could lead to Israel forfeiting the land itself. Should the nation ask how they could ensure their economic survival if they had to be constantly occupied with spiritual matters such as studying the Torah, they are reminded that they had learned during forty long years that the pursuit of material values is not the only way to ensure one's economic success in the world. "Remember the way your Lord guided you,...He fed you the manna...your clothing did not rot..." The whole purpose of allowing wife number one to be kidnapped, was to demonstrate that survival is possible without all these accoutrements. On the contrary, harm and failure will result from neglect of our spiritual equipment, rather than from our neglecting our business in favour of Torah study and mitzvah performance. We find this type of warning in Avot 6,2, "woe to the creatures because of the insult they heap upon Torah." Neglect of Torah spells retribution according to the midah keneged midah, measure for measure principle. "He who tries to divest himself of the yoke of Torah has the yoke of government and bureaucracy imposed upon him." (Avot 3,5.) If one encounters certain difficulties in life, one often does not have to search very far for the reasons. It is usually due to an imbalance in the way one has handled one's priorities. Torah study, mitzvah performance, have to be given equal time with the pursuit of one's economic goals. Nourishment of the soul is not provided by the same source as nourishment for the body. A healthy body is needed to enable the souls to function at full capacity. For that reason, all reasonable efforts have to be made to provide the body with proper sustenance. We know that Torah and mitzvot are the primary food for the soul from Solomon (Proverbs 6,23) "for the mitzvah is like a candle, whereas the Torah is like light itself." In the Torah (Deut 8,3,) we are told "man does not live by bread alone, but by everything which emanates from the mouth of G'd does man live." Onkelos renders Leviticus 18,8, as follows: "You shall observe My statutes and My social laws so that man ensures eternal life for himself when he carries them out." The expression "to live thereby," accordingly refers to sustenance for our spiritual half. All the commandments that become applicable upon entry into the holy land, give sustenance to the spiritual part of the Jew. The land is described as one in "which you do not eat bread therein out of scarceness" (Deut 8,9). It is a land that does not demand so much physical labour that its inhabitants cannot find enough time to devote themselves to their spiritual tasks. Verses 11-14 are the warning not to immerse ourselves too deeply in the effort to acquire material riches. This could lead to forgetting G'd's goodness and the purpose for which we travelled

forty years through the desert. Whereas, notwithstanding G'ds generosity, our own contribution to economic stability is required, or at least permitted, we must never forget what it is that gives us the strength to perform economic miracles. Should we fail to remember, our fate will be the same as that of the nations whom we are replacing in Canaan. If any reminder were needed as to by whose grace conquest of the country was accomplished, reference is made to the relative physical and numerical strength of Israel vis a vis the nations it has conquered. Those nations had inspired such awe in any would be conquerors, that to credit our success merely to our own strength would be sheer lunacy. G'd is also anxious to disabuse us of the thought that it was our moral superiority that led to our successful conquest. He points out that it was the wickedness of the land's inhabitants that caused them to be dispossessed. Already at the time of Abraham, G'd had promised that fulfilment of G'ds promise to him had to await the inhabitants' cumulative level of sin reaching a stage that would give G'd legal justification to dispossess them. (Genesis chapter 15) Israel's own waywardness is recalled, to remind them further that it was not their righteousness that led to the conquest of the land of Canaan. Precisely because G'd had forgiven so many of their past misdemeanours in the desert, they had to be warned now that they could not count on G'd being indulgent with them in the future. Also, the argument which Moses had used successfully up to now, namely that demise of the Jewish people would be interpreted by the nations at large as the Jewish G'ds inability to make good on His promise to his people, would no longer be valid. Once Israel had conquered the land of Canaan, G'd would have demonstrated His ability to deliver on His promises. The difficulties in this Parashah stem from the apparent lack of logical sequence in which it is written.

10 וְאָכַלְתָּ וּשְׂבַעְתָּ וּבֵרַכְתָּ אֶת־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ עַל־הָאָרֶץ הַטֹּבָה אֲשֶׁר נָתַן־לְךָ: 10 When you have eaten your fill, give thanks to your God יהוה for the good land given to you.

Akeidat Yitzchak 41:1:7 When Shemot Rabbah 25, suggests that in answer to the question of why we observe the Sabbath, we should point out the fact that no Manna fell on the Sabbath, it means that we have seen proof that He created the universe in six days and rested on the seventh day. The falling of the Manna was associated with three miracles, (a) it did not fall on the Sabbath, to teach the sanctity of the Sabbath; (b) the fact that the daily ration collected was exactly adequate for each individual, there was no shortfall. This teaches that one should not chase after material goods and seek to accumulate them; (c) the double portion that fell on Fridays, teaching that the Sabbath was the day of rest, and that only those people would eat it who had prepared for it on Sabbath eve. The lazy people would starve.

Compare Isaiah 65,13, "behold, My servants will eat, but you will starve!" (See Shabbat 153) (10) Since "seeing is believing," keeping a day's supply of Manna bottled up for future generations would reinforce the belief of future generations of Jews that Manna had indeed been also been spiritual nourishment, and as such had benefitted even the later generations. (11) The repetition of "they ate Manna for forty years etc.," is to emphasize that both their physical and their spiritual needs were met by consuming Manna during all these years. Alas, when the Manna stopped, and there was no longer visible evidence of G-d's Providence, Israel began to depart from the level of Torah observance it had practiced up to that point. The Midrash quoted at the outset reflects the lesson of the Manna. Before explaining this in detail, we must understand some of the details in the parable. Why had G-d placed the table in the garden of Eden and not in the desert? Where were the angels Michael and Gabriel, if G-d sat the head and the righteous at His feet? Why did they divide the fruit of the garden and the fruit of the tree of life into separate courses? How does one accord honour to G-d if one portrays Him as asking others to recite grace? This is especially curious in view of the fact that that honour was declined by most of those who had been invited to say grace? Since the angels did not participate in the meal, how could they possibly have been asked to recite grace? What prompted David to bless G-d more than the other participants at that meal? Since G-d's activities both within nature and when supernatural, are all designed to afford man a greater understanding of who He is, what He is, the extent of His power etc., eating at His table is symbolic of being allowed to share some of these insights. This is the reason the Midrash quotes the verses in Isaiah 33,16-22, in which G-d is featured as the Provider of parnassah, livelihood. When these verses describe how G-d established Israel in the choice land of Israel and Jerusalem, this refers to the Manna. Just as the Manna was food par excellence, so the land of Israel was soil and climate par excellence, providing the best in crops and agricultural products. Its advantages were similar to the advantages of Manna over ordinary food. Proverbs 30,7-9, expresses our attitude to earthly belongings.

"Do not make me too poor or too rich." This is the reason that parnassah became known as shulchan aruch (see haggadah shel Pessach) The term means that all necessities are at hand. The "fruit" represents the food for the body of elevated man, referred to earlier in this chapter. The bodies of such people are to be treated as separate from their spirit, and therefore rate vegetable matter as their proper nourishment. The fruit from the tree of life represents food offered to the mind and spirit. Since the latter is also the nourishment that sustains angels, it was quite in order for them to recite grace for what they had received from their Host. Honouring G-d by allowing Him to choose the order of

who should recite grace, is a way of saying that G-d's involvement in all that goes on in our world is not merely indirect, He being the ultimate Source, but that it is immediate. He remains in charge, overlords all that goes on in our world.

Since the angels Michael and Gabriel had not been listed as guests participating at that meal, their mention may symbolise two different stages of human development. Michael is symbolic of the primordial intellect, something that represents merely man's potential. Gabriel, on the other hand, symbolises the mind and spirit that have matured, achieved their potential. According to Chagigah 16, these are the two angels that accompany man at all times, never leave him. G-d first asked Michael to recite grace, since he first and foremost is in need of the nourishment offered, and has to acknowledge what he has received from the Lord. Next comes the angel Gabriel, who has to give thanks for the spiritual sustenance received. It is this which enables the most refined part of man to achieve its perfection. Next in line are the ancestors who, though they owe many of their moral and ethical achievements to their own efforts, could not have done so without the nourishment (guidance) provided by Him. The ancestors in turn ask David to give thanks, since he is the king chosen by them; it is fitting that the human representative of Royalty, acknowledge the Royalty of the entire universe by this manner of thanksgiving. David was especially representative, since G-d had assisted him in an unparalleled manner. Therefore, it is he who says "I will pronounce the benedictions." It is worthwhile to recall another aggadah in Pessachim 119. In that instance, at the feast G-d prepares for the righteous in the future, "on the day

He performs kindness with the offspring of Isaac," G-d offers the honour of reciting grace first to Abraham, who declines, citing inadequacies having sired Ishmael. Then Isaac declines, because he had sired Esau. Jacob also declines feeling inadequate having married two sisters during their lifetimes, something later on prohibited by Torah law. Moses declines not having been worthy to enter the holy land, whereas Joshua declines for not having been worthy to have a son. David, however, accepts the honour with alacrity. Actually, David had better reason to decline seeing he had transgressed Torah laws in effect during his lifetime. The answer, however is as stated. No one had received a cup so full of salvations, i.e. no one else had experienced so many acts of G-d's Personal Providence as had David. It was fitting therefore that he, more than anyone else should lift the chalice in thanksgiving to the Lord. David's entire lifestyle of praising the Lord in song, reflects his constant awareness of all G-d's kindness he had experienced. Having appreciated the foregoing, we can understand the inner connection between the Midrash with the Manna in the desert. (12) When

Israel reached the oasis Refidim, which contained all the necessities of life except water, they thought that this was proof that Moses had acted on his own all along. They believed that Moses had finally miscalculated, having forced Israel to march through the desert. They challenged Moses to produce water. They argued that if G-d was indeed the force behind every one of Moses's instructions, surely they were entitled to a miracle. Moses, realising that it was not really water they had requested, but that they had made the availability of water an issue to discredit his leadership, upbraided them for "trying the Lord." If you have a quarrel with me, he said, do not bring the Lord into it. Moses was not angry at the request for water, but at the pretext this request served for. Only after the pangs of thirst grew stronger, and the people were actually afraid of perishing from thirst, did Moses call upon G-d to ask for help. This was both because the people were thirsty, and because he felt threatened personally. When the people accused Moses of taking them out of Egypt into a deathtrap, they did not refer to G-d, against whose leadership they would not have complained.

Moses presented the people's case against himself as apparently justified. If succor would not be forthcoming, he argued, the people would be entitled to stone him, as is the fate of a false prophet. So as to remove such doubts from the people's mind, he was commanded to take the elders with him when he would perform the great miracle of producing water from the rock by means of the very staff that had up to now served to produce plagues, afflictions and death on the Egyptians. The episode of Massa and Merivah taught the lesson that G-d continued to guide the everyday lives of the Jewish nation.

Jewish Women in Time and Torah, i "Women Are a People by Themselves" 5 Suffice it to cite just two halakhic discussions that have a bearing on this subject. Women are obligated to say Birkat ha-Mazon (grace after meals). The Talmud asks, however, whether this obligation is of biblical origin or is based on a rabbinic innovation. The question requires an explanation: Why should it be a rabbinical commandment? The Bible says clearly: "And you shall eat and be satisfied, and you shall bless the Eternal One, your God."⁷ (Deuteronomy 8:10.) Surely this is not an obligation dependent on the time of day. Why should women not be obligated to recite grace as a biblical mitzvah? The reason this question arises is explained in the commentaries of Rashi and Tosafot. According to Rashi, the command to say grace does not seem to apply to women because after the words "and you shall bless the Eternal One, your God" the Bible continues: "for the good land that He gave you," and as we know, the land was distributed among the male members of the tribes and women did not receive a share in it. How can they thank God for the "good land" if it was given to the men and not to them?

Jewish Women in Time and Torah, iv Contemporary Halakhic Issues Regarding Women 34 Let us now see why Ravina believes that the woman's obligation in this matter is only rabbinical. Rashi and Tosafot disagree in their analyses of his argument. According to Rashi, Ravina assumes that the commandment cannot be based on the Torah, for the Torah says: "You shall eat and be satisfied and bless the Eternal One, your God, for the good land that He gave you."¹⁸ (Deuteronomy 8:10.) But we know that the land was divided only between the male members of the tribes of the children of Israel. Women had no share in it. How can they bless God for land that was not given to them? But is it really true that the land of Israel was given only to the males and not to the females?

Leadership in the Wilderness; Authority and Anarchy in the Book of Numbers, Part I, Chapter 6; The Aspiration Postcard 12 For the Lord, your God, is bringing you to a good land, a land with streams and springs and fountains issuing from plain and hill; a land of wheat and barley, of vines, figs and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey, a land where you may eat food without stint, where you will lack nothing, a land whose rocks are iron and from whose hills you can mine copper. When you have eaten and are satisfied, you will bless God, your God, for the good land that He has given you. (Deut. 8:7–10)

Leadership in the Wilderness; Authority and Anarchy in the Book of Numbers, Part I, Chapter 6; The Aspiration Postcard 40 In the book of Deuteronomy, the blessings of food are integrally connected to the land of promise and even come with a cautionary note: "When you have eaten your fill, give thanks to the Lord your God for the good land which He has given you" (Deut. 8:10). Perhaps you will mistake the milk and honey of the place of your servitude with the milk and honey of freedom. It is easy enough to confuse the two when the struggle for freedom gets difficult. Becoming an independent landowner has its own spiritual perils, one of which is the fear that the reliance upon God as provider in the desert can turn to self-sufficiency and forgetfulness of the divine once on the land. Such is the warning offered in Deuteronomy describing God's nurturing in the wilderness and the impending change that may take place when the desert journey is over:

הַשֹּׁמֵר לֹא פָּנִיתְשָׁכָה אֶת־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְבַלְתִּי שְׁמֹר מִצְוֹתָיו וּמִשְׁפָּטָיו וְחֻקֵּי אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי מֵצִוְךָ הַיּוֹם: 11 Take care lest you forget your God and fail to keep the divine commandments, rules, and laws which I enjoin upon you today.

Akeidat Yitzchak 77:1:12 Midrash Tanchuma on Parshat Eykev, and Midrash Shocher Tov comment on Proverbs 5,6, and Job 28,16, respectively. We find in those verses references to the mysterious way in which Torah sometimes reports the sequence of events. In the words of the Midrash, the apparent lack of cohesion is deliberate, as otherwise "every reader could heal the sick or revive the dead." We should ask therefore, why the sages endeavoured altogether to find meaning in the order in which events have been related? The truth is that our sages did not mean that there is absolutely no order in the sequences of the Torah's teachings; rather they teach that G'd arranged things in a manner that safeguarded certain secrets that He has reserved for Himself. (Isaiah 44,7) "Who but I can declare it and set it in order for Me, since I appointed the ancient people." This verse forms the background to our Midrashim. The enquiry why a particular event is reported at a particular point in the sequence of events, is quite legitimate, regardless of the general rule *eyn mukdam*, that the Torah does not claim to report events in the chronological order in which they occurred. That rule means, that even when the Torah does report events in historical order, this does not mean that the Torah's purpose is exhausted by having conveyed to us a little bit of history. Dissemination of slanderous information may stem from a variety of motivations. 1) A person may slander someone else in order to make himself look good by comparison. 2) On the other hand, someone may spread negative information about a third party, having no ulterior motive at all. The latter type is the real *ba-al lashon hara*, spreader of evil gossip. The first type is simply a glory seeker, the slander being incidental to his purposes. When the Talmud Erchin 15, describes animals approaching the snake asking the reason it attacks humans, it compares the lion and the wolf with the snake. The two former either wish to still their hunger, or at least to devour the prey. The snake however, seems to poison just for the fun of it, deriving no visible benefit from its action. Korach was not a classic example of a slanderer, since he merely used slander to enhance his own stature, and to further his ambition to become a leader. For this reason, Korach is described in our classic sources as a dissident, a quarreler. The spies, however, are described as "slanderers." Since Miriam's sin, though not as severe as that of the spies, was also in the nature of slander, the story of the spies follows that of the punishment of Miriam, to alert us to the fact that the spies had not absorbed the lesson contained in Miriam's punishment. (1) If the Torah skips the introduction about the circumstances that preceded the dispatch of the spies, in this instance, it is precisely to make sure that we would not confuse the issue, and would notice that the issue was the sin of *lashon hara*, slander. (2) The reason twelve men were sent, was to provide the maximum chance of success. People endowed with all the good qualities cited in the Parshah, would command enough moral fortitude to prevail over their human

weaknesses, if anyone could. Their eventual report would be accepted without prejudice, since they represented a cross section of the people. Should the mission fail, it would not be due to inadequate planning. The princes mentioned in Parshat Nasso, having already assumed their respective functions, were not allowed to absent themselves from their posts for such an extended period. The Torah describes the twelve spies as each being a nassi, prince, in order to show that they were not inferior to the twelve princes whom we know already. The fact that Joshua is only ranked fifth amongst them, shows that all of them had been very eminent people at the time of their appointment for this task. That the Torah does indeed list them in the order of their qualities seems borne out by the fact that the order in which they are listed corresponds neither to the order of the "flags" of the encampment, nor to the order of birth of the various sons of Jacob whose tribes they represented. The Talmud Sotah 34, discusses the various names and comes to the conclusion that their various names contained hints of their eventual disloyalty to G.d. Since this is obviously an exercise in hindsight, the original selection must have been based on the positive qualities each one of the spies had displayed prior to his being chosen for such a fateful mission. The fact that Caleb and Joshua could not even persuade their own respective tribes to accept their minority report, shows that the spies had not been chosen for any popular following they might have enjoyed. (3) The verse dealing with the name Joshua must be understood as follows. "These are the names of the men...except for Hoshaya of the tribe of Ephrayim, whom Moses later used to call Joshua." (which is the name by which he is known to us in most instances when we read about him.) Observing the goodness of the land, entailed four separate considerations. 1) Did the inhabitants appear robust and healthy? 2) Was the terrain easy to cultivate and was there an abundance of it? 3) Were there urban centres the inhabitants were happy in and proud of? 4) Did the soil yield abundantly, and was the produce of high quality? (4) Moses wanted the spies to pay attention to all these factors, so that they would look forward to this all soon being theirs. (compare verses 18-20) Concerning the type of cities, whether open or fortified, - Moses wanted to point out that if these people still lived in fortified cities, this reflected a lack of self confidence on their part. This would give Israel a psychological advantage when setting out to attack them. The book of Joshua in chapter 6,1, reports that Jericho was completely sealed off from the inside and the outside. Immediately afterwards we are told that the inhabitants had already reached the point of despair. Although it was early in the season, and the orchards would therefore be under close scrutiny by their respective owners, Moses instructed "fortify yourselves," i.e. get a hold of yourselves and take from the fruit to taste it. Moses' insistence stemmed from his conviction that the land was excellent. The fact that the nachal eshkol, valley of the grape cluster, was so named, was only in commemoration of the spies' visit. It proves that the grapes found there were not of exceptional quality. (verse 24) They were merely representative specimens of the quality the land produced. (5) The spies brought the fruit back in order to lend credibility to the report they were about to issue. When Moses saw the fruit, he was lulled into a false sense of security, overlooking the fact that they were not making their report to the commander-in-chief, but to the nation as a whole. The Torah indicates this by describing the spies as returning from latour, from touring the country, from emphasizing its good points. When one emphasizes weak points such journeys are described as rigul, spying. The opening remarks seemed to confirm Moses' optimism. (verse 27) As soon as they uttered the word efess however, they aborted their entire mission. The fruit became an instrument to describe the desirability of the land, and to contrast this with the physical prowess of its inhabitants. From having been reporters, they suddenly assumed the role of advisors. The careful description of who lived in the land, i.e. Amalek in the South, the presence of giants, three nations in the mountains, Canaanites by the sea and the river Jordan, all these remarks were designed to create the impression that conquest of such a country was not feasible. They did not yet dare to spell this out, however. When Caleb, knowing the tenor of their remarks, interrupted, he did so to give Moses a chance to be heard, and to create a climate in which his own report would at least get a hearing. For that reason he made it appear as if he too had something to complain against Moses' adventurous policy of attacking such physically superior residents of the land of Canaan. In fact, he hoped that by giving his own report, emphasizing his firm belief that Israel could conquer the land, he could squelch the despondency his colleagues had evoked with their innuendos about the hopeless nature of such an undertaking. He thought that the other spies would not dare come out openly against such a campaign in the very presence of Moses. At that point, however, the other spies started to use their arguments outright. They portrayed the presence of the giants (32-33) as proof of the futility of starting a war, citing the fact that these giants included men who had survived the deluge. To contrast this with their own feeling of inadequacy, they referred to their having felt like grasshoppers by comparison to those super-men. The fact that these giants had observed twelve strange men help themselves to grapes from their orchards without the owners having become galvanised into some form of counter action, they conveniently overlooked. On the contrary, they allowed it to be taken as proof that these men were not in the least bothered by such action. They considered any danger from Jewish spies as no greater than the threat posed to them by grasshoppers. They considered the country's fertility as only due to the superhuman efforts of these giants. By

describing the land as one that devours its inhabitants, they hinted that ordinary people could not survive that climate.

The reason there is no preamble to the despatch of the spies, is that the very mission, having as its objective the collection of factual observations, was perfectly permissible. What was wrong was that the people, upon return of the spies, allowed them to present their interpretation of what they had seen, and that they believed those interpretations.

The people's belated concern (14,3) was only a cover for their, true motivation, that of despising the land G'd was offering to them. (14,31) The positioning of verse three, in which the people describe their own fate and that of their families, makes it appear that they preferred their families' deaths to their own dying by the swords. They do not describe the fate of their wives and children as the result of their own death in action. They express their preference to whatever fate would await them in Egypt. They go so far as to suggest the appointment of a leader for such a return. G'ds answer to all this is quite appropriate. He says, in effect: "your children will enjoy that which you have despised."

But you who have consigned yourselves to damnation either way, and who are already considering yourselves as corpses, you will drop dead in the desert. (7) Joshua and Caleb rent their clothing, confirming only that the land was indeed excellent. Since this had been all that they as spies had been asked to report on, they expressed the conviction that if He wished, the Lord would surely bring them to that land subject to His considering them fit for this. (6) When the people realised that the whole logic of their position had been challenged by Joshua and Caleb, they did not react with reason but with their basest instincts, trying to still the voice of conscience by attempting to murder the authors of a report they did not like. They were restrained only by the appearance of the Divine glory that scared them. Moses, who continued to remonstrate with them, could not sway them. (Deut. 1,29-33) At that point G'd despaired of their ever demonstrating true faith, and decided to let them all die at once, meaning to replace them with a new people, with Moses as its patriarch. Moses used the well worn argument that the impression such action would produce on outsiders like the Egyptians, would be counterproductive to His image. Our sages describe active forces in terms of the masculine gender, whereas they describe passive ones in terms of the feminine. It does not matter in this context whether the mashpia, the active force is actually of the male gender or vice versa, in the case of the mushpa the passive force being actually of the female gender. In that sense, G'd is always the mashpia, and everybody or everything relative to Him is always the mushpa. When Moses in 15, 11, says to G'd "if this is what You are about to do to me," and he uses the feminine gender for the word "You," the sages interpret this to mean "You will undermine Your own strength." The idea is that he argues that G'd would henceforth appear as the mushpa instead of as the mashpia, G'ds traditional role. This is the reason Moses prayed "now let the power of the Lord be great," to demonstrate that "Your" strength is indeed the source of all Power. When Israel, speaking to Moses at the time they received the ten commandments, said to Moses "you speak to us," employing the feminine pronoun in referring to Moses the man, the human being, (Deut. 6,23) they convey the same idea. They are saying that although they will then be hearing the voice of G'd only from the mushpa instead of from the mashpia, at least they would survive. (8) The fact that the argument Moses used is of the utmost significance, is proven from the words of Ezekiel, in chapter thirty six. Concerning the advent of the redemption in the future, G'd is quoted as saying "Not for your sake do I act, family of Israel, but for the sake of My holy name that you have desecrated etc." Moses, as distinct from the sin at the golden calf, invoked the attribute of adnut, Omnipotence of G'd when he appealed for forgiveness. He had realised that after all the many acts of rebellion by the Jewish people, the kind of forgiveness which is total, could not be expected as an immediate outcome of his prayer. He therefore refers to the fact that G'd had previously raised the level of the sin to a lesser category - compare verse 19- "as You have raised this people until now, ever since they have come out of Egypt." G'd responds by saying "I have forgiven, exactly in accordance with your words." (the limitations you yourself have set) This is "for the people." However, the perpetrators

will have to pay an immediate price and die by the plague. (verse 37) The entire nation who had witnessed G'ds miracles at the time of the Exodus in their adult years, would henceforth no longer qualify for similar miracles at the time they would conquer the land of Canaan. They have forfeited forever the right to such revelations of G'ds power on their behalf. This was a punishment on an individual level, though at first glance it might have looked collective, since none of them would enter the holy land. The individual nature of the punishment would manifest itself when each one of them would die on a different date. However, "the wicked congregation," i.e. the ten spies, would all die at the same time at once, receive collective punishment. (9) The need for the next generation to wait forty years to enter the holy land, is directly related to the sin of the parent generation. As long as some of the former remain alive, as living testimony to the disloyalty of their covenant with G'd, the miraculous protection of G'd cannot be extended to their children when they would try to enter the holy land. The ratio of forty years for forty days is again an expression of G'ds consideration for His people. Since the spies had taken forty days before returning with a negative report, G'd allows a year for each day of delay, spreading the punishment over a period of forty years, instead of letting everybody die at once. In this manner, the whole nation would learn that G'd is merciful even when He administers punishment. He does

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not thin out the ranks of the people all at once, but gradually, so as not to allow their decreased numbers to become an invitation to attack by their enemies. If G'd could be merciful even in such circumstances, what tremendous display of G'ds goodness must the people have forfeited by their conduct? G'd hastens to confirm the decree by swearing an oath (verse 28). He is only too aware that the people will be overcome by a feeling of remorse and will try to sway Him from His declared intention. (10) Since repentance induced by fear, duress, does not wipe the slate clean, the people did not deserve the presence of the holy ark in their midst in the campaign they now planned. The very fact that they dared to go ahead without it, showed that they still had not appreciated who it was that alone would guarantee their success. If we are taught in the book of Joshua that the sin of one man, Achan ben Karmi, who had not yet been punished for his crime, could be the cause of the whole Jewish people suffering defeat at the hands of the small city of Ai, what would happen when a whole army of unrehabilitated sinners would face the might of the Canaanites? (compare chapter 7)

Nineteen Letters 11:2 They furthermore tend to ennoble thy inner character that it become pure and free of all that could drag thee down from the high pinnacle of thy holy mission. They bid thee put aside pride and desire of sensual pleasure, to respond sympathetically to the sorrow or joy of all beings, and to embrace them all in thy love as children of thy God. These injunctions are but the applications of the principles demonstrated as true in the revelations given in the actions, in the mighty deeds, of God. His commandments are but the expressions of these principles; revealed as concepts, not as mere incomprehensible behests; whosoever desires truth will accept them.

12 When you have eaten your fill, and have built fine houses to live in,

Duties of the Heart, Ninth Treatise on Abstinence 7:3 When they conquered the land of Israel and settled it, and enjoyed its good, they started to seek superfluities in food and drink, indulgence with women, and in erecting buildings. The more the land was developed, the more their intellect deteriorated, as written: "Lest when you have eaten and are full, and have built goodly houses, and dwelled therein...[then your heart be lifted up, and you forget G-d.]" (Devarim 8:12). And the more the lusts increased and strengthened, the more the intellect weakened, and delayed grasping the correct way.

13 and your herds and flocks have multiplied, and your silver and gold have increased, and everything you own has prospered,

14 beware lest (lest Heb. pen; moved down from v. 12 for clarity.) your heart grow haughty and you forget your God הוהי—who freed you from the land of Egypt, the house of bondage;

Akeidat Yitzchak 41:1:6 No doubt the portion dealing with Manna is of fundamental significance, since it relates to man's ultimate destiny and salvation. The impediments to achieving final goals are twofold, and stem from people having either too much or too little. Of the two impediments, having too much is undoubtedly the greater impediment on our path towards salvation. A surfeit of worldly goods acts as a greater hindrance to our achieving our spiritual goals than a shortage of such material possessions. We know of many poor people who became great Torah scholars, whereas only a few Jews managed to combine both material wealth and great spiritual leadership in one person. Among those blessed with wealth, some have used it to provide comforts for their families, others, such as the tribe of Zevulun, to enable others to pursue a life of Torah study not interrupted by the need to earn a livelihood. However, the vast majority were snared by material wealth to feed their own greed. As a result, all the good their wealth might have accomplished was wasted. Of the latter people, David says (Psalms 78,33) "they have ended their days in vanity, their years in confusion." Deuteronomy 8,11 -14, warns of the dangers of wealth which can lead one astray. (1) Because G-d was aware of the dangers inherent in wealth, He provided Israel with bread from heaven on a day to day basis. This

was to teach them the lesson that He was the great Provider, and that food serves specific objectives, that its accumulation is not an end in itself. Only in this way can one expect to be fed at "the two tables." (2) When G-d provides the Manna, the temptation not to serve G-d because one is busy earning one's livelihood ceases. On the other hand, by not receiving excess food or material wealth, the temptation to wheel and deal, amass fortunes etc are robbed of their very basis, and the impediment to serving G-d due to preoccupation with one's worldly possessions is removed from such an individual. This is the meaning of the words "in order to test you if you will go in the way of My teachings or not." (Exodus 16,4) (8) By providing a double portion for the Sabbath already on Friday, the sanctity of the seventh day is emphasized, for without preparing for that day ahead of time, no prepared meals would be possible on the Sabbath.

The lesson is also taught that accumulation of worldly goods is justified when these goods serve a holy purpose, (more about this in chapter 55) (3) When the Jewish people noted a layer of fine particles, they believed it was the Manna which people knew of. That is why the verse cites "they said to one another it is "Manna," because they had not realised what it really was." They had been wrong! Moses pointed this error out to them, explaining that this was not a medication, but food. Moses said "this is the bread G-d has given to you to eat," i.e. it is not what you thought it was. Since, however, they had already named it, the name stuck to it. Since it was difficult to get the Israelites to change the name of that food, we find repeated occasions when Moses refers to it by name, with the added comment "which neither you nor your forefathers knew," or, "who feeds you Manna, which neither you nor your forefathers knew. (Deut. 8,3; 8,16) All this is to let us know that although the Israelites named the food "Manna," it is not identical with the Manna generally known. (4) The essence of the heavenly gift which was absorbed by the body one hundred per cent was, that it was to serve exclusively as food, not as an object of trade or barter. That is why Moses said "gather from it each according to the amount he needs to consume, namely one omer per head." When the Israelites did so, each one estimating the amount he required, he found upon returning to the camp that what he had collected was exactly one omer for each head in his family. The wonderful lesson was that it had been demonstrated that rich and poor require exactly the same amount of sustenance. (5) He who thought that he had collected "a lot," hamarbeh, as well as he who thought he had collected a little, ha-mamit, realised at the end of his respective life that each of them had had exactly enough. The rich person cannot take his wealth with him, and the poor has not been deprived since he has had enough until the day he died. (7) They were not allowed more than one day's supply to comply with the principle of baruch hashem yom yom, may the Lord be blessed daily, to teach us to have faith that G-d will be here to provide for us tomorrow also. The fact that some people starved themselves in order to leave some for the morrow, was not a form of asceticism, but was proof they were miserly. Just as there are many men who because they deny themselves luxuries being miserly with themselves, succeed only in providing generously for the second husbands of the widows they leave behind, so the Israelites were to be taught that self denial for the wrong reason is self defeating. The fact that the Manna melted as the sun became hot, was to dissuade greedy people who might come back to collect the left over quantities. The very crystal like nature of the Manna when freshly collected, gave rise to the belief that it would be easy to keep and preserve. This is the reason all these points are described in detail. (8) (6) Moses had obviously not told the people beforehand that a double ration would be found on Fridays. Moses then told them that if they prepared it for the Sabbath right away, not on the next day, it would keep. "He who labours on the eve of the Sabbath, will eat on the Sabbath," i.e. he who labours in this world will reap a double reward in the world to come. The verse (Exodus 16,26) "on the seventh day is the Sabbath there will not be any on it," teaches that any good deeds accumulated in this life is food stored up for consumption in the hereafter. "Today to prepare it, and not tomorrow to prepare it." (Avodah Zarah 3) (9) Just as there were people who tried to keep what they had already collected for later, so there were some who went out on the Sabbath to collect. They did not want to miss any, in case there would be some. G-d's anger at these people stemmed from the fact that the lesson of the double ration they had already received on Friday had been lost on them. They were not concerned with their well being in the hereafter, but lived only for the material blessings available in this world. Moses upbraided these people saying "here G-d made you a gift of the Sabbath." Their refusal to see the centrality of the Sabbath legislation to the whole fabric of Judaism, was indeed a most serious offence. The visible Providence of G-d in connection with the Manna demonstrated that the Sabbath legislation is indeed fundamental, its observance a keystone in Judaism.

Akeidat Yitzchak 67:6:14 From the foregoing we can stipulate three things: 1) On Rosh Hashanah, G'd considers only deeds already committed previously. 2) Only fitness to survive is judged on that day, just as would be the function of a human tribunal. This eliminates the thoroughly wicked people who, having already lost their share in the hereafter, could not regain it by submitting to the death penalty decreed on them in the physical world. 3) Since death decreed on man on Rosh Hashanah is due to the evil nature of his deeds, such death will not be due to natural causes when it occurs, since death is something that is part of everyone's fate anyways. Keeping this point in mind, we can approach the solution of the apparent paradox of tzaddik ve-ra lo, rasha ve-tov lo, the righteous and his misery and the wicked and his being well off. When G'd makes mankind parade before Him on Rosh Hashanah, the nations that have not stood at Mount Sinai are excluded. "All the nations are like nothing vis a vis Him." (Isaiah 40,17) Of the Jews, all who have sinned but have merits offsetting the sins, or have repented their sins, and all those whose sins are not the kind that deserve death, are immediately inscribed for a year of life. This is what is meant by the expression tzaddikim gemurim; they are now considered righteous. Those whose mortal sins are not offset by merits or repentance, are inscribed for death. Naturally, these sentences are not carried out at once, so as not to arouse the feeling that the judgment is cruel.

However, the Personal Divine Providence is withdrawn from these guilty people, and from that moment on every one of them is subject to the caprice of natural law. Should natural law not result in their death, G'd despatches a messenger to terminate the guilty person's life, as we read in Samuel I 26,10, "or the Lord will smite him, or his day will come and he will die, or by warfare." Since the judgment had been based on past conduct, one may assume that a change of conduct on the part of the person under sentence of death would change the sentence, possibly even cancel it. Just as the person who has been inscribed for life, would not be kept alive were he foolishly to attempt to commit suicide, so a person who has been inscribed for life did not buy an insurance policy permitting him to commit felonies, and remain free from death until the following Rosh Hashanah. By the same token, repentance is acceptable even from persons who are under sentence of death, irrespective of whether they are aware of such sentence or not. The exceptions to this rule are those sins that cannot be expiated for by repentance alone, as per Isaiah 22, 14, "this sin will not be atoned for you until you die." We learn that remission for people under sentence of death is possible, from Achav king of Israel. (compare Kings 1 21, 29) Also king Chiskiyahu's sentence of death was revoked. (compare Isaiah 38, 5 and our comments in chapter 36.) It pays to read chapter eighteen in Ezekiel, where the process of guilt and punishment is discussed in detail, as well as the reversal of evil decrees. When we encounter an apparently thoroughly wicked person, who enjoys long and successful years, it is clear that he has not been judged on Rosh Hashanah. This is so, a) because he no longer qualifies for hashgachah peratit, b) presumably he has some merits to his credit which, since they cannot be compensated for in the hereafter, must be compensated for in this life, i.e. el panav yeshalem lo. "G'd will pay him off to his face," (Deut. 7, 11) This is also what David means in Psalm 92, 8, "when the lawless spring up like grass, where all the abusers of might flourish, in order to be destroyed in the end. When an apparently righteous person dies prematurely, we assume that although he had been righteous last Rosh Hashanah, something that he has done since last Rosh Hashanah caused a change in his judgment. Examples are both Moses and Aaron, and Nadav and Avihu, who surely on the Rosh Hashanah prior to their respective deaths had been inscribed for life, but whose specific actions resulted in their deaths before the year was out. Other examples would be Gedalyah ben Achikam, who ignored warnings of danger (Jeremiah 40, 13), or Achitofel, who committed suicide, (Samuel II 17, 23), or people who chose to die on kiddush hashem sanctification of the Lord's name. These deaths come under the heading of "everything is in the hands of Heaven except the common cold," i.e. they are the direct result of free volition of the party involved, not due to prejudgment on Rosh Hashanah of sins committed in the past. Similarly, old people do not die from the effects of a decree issued on account of their sins, on the contrary, they enjoy both "tables," i.e. they have had a good life in this world and can look forward to their full share in the world to come. The principle that once G'd has decreed something good, positive, He does not revoke it, is not in conflict with the position we have taken, since a) nowhere is it stated that the inscription on Rosh Hashanah "for life," covers the entire year. It merely means that since the person examined had not at that time deserved the death penalty for past errors, he is confirmed for continued life. There cannot therefore be a question of G'd having reversed Himself, should that individual have become guilty of a capital offence prior to the next day of judgment. b) The rule of G'd not reversing a decision favourable to an individual or individuals, is generally misunderstood. This will be dealt with in detail when we discuss false prophets in chapter ninety six. There we address the question "how will we know that G'd has not spoken to him?" Should one argue that this latitude on the part of G'd would make the day of judgment quite meaningless, since decisions taken on that day are subject to all kinds of reversals, the answer is simple. It is the kindness of G'd who endeavours to treat all His children like a clever doctor. He is not only concerned about restoring his patients to health, but also engages in the practice of preventive medicine. "For I the Lord am your Healer" (Exodus 15, 26.) A doctor may prescribe preventive treatment to forestall many minor disorders. Nevertheless, when a particularly violent strain of disease hits a person, special measures are called for. Most sins, committed daily, are not each in itself deserving the death penalty. However, if allowed to accumulate, they would combine to attract the death penalty. It is similar with the function of Rosh Hashanah. The day of judgment, in conjunction with repentance, disposes of myriads of minor sins. However, should a person have committed a major crime during the year, stern measures may be called for immediately. Anyways, the call of the shofar is to warn each of us to regain our spiritual health by taking the pertinent drugs, and cleansing our system to prevent future contamination. The spring, Passover time, is reserved for our physical renewal, whereas the autumn, i.e. Rosh Hashanah, is reserved for our spiritual renaissance. Spring being nature's renewal season, is suitable for physical renewal. Fall, on the other hand, is the period when due to harvesting, man considers himself most independent and he is at the height of his self reliance. It is at that time that he needs to be reminded that he is still in need of G'ds protection. Making the day of the shofar occur at this juncture, is most appropriate in counteracting man's frivolity at that time of year. "Yeshurun waxed fat and kicked," Deut 32, 15, or "lest you eat, be satisfied and your heart become haughty." Deut 8, 14. Encouraging man to repent before the day of judgment is ever so much more helpful than to wait

for the judgment, and then attempt to reverse it. Therefore, the knowledge of when the day of judgment occurs, affords us a chance to prepare for that day. When David proclaims "hail the nation that knows the teruah, they walk in the light of Your countenance," (Psalms 89, 16), he merely points out how fortunate we are to be able to put this knowledge to our advantage. The Talmud Rosh Hashanah 16, discusses timing of celestial judgments. Rabbi Yossi emphasizes that daily judgment of man occurs also, whereas Rabbi Yochanan makes the point that repentance even tears up the evil decree. When the question is raised that even myriads of sacrifices, if they are offered after the Day of Atonement, can no longer change the evil decree, the answer given is that this is so only in the case of individuals. Collective repentance of a congregation is accepted at all times. Since we have the opinion of Rabbi Meir that prayer, i.e. repentance is effective even after G'd has passed sentence, then the original opinion offered by him, that man is judged on Rosh Hashanah, does not mean that Rosh Hashanah is the only day judgment can be pronounced on man. He therefore, does not disagree with Rabbi Yossi and Rabbi Nathan who claim that the judgment process can occur any day, even at any hour. We rely on scriptural proof from the verse "to carry out the judgment of His servant as a daily matter." (Kings 1, 8, 59) There remains to be explained the status of the beynonim, the people whose actions leave them hanging in the balance, and how they are being dealt with. Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, is reserved for this category of people as the day when their status is examined and a decision is made whether to inscribe them (seal) in the book of life. The discussion in Rosh Hashanah 16, between Rabbi Avin and Rabbi Nachman, centers around the fine point whether having been inscribed (on Rosh Hashanah) they might need to be erased from the book of life (or the book of death as the case may be), or whether there is no need for that since people of that category had not been inscribed at all on Rosh Hashanah. A practical difference between these two viewpoints would occur only, if the person who was a beynonion Rosh Hashanah, still remains a beynoni by the time Yom Kippur has arrived. According to the view that he had never been inscribed for life on Rosh Hashanah, such a person would have nothing to look forward to, since he had not improved his status during the days of penitence.

Olat Reiyah, Essays on Prayer, Paths of Action in Prayer 11 ...rather while immersed in the joy of mitzvah. [ibid.] A mitzva comes to realization also outside of the soul of the one who performs it. In truth, joy is the sensation of inner wholeness which the upright soul feels in the rightness of her path and its goodness. And, in that prayer is the choice fruit of time (see Kuzari 3:5) and its purpose inner soul perfection (For more on the notion that the purpose of prayer is inner perfection, see sections 1:4 and 4:4), it is fitting that it reveal itself through the pleasure of a whole inner life, through the joy of mitzvah. Our Sages teach – one who prays must direct his heart toward heaven. Abba Shaul says a sign for this is "You will prepare (tachin) their heart, You will cause your ear to hear." (Tehillim 10:17) [ibid.] (The whole verse is "You shall hear the desire of the humble, O LORD, You will prepare their heart, You will incline Your ear." The Hebrew word יָכִיחַ means to set on a sound basis for what comes and shares the root יָכַח with the word , kavana הַנּוּחַ. See the Radak on Psalms 10:17 who says that here, in relation to prayer, it means to remove all distractions of the world which trouble the heart. Compare this to the Rambam's comment on the Mishna Berachot 5:1 "The first chassidim would wait an hour (shohin) [until thoughts ceased-Rambam] before prayer, in order to align (Ichavein) their hearts with Place." Rav Daniel adds - Shehiyya is sitting in stillness in order to align your heart with the Place. The one who sits in stillness learns that in truth he carries this place within him. It is the very life which he has, and the revelation that things are so clears the way for standing before the Shechina.) There is particular kavana (Compare this section to section 4:8), which is alignment with the meaning of the words and ideas of prayer. There is all-inclusive kavana, which is an alignment of the heart with the greatness of G-d and the soul's elevation suitable to her illumination by the light of G-d, for which the hour of prayer is uniquely favorable. This is what we learn here, that aside from aligning with the words and ideas in their particularity, one must direct align their heart with heaven and the loftiness of G-d to the extent that their soul can bear. And through this remembering (The link between kavana and memory flows from a reading of 'to remember' as to "re-member." Since memory is always located in the present, every act of remembering is a summoning up of past events, experience, states of consciousness and attaching them to my present awareness. The subject of memory is nominally the past, but it is a past accessible only through the lens of present identity. We do not remember everything, and what we do remember is most often not a factual "first-person account" of the past but rather a blend of our experience of it then and now. Just recall an important event with a sibling, parent or old friend and compare accounts. Or think of an event which occurred more than 5 years ago in your life which you said 'nothing will be the same after this.' Now ask yourself if you understand that even now more or less than when it happened. In this sense, memory becomes a process of telling a story of the past which fits into present identity, which provides it with a sound basis. But the present passes in an instant. Unless we engage in regular consciousness practices like meditation, mindfulness and reflective prayer then we may find it extremely difficult to be present to the present. Most

of our identity exists in a tension between memory and aspiration/anxiety for the future - the story of what was and the story of what will be. Therefore the whole picture of memory is the telling of a story of the past that shapes present identity which is oriented toward the future of which we dream. Or dread. This is why R' Kook says that through the remembering of G-d "the soul is lifted up to the wholeness of prayer's purpose" which is what aids its acceptance. We are praying for the future, for something toward which we aspire, and the question which lies behind so many of the thoughts in this introduction is – am I the person I need to be in order to receive the things I desire? Memory of G-d is a deliberate connecting of present consciousness to a heart's conception of His awesome greatness and the openness of soul which allows me to receive His light. And when my present self is wholly aligned to that feeling, idea, experience – I become, if only for a moment, the one to whom G-d would grant such a request. And if we pray often, with deep enough alignment, we can reorient ourselves and the world around us to the future for which we pray. The Holy Ba'al Shem Tov teaches that memory is the secret of redemption כבב שר. ח בקע תשרפ מירבד בוט מש לעב redemption is the secret of redemption מולחב סיהלאה וילא ולגנ רשא בתכו, השעת אל תווצמב הז הנמ יצוקמ ס"רהומ ברהו, תחכשו כבבל שר ביתכד חורה יסגל הרהזא (א' ה' הטוס) רשאכ יכ (ע"ז ט"שעבה וניבר) אוה ראיבו, החכשה אוה מולשו סח הרותה תוסירה דופיההו, הריכוה תוצמ אוה הרותה לכ תרהזא רקיעש, הלילה חכשת אירטמיג אמאו אבאד סירוחאמ החכשהו, רכו תומשמ קשמנ הריכוה יכ, חכשת אירטמיג סירוחא תניחבב אוה מדאה זא מדב תוריקע שי (ב) נח סכח יפ ירברו, הלואגה אב (ביהריכוהמו, החכשהמ תולגה קשמנש, תוללכב אוה כד דחא מדא תוטרפב אוהש ומכו, מידוחיב בותכש ומכ Sefer Ba'al Shem Tov Devarim Parshat Ekev "...lest your heart grow haughty and you forget the LORD your God..." (Devarim 8:14) They said in the gemara (Sotah 5a) This is a warning to the proud in spirit, as it is written 'lest your heart grow haughty and you forget.' The Rav Moshe m'Kotzi counted this as a negative commandment and wrote that God revealed to him in a dream, that the essential warning of all the Torah is the commandment to remember and that forgetting, which is its opposite, God forbid destroys the whole Torah. And the Holy Ba'al Shem Tov explained - when the blood is clouded, then one is in the aspect of the 'back end' which has the numeric value of 'and you forget' because memory flows from male names (?) and forgetting from the 'back end' of Aba and Ima which is the numeric value of 'and you forget' as is written in the Yichudim. As it is with an individual, so it is with humanity – exile flows from forgetting and redemption from remembering. "The words of a wise man's mouth find favor..." (Kohelet 10:12) See Shmonah Kvatzim 1:416 from R' Kook on the relationship between memory, miracle, consciousness and redemption:) of G-d and His greatness, the soul is lifted up to the wholeness of prayer's purpose, which of necessity aids its acceptance. And Abba Shaul said that this is what 'prepare their hearts' means - that through remembering G-d, their hearts are prepared for justice (see Yishayahu 45:19) and rectitude. Like the words of Rabbenu Yonah (Sha'are Teshuva (Sha'ar 2, siman 1, sha'ar 3, siman 27)) on the verse "It is through the Lord that all the offspring of Israel have vindication and glory." (Yishayahu 45:25) There he says that through recalling G-d, the seed of Israel becomes righteous and praiseworthy, because through this recollection their soul is lifted up to every good trait, to every practical capability and heart's wisdom. And so G-d is the One Who prepares their hearts, because their hearts are lifted up to great things through the remembering of Him and His might. And through this 'You will cause Your ear to hear.' This teaches that aside from the particular kavana, that is absolutely primary, the all-inclusive kavana is certainly required. This type of kavana is indicated by 'prepare (tachin) his heart to heaven,' it aids the acceptance of prayer. ל"ז וניחברמ עדונה אוהו, קמ תצק סבל קוחר ויידעש ינפמ אוה סתינע אלש המו, ה' תעמש סינע תואת הנהו ז"י: מילהת לע ירשלא. (וש וניזאה ירפס) כד רחאו סבל יכת וכל, קרא ניזאהו סימש ועמש (ב א) היעשי רמא נכ לעש, בורקמ הבשקה וא הנואה, קוחרמ איה העימש יכ (וש וניזאה ירפס) Alshich Psalms 10:17 You shall hear the desire of the humble The reason You have not answer until now is that their hearts were still somewhat distant from You. It is known from our Sages (Sifre Ha'azinu 306) that 'hearing' indicates from a distance, while 'giving ear' or 'listening' are from up close, as in "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord has spoken..." (Isaiah 1:2) This is why it says 'prepare their hearts,' because only after this will Your ears hear from up close.)

15 המוליכך במדבר | הגדל והנולא נחש | שרף ועקלוב וצמאון
 אשר איךמים המוציא לך מים מצור התלמיש:
 who led you through the great and terrible wilderness with its seraph (seraph Cf. Isa. 14.29; 30.6. Others "fiery"; exact meaning of Heb. saraph uncertain. Cf. Num. 21.6–8.) serpents and scorpions, a parched land with no water in it, who brought forth water for you from the flinty rock;

Akeidat Yitzchak 55:1:6 Since man has not been created to sit idle, with his hands folded in his lap, it is fitting that his activities should be commensurate with the lofty status he occupies in this universe. The philosopher Aristotele illustrates this premise by two examples. In the first example he describes the relationship of superior beings to their inferiors. In the second example he describes the relationship of the whole to its constituent parts. If an artisan ruins his

reputation by failing to live up to what is expected of a man of his calling, how much more does man forfeit his claim to superior status in this universe if he fails to employ the talents with which he has been endowed? Every part of the human body is designed and exists for the performance of some distinct function. Failure or inability to perform this function, robs that part of the claim to be what it is commonly called. A blind man's eye can hardly be termed "eye," since the ability to see, to have vision, is part of the definition "eye." Once devoid of its function, such parts retain their names only in the sense that they have been supplied to their respective owners. When "eye, ear, legs" are described in Psalm 115 as being parts of the idols, the Psalmist goes on to say "may those that would use them be just as these parts are themselves." This means that since the individual parts of the idols, i.e. eyes, mouth, legs etc. cannot perform the functions they were meant to perform, neither will the idol perform its function to be a deity, a protective power for those who worship it. "KOL asher boteach bahem," the whole in which one places one's faith. The whole relies on its parts to each fulfil its function; only then can the whole be conceived of, as living up to its title. If individual parts of the idol lack power and do not demonstrate such power, the idol as a whole is powerless, a sham. When man's individual parts fail to perform the various functions assigned to them, the term "man" can no longer be applied to its owners except in the sense of the lowest common denominator. This is why David says "KOL asher boteach" with the vowel cholam on the letter kaf rather than with the vowel kamatz under the letter kaf. When Solomon in Proverbs 21,25, states "the greed or lust of the lazy person will cause his death, since his hands refuse to do what he is supposed to do," he refers to the same idea. Man's inclination to inactivity leads him to be labelled "dead," as we find in Berachot 18, "the wicked are called dead during their lifetime (already)." Because they refuse to carry out their tasks, they have reached death prematurely; death after all, is merely a state of ultimate inactivity. Another way of explaining the same verse is that the desires of the lazy people are weak, express a wish to achieve their goals effortlessly. Therefore, when the time for action arrives, they fail to heed "the requirements of the hour, his hands refuse to do their share." This in turn leads to their death. It is beyond question then that a special task has been reserved for man. In general terms this task is described at the end of the story of creation. "He placed him in a garden in Eden, to work it and to preserve it." (Genesis 2, 15.) This verse is a reversal of a previous statement (2,5) "there was no human being to work the soil." Our sages comment on Deut. 15, 18, "He will bless you in all that you do." This verse is necessary so that we should not think we might sit and be idle. (Ketuvot 59) "Idleness leads to boredom." It causes spiritual emptiness and degeneration. The Torah illustrated that if even a small part of you, such as your hand, needs to perform its function, the idea that man as a whole could remain idle is obviously wrong. Solomon used many examples to decry and deplore idleness, laziness etc. From the above premise it is clear that all activity which does not lead to attainment of the goals and purpose of the person who performs it, is a useless activity. Such an activity would not be considered better than no activity. (Moreh Nevuchim section three chapter 25) However, the effort and diligence expended in pursuit of all categories of activities whose apparent goals are measured in quantity, weight or size, no doubt fall under the heading of "useless activity." The reason this is so is, that they are never ending, boundless. Those who pursue them never find rest, as someone who moves in a certain direction ought to find when he arrives at his destination. If this is so, the intensity with which these objectives are pursued do not make man any less idle or despondent. It follows that man's true activities must be the achievements that can be measured in terms of quality, not those that are measurable in terms of quantity. Real acquisitions would be knowledge, moral qualities etc. These acquisitions would be truly praiseworthy. Pursuit of such aims elevates man from a state of want and inadequacy to one of ever ascending status, until all his desires reach the stage of fulfilment. (menuchah, creative rest) All worthwhile objectives have strict limits towards which the aspirant strives. It is this which the wise Solomon defines as the perfect state of man. He proceeds from the premise that the soul is active in accordance with its superior moral status. The key to man's achieving his perfection lies then in the activity not motivated by lust, greed and phantasies, but by his moral imperatives. This is evident from the Torah's description of man's task in the garden Eden, which was the result of G-d blowing a living soul into him. (Genesis 2,7) It was at the point that we are told that Adam was endowed with a soul, that the Torah tells us what is his task. The poel, driving force, was to be the neshamah, soul. This is also what we must learn from the opening portion of our Parshah. "These are the words that the Lord said to them. Six days work shall be performed etc." (Exodus 35,2-3) When viewing the entire panorama of human activities which G-d commanded each one of us, one understands that just as G-d imposed activities upon Himself from which He desisted once He had achieved His objective, (compare "for during six days He created the universe, and on the seventh day He desisted and had a respite."-Exodus 31, 17) so all who model themselves after Him, will seek out activities that possess the distinction that toil and effort expended on them leads to margo-ah, serenity of their soul and personality, does not leave them feeling exhausted, unfulfilled, empty. When David says "when you eat of the labour of your hands, you will be happy and well off," (Psalms 128,2) our sages in Berachot 8, state that the word "happy" refers to this world, whereas the words "well off" refer to the world to come. It is clear that

such activities are difficult for man to achieve, as explained in Moreh chapter 34, section 1. We would like to add another factor to those mentioned by Maimonides, one that is equal in importance to all those enumerated there. Most people view the acquisition of apparent wealth as the major accomplishment in their lives. This attitude leads to these people being under great strain, it preoccupies them so much that they have little time and energy left for the performance of good deeds. (Aristotele ethics chapter 17, statement 7) The "good fortune" of amassing such wealth, prevents true wealth, real happiness. Perhaps then material wealth is not really a "good fortune," if it leads someone astray who started out being a tzaddik before he became wealthy. "Watch yourself.. lest you eat, become sated,...and your heart becomes boastful..and you forget the Lord your G-d." (Deut 8, 11-15) See our commentary in connection with the manna in chapter 41.

Derashot HaRan 4:21 The answer: That sin which is cause for apprehension on the Blessed One's part as potentially resulting in the destruction of the Jews is idol worship, to which the sin of the golden calf was similar in character. For the other transgressions do not arouse the Blessed One's wrath to such a great extent; idol worship is to be much more feared in this regard. And there is more reason for apprehension of this sin in the desert than in the land of Israel. For the Jews knew that the other lands were under the ordinance of stars and constellations, as our sages state (Kethuboth 110b): "All who live in the land of Israel, it is as if they have a G-d; all who live outside the land of Israel, it is as if they do not have a G-d." This is because the other, gentile lands are under the ordinance of heavenly plenipotentiaries, an ordinance which cannot be changed except through miraculous, Heavenly intervention (this being the intent of "for he will not forgive your sins"). Therefore, if one lives outside the land of Israel, because he is under the ordinance of a star or of a constellation, his prayer is not so readily accepted as it would be if he lived in the land of Israel, which is not under the dominion of a chief, an officer, or a ruler, but of the Blessed One Himself, as it is written (Deuteronomy 31:16): "and they go astray after the strange gods of the land" — indicating that all gods, except the Blessed One Himself, are strangers in that land. And because the Jews knew this, they would be more apt to stray into idol worship outside the land of Israel, the province of other powers (as they, indeed, said [Exodus 32:1]: "Arise and make us a god which will go before us") than they would in the land of Israel itself. Add to this the fact that they would more likely cleave to the Holy One in the holy land than outside it and that there is more reason for apprehension that rebellion against the word of G-d would result in destruction in the desert than in the land of Israel in that the desert is a place fraught with the danger of "snakes, serpents, scorpions, and drought, no water being there" (Deuteronomy 8:15), so that destruction is more of a possibility there than in other places. This is not as the pseudo-pious would have it, that the power of G-d is constant in all places, for good or for evil. This is not so, but the Blessed One has stamped it into the nature of things that loss is more likely to result in dangerous places than in others, so that if He is not constantly providential of one in such places but abandons him to the vicissitudes of time, then evil will certainly befall him, unlike the case in other places, where there is not cause for such apprehension. Therefore, the Blessed One said to Moses: This does not require My apprising you of My ways, for I have no intention of separating Myself from you, but My presence will go in your midst when I grant rest to you — and them (what is stated of Moses applying to all of Israel, as in "to heed you on the way," where the meaning is obviously not to heed Moses alone). But this did not suffice for Moses, who answered (Exodus 33:15): "If Your presence does not go, do not take us up from here." That is, if Your presence does not go, we should not move from this spot at all. For how will it be known that we have been singled out from the other nations if not by Your going with us now? For when we are in the land of Israel, they will attribute our fortune not to us but to the land, seeing that when we were not in the land You did not walk in the midst of our camp. And the Blessed One acknowledged this, saying (Ibid 17): "This thing, too, that you have spoken I will do, for you have found favor in My eyes and I have known you by name." He elaborated here, saying "for you have found favor in My eyes" in response to Moses' first having said (Ibid 12): "and You said: 'I have known you by name and you have also found favor in My eyes'" — indicating thereby that He was doing so by virtue of Moses' having found favor in His eyes. And He added "and I will know you by name," in response to "and You said: 'I have known you by name,'" not as Moses said (Ibid 16) "so that I and Your people be singled out from all the peoples," but "because you have found favor in My eyes." And this is also by way of intimating that His acquiescing in walking in their midst and not governing them through an angel would be limited to the days of Moses alone; but afterwards, in the days of Joshua, the aforementioned angel would lead the Jews until they came "to the rest and to the inheritance," as we shall explain.

Guide for the Perplexed, Part 3 50:9 Of this kind is the enumeration of the stations [of the Israelites in the wilderness] (Num. xxxiii.). At first sight it appears to be entirely useless; but in order to obviate such a notion Scripture says, "And Moses wrote their goings out according to their journeys by the commandment of the Lord" (ibid. ver. 2). It was indeed most necessary that these should be written. For miracles are only convincing to those who witnessed them; whilst

coming generations, who know them only from the account given by others, may consider them as untrue. But miracles cannot continue and last for all generations; it is even inconceivable [that they should be permanent]. Now the greatest of the miracles described in the Law is the stay of the Israelites in the wilderness for forty years, with a daily supply of manna. This wilderness, as described in Scripture, consisted of places “wherein were fiery serpents and scorpions, and drought, where there was no water” (Deut. 8:115); places very remote from cultivated land, and naturally not adapted for the habitation of man, “It is no place of seed, or of figs, or of vines, or of pomegranates, neither is there any water to drink” (Num. 20:5); “A land that no man passed through, and where no man dwelt” (Jer. 2:6). [In reference to the stay of the Israelites in the wilderness], Scripture relates, “Ye have not eaten bread, neither have ye drunk wine or strong drink” (Deut. 19:5). All these miracles were wonderful, public, and witnessed by the people. But God knew that in future people might doubt the correctness of the account of these miracles. in the same manner as they doubt the accuracy of other narratives; they might think that the Israelites stayed in the wilderness in a place not far from inhabited land, where it was possible for man to live [in the ordinary way]; that it was like those deserts in which Arabs live at present; or that they dwelt in such places in which they could plow, sow, and reap, or live on some vegetable that was growing there; or that manna came always down in those places as an ordinary natural product; or that there were wells of water in those places. In order to remove all these doubts and to firmly establish the accuracy of the account of these miracles, Scripture enumerates all the stations, so that coming generations may see them, and learn the greatness of the miracle which enabled human beings to live in those places forty years.

הַמֵּאֲכִלְךָ מִן בְּמִדְבַּר אֲשֶׁר לֹא־יָדְעוּ אֲבֹתֶיךָ לִמְעַן עֲנֹתְךָ 16 who fed you in the wilderness with manna, which
וּלְמַעַן נִסֶּתְךָ לְהִיטֵבְךָ בְּאַחֲרֵיתֶךָ; your ancestors had never known, in order to test
you by hardships only to benefit you in the end—

Duties of the Heart, Fourth Treatise on Trust 3:45 2. In the way of exchanging, to pay him more good in Olam Haba (the afterlife), as written "to benefit you in your end" (Devarim 8:16).

Guide for the Perplexed, Part 3 24:4 The trials mentioned in Scripture in the [six] passages, seem to have been tests and experiments by which God desired to learn the intensity of the faith and the devotion of a man or a nation. [If this were the case] it would be very difficult to comprehend the object of the trials, and yet the sacrifice of Isaac seems to be a case of this kind, as none witnessed it, but God and the two concerned [Abraham and Isaac]. Thus God says to Abraham, “For now I know that thou fearest God,” etc. (Gen. 22:12). In another passage it is said: “For the Lord your God proveth you to know whether ye love,” etc. (Deut. 13:4). Again, “And to prove thee to know what was in thine heart,” etc. (ibid. 8:2). I will now remove all the difficulties.

Guide for the Perplexed, Part 3 24:6 Having shown that the term “to know” means “that all people may know,” we apply this interpretation to the following words said in reference to the manna: “To humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldst keep his commandments, or not” (Deut. 8:2). All nations shall know, it shall be published throughout the world, that those who devote themselves to the service of God are supported beyond their expectation. In the same sense it was said when the manna commenced to come down, “that I may prove them whether they will walk in my law or no” (Exod. 16:4); i.e., let every one who desires try and see whether it is useful and sufficient to devote himself to the service of God. It is, however, said a third time in reference to the manna: “Who fed thee in the wilderness with manna, which thy fathers knew not, that he might humble thee, and that he might prove thee, to do thee good at thy latter end” (Deut. 8:16). This might induce us to think that God sometimes afflicts man for the purpose of increasing his reward. But in truth this is not the case. We may rather assume one of the two following explanations: either this passage expresses the same idea as is expressed in the first and second passages, viz., to show [to all people] whether faith in God is sufficient to secure man’s maintenance and his relief from care and trouble, or not. Or the Hebrew term le-nassoteka means “to accustom thee”; the word is used in this sense in the following passage: “She has not accustomed (nisseta) the sole of her foot to set it upon the ground” (ibid. 28:56). The meaning of the above passage would then be: “God has first trained you in the hardships of the wilderness, in order to increase your welfare when you enter the land of Canaan.” It is indeed a fact that the transition from trouble to ease gives more pleasure than continual ease. It is also known that the Israelites would not have been able to conquer the land and fight with its inhabitants, if they had not previously undergone the trouble and hardship of the wilderness. Scripture says in reference to this: “For God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt. But God led the people about, through the way of the wilderness of the Red Sea; and the children of Israel went up harnessed out of the land of Egypt” (Exod. 13:17, 18). Ease destroys bravery, whilst trouble and care for food create strength; and this was [also for the Israelites] the good that ultimately came out of their wanderings in the wilderness.

17 and you say to yourselves, "My own power and the might of my own hand have won this wealth for me."

Akeidat Yitzchak 75:1:6 (1) The people were "as if complaining," refers to a trumped up charge, one not voiced openly. They were ashamed to voice their real complaint, and instead they voiced some diversionary complaint. Their real complaint, of course, had reached the ears of G'd who is familiar with what goes on in people's hearts. For this reason, G'd says later "you have wept in the earshot of G'd, who will feed us meat?" G'd had heard and was angry. At the time Abraham had weighed the money to Ephron for the burial ground he was purchasing for Sarah, he had also "heard" Ephron's unspoken words, not only the flattering offer of a gift. Despite Moses' prayer, which had stopped the fire consuming the people at tav-eyrah, the people sinned again for an entirely unprovoked reason. The assafsuff, the fringe elements, did not lust after meat. They induced in themselves lust after meat, a most despicable trait. Aristotele in chapter 9 of his book of ethics deals with this trait. When a person sees someone else enjoying something that he himself neither feels the lack of, nor the need for, he desires to be possessed of the urge to enjoy the same thing. If one observes a thirsty person slake his thirst with ice cold water, then such a person wishes to become thirsty in order to be able to quench his thirst. This is the basest way of enslaving oneself to physical greed and passions. Such people cannot even claim in defence of their behaviour that an outsider tempted them as Eve had done in Genesis 3,13. When the rest of the people observed the lust of the assafsuf, they wept again as they had done previously. This time however, they articulated their lust for meat. What displeased G'd most, was, that they had chosen to be free from moral imperatives (Torah) over freedom from enslavement to their physical urges. In Egypt, while they had been enslaved physically, Torah legislation had not yet regulated their freedom to partake of all the physical gratifications that presented themselves. Their food intake, sex life etc. had not yet become subject to Torah law and guidance. The fact that they now disdained the very thing that would lift them to the level of being truly free persons, particularly angered G'd. Whenever the Torah reports Israel as displaying a preference for Egypt, i.e. "we were better off in Egypt," the reference is to the exchange of physical freedom for the sacrifice of moral licentiousness. (see comment of Sifri on the word chinam, i.e. free from the yoke of the mitzvot,) The right to eat any fish without examining if such fish was equipped with fins and scales, was more important to them than to harbour the shechinah, Presence of G'd in their midst. After all, that shechinah, guided their destiny. (2+3) By their own admission, they had never eaten meat to their satisfaction; they only talk about sitting close to other people's fleshpots. But, even the memory of their erstwhile proximity to meat, was preferable to the availability of man, Heavenly food. At Refidim, when they did get quail, apparently it had not been to satisfy their bellies, since the fowl had not been described as performing that function. (as distinct from the "bread" which is described as lasovah, to satisfy. Exodus 16,8) Their complaint that they had nothing to look at but the man, underlined that they felt dependent daily on its re-appearance. The Torah says "who feeds you manna in the desert to keep you afflicted, unsatisfied, to test you, so that in the end you will be well off." (Deut. 8,17) G'd did not want Israel to gorge themselves on food, not even on man. When our sages in Yuma 74, tell us that blind people are never satisfied after having eaten, the reason is that they did not see the food. This places Israel's complaint into focus. "The only thing we can see is the manna." In other words, the only thing that they get their fill of is the manna. Abaye, in the same discussion in the Talmud, suggests that banquets should not be held at night, as one cannot enjoy one's food in the dark. Since the people had expressed themselves in a derogatory fashion about the manna, its appearance, its feel, etc., the Torah proceeds to give us an objective report about its properties. In Proverbs 16,17, Solomon writes "better a dish of vegetables that is served and eaten with love, than a fatted ox which is served and eaten with hatred." He illustrates the attitude of the people towards the most delectable of dishes, handpicked by G'd Himself. The Torah's description of the layer of dew upon which the manna descended nightly, proves that the people's state of mind was not due to an inherent shortcoming of the manna.

18 Remember that it is your God הוהי who gives you the power to get wealth, in fulfillment of the covenant made on oath with your fathers, as is still the case.

Akeidat Yitzchak 26:1:3 Human achievement may be due to G-d's personal intervention on our behalf known as hashgachah pertatit; it can also be due to favorable horoscopic constellations or environmental factors, commonly called hashgachah klalit; finally, it can be due to personal endurance, intelligence, energy, and skill. It is reasonable to assume that none of the factors listed account exclusively for the success or failure of our endeavors. Allowing that the Almighty's omnipotence allows Him to determine the outcome of all our endeavors, human intelligence and willpower

would be utterly meaningless were they not to play a significant part in determining the success or failure of our endeavors. This statement is not, of course, intended to minimize the value of G-d's contribution to the result of such endeavors. Although theologians claim that the Almighty can mislead the wise and impair their judgment to the point that they will act contrary to their original intentions, the same theologians do not deny that man possesses freedom of choice, without which the whole concept of reward or punishment for compliance or non compliance with G-d's wishes would be meaningless. There are numerous instances when the Torah legislates an action designed to protect the life or property of a third party. Consider the example of the law to erect a protective fence around one's roof. The reason stated is that unless such a fence is erected, a fatal fall from such a roof would be considered as an act of bloodshed committed by the owner of the house in question. Obviously, mentioning the latter possibility assumes that there is a free choice of whether to comply with the legislation or not. If there were no choice, how could there be negative results for the owner or the victim if the owner had failed to erect the fence? But not every one walking around an unfenced roof will fall off it with fatal consequences. The ultimate result of the fate of such an individual then is the result of more than one of the factors we have listed (Deut. 22,8). Consider also that the Talmud when discussing the digging of a hole that an animal might fall into, does not hold the digger responsible if a human being had come to harm by reason of that hole. The reason is that human beings are expected to have their wits about them, are meant to use the intelligence they have been granted. We see clearly that human behavior is at least one of the criterion determining his ultimate fate. The nature of the legislation to erect a fence, then, is more of the "good advice" variety that the Talmud often refers to when citing Rabbinic strictures. On the other hand, we know from experience that even the most diligent endeavors of man to attain certain objectives, are often doomed to failure. The attempt by Joseph's brothers to thwart realization of his dreams by selling him to a caravan of Midianites travelling to Egypt, is just one such example. The Talmud (Niddah 60) elaborates on our theme, explaining that even if one follows all the advice concerning the acquisition of wisdom meticulously, the desired result may not be achieved unless such efforts are accompanied by an appeal to the One who grants wisdom, and by G-d's positive response to such an appeal. Nevertheless, history is full of examples of brilliant men who were successful without turning to G-d for help; also, what point would there be in the selection of brilliant advisors to heads of states, if their advice would not have positive results? In Proverbs 22,29, Solomon tells us, "Seest thou a man diligent in his business? He shall stand in front of kings! (10,4) he will become poor who deals with a sick hand, but the hand of the diligent makes rich." We must conclude then that success of human efforts is assured if the individual in question is also favored by astrological influences, mazzal and if due to his own merit he receives Divine guidance at the personal level. Philosophers agree that one must not base one's lifestyle on hope for success due to fortuitous circumstances. Lucky breaks cannot be depended on. The interplay of the four causes for success in worldly matters may be understood in the following manner. A person born under favorable conditions who also lives the life of the righteous, qualifies for hashgachah peratit and will therefore require relatively little personal exertion to achieve his objectives. "Man's steps are guided by the Lord, when the latter approves of his path" (Psalms 37,23). Conversely, should such a person lead the wrong kind of life, even the favorable conditions he was born under, will not altogether protect him, as G-d's hand will prove more powerful than his natural good fortune and will thwart him despite his best efforts. See the example of Achitofel (Samuel II Chapter 7). To quote Isaiah 44,25, "He turns wise men backwards and makes their knowledge foolish." The same holds true, of course, if one's natural mazzal is only average or worse. If, however, one is endowed with average skills and intelligence, and one's actions are the outgrowth of one's own free will, such a person does not qualify for Divine intervention in his affairs. His successes in wordly matters are due in overwhelming measure to his own efforts or lack thereof. Any slackening of his efforts is apt to put his success in jeopardy. If such a person had been born under unfavorable conditions, his chances to succeed would be minimal indeed. If a person born under negative environmental, hereditary, and horoscopic influences lives a life of piety, then his efforts combined with the merit he has accumulated will qualify him for Divine intervention on his behalf, and enable him to neutralize the negative factors under which he had been born. Abraham overcame the negative mazzal of sterility (Psalm 33,18). "The eye of the Lord is on those who fear Him and wait patiently for His kindness to save them from death and to keep them alive during times of famine." In all these instances, personal effort and perseverance contribute the major part to eventual success. In fact, any negligence or laziness is rated as sinful when circumstances seem to have called for exertion of self (Deuteronomy 16,10, promising success in return for kind and generous behaviour towards the poor, does so on the assumption that one's efforts will be crowned with success). The Torah does not promise windfalls. Since the majority of people are of average or below average endowments, the need for them to exert themselves on their own behalf is beyond question, since their merit or natural mazzal cannot be depended upon. The advice given by the Torah is addressed precisely to this large group of people, who by following it can hope to battle adverse conditions successfully. Man's lack of success is called nefilah when it occurs independent

of G-d's intervention; it is called *happalah* when due to G-d's active intervention in the affairs of that individual. Psalm 37,24 tells us, "Even though a man may fall, he shall not be cast down, for the Lord upholds his hand." When someone walks on a roof protected by a railing, this railing will prove a protection if the Lord had not intended for that person to fall off that roof. However, if the Lord had intended for that person to fall off that roof, the best railing in the world cannot save him. Sometimes, two people born under identical circumstances can have a widely different range of success due to their different merits (The Talmud *Moed Katan* 28 discusses this problem in connection with Rav Chisdah and Rabbah). Many fine distinctions apply in ascertaining the relative success of individuals in apparently similar circumstances. Suffice it to say that it behooves a person to view himself at all times as average in deeds (merits) and as below average in natural endowments. This will give him the incentive to acquire merits and to strive to overcome handicaps. In all matters of "worldly affairs," we have to make the first move, and the Lord has to assist us to assure us of success in carrying out our designs. Our prayers must be directed towards obtaining His help to overcome our respective handicaps. Should one fail to succeed in spite of having complied with all the above, the cause may be heavenly judgment acting as punishment. It could be trials to test our faith in Him. It could also be an affliction designed to enhance the ultimate achievement of our aims in our own eyes when it does finally occur. If one gives up prematurely in the face of obstacles, and does not strive mightily to overcome such impediments, the chances are that one is the architect of one's own misfortune and that such failure had not been decreed by G-d at all. Suppose we had been given the choice between immediate execution or life imprisonment, without time off for good behavior, we would certainly refuse to acquiesce in either alternative. We would make strenuous efforts to escape either of these two calamities. We would leave no stone unturned as long as the efforts to improve our own situation would not be at the expense of some innocent third party. Similarly, our own efforts to escape misfortune must be pursued up to the point where continued insistence would constitute rebellion against G-d. If pestilence rages in a city, one does not stay around, but one isolates oneself (*Baba Kama* 60). One employs every known medication to ward off infection. Should all efforts have failed and one appears doomed, one must declare one's faith in the justice of the Lord, reconcile oneself to His superior wisdom, and prepare to meet one's judgment. Although Ramban disagrees with the approach we have outlined in the case of the need to call a doctor, he would not disagree with the approach outlined in other areas of life (Ramban holds that whereas a doctor may treat the sick, the sick must not ask to be treated, as this would indicate lack of faith in G-d as the ultimate Healer). When G-d sent Samuel to anoint David, who had a price on his head, Samuel had to expose himself to danger, in order to perform this mission. G-d did not expect Samuel to rely on miracles, but told him to use subterfuge in the shape of a calf, so that if intercepted, he could claim to be on the way to Bethlehem to offer the calf as a sacrifice. G-d instructs, "During the meal, you will proceed according to My instructions" (*Samuel I* 15,1 -6). King Assa's reliance on a doctor is criticized only because it had not been preceded by prayer, not because the patient had no right to consult doctors (*Chronicles II* 16,12). One of the best examples of the extent to which one has to go to ensure one's survival, is found in *Samuel I* 21,14, when David, while at the court of Achish, deliberately acts like a demented halfwit to mollify those of Achish's advisors who did not trust his loyalty. When David recalls that episode in Psalm 34, he credits G-d with helping him, though when reading the account of this event it seems wholly due to David's own initiative. His problem had been that he had to choose between actively fighting against his own people to prove his loyalty to the Philistines and to qualify for refuge from Saul in Gath, or to forfeit his life by refusing to join an attack against his own people. In this unusual situation, a course of inaction coupled with an appeal to G-d seemed the only way out. The classic example for proper conduct is found in the account of the encounter between Jacob and Esau. Since Jacob's delegation to Esau had been prompted by fear, and some of our sages even castigate Jacob for having "taken hold of the dog's ear" (*Bereshit Rabbah* 75), we must ask why G-d did not take Jacob aside and say to him "do not be afraid, I will be your shield," as He had done for Abraham after the latter had returned from defeating Kedorleomer and liberating Lot (*Genesis Chapter* 15). Similarly, G-d had told Isaac not to go to Egypt, to rely on Him. Even Jacob himself, before setting out on his last journey to Egypt, had been personally reassured by G-d. No doubt, the impending encounter with Esau called for more reassurance than any of the other examples mentioned. So why was this reassurance not forthcoming?

Duties of the Heart, Fourth Treatise on Trust 3:64 One should not think that his livelihood depends on a particular means and that if these means fail, his livelihood will not come from a different means. Rather, trust in the Al-mighty, and know that all means are equal for Him. He can provide using whatever means and at any time and however He so wishes, as written "for with the L-ord there is no limitation to save with many or with few" (*Shmuel I* 14:6), and "But you must remember the L-ord your G-d, for it is He that gives you strength to make wealth, in order to establish His covenant which He swore to your forefathers, as it is this day." (*Devarim* 8:18), and "Not by might nor by power, but by

My spirit, says the L-ord of Hosts." (Zecharia 4:6).

For the Perplexed of the Generation 11:3 Our nation has never had any doubt, even from the beginning of its development, that the way to develop its vitality and achieve its establishment depended on its diligence and its efforts.

The ethical connection to the value of effort was always to recognize that God gives us the strength to do acts of strength, but it is always dependent on effort and industry on our part. Did we only put in a little effort and a little war for the land that was promised to us by God with an absolute promise to our forefathers? However, it is not lack of effort that causes the pure faith, rather it is strength of heart and perfect hope, which in the end will bring about our soul's desire. It therefore increases strength and bravery, and distances us from despair. The idea of faith only brings us to the perfection in an all-inclusive and authentic understanding that we are not only built through physical strength, but additionally, and especially, through moral strength that perfects us along with them. That, without a doubt, is the ratified covenant. That is understood by anyone who understands and pays attention to the ways of our people and its inner vitality.

Leadership in the Wilderness; Authority and Anarchy in the Book of Numbers, Part I, Chapter 6; The Aspiration Postcard 18 Take care lest you forget the Lord your God and fail to keep His commandments, His rules, and His laws, which I enjoin upon you today. When you have eaten your fill, and have built fine houses to live in, and your herds and flocks have multiplied, and your silver and your gold have increased, and everything you own has prospered beware lest your heart grow haughty and you forget the Lord your God – who freed you from the land of Egypt, the house of bondage; who led you through the great and terrible wilderness with its seraph serpents and scorpions, a parched land with no water in it, who brought forth water for you from the flinty rock; who fed you in the wilderness with manna, which your fathers had never known, in order to test you by hardships only to benefit you in the end – and you say to yourselves, "My own power and the might of my own hand have won this wealth for me." Remember that it is the Lord your God who gives you the power to get wealth, in fulfillment of the covenant. (Deut. 8:11–18)

19 והִזָּה אִם־שָׁכַחְתָּ תִּשְׁכַּח אֶת־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ וְהִלַּכְתָּ אַחֲרֵי אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים וְעִבַּדְתָּם וְהִשְׁתַּחֲוִיתָ לָהֶם הֲעֵדֹתִי בְכֶם הַיּוֹם כִּי אֶבֶד תֹּאבְדוּן: If you do forget your God הוהי and follow other gods to serve them or bow down to them, I warn you this day that you shall certainly perish;

The Jonathan Sacks Haggadah; Essays, History and Memory 15 Beware lest you forget the Lord your God...lest you lift up your hearts and forget the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt.... And it shall come to pass if you indeed forget the Lord your God...I bear witness against you this day that you shall utterly perish. (Deut. 8:11–19)

20 כְּגוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר יְהוָה מֵאֲבִיד מִפְּנֵיכֶם כֵּן תֹּאבְדוּן עַקֵּב לֹא תִשְׁמְעוּן בְּקוֹל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם: like the nations that הוהי will cause to perish before you, so shall you perish—because you did not heed your God הוהי.

9

1 שִׁמְעוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל אֵלֶּה עֹבֵר הַיּוֹם אֶת־הַיַּרְדֵּן לְבָא לְרִשְׁתָּ גּוֹיִם גְּדֻלִּים וְעִצְמִים מִמֶּךָ עָרִים גְּדֻלֹּת וּבְצֻרֹת בְּשָׁמַיִם: Hear, O Israel! You are about to cross the Jordan to go in and dispossess nations greater and more populous than you: great cities with walls sky-high;

Akeidat Yitzchak 37:1:9 At this point, the author discusses 12 symbolisms in connection with the moon's behavior, linking these to the twelve tribes of the Jewish people. The list is omitted in the interest of brevity. A different way of looking at the aggadah in Chullin 60 is this: Israel (moon) complained against Esau (sun) that it is impossible for both to wear the crown of spiritual success. The difference in their essence makes that impossible. G-d's suggestion to the moon then was that the moon give up some of its claim to glory in this world, so as to merit the crown of success in the world to come. G-d's message was that Jews could not expect to be both spiritually and materially successful in the present world as well as in the world to come. When the moon wanted to know why this was impossible, G-d said in effect, "Go ahead and try." Although a few Jews succeeded, it became clear that whatever measure of success they did attain, was viewed by the world as essentially belonging to the realm of the material world. They were not credited with being different from other gentiles. So G-d told the moon that in that case it must find its satisfaction in the recognition it would obtain in the eyes of the Almighty. Although it is true that the sun too, plays a part in calendar calculation, since the righteous achieve their status by claiming smallness, it behooves the moon to act likewise. Success in this world,

though sometimes forthcoming, cannot be guaranteed; but to try for it with any chance of success, one must be prepared to be humble and unassuming. Proof that the Almighty Himself was not totally happy with the need to advise this path, is provided by the fact that He requested the he-goat offering as an act of atonement for having made this demand on the Jewish people. If we consider all the sufferings undergone by the Jewish people despite the fact that they were persuaded by G-d to reduce their claim to the enticements this world has to offer, imagine what greater suffering would have been in store for us had we not voluntarily agreed to this contraction in size. To sum up then, our Parshah has a threefold purpose: 1) To debunk theories about the moon that are idolatrous. 2) To rebut the argument about the accidental nature of the universe. 3) To strengthen Jewish faith in the ultimate fulfilment of our hopes.

Akeidat Yitzchak 39:1:10 (1) The remnants of the antediluvian giants were found only in the land of the Philistines. Goliath, in the cities of Gat and Ashdod, and the legendary Og in what is today Jordan. Had the Israelites continued on the path that the expulsion by the Egyptians had indicated, they would have sustained losses in the encounter with such kings. They would not have had the faith building experience of crossing the sea on dry land etc. Their lack of self confidence would have been understandable, and the prediction of the Egyptian astrologers that the Jews were marching towards their doom would have been fulfilled. For this reason, G-d made them detour in order that these miracles could be experienced and for the surrounding nations to be duly impressed and frightened by the G-d of the Hebrews. We know from the testimony of Rachav of Jericho forty years later, that there was fear in the hearts of the Canaanites ever since the crossing by the Jews of the sea of reeds and the drowning of the flower of the Egyptian army in those same waters. Even the forty year trek through the desert by the Jewish people, had not diminished that impression. When the Emorite Sichon made war subsequently, G-d had to infuse his heart with obstinacy as well as the hearts of the other kings of Canaan who defended their country against invasion by the Israelites. These had not been natural reactions, but Divinely inspired defensive wars, to enable the Israelites to carry out the conquest of the land, and to enable G-d to fulfil His promise to Abraham and to them.

Derashot HaRan 1:12 This was the crucial factor in respect to the generation of the dispersal. There is no doubt that at that time all men held defective beliefs, all of mankind concurring only in their espousal of idolatry, with a few rare exceptions who had tasted and witnessed the goodness of the Light of the World. But even they could not call others to serve the L-rd together from fear of the peoples who were the ruling powers in their lands. So that the first to begin this call, Abraham, experienced what he did at the hands of Nimrod until he was compelled to leave his land and go to a different one. Now, unquestionably, for those righteous men who were unique in those generations the division of peoples and kingdoms was a good and a benefit. For when the people of a certain kingdom would oppress them, they would move on to a different land, where they could serve the L-rd as they desired, as is the case in our present-day exile. For when enforced conversion began in the Arab lands, the Jews fled to a different land, and, thence, back to the Arab lands. And this gave us a lease on life in the midst of our afflictions and our toils. At that time all the world spoke one language and they agreed that there be one head for the entire world, a leader and a regent, and that they not be spread out and divided among their dominions. It is for this reason that they chose a spacious valley, for, unquestionably, most men would choose to be as close as possible to the head of their kingdom. It is for this reason, too, that they agreed to build a tower with its "top in the heavens," that is, as tall as possible (the sense of the phrase corresponding to [Deuteronomy 9:1]: "great cities and fortified in the heavens"). For it befitted him who was chosen as the terrestrial regent to have a palace and a tower so tall as to inspire all who saw it with awe and fear, and to be visible from afar.

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| <p>עַם-גָּדוֹל וָרָם בְּנֵי עֲנָקִים אֲשֶׁר אָתָּה יֹדְעַת וְאַתָּה שֹׁמֵעַת מִי
יִתְיַצֵּב לִפְנֵי בְנֵי עֲנָק:</p> | <p>2 a people great and tall, the Anakites, of whom you have knowledge; for you have heard it said, "Who can stand up to the children of Anak?"</p> |
| <p>וַיֵּדַעַת הַיּוֹם כִּי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ הוּא הָעֹבֵר לְפָנֶיךָ אֵשׁ אֹכֶלֶת הוּא
יִשְׁמִידֵם וְהוּא יִכְנִיעֵם לְפָנֶיךָ וְהוֹרֵשְׁתָּם וְהָאֲבֹדֹתָם מִיָּד כְּאֲשֶׁר
דִּבֶּר יְהוָה לְךָ:</p> | <p>3 Know then this day that none other than your God הוּא is crossing at your head, a devouring fire; it is [God] who will wipe them out—subduing them before you, that you may quickly dispossess and destroy them, as הוּא promised you.</p> |

Akeidat Yitzchak 31:1:12 (1) When the brothers arrived back in Canaan in their splendid looking new outfits, their father was overjoyed to see that they had returned safely. However, when they mentioned Joseph's name, they reopened old wounds that had never healed completely, and Jacob's joy quickly turned into disbelief. He had, after all, trained himself to cope with bad news, but was psychologically unprepared for good news. Having listened to the

brothers' detailed report, however, and having inspected the gifts Joseph had sent as proof of his being alive and in an exalted position, he returned to his original frame of mind and said, "It is enough. I do believe now that my son Joseph is still alive." (2) No doubt the brothers had held forth at length about the splendor in which Joseph lived and the honor he enjoyed. Jacob exclaimed simply, "It is enough that my son Joseph is alive, I will go and see him; never mind all this business about his glory. Even if he were merely alive, not powerful, I would go to see him before my death." Israel began the journey towards Egypt, but stopped at Beer Sheva to offer thanksgiving and to seek guidance, because he was troubled on two accounts. 1) Would this descent result in the family becoming assimilated in Egypt? 2) Would he forfeit the right to burial in the cave of Machpelah? He hoped to receive Divine guidance to both questions when he prayed at the place that both his father and grandfather had prayed at, and had had confrontations with temporal rulers. G-d did indeed appear to him, reassuring him on both counts. The promise that he would become a nation in Egypt, meant that his descendants would retain their specific characteristics, as testified to later in Deuteronomy. When the Sifri explains the verse, "And became a great nation there" (Deut 26,5), this meant that they were most distinguishable from the Egyptians, had not assimilated. Concerning the burial, he is reassured by G-d who promises that Jacob will indeed survive the journey and see Joseph who would be present at his eventual death and burial, and that G-d at that time would bring him out of Egypt again so that he could rest in peace with his ancestors. Jacob is given an assurance that his future fate would be governed by Divine Providence, not by any other method; therefore, he had no cause to worry.

Akeidat Yitzchak 77:1:12 Midrash Tanchuma on Parshat Eykev, and Midrash Shocher Tov comment on Proverbs 5,6, and Job 28,16, respectively. We find in those verses references to the mysterious way in which Torah sometimes reports the sequence of events. In the words of the Midrash, the apparent lack of cohesion is deliberate, as otherwise "every reader could heal the sick or revive the dead." We should ask therefore, why the sages endeavoured altogether to find meaning in the order in which events have been related? The truth is that our sages did not mean that there is absolutely no order in the sequences of the Torah's teachings; rather they teach that G'd arranged things in a manner that safeguarded certain secrets that He has reserved for Himself. (Isaiah 44,7) "Who but I can declare it and set it in order for Me, since I appointed the ancient people." This verse forms the background to our Midrashim. The enquiry why a particular event is reported at a particular point in the sequence of events, is quite legitimate, regardless of the general rule *eyn mukdam*, that the Torah does not claim to report events in the chronological order in which they occurred. That rule means, that even when the Torah does report events in historical order, this does not mean that the Torah's purpose is exhausted by having conveyed to us a little bit of history. Dissemination of slanderous information may stem from a variety of motivations. 1) A person may slander someone else in order to make himself look good by comparison. 2) On the other hand, someone may spread negative information about a third party, having no ulterior motive at all. The latter type is the real *ba-al lashon hara*, spreader of evil gossip. The first type is simply a glory seeker, the slander being incidental to his purposes. When the Talmud Erchin 15, describes animals approaching the snake asking the reason it attacks humans, it compares the lion and the wolf with the snake. The two former either wish to still their hunger, or at least to devour the prey. The snake however, seems to poison just for the fun of it, deriving no visible benefit from its action. Korach was not a classic example of a slanderer, since he merely used slander to enhance his own stature, and to further his ambition to become a leader. For this reason, Korach is described in our classic sources as a dissident, a quarreler. The spies, however, are described as "slanderers." Since Miriam's sin, though not as severe as that of the spies, was also in the nature of slander, the story of the spies follows that of the punishment of Miriam, to alert us to the fact that the spies had not absorbed the lesson contained in Miriam's punishment. (1) If the Torah skips the introduction about the circumstances that preceded the dispatch of the spies, in this instance, it is precisely to make sure that we would not confuse the issue, and would notice that the issue was the sin of *lashon hara*, slander. (2) The reason twelve men were sent, was to provide the maximum chance of success. People endowed with all the good qualities cited in the Parshah, would command enough moral fortitude to prevail over their human weaknesses, if anyone could. Their eventual report would be accepted without prejudice, since they represented a cross section of the people. Should the mission fail, it would not be due to inadequate planning. The princes mentioned in Parshat Nasso, having already assumed their respective functions, were not allowed to absent themselves from their posts for such an extended period. The Torah describes the twelve spies as each being a *nassi*, prince, in order to show that they were not inferior to the twelve princes whom we know already. The fact that Joshua is only ranked fifth amongst them, shows that all of them had been very eminent people at the time of their appointment for this task. That the Torah does indeed list them in the order of their qualities seems borne out by the fact that the order in which they are listed corresponds neither to the order of the "flags" of the encampment, nor to the order of birth of the various sons of Jacob whose tribes they represented. The Talmud Sotah 34, discusses the various names and comes to the conclusion

that their various names contained hints of their eventual disloyalty to G.d. Since this is obviously an exercise in hindsight, the original selection must have been based on the positive qualities each one of the spies had displayed prior to his being chosen for such a fateful mission. The fact that Caleb and Joshua could not even persuade their own respective tribes to accept their minority report, shows that the spies had not been chosen for any popular following they might have enjoyed. (3) The verse dealing with the name Joshua must be understood as follows. "These are the names of the men...except for Hoshaya of the tribe of Ephrayim, whom Moses later used to call Joshua." (which is the name by which he is known to us in most instances when we read about him.) Observing the goodness of the land, entailed four separate considerations. 1) Did the inhabitants appear robust and healthy? 2) Was the terrain easy to cultivate and was there an abundance of it? 3) Were there urban centres the inhabitants were happy in and proud of? 4) Did the soil yield abundantly, and was the produce of high quality? (4) Moses wanted the spies to pay attention to all these factors, so that they would look forward to this all soon being theirs. (compare verses 18-20) Concerning the type of cities, whether open or fortified, - Moses wanted to point out that if these people still lived in fortified cities, this reflected a lack of self confidence on their part. This would give Israel a psychological advantage when setting out to attack them. The book of Joshua in chapter 6,1, reports that Jericho was completely sealed off from the inside and the outside. Immediately afterwards we are told that the inhabitants had already reached the point of despair. Although it was early in the season, and the orchards would therefore be under close scrutiny by their respective owners, Moses instructed "fortify yourselves," i.e. get a hold of yourselves and take from the fruit to taste it. Moses' insistence stemmed from his conviction that the land was excellent. The fact that the nachal eshkol, valley of the grape cluster, was so named, was only in commemoration of the spies' visit. It proves that the grapes found there were not of exceptional quality. (verse 24) They were merely representative specimens of the quality the land produced. (5) The spies brought the fruit back in order to lend credibility to the report they were about to issue. When Moses saw the fruit, he was lulled into a false sense of security, overlooking the fact that they were not making their report to the commander-in-chief, but to the nation as a whole. The Torah indicates this by describing the spies as returning from latour, from touring the country, from emphasizing its good points. When one emphasizes weak points such journeys are described as rigul, spying. The opening remarks seemed to confirm Moses' optimism. (verse 27) As soon as they uttered the word eless however, they aborted their entire mission. The fruit became an instrument to describe the desirability of the land, and to contrast this with the physical prowess of its inhabitants. From having been reporters, they suddenly assumed the role of advisors. The careful description of who lived in the land, i.e. Amalek in the South, the presence of giants, three nations in the mountains, Canaanites by the sea and the river Jordan, all these remarks were designed to create the impression that conquest of such a country was not feasible. They did not yet dare to spell this out, however. When Caleb, knowing the tenor of their remarks, interrupted, he did so to give Moses a chance to be heard, and to create a climate in which his own report would at least get a hearing. For that reason he made it appear as if he too had something to complain against Moses' adventurous policy of attacking such physically superior residents of the land of Canaan. In fact, he hoped that by giving his own report, emphasizing his firm belief that Israel could conquer the land, he could squelch the despondency his colleagues had evoked with their innuendos about the hopeless nature of such an undertaking. He thought that the other spies would not dare come out openly against such a campaign in the very presence of Moses. At that point, however, the other spies started to use their arguments outright. They portrayed the presence of the giants (32-33) as proof of the futility of starting a war, citing the fact that these giants included men who had survived the deluge. To contrast this with their own feeling of inadequacy, they referred to their having felt like grasshoppers by comparison to those super-men. The fact that these giants had observed twelve strange men help themselves to grapes from their orchards without the owners having become galvanised into some form of counter action, they conveniently overlooked. On the contrary, they allowed it to be taken as proof that these men were not in the least bothered by such action. They considered any danger from Jewish spies as no greater than the threat posed to them by grasshoppers. They considered the country's fertility as only due to the superhuman efforts of these giants. By describing the land as one that devours its inhabitants, they hinted that ordinary people could not survive that climate.

The reason there is no preamble to the despatch of the spies, is that the very mission, having as its objective the collection of factual observations, was perfectly permissible. What was wrong was that the people, upon return of the spies, allowed them to present their interpretation of what they had seen, and that they believed those interpretations.

The people's belated concern (14,3) was only a cover for their, true motivation, that of despising the land G'd was offering to them. (14,31) The positioning of verse three, in which the people describe their own fate and that of their families, makes it appear that they preferred their families' deaths to their own dying by the swords. They do not describe the fate of their wives and children as the result of their own death in action. They express their preference to whatever fate would await them in Egypt. They go so far as to suggest the appointment of a leader for such a return.

G'ds answer to all this is quite appropriate. He says, in effect: "your children will enjoy that which you have despised."

But you who have consigned yourselves to damnation either way, and who are already considering yourselves as corpses, you will drop dead in the desert. (7) Joshua and Caleb rent their clothing, confirming only that the land was indeed excellent. Since this had been all that they as spies had been asked to report on, they expressed the conviction that if He wished, the Lord would surely bring them to that land subject to His considering them fit for this. (6) When the people realised that the whole logic of their position had been challenged by Joshua and Caleb, they did not react with reason but with their basest instincts, trying to still the voice of conscience by attempting to murder the authors of a report they did not like. They were restrained only by the appearance of the Divine glory that scared them. Moses, who continued to remonstrate with them, could not sway them. (Deut. 1,29-33) At that point G'd despaired of their ever demonstrating true faith, and decided to let them all die at once, meaning to replace them with a new people, with Moses as its patriarch. Moses used the well worn argument that the impression such action would produce on outsiders like the Egyptians, would be counterproductive to His image. Our sages describe active forces in terms of the masculine gender, whereas they describe passive ones in terms of the feminine. It does not matter in this context whether the mashpia, the active force is actually of the male gender or vice versa, in the case of the mushpa the passive force being actually of the female gender. In that sense, G'd is always the mashpia, and everybody or everything relative to Him is always the mushpa. When Moses in 15, 11, says to G'd "if this is what You are about to do to me," and he uses the feminine gender for the word "You," the sages interpret this to mean "You will undermine Your own strength." The idea is that he argues that G'd would henceforth appear as the mushpa instead of as the mashpia, G'ds traditional role. This is the reason Moses prayed "now let the power of the Lord be great," to demonstrate that "Your" strength is indeed the source of all Power. When Israel, speaking to Moses at the time they received the ten commandments, said to Moses "you speak to us," employing the feminine pronoun in referring to Moses the man, the human being, (Deut. 6,23) they convey the same idea. They are saying that although they will then be hearing the voice of G'd only from the mushpa instead of from the mashpia, at least they would survive. (8) The fact that the argument Moses used is of the utmost significance, is proven from the words of Ezekiel, in chapter thirty six. Concerning the advent of the redemption in the future, G'd is quoted as saying "Not for your sake do I act, family of Israel, but for the sake of My holy name that you have desecrated etc." Moses, as distinct from the sin at the golden calf, invoked the attribute of adnut, Omnipotence of G'd when he appealed for forgiveness. He had realised that after all the many acts of rebellion by the Jewish people, the kind of forgiveness which is total, could not be expected as an immediate outcome of his prayer. He therefore refers to the fact that G'd had previously raised the level of the sin to a lesser category - compare verse 19- "as You have raised this people until now, ever since they have come out of Egypt." G'd responds by saying "I have forgiven, exactly in accordance with your words." (the limitations you yourself have set) This is "for the people." However, the perpetrators will have to pay an immediate price and die by the plague. (verse 37) The entire nation who had witnessed G'ds miracles at the time of the Exodus in their adult years, would henceforth no longer qualify for similar miracles at the time they would conquer the land of Canaan. They have forfeited forever the right to such revelations of G'ds power on their behalf. This was a punishment on an individual level, though at first glance it might have looked collective, since none of them would enter the holy land. The individual nature of the punishment would manifest itself when each one of them would die on a different date. However, "the wicked congregation," i.e. the ten spies, would all die at the same time at once, receive collective punishment. (9) The need for the next generation to wait forty years to enter the holy land, is directly related to the sin of the parent generation. As long as some of the former remain alive, as living testimony to the disloyalty of their covenant with G'd, the miraculous protection of G'd cannot be extended to their children when they would try to enter the holy land. The ratio of forty years for forty days is again an expression of G'ds consideration for His people. Since the spies had taken forty days before returning with a negative report, G'd allows a year for each day of delay, spreading the punishment over a period of forty years, instead of letting everybody die at once. In this manner, the whole nation would learn that G'd is merciful even when He administers punishment. He does not thin out the ranks of the people all at once, but gradually, so as not to allow their decreased numbers to become an invitation to attack by their enemies. If G'd could be merciful even in such circumstances, what tremendous display of G'ds goodness must the people have forfeited by their conduct? G'd hastens to confirm the decree by swearing an oath (verse 28). He is only too aware that the people will be overcome by a feeling of remorse and will try to sway Him from His declared intention. (10) Since repentance induced by fear, duress, does not wipe the slate clean, the people did not deserve the presence of the holy ark in their midst in the campaign they now planned. The very fact that they dared to go ahead without it, showed that they still had not appreciated who it was that alone would guarantee their success. If we are taught in the book of Joshua that the sin of one man, Achan ben Karmi, who had not yet been punished for his crime, could be the cause of the whole Jewish people suffering defeat at the hands of the small city of Ai, what would

happen when a whole army of unrehabilitated sinners would face the might of the Canaanites? (compare chapter 7) Akeidat Yitzchak 90:1:4 Joseph's brothers say to their father: "recognise whether this is the coat of your son or not." (Genesis 37,32) We are told to remember what Amalek did to us. (Deut. 25,17) We are told not to fear nations surrounding us. (Deut 7,18-21) Since we are human beings, not just animals, it is expected that we can refine certain characteristics, are not limited to instinctive reactions. If one can learn to compensate for the weakness of certain of one's senses, then surely one can find means to reinforce certain character traits. A blind man develops a more acute sense of hearing. A shortsighted person can improve his vision by the use of spectacles. A person suffering from certain character weaknesses must also find means to compensate for this. Using one's power of imagination, one can imagine situations that make one's phobias seem unjustified and ridiculous. The process of thought association with specific objects is known to be an excellent memory jogger. These aids must be applied when we are asked to observe certain commandments involving remembrances. Seeing the tzitzit reminds us of other mitzvot such as kilayim, forbidden mixtures. This has been discussed at greater length in chapter sixty five. Awareness of the importance of memory joggers may have led some prophets to find common denominators for certain mitzvot, and thus make it easy for us to have these short summaries constantly at our command. Isaiah manages to condense Torah into two slogans, "observe justice and perform righteousness." (chapter 56) Chabakuk manages to sum it up in a single slogan, "the righteous will live by his faith" (2,4). No doubt the purpose of these apparent over simplifications is simply to provide a constant reminder, which when triggered will remind us of all the other mitzvot which are incumbent upon us to perform. When the Talmud (Ketuvot 30) tells us that all is in the hands of Heaven except the contracting of colds and heatstrokes, we know very well that both those phenomena are natural phenomena and as such not subject to our control. In fact, no remedy has yet been found for the common cold. Nevertheless, the sages are telling us that if one falls victim to those two ailments, this is due to negligence on the part of man, to wilful over-exposure etc, and cannot be blamed on outside forces. Just as one can control colds and heatstrokes, so, by employing memory properly, one can reinforce one's senses of trust and confidence in the help of G'd, no matter what the circumstances. This is what David said (Psalms 27,1) "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?, The Lord is the source of my strength, of whom shall I be afraid?" He means that if his attitude is based on remembering G'ds many past acts of kindness and assistance, why would he be afraid of anyone in the future? In the same vein, Moses tells the people: "you are today about to cross the Jordan in order to dispossess people greater and more powerful than you etc." (9,1). This calls for faith and confidence based on the recollection of all the past triumphs achieved through Divine intervention. The foremost memory jogger is the keriyat shema, which for that reason has been included in our daily prayers three times. We will examine the passage in detail to gain a better understanding of its significance. The following questions suggest themselves:

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| <p>אֶל־תֹּאמַר בְּלִבְכֶּם בְּהִדָּף יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם אַתֶּם מִלְּפָנָיִךְ לֵאמֹר
בְּצִדְקָתִי הִבִּיאֵנִי יְהוָה לְרִשְׁתָּ אֶת־הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת וּבְרִשְׁעָתְהָ הַגּוֹיִם
הָאֵלֶּה יְהוָה מוֹרִישָׁם מִפְּנֵיכֶם:</p> | <p>4 And when your God הוה has thrust them from your path, say not to yourselves, "הוה has enabled us to possess this land because of our virtues"; it is rather because of the wickedness of those nations that הוה is dispossessing them before you.</p> |
| <p>לֹא בְּצִדְקָתְךָ וּבִישׁוּרֶיךָ לִבְכֶּם אַתֶּם בָּא לְרִשְׁתָּ אֶת־אֲרָצָם לִי בְּרִשְׁעָתָם
הַגּוֹיִם הָאֵלֶּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם מוֹרִישָׁם מִפְּנֵיכֶם וְלִמְעַן הַקִּים אֶת־הַדְּבָר
אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע יְהוָה לְאַבְרָהָם לְיִצְחָק וּלְיַעֲקֹב:</p> | <p>5 It is not because of your virtues and your rectitude that you will be able to possess their country; but it is because of their wickedness that your God הוה is dispossessing those nations before you, and in order to fulfill the oath that הוה made to your fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.</p> |

Man and God, Chapter 7 Sedeq and S'daqah 3 In numerous places s'daqah occurs as the opposite to resha or rish'ah, evil, wickedness. The children of Israel, for instance, were warned not to imagine that God brought them into the promised land because they deserved it on account of their s'daqah. Rather, it was because of their wickedness that the original inhabitants were driven out from before Israel. (Deut. 9:4-5.) "Wickedness," of course, is used here in its widest sense. It has no legal connotation of any kind. It is ethical and moral corruption. It includes any act of conduct which is objectionable on moral or religious grounds. This is borne out by the numerous other references in the Bible to the guilt of the original inhabitants of Canaan. This makes it somewhat difficult to define s'daqah, which is here opposed to "wickedness." Would s'daqah have to be the complete opposite to everything that is here comprehended by

“wickedness” or should we be justified in calling s'daqah any act or attitude that is contrary to any part of the evil, which is comprehended by the wider term, wickedness? As might be expected, Proverbs is quite rich in passages in which “evil” and “wickedness” are contrasted to s'daqah, but there, too, the terms are used in too general a sense to allow us to draw more exact conclusions from them. There is, for instance, the saying: “The establishing of s'daqah tendeth to life; but he that pursueth evil pursueth it to his own death.” (Prov. 11:19; cf. also ibid. 11:4-6; 13:6; 15:9.) “The pursuit of evil” seems to include any kind of evil, in which case “the establishing of s'daqah” may mean any act of goodness which is the opposite to any kind of evil. Reading again in Proverbs that “the doing of evil is an abomination to kings, for the throne is established by s'daqah,” (Ibid. 16:12.) it is easy to misunderstand “the doing of evil” as acting against the law safeguarded by the king, and to interpret s'daqah, accordingly, as righteousness in the sense of justice or the monarchic order. We know however, from other passages that the establishing of a throne is not only a question of law and justice, but also of hesed and emeth, of lovingkindness and faithfulness. (Cf. Isa. 16:5; Prov. 20:28; 29:14.) (This, of course, is so because in the Bible, as we have shown, lovingkindness and faithfulness belong in the same category of values as “law” and “justice.”) Neither the evil, which is a king's concern, nor s'daqah, which establishes his throne, should be taken to have a juridical significance. As everywhere else in the Bible, here, too, their implication is ethico-moral and religious.

- וידעת כי לא בצדקתך יהיה אלהיך נתן לך את הארץ הטובה
הזאת לרשתה כי עסקשה ערך אתה:
- 6 Know, then, that it is not for any virtue of yours that your God יהוה is giving you this good land to possess; for you are a stiffnecked people.
- זכר אל תשכח את אשר הקצפת את יהוה אלהיך במדבר למחזור
אשר צאת מארץ מצרים עד באכם ער הבקום הזה ממרים הייתם
עם יהוה:
- 7 Remember, never forget, how you provoked your God יהוה to anger in the wilderness: from the day that you left the land of Egypt until you reached this place, you have continued defiant toward יהוה.
- Akeidat Yitzchak 80:1:9 Some difficulties in the text of our Parshah. 1) What manner of people is this that wishes itself such a horrible death as that experienced by Korach and his followers? (20,3) 2) Why do these people harp on the fact that figs and pomegranates do not grow in the desert, while they are in the middle of accusing their leaders of causing their death from thirst? 3) Why did G'd insist on a verbal command to the rock in question? 4) Why do all the commentators have such problems in explaining the sin of Moses and Aaron, when chapter twenty verse twelve clearly spells it out for us?
- Yesod Mora VeSod HaTorah 2:15 And behold, those who have warnings are similar to a person who counts how many grasses are written in a book of botany, yet he does not recognize the benefit of each one and what their names signify. Some of them are mentioned in the book under two names, and he thinks they are two separate entities, like “Remember, do not forget” (Deuteronomy 9:7). And it is also possible for you to place the verse in its appropriate context. Likewise, there are many commandments written in the Torah, but no one pays them proper attention.
- ובחורב הקצפתם את יהוה ויתאנף יהוה בכם להשמיד אתכם:
- 8 At Horeb you so provoked יהוה that יהוה was angry enough with you to have destroyed you.
- בעלתי ההרה לקחת לוחות האבנים לוחות הבליית אשר כרת יהוה
עמכם ואשב בהר ארבעים יום וארבעים לילה לחם לא אכלתי
ומים לא שתיתי:
- 9 I had ascended the mountain to receive the tablets of stone, the Tablets of the Covenant that יהוה had made with you, and I stayed on the mountain forty days and forty nights, eating no bread and drinking no water.

Akeidat Yitzchak 44:3:5 In order to achieve maximum impact by His revelation at Mount Sinai, G-d resorted to extraordinary phenomena both before, during and after matan Torah, the presentation of the Torah to the people. This becomes evident when one studies the story of the Jewish people's arrival in the desert of Sinai. First we are told that they arrived in Sinai on the first day of the third month. Next, though we know that their last stop had been Refidim, the fact that they set out from Refidim and arrived in Sinai is repeated. Next it says that Moses ascended to G-d and called to Him from the Mountain. The order really should have been “G-d called to Moses and the latter ascended.” From the manner of the text, it appears as if Moses was on a higher level than the one calling to him. Next we have the emphasis on the order of addressing Israel, “thus you shall say to the house of Jacob and tell the children of Israel.” Furthermore, “these are the words you shall speak to the children of Israel.” This suggests that Moses had no latitude in the words he could use. However, it is worth noting that anyone who has a major request of his fellow man would do well to pay

attention to the following prerequisites in order to assure himself of an optimal chance of success. He must watch (a) timing, (b) place, (c) method of presentation of the request, (d) the ability of the party petitioned to grant the petition, (e) explain the advantages accruing to the petitioned party if he grants the petition. He must also bear in mind the position in society of the party petitioned. Queen Esther is a prime example of how all these points need to be heeded when she petitioned king Ahasverus. She chose the timing very carefully, saying "tomorrow I shall do what the king says." She chose the place, inviting him to lunch at her palace, so as to be undisturbed. She chose the method, i.e. wine, in order to put the king into a good frame of mind, and at the same time to make Haman relaxed and careless. She adhered to the order of priorities by begging for her own life first. Concerning the king's ability to deliver, and the advantage to him by granting her request, she said "we have been sold, and the king stands to lose heavily financially." In our situation, G-d demonstrates the same care in His request from Israel. The time chosen, the third month after the Exodus, allowed Israel to have recovered from the slavery experienced. They had been given ample opportunity to observe the way in which G-d had looked after their needs thus far. The mountain, frequently referred to as "the mountain of G-d", was meant to impress itself on those who beheld it. (by far the highest mountain in that part of the world). When one contrasts unpleasant memories with pleasant experiences, the latter seem much more impressive than when contrasted with everyday events. Since the events in Refidim had been exceptionally upsetting, mentioning the contrast of their departure from there with the arrival at Sinai, left an especially favourable impression. The site was well chosen, therefore. As far as how G-d's request was related to the Jewish people, this was accomplished through the good offices of Moses who was the most suitable instrument, being someone who had reached the highest level of humanity without the benefit of Torah legislation. Concerning the exact formulation of the request, the word "thus" indicates that Moses indeed was not given any leeway in the precise wording he had to employ. The content of the message concentrated on reminding the addressee of prior events which have a bearing on his attitude. In this case, these would be G-d's actions against Egypt, which form the background for His present request. There follows the purpose of the request, namely that Israel become a holy nation, a nation of priests, precious to the Lord etc. That such a carefully planned scenario elicited a favourable response from Israel is hardly surprising then. Although Moses relayed G-d's request only to the elders, fearing that the nation as a whole might not be so responsive, the nation's response shows how effective G-d's planning of this event had been. The wonderfully effective things G-d was going to do during the actual revelation is introduced by His saying to Moses "here I will come to you in a thick cloud, so that the people will hear Me talk to you and will also believe in your leadership forever more". The objective of becoming a "holy nation" by means of the mitzvot is described in Deuteronomy 30,11, as a very easily attainable goal. "For this commandment is not so wonderful..it is easily achievable..up to your mouth and your heart to implement". Our sages tell us that the Torah is so structured that even "the empty ones among you are as full of mitzvot as pomegranates are full of pips". This is so, because the mitzvot apply to our body's activities and do not require intellectual brilliance in order to be performed.

Akeidat Yitzchak 53:1:15 It is in this context that we must understand the repeated references Moses made to the Jewish people at the burning bush, when he said to G-d that the Jewish people would not believe in him or his mission. Moses expected the same reaction from his own people that he had expected from Pharaoh. This is why he said "when they ask me for Your name, what shall I say?" (Exodus 3, 13) The miracle had been needed to demonstrate the existence of such a G-d. Whenever things went well, the people believed in G-d, Moses and his mission. Whenever difficulties arose, they saw in this proof that there was no free G-d, no Personal Providence, only superior showmanship by Moses, presently revealed as inadequate. Proof of all this lies in the fact that whenever they refer to the Exodus from Egypt, they ascribe it to Moses the man, not to G-d. (compare Exodus 14, 12; 16,3; Numbers 16, 12) Their admiration of Moses was based on Moses being an outstanding man rather than Moses as an instrument of G-d. (1) As soon as Moses was out of sight, not having announced when he would return, (possibly he had not known when he would return) the people wanted to see if they themselves could do what Moses had been doing all the time. Therefore, they had lots of time at their disposal to urge Aaron. The fortieth day was in fact only the last of many days that Aaron had been under pressure. (2) These people believed that the configuration of the ox might hold the secret of Moses's power. Therefore they traded their own horoscope (that of the lamb) for that of the ox. This is the meaning of Psalms 106,20 "they themselves chose this trade, exchange." It was not Aaron's doing. No doubt, during those forty days the pressure on Aaron had been increasing steadily, the murder of Chur being part of that pressure. Had the Torah reported all this in detail, the impression that Aaron co-operated reluctantly would have been created, and the golden calf would have been viewed as the triumph of the belief in witchcraft over those who believed in G-d and His leadership. Now, that the text seems to suggest Aaron's enthusiastic co-operation, the whole episode can be seen as the creation of a symbol representing the ultimate that human art was capable of. (3+4) In this way, once the impotence of that symbol would become evident to

one and all, the illusion that man could fashion a deity would be debunked once and for all. This was Aaron's reasoning when he decided to co-operate. He had no way of knowing that as soon as the calf would emerge, some Jewish lowbrows would commence dancing around it and proclaiming it as their new deity. When that happened, Aaron quickly built an altar for G-d, and tried to allow reason to prevail by postponing the celebration until the morrow, and by dedicating the altar to the Lord. He hoped all the time, of course, that in the interval remaining, G-d would tell Moses to return to the people in order to forestall tragic consequences. Even so, only three thousand people were enthusiastic enough to actually worship this idol before it had demonstrated powers equal or superior to those demonstrated by Moses. (This is why the rest of the nation was not punished by death) We see from all this, that far from precipitating or even participating in the sin, Aaron had used his best efforts to teach the people a lesson of faith in the Lord. This is why, at a later stage, G-d was able to say to Moses "You shall cause your brother Aaron to come close to Me, to be My priest" (Exodus 28, 1) (5) G-d indicated to Moses that if the latter were to pray, He would not then become angry, since the action of a fool acting out of foolishness does not warrant his master's anger. Nonetheless, even fools must repent and confess their errors. Psalms 25,8, and Hoseah 14,2 are some of the sources in scripture for the need to expiate.

Severity of a sin is measured by three criteria. 1) The manner in which the Torah describes a sin, is a good indication of the view the Torah holds concerning such sin. Expressions such as "abomination, immorality" are used for acts which are especially serious. 2) Any kind of misdemeanour when committed by a person of high rank, becomes more serious, since the sinner's stature should have precluded such conduct on his part. 3) When the disobedience is directed against a supreme lawgiver, it is more serious than disobedience against a man made law. (10) Moses, admits in his confession, that "this nation" had come closer to G-d than any of its predecessors, and should therefore have known better. When he refers to "this great sin," he confesses that due to the people's elevated stature their sin had assumed an added degree of severity. He confesses the heinous nature of the sin when viewed objectively, when he refers to "the golden deity" that this nation had made. While confessing all this, Moses manages to inject powerful arguments about the extenuating circumstances surrounding this crime. Shemot Rabbah 28, clothes Moses's arguments in the following words: (6) Moses to G-d "Your children have made an assistant for You, and You are angry? Did You not Yourself make the sun shine, and the latter bestows some of its light on the moon? (making it an assistant) Did You not make rain, which in turn promotes the growth of plants etc?" To this G-d replied: "You too are in error, since the golden calf is not capable of doing anything." To this, Moses replied: "in that case why do You get angry over a mere nothing?" Philosophically speaking, Moses presents the golden calf as incapable of offering competition to G-d, and therefore not deserving His concern.

Concerning the second criterion for measuring the severity of a sin which we have mentioned, Moses refers to "this people." He refers to their having come out of Egypt. He implies that it is unreasonable to expect high standards of faith from a nation that had just left a country in which it had absorbed a totally wrong way of looking at the world for several hundred years. The Midrash describes it in this way. A father put his son in charge of a perfumery situated in a red light district. Naturally, both the location of the store and the type of customers he dealt with, combined with the son's personal character weakness to corrupt him. When the father finds out and is enraged and threatens to kill his son, the father's friend has to intervene. This friend berates the father, saying: "you have lost him because you have failed to teach him a trade that would bring him into contact with the upper classes of society. Not only that, but you have made him reside amongst harlots. How can you be surprised at the outcome?" Finally, since it was G-d's declared purpose to use the Jewish people to aggrandize His name, and to make Egypt aware of this, (Exodus 9, 16) what would the Egyptians say when they hear that You have wiped out this nation?" We read in Joshua 7, 10 that G-d told Joshua that Israel's defeat at Ai was due to the nation having sinned, having transgressed the injunction not to appropriate any of the loot of Jericho etc. Actually, only one man, Achan ben Karmi, had committed those acts. (7) When G-d told Moses that the Jewish people had made themselves a cast calf, worshipped it etc, Moses may have thought that this could have been the act of a single individual, and that G-d had referred to the collective responsibility every Jew bears for the actions of another Jew. It had not occurred to Moses that the nation as a whole had been involved in this act.

Akeidat Yitzchak 55:1:16 The first name (principle) of the Sabbath, helps remove two obstacles to Sabbath observance, namely the profound nature of the inadequate perceptual powers of the people who are to observe the Sabbath. By allowing us to stop work on the Sabbath, G-d has enabled us to grasp spiritual truths no gentile has an inkling of. By removing our work load, He has given us the time to study Torah and thus add an extra dimension to our soul. In this way, we can correct our faults, shortcomings, and advance towards perfection, something no other people can accomplish. The second name (principle) of the Sabbath removes two further obstacles to Sabbath observance, namely the natural tendency to opt for a life of ease and indulgence, and the obstacle to the arduous task of performing mitzvot and acquire Torah knowledge. The Sabbath provides an incentive to learn. The moral and ethical truths

learned on that day provide a bulwark against our baser instincts and traits. The third name (principle) helps to deal with the remaining two obstacles, namely the need to attend to the task of earning a livelihood, ensure our material well being, as well as the need to ensure our physical well being, health. Once one has absorbed the lesson of the third Sabbath principle, namely the lack of substance of everything material, one is well on the way to achieving mastery of the mind over the body. All the examples of apparently superhuman limitation in food intakes such as Rabbi Chaninah ben Dotha subsisting on a "kav of carobs," or Moses going without food and drink for forty days, are then understood quite easily.

Sefer Yesodei HaTorah 28:1 And as with the borrowing of the vessels from the Egyptians, so is it with Israel's being commanded to cut off the men of Canaan. Even though it is not withheld from the Almighty to give His people an inheritance of field and vineyard without such violence and cruelty as cutting off nations which did them no harm, the Blessed One desired that they cut off those nations so that they take mussar ("chastisement") and see how the L-rd punishes doers of evil. As Moses said to them (Vayikra 18:27) "for all of these abominations were done by the people of the land which were before you", (Ibid. 25) "and the land vomited out its inhabitants", (Ibid. 26) "And you shall keep My statutes and My judgments, etc.", (Ibid. 28) "so that the land not vomit you out by your making it unclean, as it vomited out the nation that was before you." And it is for this reason that the Torah foretold in the L-rd's words to Abraham (Bereshith 15:16) "And the fourth generation (of the Egyptian exile) shall return here (to Canaan), for the sin of the Emori would not have been consummated, (justifying their being driven out of the land) until then." All this, to apprise us that those nations were cut off only because of their wickedness, Israel being powerless to take the land from their hands until their "measure" (of wickedness) had been consummated. And, likewise, from Moses' telling them (Devarim 9:9) "Do not say in your heart, when the L-rd your G-d thrusts them from before you: In my righteousness did the L-rd bring me to inherit this land, etc.", it is seen clearly that this was the inclination of their hearts, that the success of every nation was a result of the Blessed One's decree and providence, and not of chance as those who came after them assumed. And it follows from this that when they cut off the Canaanites, no negative impress was made on their souls which would run counter to improvement of character, but, rather, it was deeply impressed upon them that those nations were liable to destruction because of their abominations, and that they were only acting as the emissaries of the L-rd. And this belief was strengthened in their hearts by witnessing the signs and wonders wrought for them by the L-rd when they came to conquer the land, by crossing them over the Jordan on the dry land, by their warring against the men of Canaan as He pelted them with great stones from the heavens, and by His causing the sun to stand still in the midst of the heavens. And if the "wise ones" (those filled with compassion and kindness to the distant and the dead) would arise and say: "How could the L-rd command the destruction of an entire nation — men and women, young and old, sucklings and nurslings who did not sin?" you, in kind, "dull their teeth" and say to them: "And when the earth quakes and trembles, and houses fall on their dwellers, or if it come to pass in a land that half its inhabitants are cut off and perish, did the L-rd not command it?" It is not for me to defend the Almighty. It suffices for me if I have demonstrated clearly that what the L-rd commanded to Israel, both as regards the borrowing of the vessels from the Egyptians and the annihilating of the dwellers of Canaan did not leave in their hearts a negative impress which vitiated their character, but, to the contrary, strengthened their belief in providence and in reward and punishment.

וַיִּתֵּן יְהוָה אֵלַי אֶת־שְׁנֵי לוחֹת הָאֲבִנִּים כְּתוּבִים בְּאֶצְבַּע אֱלֹהִים
וְעָלִיהֶם כְּכֹל־הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר יְהוָה עִמָּכֶם בְּהָר מִתּוֹךְ הָאֵשׁ
בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא: 10 And הוה gave me the two tablets of stone
inscribed by the finger of God, with the exact
words that הוה had addressed to you on the
mountain out of the fire on the day of the
Assembly.

Derashot HaRan 7:9 Now this, indeed, must be understood. How can it be said that other rulings in a halachic dispute were stated to Moses by the Omnipotent One! Shammai says (Iddyoth 1:2) that the requirement of chalah begins from a kav; Hillel says that it begins from two kavim. Only one of these can be true; the other must be untrue. How can it be said, then, that something untrue issued forth from the mouth of the Omnipotent One? The understanding is as follows: All of the Torah — both the written and the oral — was given to Moses on Sinai, as our sages have stated (Megillah 19b): "R. Chiyya b. Abba said in the name of R. Yochanan: 'From the verse (Deuteronomy 9:10) "...and upon them according to all the words..." we infer that the Holy One Blessed Be He showed Moses all of the Torah's deductions and all of the scribes' deductions and what the scribes were destined to originate, namely, the reading of the Megillah." "The scribes' deductions" are the disputes and differences of view among the Torah scholars — and all of them were taught to Moses our teacher, may peace be upon him, by the Omnipotent One without the decision for each specific dispute. But he was given a guiding principle for the ascertainment of the truth, namely (Exodus 23:2): "After the multitude to incline

[judgment]," and also (Deuteronomy 17:11): "Do not turn aside from the thing that they tell you." And when disputes multiplied among the sages, if it were a case of one against many, the halachah was established according to the majority. If it were a case of many against many or one against one, the decision was according to the view of the sages of that generation, this decision having already been relegated to them, as it is written (Ibid 9): "And you shall come to the priests, the Levites, or to the judge that shall be in those days." Similarly, "Do not turn aside..." We see, then, that permission was given to the sages of the generations to rule on the disputes of the sages according to their own view, even if their predecessors were greater and more numerous than they. And we have been commanded to abide by their consensus whether it corresponds to the truth or is at variance with it.

11 וַיְהִי מִקֵּץ אַרְבָּעִים יוֹם וְאַרְבָּעִים לַיְלָה נָתַן יְהוָה אֵלַי אֶת־שְׁנֵי לַחַת הָאֲבָנִים לַחֹת הַבְּרִית: At the end of those forty days and forty nights, הוהי gave me the two tablets of stone, the Tablets of the Covenant.

12 וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֵלַי קוּם רָד מִהֵר מִזֶּה כִּי שָׁתַת עֲמָלְךָ אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתָ מִמִּצְרַיִם סֶרֶוּ מִהֵר מִן־הַדֶּרֶךְ אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתָם עֲשׂוּ לָהֶם מִסְכָּה: And הוהי said to me, "Hurry, go down from here at once, for the people whom you brought out of Egypt have acted wickedly; they have been quick to stray from the path that I enjoined upon them; they have made themselves a molten image."

13 וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֵלַי לֵאמֹר רְאִיתִי אֶת־הָעָם הַזֶּה וְהִנֵּה עַם־קִשְׁה־עֲרָף הוּא: הוהי further said to me, "I see that this is a stiffnecked people.

Derashot HaRan 3:25 The understanding is as follows: All of the Torah — both the written and the oral — was given to Moses on Sinai, as our sages have stated (Megillah 19b): "R. Chiyya b. Avin said in the name of R. Yochanan: 'From the verse (Deuteronomy 9:13) "...and upon them according to all the words..." we infer that the Holy One Blessed be He showed Moses all of the Torah's deductions and all of the scribes' deductions and what the scribes were destined to originate, namely, the reading of the Megillah.'" "The scribes' deductions are the disputes and differences of view among the Torah scholars — and all of them were taught to Moses our teacher, may peace be upon him, by the Omnipotent One with the provision that the decision be according to the consensus of the sages of the respective generations. And this underlies the episode of R. Eliezer Hagadol and his dispute, concerning which we are told (Bava Metzia 59b) that R. Yehoshua arose and declared (Deuteronomy 30:12): "It is not in the heavens!" What is the intent of "It is not in the heavens"? It has already been given to Moses on Mount Sinai, and in it is written (Exodus 23:2): "After the multitude to incline [judgment]." Now it was clear to all that R. Eliezer was closer to the truth than they, that all of his signs were truthful and righteous, and that heaven itself had ruled him correct — in spite of which they acted according to their consensus. Since their judgment inclined to "unclean," though they knew that their consensus was at variance with the truth, they did not wish to pronounce it clean. What is more, had they pronounced it clean they would have been transgressing against their reason, which inclined to "unclean," the decision having been relegated to the sages of the generations.

14 הֲרָף מִלְּנִי וְאַשְׁמִידֵם וְאַמְחָה אֶת־שֵׁמָם מִתַּחַת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאַעֲשֶׂה אוֹתָךְ לְגוֹי־עֶצְוִים וְרַב מִמֶּנּוּ: Let Me alone and I will destroy them and blot out their name from under heaven, and I will make you a nation far more numerous than they."

Ner Mitzvah, Volume I 26 And behold! This subject has been explained in the worlds of the Scholars of Greece, in what they wanted in this that they said (Bereshit Rabbah 2:5) "They wrote on the horn of an ox that they have no portion in the G-d of Yisrael". For they said that onsidering that Yisrael made the Calf as soon as they were taken out from Egypt, so that illustrates that they, G-d forbid, have no portion in the G-d of Yisrael. For an entity which is essential is first, and the Calf was first. And this is what they mean when they wrote on the 'horn of the ox', whereas they didn't write it on paper, for the horn is from the ox itself [i.e. it is an entity which extends from the creation, and while not an essential part of the creation is an extension of the creation], which means to say that they made the Calf, and this Sin is an essential matter to them, and not a matter of happenstance, and therefore they do not have a portion in the G-d of Yisrael. And one does not have an entity which is harder than a horn, and they said that this thing [the Sin of the G.C.] was to Yisrael from the aspect of their stick-neckedness which they exhibited, and their stick-neckedness certainly was from their intrinsic perspective, and therefore the Calf was from their perspective, so says Hashem be Blessed in the act of the Calf (Deuteronomy 9:13-14) "I see that this is a stiffnecked people. Let Me alone" [end of verse: and I will destroy them and blot out their name from under heaven, and I will make you a nation far more numerous than they]. So said the Greeks,

and they didn't understand the response to this, which is stated in the versed (Isaiah 49:16) "I never could forget you":

And all of this, because this nation [Greece] wanted to negate from Yisrael the attribute of Transcendent G-dliness which there is to Yisrael, and therefore they [Greece] decreed upon them [Yisrael] to nullify from them the G-dly Torah.

And even also the fourth kingship decreed destructions (? - unsure of translation) upon Yisrael in various things, however it's not similar. For the fourth kingship didn't do this because they said to us the 'transcendent G-dly attribute' as the Greeks said, rather they [the Romans] wanted to destroy them [the Jews] for they [the Jews] wouldn't do as they [the Romans] has decreed upon them, and they wanted to murder them therefore they decreed upon them decrees and destructions. And this was their fundamental drive to murdered, as we will explain. But the Greeks were not driven for their [the Jews'] destruction, rather they said that they didn't have a portion in the Blessed, but indeed we do have the G-dly attribute.

וְאֶפְסָן נֶאֱרָל מִן־הַהָרָה וְהָהָר בָּעֵר בְּאֵשׁ וּשְׁנֵי לִוְחֵת הַבְּרִית עַל שְׁתֵּי יָדַי: 15 I started down the mountain, a mountain ablaze with fire, the two Tablets of the Covenant in my two hands.

Akeidat Yitzchak 54:1:15 As mentioned in the introduction in the statement of Rabbi Berechyah, Moses took these rays of glory to show that he had become G-d's partner, as indicated by the dimensions of the tablets. (12) Possibly, when he had come down with the first set of tablets, the people were even more terrified of him. However, circumstances at that time made any comment about that fact irrelevant. Supporting evidence for such a thought can be found in Moses's own words when he describes the first descent. (Deut.9, 15) "I turned around and descended from the mountain, the mountain being burning fire, and the two tablets of the covenant in my two hands." This means that the rays of glory at that time were like "consuming fire." When Moses saw the sin, the fire went out as the letters on the tables "flew away," and he smashed the tablets. Do not think that the purpose of the veil was to enable the Jewish people to approach him, since in that event, Moses should have worn the veil when speaking with them, removing it when he finished speaking. We see that he did exactly the reverse. The matter of the veil seems to have worked as follows. When G-d would address Moses, he removed the veil to increase his receptiveness to the Divine message. When Moses spoke to the people, he removed the veil to impress the people even more with the fact that his message was Divine. Only on the infrequent occasions when Moses neither communicated with the people nor G-d with him, did he actually wear the veil. A careful analysis of the verses describing all this, will confirm this interpretation. The veil, in other words, indicated when Moses was preoccupied with the mundane tasks of life.

וְאֵרָא וְהִנֵּה חֲטָאתְכֶם לִיהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם עֲשִׂיתֶם לָכֶם עֵגֶל מִסִּכָּה סִרְתֶּם מִהָרָה מִן־הַדֶּקֶר אֶשְׁר־צִוָּה יְהוָה אֲתֶכֶם: 16 I saw how you had sinned against your God הוּדִי: you had made yourselves a molten calf; you had been quick to stray from the path that הוּדִי had enjoined upon you.

וְאֶתְפַּשׁ בְּשְׁנֵי הַלְּחָת וְאֶשְׁלַחֵם מֵעַל שְׁתֵּי יָדַי וְאֶשְׁבְּרֵם לְעֵינֵיכֶם: 17 Thereupon I gripped the two tablets and flung them away with both my hands, smashing them before your eyes.

Derashot HaRan 3:6 There is certainly room for the question, then, if the Blessed One conferred this supernatural perfection upon Moses, why should He have allowed him to lack from that perfection something [i.e., glibness of speech] which most men possess in great perfection within the framework of nature itself! And if you would contend that the conditions for the prophetic eminence consist only in the virtues of intellect and not in the perfection of all other qualities connected with the physical faculties — this is not so! For our sages state (Nedarim 38a): "R. Yonathan said: 'The Holy One Blessed be He causes His Shechinah to come to rest only upon one who is wise, strong, wealthy, and humble, Moses serving as the prototype for all of these criteria.'" Now strength and wealth are neither virtues of intellect nor virtues of character, in spite of which they are conditions for prophecy. And though there are some who understand "strong" in this connection as suppressing one's evil inclination, and "wealthy" as possessing the quality of contentment and rejoicing in one's lot, they are obviously mistaken. For in Nedarim, in reference to Moses' serving as the prototype for all the criteria, "strong" is corroborated by (Deuteronomy 9:17): "And I took hold of the two tablets," and "wealthy" by (Exodus 34:1): "Hew for yourself two tablets of stone — both of which have no connection whatsoever with virtues of intellect or of character. But the fact of the matter is that a prophet must possess all of the perfections which gain him esteem in the eyes of the populace, so that they will more readily heed his words and he will more readily secure for them the betterment for which purpose he was sent. If this be so, how could Moses our teacher, may peace be upon him, have been lacking the perfection of speech? There is no doubt that after the virtues of intellect and

those of character, there is no quality more appropriate for a prophet than this, having always to speak, as he does, before large populations — so much so that the very word "navi" [prophet] derives from his constant speaking, tracing itself to "niv sefataim" [the expression of the lips]. And we find Moses himself expressing amazement over this, how it could be, after he had been chosen as a prophet that his speech impediment was not removed, viz. (Exodus 4:10): "I am not a man of words; neither yesterday, nor the day before, nor since You have spoken to Your servant." There is no question that this is an expression of wonder — How is it that since You have spoken to Your servant his speech impediment was not removed? And the only answer he received from the Blessed One was (Ibid 11): "Who makes a man's mouth...", which, seemingly does not dispel the wonder at all!

Derashot HaRan 5:3 What demands explanation, however, is why a prophet must also be strong and wealthy. Some interpret "strong" in this connection as asserting one's intellect over one's lusts, and "wealthy," as possessing the quality of contentment, likening R. Yonathan's categories to those mentioned by Ben Zoma (Avoth 4:1). They are obviously mistaken, however, for once "humble" is included it is no longer necessary to mention "strong" and "wealthy" [in the aforementioned sense], for our sages of blessed memory have said (Avodah Zarah 20b): "Humility is greater than all of the other traits." They explain that it is impossible to attain humility without having previously attained purity, holiness, fear of sin, and the other qualities mentioned there. This being so, it is obvious that the humble man rules his evil inclination and that he has achieved contentment; for if his inclination rules him and he is constantly anxious over what he has not acquired, it is impossible for him to have achieved the other qualities.

Derashot HaRan 5:4 And there is no doubt that these qualities [wisdom and humility] perfect the soul and free it from the terrestrial, causing it to cleave to the celestial until it is ready for prophecy. And if one deviates from wisdom and humility — the virtues of intellect and character — the bodily faculties within him will grow strong (his material element appertaining to the animal in him and not to the man) and will create a great gulf between him and the Blessed One. As the prophet has said (Isaiah 59:2): "Your transgressions have made a separation between you and your G-d..." Therefore, the prophet must divest himself of lowliness and embody the true perfections, wisdom and humility. Also posing a difficulty to their interpretation is the fact that "strong" is derived (Nedarim 38a) from its being written (Exodus 40:19): "And he spread the tent over the tabernacle," concerning which Rav said (Shabbath 92a): "Moses our teacher, may peace be upon him, did so," and it is written (Exodus 26:16): "The length of the beam shall be ten ells." And it is asked there (Nedarim, Ibid): "Perhaps he was tall and small [in strength]!" and it is answered: "[We know that he was strong] from the verse (Deuteronomy 9:17): 'And I took hold of the two tablets...', and we learned that the tablets were six ells long, six ells broad, and three ells wide. We know that he was wealthy from the verse (Exodus 34:1): 'Hew for yourself two tablets of stone' — you may keep the chippings for yourself." And they also derived this from Jonah, as it is written (Jonah 1:3): "And he paid its hire," concerning which R. Yochanan said: "The hire of the whole ship." And R. Romnos said: "The hire of the whole ship was four thousand golden dinars." It is clear, then, that "strong" and "wealthy" are to be taken literally. Also posing a difficulty to their interpretation is (Shabbath 92a): "...Let us derive it from Moses. Perhaps Moses is different, for the master said: 'The Shechinah comes to rest only upon one who is wise, strong, wealthy, and tall.'" Now there is no eminence of character or of intellect in being tall! It is obvious, then, that "strong" and "wealthy" are to be taken literally.

- 18 וְאֶתְנַפְּלָ לִפְנֵי יְהוָה כְּרֹאשׁוֹנָה אַרְבָּעִים יוֹם וְאַרְבָּעִים לַיְלָה לָחֶם
לֹא אֵכְלֹתִי וּמַיִם לֹא שָׁתִיתִי עַל כָּל־חַטָּאתְכֶּם אֲשֶׁר חָטֵאתֶם לַעֲשׂוֹת הָרָע
בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה לְהַכְעִיסוֹ: I threw myself down before הוהי —eating no bread
and drinking no water forty days and forty nights,
as before—because of the great wrong you had
committed, doing what displeased and vexed הוהי.
- 19 כִּי יִגְרַתִּי מִפְּנֵי הָאֵף וְהַחֲמָה אֲשֶׁר קִצַּף יְהוָה עָלֵיכֶם לְהַשְׁמִיד
אֶתְכֶם וַיִּשְׁמַע יְהוָה אֵלַי גַּם בְּכַעַם הָהוּא: For I was in dread of the fierce anger against you
which moved הוהי to wipe you out. And that time,
too, הוהי gave heed to me.—

Akeidat Yitzchak 59:1:5 The meaning of our opening aggadah is as follows. If you refrain from contact with your wife during the seven days of the menstrual cycle, tum-ah, you will merit the blessing of the eighth day, i.e. circumcision, which symbolises ascendancy over the spirit of impurity, attainment of purity. Since "seven days" represent the "creation cycle," the number seven always reminds man both of his duties and of his limitations on this planet.

What is the Talmud, VII What is written in the Talmud?, 8 Charity 13 R. Eleazar said: A man who gives charity in secret is greater than Moses our Teacher, for of Moses it is written (Deut 9:19), For I was afraid because of the anger and the wrath, and of one who gives charity [secretly] it is written (Prv 21:14), A gift in secret subdues anger. Bava Batra 9b

20 Moreover, הויה was angry enough with Aaron to have destroyed him; so I also interceded for Aaron at that time.—
 וּבִבְאֵהוֹן הַתְּאֵנָה יְהוָה מְאֹד לְהַשְׁמִידוֹ וְאֶתְפַּלֵּל גַּם־בְּעַד אֶהֱרֹן
 בְּעַת הַהוּא:

Akeidat Yitzchak 53:1:17 Shemot Rabbah 42, answers the question from where Moses took the authority to kill Jews found worshipping the calf, by referring us to G-d's own example on the occasion of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the Tower of Babel respectively. In either case, G-d had proceeded to mete out punishment after He had investigated the facts. Similarly, Moses, G-d's trusted servant, was expected to carry out this task as G-d's messenger. When the Levites had completed their task, Moses addressed the nation exhorting them to remain loyal to G-d, and thus turn away His wrath. He pointed to the example of their fellow Jews the Levites, who had demonstrated such loyalty by disregarding family ties when the law required that their closest relatives be executed. He explained that all that is needed to qualify for G-d's blessing, is loyalty. (Exodus 32,29) On the morrow, after the three thousand had died, Moses said to the people that they too had sinned gravely by having demanded proof of G-d's existence and power. Also, they should have prevented the three thousand from dancing around the calf. Therefore, it was now necessary for Moses to ascend the mountain and plead for forgiveness. Moses uses both understatement and exaggeration in his plea, in order to present a credible defense. By describing the sin as the construction of a golden deity, he exaggerated its importance. By pointing out that it had been removed, and that the guilty had been punished, and that none of those witnessing the punishment had protested the death of the guilty, he prayed that surely the time had come to forgive the remainder of the nation for this episode. G-d's reply "whosoever has sinned against Me, I will wipe out from My book," is not a direct response to Moses's request. Moses had spoken about the book "You have written," meaning the Torah, whereas G-d referred to the book of life, a book which G-d retains for His own exclusive use. The people were to be punished by acts of G-d only, since no human witnesses were at hand to testify to their culpable participation in the construction of the golden calf. However, G-d reserved the right to exact such punishment whenever an occasion would arise in the future to punish them for other misdeeds. For the present therefore, G-d says to Moses "lead this people to the place I have said to you." We read in verse 35, "G-d smote the people because they had made the calf that Aaron had made." The repetition of the words "they had made...Aaron had made," indicates that the intentions of the people and the intentions of Aaron had been quite different from one another. Aaron's part in it had been merely incidental, the real culprit having been the people. Nonetheless, Aaron reproaches himself after two of his sons have died, saying "all these things have happened to me," when in fact we had not read of anything else happening to him. 11) Since the progress of the Jewish people from now on was to be under the guidance of an angel, (Exodus 33, 1-3) the people thought that the Divine Presence would no longer be among them. They mourned this news by failing to wear their jewelry. Since they had not actually removed their jewelry from themselves, there was reason for Moses to command them to "remove" it. Apparently, some of the people had put on their jewelry. Why did some people wear their jewelry, whereas others did not? If we follow the tradition that the "jewelry" were the phylacteries of the head, the latter could be viewed as a protective device while worn. When in mourning, wearing such phylacteries is forbidden. The Jews who did not wear their phylacteries considered themselves in mourning, having heard G-d's decree. Others considered themselves in the category of "outcasts," and as such Jewish halachah requires the continued wearing of phylacteries. The difference between the two groups stemmed from which part of G-d's stricture they considered as paramount. (33,5) If they considered the reference to them as "a stiffnecked people" as paramount, they would be in mourning. If they considered the words "I will not go up with you" as paramount, they would view themselves as outcasts. When G-d used the words "children of Israel," a term of endearment at one and the same time, this was proof to those who continued to wear their phylacteries that it was the danger to their souls that was the greater source of worry. G-d having rescinded His decision to abandon the Jewish people, they were told not to grieve more than their brethren who had mourned their physical fate and had therefore divested themselves of their phylacteries. The commandment to the last group to remove their phylacteries also, is a commandment to downgrade the state of their despair to a level in which they only mourned the physical consequences arising out of the episode of the golden calf. When Moses realised that the people were in a state of banishment, he had to remove his tent from their midst, or he would have forfeited further communication from the shechinah, since the latter would not communicate with him as long as he was amidst the banished.

Leadership in the Wilderness; Authority and Anarchy in the Book of Numbers, Part III, Chapter 15; Losing a Leader 14

The passage begins in similar fashion to Miriam's death scene, as an interruption of the sojourns of the children of Israel. Here, however, there is special mention of the "whole congregation." It is this group that frames the passage, as it closes with "all the house of Israel." Again in the middle we are reminded that this event takes place "in the sight of all

the congregation.” That the whole congregation would travel together and mourn collectively for one of its leaders comes as no surprise, but the noticeable absence of this communal presence in the death of Miriam and, to a lesser degree, Moses, makes it noticeable here. Aaron had been a man of the people. He served as spokesman to them and orchestrated the plan for the Golden Calf in consonance with their wishes. In rabbinic literature, he is lauded as a pursuer of peace, a mediator who was devoted to his constituents. While he may have erred in some respects (Deuteronomy 9:20 records God’s displeasure with Aaron for his involvement in the sin of the calf: “And the Lord was very angry with Aaron to have destroyed him”), Aaron was a defender of the people. He had mercy on their faults and, through the generosity of his spirit, was able to overlook some of their evil tendencies. God seems to find more mercy for those too generous than for those who were not generous enough. One midrash queries why Moses was not accorded the same public mourning and concludes, “since he judged strictly and criticized whereas Aaron never said a negative word to any man.” (Avot DeRabbi Natan 12.) For this, the midrash concludes, Aaron was awarded the appellation “a pursuer of peace.” Aaron’s mistake was in loving the congregation too much. It is no coincidence, then, that his death would be framed by the presence of the people he unconditionally loved.

- 21 וְאֶת־חֲטָאתְכֶם אֲשֶׁר־עָשִׂיתֶם אֶת־הַעֲלֹל לְקַחְתִּי וְאֲשַׁרְףֶּהָ אֹתוֹ | בָּאֵשׁ
וְאָכַלְתָּ אֹתוֹ טָחוֹן הַיֵּטֶב עַד אֲשֶׁר־דִּקָּה לְעֶפֶר וְאֲשַׁלְּחֶנּוּ אֶת־עֲפָרוֹ אֶל־הַנָּחַל
הַיָּרֵד מִן־הָהָר:
- 21 As for that sinful thing you had made, the calf, I took it and put it to the fire; I broke it to bits and ground it thoroughly until it was fine as dust, and I threw its dust into the brook that comes down from the mountain.

Akeidat Yitzchak 53:1:16 The Midrash teaches that this is the source for the lesson never to condemn anyone until one had seen with one's own eyes. Even when the information originates with the Almighty Himself, this is not enough to condemn without personally investigating the facts. (8) Moses presumably burned the platform that must have been erected for the golden calf, not the calf itself. Chapter 32,20, may be understood in this vein: When Moses had observed the goings on in the camp, had smashed the tablets etc., he took the calf they had made, burned the trappings and ground the golden calf into dust, scattering the dust on the surface of the water, making the people drink from it. This would be in line with Deut. 9,21, "and the sin you had constructed together with the calf, I took and burned it, and I ground it into thin dust." Note that the Torah in our chapter had not stated "he took the calf and burned it," but rather "he took the calf they had made and burned in fire." (9) When asking Aaron "what did the people do to you that you have brought such a great sin upon them?" (Exodus 32,21) What Moses meant was: "what terrible pressures have you been subjected to, that you could even have had a part in this affair?" Aaron's reply was simply "you know the people's conduct when they are evil." The reason Aaron's part in this whole affair is so brief, is not a cover up, on the contrary, since his intention to steer them away from sin had misfired, he could not be given any credit for his intervention. Moses saw that the people's behaviour was totally unrestrained. This was due in part to Aaron's intervention however well meaning it might have been. As a result, non Jews and even some Jews might argue that if even Moses's own brother had had a share in the sin, how could one blame the people at large for such a sin! It is in this context that we must understand Moses's apparent accusation against Aaron. So, Moses positioned himself at the gate, and called for volunteers to deal with those who had danced around the calf. If Aaron's own tribe volunteered and killed three thousand of their fellow Jews and no one protested, this could only have been because they knew that Aaron's intentions had been pure, and that his involvement in the unhappy outcome had been due to circumstances he had not foreseen.

- 22 וּבַתְּבַעְרָה וּבַמִּסָּה וּבַקְּבֵרֶת הַתְּאֵנָה מִקְצָפִים הָיִיתֶם אֶת־יְהוָה:
- 22 Again you provoked הוהי at Taberah, and at Massah, and at Kibroth-hattaavah.
- 23 וּבִשְׁלַח יְהוָה אֶתְכֶם מִקְדֵּשׁ בְּרַנֵּל לֵאמֹר עֲלוּ וּרְשׁוּ אֶת־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר
נָתַתִּי לָכֶם וַתְּמָרוּ אֶת־פִּי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם וְלֹא הֶאֱמַנְתֶּם לוֹ וְלֹא
שָׁמַעְתֶּם בְּקוֹלִי:
- 23 And when הוהי sent you on from Kadesh-barnea, saying, “Go up and take possession of the land that I am giving you,” you flouted the command of your God הוהי —whom you did not put your trust in nor obey.
- 24 מִמְּרִים הָיִיתֶם עִם־יְהוָה מִיּוֹם דַּעַתִּי אֶתְכֶם:
- 24 As long as I have known you, you have been defiant toward הוהי.

25 וְאֶת־נַפְלִי לִפְנֵי יְהוָה אֶת אַרְבָּעִים הַיּוֹם וְאֶת־אַרְבָּעִים הַלַּיְלָה אֲשֶׁר
הִתְנַפַּלְתִּי כִּי־אָמַר יְהוָה לְהַשְׁמִיד אֶתְכֶם: When I lay prostrate before הוהי those forty days
and forty nights, (those forty days and forty
nights Lit. “the forty days and forty nights that
I lay prostrate.”) because הוהי was determined to
destroy you,

Olat Reiyah, Essays on Prayer, Paths of Action in Prayer 3 The Sages taught – It happened once with a student that prayed before the ark in the presence of R. Eliezer, and he prayed too long. His students said to him, ‘how longwinded he is! He said to them ‘Is he more longwinded than Moshe our Teacher, of whom it is written “The forty days and the forty nights...” (Devarim 9:25)?’ It happened again that a student prayed before the ark in R. Eliezer’s presence, and he cut his prayer too short. His students said to him, ‘how brief he is!’ He said to them ‘is he more brief than Moshe our Teacher, of whom it is written “...please G–d, please heal her.” (Bamidbar 12:13)?’ [Berachot 34a]The value of prayer reveals itself through two things. The first is through the elevation of comprehensions and qualities, be they of the one praying or the one prayed for. For this great lengthiness is required, like the process of changing ingrained motions, which happens gradually. Such was the lengthiness of Moshe our Teacher - forty days, aligned with the days of formation of the fetus (See Berachot 60a. It is important to remember that numbers can be more than mathematical measures, they can be a symbolic language as well. Forty days of rain, forty nights on the mountain, forty years in the wilderness. Perhaps forty represents the completion of one stage and the passage to another.), like the giving of a new form and heart to the one for whom he prayed. And the second - that once everything needed for elevation has been done within the innerness of the soul, expressed prayer serves to actualize what has already been done within. For this, no duration whatsoever is required, because with one word a multitude of feelings are brought to light. (Compare this line to section 1:4) Brevity in prayer serves in the place which requires actualization of that which is already prepared. Therefore, both these paths have a positive aspect, so long as one focuses their heart on heaven, according to what is possible and fit to the need of the hour.

26 וְאֶת־כָּל אֱלֹהֵי הָהָרָה נֹאמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוָה אֶל־תִּשְׁחַת עַמְּךָ וְנַחֲלֶתְךָ
אֲשֶׁר פָּדִיתָ בְּגִדְלֶךָ אֲשֶׁר־הוֹצָאתָ מִמִּצְרַיִם בְּיַד חֲזָקָה: I prayed to הוהי and said, “O Lord הוהי, do not
annihilate Your very own people, whom You redeemed
in Your majesty and whom You freed from Egypt with
a mighty hand.

Olat Reiyah, Essays on Prayer, Prayer and Torah 6 “R. Chanin said in the name of R. Chanina: If one prays at length, their prayer does not return empty. From where do we know this? From Moshe our Teacher, as it says, ‘And I prayed to G–d...’(Devarim 9:26), and it is written afterwards, ‘and G–d listened to me that time also.’ (Devarim 10:10) Is that so? Didn’t R. Chiyya bar Abba say in the name of R. Yochanan - if one prays at length and expects the fulfillment of his prayer, in the end he comes to heartbreak, as it says, ‘Hope deferred makes the heart sick’? (Mishle 13:12) What is his remedy? Occupy himself with Torah, as it says, ‘But desire fulfilled is a tree of life; (ibid.) and the tree of life is none other than the Torah, as it says, ‘She is a tree of life to those who hold fast to her!’ (Mishle 3:18) — There is no contradiction: one refers to a man who prays at length and expects the fulfillment of his prayer, the other to one who prays at length without expecting the fulfillment of his prayer.” [Berachot 32b]Prayer is the product of spiritual feeling from the depths of the soul’s nature, and the intellect is fit to serve only as her introduction and foundation, because in so far as one’s intellect is lucid, and through it one’s actions aligned toward the essence of wholeness, so the nature of their soul is elevated and her power increased in the moment when she pours out her plaint before her Maker. But mingling a deep accounting of intellectual influences into prayer itself removes one from the realm of prayer at all, because the true nature of prayer, and its essential precious quality, comes not through an accounting of logical, intellectual connections, but rather from above this. That is how the nature of the soul is established - through the revelation of the essential nature of the depths of the pure soul as she turns longingly toward the G–d of her redemption. Therefore, to the extent that no alien force is mingled in the element of spiritual feeling, and she is left in her pure nature to aspire toward the object of her actions, the greater the power of prayer grows. One who prolongs prayer with the expectation of response, bringing intellectual functions into prayer, comes to heartache. The ways of the soul’s sentiments in her inner nature will be withheld from them, since they desire to give them intellectual pathways, through which they will never achieve comprehension nor come by way of them to their ultimate purpose. However, if one’s soul longs for intellectual perfection, that through it their emotions be clear and more fit for intellectual awareness, the practice of prayer is not for this purpose. Rather, this is achieved through Torah, and the more one gains wisdom in Torah, and through it their intellect is refined, so the intellect will work on the powers of

feeling and imagination, that they be their brightest. But there is one who prays at length in order to actualize the longings of the soul and its thirst for Divine intimacy, and does not expect to see their fulfillment. This includes the one who readies further wisdom and fitting holy consciousness before the time of prayer, because according to the magnitude of preparation, so will be the preciousness loftiness of the feeling. Their prayer is like the lengthy prayer of Moshe our Teacher, which flowed from the intellectual nature of that which preceded it, his primary occupation of Torah, and was a lofty preparation for prayer fit to the value of his stature. Such a prayer does not return empty.

27 זָכַר לַעֲבָדֶיךָ לְאַבְרָהָם לְיִצְחָק וְלִיעֲקֹב אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֶל־קִשְׁי הָעַם הַזֶּה וְאֶל־רִשְׁעוֹ וְאֶל־חֲטָאתוֹ: Give thought to Your servants Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and pay no heed to the stubbornness of this people, its wickedness, and its sinfulness.

28 פֶּן־יֹאמְרוּ הָאֲרָץ אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתָנוּ מִשָּׁם מִבְּלִי יָכֹלֶת יְהוָה לְהִבָּיֵאֵם אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר־דִּבֶּר לָהֶם וּמִשְׁנֵאתָ אוֹתָם הוֹצִיאָם לְהַמָּתָם בַּמִּדְבָּר: Else the country from which You freed us will say, 'It was because הוה' was powerless to bring them into the land promised to them, and because of having rejected them, that [their god] brought them out to have them die in the wilderness.'

29 וְהֵם עַמְּךָ וְנַחֲלָתְךָ אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתָ בְּכַחֲךָ הַגָּדֹל וּבִזְרֹעַךְ הַנְּטוּיָה: Yet they are Your very own people, whom You freed with Your great might and Your outstretched arm."

Yesod Mora VeSod HaTorah 12:2 Now pay attention, for the unity is the secret of every calculation, and behold, it is not a calculation, for it stands on its own, and it does not require approval from those who come after it. Every calculation is composed of units, and every calculation is made from the two sides of its corners, according to what the one does in one corner of those that exist for it. Therefore, the sages of the Tushia called man "a small world," and this is the secret of Metatron, the Prince of Countenance. This is the secret that our sages mentioned in the five matters. Thus it is written in the measure of "Koma" (the heavenly heights). Rabbi Yishmael said, "Whoever knows his measure in the formation of Genesis, it is guaranteed to him that he is a son of the World to Come, and I and Akiva are guarantors for him." And from this path, the discerning one can know the unity, for everything in it is cleaved only by the aspect of complete goodness. The prophet does not have the strength to comprehend it, and the analogy is like the sun passing over the surface of a closed eye, and one cannot see the face of the sun until it passes. Thus it is written, "I will pass all My goodness before you" (Exodus 33:19), and behold, they cleaved to all His goodness, like the form of a face, and the creatures that cleave to Him are like backs. And this is "And you shall see My back" (Exodus 33:23), and this is the analogy in man, for man speaks and man hears, and the one who learns the wisdom of the soul can understand these matters. For they are not bodies, nor are they like bodies, and because the cause is both distant and near. Therefore, the Hebrews said, "For the portion of the Lord is His people" (Deuteronomy 32:9), "The Lord is my allotted portion and my cup" (Psalms 16:5), "My portion is the Lord, says my soul" (Lamentations 3:24). And it is written, "They are your people and your inheritance" (Deuteronomy 9:29), and it is written, "The Lord Himself is His inheritance" (Deuteronomy 18). And another way is also true, as it is written, "Blessed be the Lord, my rock" (Psalms 18:2), and it is written elsewhere, "The God of my rock, I take refuge in Him" (2 Samuel 22:3), and likewise, "He is your praise" (Deuteronomy 10), "The God of my praise" (Psalms 109:26), and it is written, "My loving-kindness and my fortress" (Psalms 144:2), and it is written, "The God of my loving-kindness" (Psalms 59:11). Therefore, the secret of prayers is to say, "I will exalt You, my God, the King" (Psalms 145:1), "Bless the Lord, His angels" (Psalms 103:20), "Magnify the Lord with me" (Psalms 34:4). And this secret is the foundation of all this gate, for it is the gate to the Lord, and through it, the righteous shall enter.

10

1 בָּעֵת הַהִוא אָמַר יְהוָה אֵלַי כָּסֵלֶיךָ שְׁנֵי־לוּחֹת אֲבָנִים כְּרָאשֵׁי וְעֹלָה אֵלַי הַהָרָה וַעֲשֵׂיתִי לְךָ אֲרוֹן עֹץ: Thereupon הוה' said to me, "Carve out two tablets of stone like the first, and come up to Me on the mountain; and make an ark of wood.

Akeidat Yitzchak 54:1:7 The first explanation obviously refers to our parable of the cave and the sea. Moses became filled with the sea of wisdom. Combined with Moses's own accomplishments, he emerges as a partner of the Lord. The second explanation reveals another aspect of the man/G-d partnership. It deals with the nature of the second set of tablets. Their composition consisted of three components, (a) the natural element, granite. (b) they acquired a finished appearance by means of work, polishing. (c) the Divine element, i.e. the inscription, as the Torah states "and the writing

was the writing by the Lord." Each of the above items can be further subdivided into two, making the tablets have six facets. This is what the sages hinted at when they described the tablets as having the dimension of six tefachim. The word tefach is used in Isaiah 48, 13, as describing G-d's workmanship. So we have the following: 1- A, a piece of granite, primeval matter. B, this primeval matter was condensed into a certain density. 2- A, the finished appearance, preceded by the tools needed to treat that raw material. B, correct size and shape. 3- A, writing material. B, the message, text.

Moses, exclusively, provided the shaping of the tablets and the tools for the work. G-d, exclusively, contributed the writing material and the text. There remained therefore two tefachim that allowed for partnership. Those two tefachim became subject to combined influences. When Moses perceived the nature of the partnership with G-d, implied by the fact that both tablets had equal dimensions, he became happy, his face radiated his happiness that such is the nature of the partnership with the Creator. This is the meaning of the verse "and Moses went up to G-d," (Exodus 19,3) or the parallel statement in Psalms 68,19, "you went up to the heights." The author continues with an attack on Maimonides

who restricts philosophic disagreements with Aristotele to the area of creation ex nihilo. Finally, the third view expressed in the Midrash, that of Rabbi Yehudah who ascribes the rays that emanated from Moses's forehead as due to ink spilled inadvertently when G-d wrote on the tablets. This means that the leftover of the great mass of sea i.e. "ink" that entered the cave and receded, was to teach that once watered by G-d, irrigated so to speak, such inspiration does not evaporate but is reflected in the appearance of the recipient. All three Rabbis then comment on the interrelationship between man and G-d, and how same is illustrated by the rays of Divinity illuminating the face of Moses on his return from his summit meeting with G-d on Mount Sinai. The author questions the view of Maimonides that would have Moses pose two separate questions, and which if answered positively would have made a kind of deity out of Moses. He prefers to treat what appears as Moses's two questions (33, 13 and 33, 18) as parts of a single question, meaning "let me know Your ways so that I will know more about You."

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| <p>וְאֶכְתֹּב עַל־הַלְּחָת אֶת־הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר הָיוּ עַל־הַלְּחָת הָרִאשׁוֹנִים אֲשֶׁר שָׁבַרְתָּ וְשִׁמַּתָּם בָּאָרוֹן:</p> | <p>2 I will inscribe on the tablets the commandments that were on the first tablets that you smashed, and you shall deposit them in the ark."</p> |
| <p>וְאָעַשׂ אֶרְוֶן עֲצֵי שִׁטִּים וְאֶפְסַל שְׁנֵי־לְחָת אֲבָנִים כְּרִאשֹׁנִים וְאָעַל הַהָרָה וּשְׁנֵי הַלְּחָת בִּידִי:</p> | <p>3 I made an ark of acacia wood and carved out two tablets of stone like the first; I took the two tablets with me and went up the mountain.</p> |
| <p>וַיִּכְתֹּב עַל־הַלְּחָת כְּמִכְתָּב הָרִאשׁוֹן אֶת עֲשֶׂרֶת הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר יְהוָה אֵלֵיכֶם בְּהָר מִתּוֹךְ הָאֵשׁ בְּיוֹם הַקֹּהֵל וַיִּתֶּנָּם יְהוָה אֵלַי:</p> | <p>4 After inscribing on the tablets the same text as on the first—the Ten Commandments that הוֹדִי addressed to you on the mountain out of the fire on the day of the Assembly— הוֹדִי gave them to me.</p> |
| <p>וְאֶפֶן נֶאֱרַל מִן־הָהָר וְאִשְׁם אֶת־הַלְּחָת בָּאָרוֹן אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתִי וַיְהִי שָׁם כְּאֲשֶׁר צֻוֵּנִי יְהוָה:</p> | <p>5 Then I left and went down from the mountain, and I deposited the tablets in the ark that I had made, where they still are, as הוֹדִי had commanded me.</p> |
| <p>וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל נִסְעוּ מִבְּאֵרֶת בְּנֵי־יִזְעָקוֹן מוֹסֶרָה שֵׁם מֵת אֶהְרֹן וַיִּקְבֹּר שָׁם וַיִּכְהֶן אֶלְעָזָר בְּנוֹ תַּחְתָּיו:</p> | <p>6 From Beeroth-bene-jaakan (Beeroth-bene-jaakan Lit. "wells of Bene-jaakan"; cf. Num. 33.31–32.) the Israelites marched to Moserah. Aaron died there and was buried there; and his son Eleazar became priest in his stead.</p> |

Akeidat Yitzchak 81:1:11 Some problems in the text of our Parshah. 1) Why did Moses tell Edom in his request for passage through its country, that Israel would not march through field or vineyard? Who has ever heard of an army deliberately setting out to travel through vineyards when they had just been given permission to traverse the country altogether? 2) Why is Aaron's death reported at this juncture and not his burial, which we read about only in Deut. chapter 10? 3) Why is the Torah so vague about the prisoners taken by the king of Arad? (21,1) 4) Why was this place chosen to report about the people's dissatisfaction with the Manna? Why the report about the snakes?

Akeidat Yitzchak 81:1:13 (1) We must make a distinction between G'ds reasons and Israel's motivations. Israel was very interested in avoiding a major detour around the land of Edom, an inconvenience, which as we have seen in this chapter, resulted in many complaints. Therefore, the Torah credits Moses with the despatch of messengers, (20,14) i.e. G'd did not prevent the people from trying diplomatic means to secure passage through the country. He knew of the futility of the exercise, and that is why all the reasons are listed that could have persuaded the Edomites to grant

Israel's request. Edom, in common with many other countries, had two kinds of roads that traversed it. The one used by armies would be far away from the built up areas so as to ensure that whoever travelled that route would not cause damage or interfere with either agriculture or civilization. The other road, the *derech messilah*, the paved main highway, was the link between the built up areas. On that route would be found suppliers of water and food for travellers. Israel first offered to travel the first kind of road. When refused, Israel suggested using the other type of road, offering economic benefits to the host country by using and paying for the facilities available. In the latter event, they wanted to reassure Edom that they would not cause destruction or damage in their wake, something the Edomites had reason to be afraid of, considering the size of Israel's army. (2) Aaron's death may have been reported, since he was able to see his son Eleazar take over his position, a *zechut*, merit, that might well have been the reason Moses wished himself a death such as that of Aaron had been privileged to experience. (Sifri Parshat Ha-azinu) He was not buried where he died, since there was concern that Edom might desecrate his grave, were the grave to be situated close to Edom's borders. When we read in Deut. 10,6, "there Aaron died and was buried," the word "there" does not necessarily describe an exact location, just the general area. (3) The absence of the *tzaddik* Aaron was felt, but not to the extent that lives were actually lost. After Israel had made the vow to destroy the Canaanite cities, the prisoners were freed as a result of renewed fighting. (4) The displeasure of the people was occasioned through the tedious detour around Edom, a march away from the direction of their eventual destination. The general dissatisfaction also led to the search for complaints against the manner of G'd's Providence. Their complaint was that all their provisions, both bread and water were due only to miraculous, supernatural means. They did not feel assured of the continuance of these supplies, and longed for a normal existence based on natural law. The appearance of the snakes reminded the people that an existence based on natural law would be precarious indeed, and that they therefore had no reason to quarrel with G'd's Providence. They realised this when they begged Moses to pray for renewed *hashgachah peratit*. (21,7) Actually, ever since the blessing Noach had received after he had offered the thanksgiving offering for having survived the deluge with his family intact, snakes ought to have been afraid of humans. (Genesis 9,2) An attack by snakes on humans, therefore, is an extraordinary phenomenon. However, the blessing bestowed on Noach, and through him on mankind, is conditional on mankind retaining its *tzelem elokim*, reflecting the Divine image accorded by its Creator. When man does not live up to the moral stature expected of him, the animals sense this and act accordingly. As long as Israel lived on a morally high plateau in the desert, the animals had kept their distance. However, as soon as they failed to maintain their standards, the predators also failed to keep their respectful distance. Animals who observe humans provided for by G'd, certainly are afraid to molest such humans. Reliance on help from above, just like during the first battle against Amalek, was demonstrated symbolically by the copper snake on a high pole. When our sages say that Moses actually threw the copper snake up into the air, and that it remained suspended there, that is precisely the point that they were making, namely that help comes only "from up there."

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| <p>מִשָּׁם נִסְעוּ הַגִּדְגָּדָה וּמִן־הַגִּדְגָּדָה יִטְבְּתָהּ אֶרֶץ נַחֲלֵי מַיִם:</p> | <p>7 From there they marched to Gudgod, (Gudgod "Hor-haggidgad" in Num. 33.32–33.) and from Gudgod to Jotbath, a region of running brooks.</p> |
| <p>בַּעַת הַהוּא הִבְדִּיל יְהוָה אֶת־שִׁבְט הַלֵּוִי לְשֵׂאת אֶת־אֲרוֹן בְּרִית־יְהוָה לְעֹמֵד לִפְנֵי יְהוָה לְשָׁרְתוֹ וּלְבָכְרוֹ בְּשִׁמּוֹ עַד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה:</p> | <p>8 At that time הוהי set apart the tribe of Levi to carry the Ark of הוהי's Covenant, to stand in attendance upon הוהי, and to bless in God's name, as is still the case.</p> |
| <p>עַל־כֵּן לֹא־הָיָה לְלֵוִי חֵלֶק וְנַחֲלָה עִם־אֲחָיו יְהוָה הוּא נַחֲלָתוֹ כְּאֶשֶׁר דִּבֶּר יְהוָה אֶלְהֵיךָ לוֹ:</p> | <p>9 That is why Levi has received no hereditary portion along with its kin: הוהי is its portion, as your God הוהי spoke concerning it.</p> |

The Third Beit HaMikdash, Concluding Statements 2 See our opening statements. (P. 21.) There it was stated that seven tribes received their ancestral portions north of the Great Terumah. This can possibly clarify the version of the Sifri favored by Rabbi Klonymus, and cited by Rashi in his commentary to Parshas Shoftim: (See Rashi, Devarim 18:2.)

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| <p>וְאֵנֹכִי עֹמְדָתִי בְּהָר כְּמִימֵי הָרָאשִׁימִים אֲרַבְעִים יוֹם וְאַרְבָּעִים לַיְלָה וַיִּשְׁמַע יְהוָה אֵלַי גַּם בַּפֶּעַם הַהוּא לֹא־אַבָּהּ יְהוָה הַשְׁחִיתֶנִּי:</p> | <p>10 I had stayed on the mountain, as I did the first time, forty days and forty nights; and הוהי heeded me once again: הוהי agreed not to destroy you.</p> |
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Olat Reiyah, Essays on Prayer, Prayer and Torah 6 "R. Chanin said in the name of R. Chanina: If one prays at length, their prayer does not return empty. From where do we know this? From Moshe our Teacher, as it says, 'And I prayed to

G-d...(Devarim 9:26), and it is written afterwards, 'and G-d listened to me that time also.' (Devarim 10:10) Is that so?

Didn't R. Chiyya bar Abba say in the name of R. Yochanan - if one prays at length and expects the fulfillment of his prayer, in the end he comes to heartbreak, as it says, 'Hope deferred makes the heart sick'? (Mishle 13:12) What is his remedy? Occupy himself with Torah, as it says, 'But desire fulfilled is a tree of life; (ibid.) and the tree of life is none other than the Torah, as it says, 'She is a tree of life to those who hold fast to her!' (Mishle 3:18) — There is no contradiction: one refers to a man who prays at length and expects the fulfillment of his prayer, the other to one who prays at length without expecting the fulfillment of his prayer." [Berachot 32b] Prayer is the product of spiritual feeling from the depths of the soul's nature, and the intellect is fit to serve only as her introduction and foundation, because in so far as one's intellect is lucid, and through it one's actions aligned toward the essence of wholeness, so the nature of their soul is elevated and her power increased in the moment when she pours out her plaint before her Maker. But mingling a deep accounting of intellectual influences into prayer itself removes one from the realm of prayer at all, because the true nature of prayer, and its essential precious quality, comes not through an accounting of logical, intellectual connections, but rather from above this. That is how the nature of the soul is established - through the revelation of the essential nature of the depths of the pure soul as she turns longingly toward the G-d of her redemption. Therefore, to the extent that no alien force is mingled in the element of spiritual feeling, and she is left in her pure nature to aspire toward the object of her actions, the greater the power of prayer grows. One who prolongs prayer with the expectation of response, bringing intellectual functions into prayer, comes to heartache. The ways of the soul's sentiments in her inner nature will be withheld from them, since they desire to give them intellectual pathways, through which they will never achieve comprehension nor come by way of them to their ultimate purpose. However, if one's soul longs for intellectual perfection, that through it their emotions be clear and more fit for intellectual awareness, the practice of prayer is not for this purpose. Rather, this is achieved through Torah, and the more one gains wisdom in Torah, and through it their intellect is refined, so the intellect will work on the powers of feeling and imagination, that they be their brightest. But there is one who prays at length in order to actualize the longings of the soul and its thirst for Divine intimacy, and does not expect to see their fulfillment. This includes the one who readies further wisdom and fitting holy consciousness before the time of prayer, because according to the magnitude of preparation, so will be the preciousness loftiness of the feeling. Their prayer is like the lengthy prayer of Moshe our Teacher, which flowed from the intellectual nature of that which preceded it, his primary occupation of Torah, and was a lofty preparation for prayer fit to the value of his stature. Such a prayer does not return empty.

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֵלַי קוּם לֵךְ לְמַסַּע לִפְנֵי הָעָם וַיְבִאוּ וַיִּירָשׁוּ
אֶת-הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר-נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי לְאֲבֹתָם לָתֵת לָהֶם:

11 And הוה said to me, "Up, resume the march at the head of the people, that they may go in and possess the land that I swore to their fathers to give them."

וְעַתָּה יִשְׂרָאֵל מַה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ שָׁאַל מֵעֲמֶךָ כִּי אִם-לִירְאָה אֶת-יְהוָה
אֱלֹהֶיךָ לָלֶכֶת בְּכָל-דִּרְכָיו וּלְאַהֲבָה אוֹתוֹ וְלַעֲבֹד אֶת-יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ
בְּכָל-לִבְּךָ וּבְכָל-נַפְשְׁךָ:

12 And now, O Israel, what does your God הוה demand of you? Only this: to revere your God הוה, to walk only in divine paths, to love and to serve your God הוה with all your heart and soul,

Akeidat Yitzchak 22:1:6 Our opening Midrash confirms our view. Rabbi Chaninah says that in spite of the fact that many aspects of a person's life are predetermined (provisionally), G-d did not predetermine man's moral development. This is entirely up to his own volition. The original determination of man's physical and material attributes is due to the leeway given to the angel, i.e. to the intermediary otherwise known as "nature." However, since G-d has reserved to Himself the keys to life, livelihood, and the ability to have children, those three matters are subject to G-d's override if man's merit suffices. This is in line with the statement by Rabbi Akiva in Avot 3,15, "While everything is foreseen, freedom of choice has been granted." The name laylah, mentioned by Rabbi Chaninah as the name of the angel in charge of presenting the embryo before G-d, symbolizes two concepts. 1) Night is a time when positive elements such as light are absent. 2) It is the time when one hopes for improvement, rebirth, renewal (see Psalms 130,6 "Shomrim laboker," one yearns for morning and what it is expected to herald). Man cannot tolerate the idea that things are decreed irrevocably, that only negative forces exist. He feels that he ought to be the master of his own fate. It is quite in line with these expectations of man, then, that G-d says, "All I am asking of you is that you revere Me etc." (Deut 10,12).

Akeidat Yitzchak 39:1:4 The animals supporting the throne of G-d in the vision of the prophet Yechezkel (1,3) have no idea of G-d's appearance, nonetheless they praise Him at the appropriate times by saying "blessed be His glorious kingdom from wherever His place." However, the Israelites descending into the sea of reeds could proclaim "THIS is my

Lord, I will glorify Him." Each one of them was able to point his finger at an image of G-d. In the future there will be a time when you will be able to say this twice, as we are told in Isaiah 25,9, "on that day he will say HERE is the Lord our G-d in whom we hoped that He would save us; THIS is the Lord we have placed our hope in, let us rejoice and be happy with His salvation." Man's position in the universe is between the sphere of the heavenly bodies and the lower creatures and inanimate matter on earth. Since he is composed of elements of either, these elements separate from one another when man dies. "Dust returns to the earth, and the spirit to the Lord." (Kohelet 12,7) Also, in nature there are gradations of animations such as corals, sponges etc. which are neither fully animate nor completely inanimate. Since we perceive that in all spheres of creation there are such gradations, the same is true also in the spiritual spheres. Everything is relative and measured against higher or lower levels of spirituality. The concept of tov, good, used in the Torah, such as when Moses demands from the people that they perform certain commandments, is always a relative "good" ("in order that you will be well of," for instance.) (Deut, 12,25) The "good" referred to is what it is possible for a human being to achieve within a certain framework. When Moses describes the task of a Jew as "what is it that the Lord your G-d asks of you, except to fear Him etc. (Deut, 10,12), he is telling us that we have been given the means to achieve a higher degree of spiritual perfection than other human beings, if we observe the laws of the Torah. It does not mean that this will make angels out of us, and remove us totally from any vestige of the animalistic within us. The mitzvot that are required of us, help us achieve our relative perfection. The same mitzvot are not required of the heavenly creatures, (angels) as they would not help them achieve their own relative perfection. "To be good for you,"- i.e. it is good for us, does not mean the same thing would be good for anybody else, (non humans.)- "to be good for us for all time." There are two kinds of "good" that apply to us. Acquisition of the "good" is divided into two categories, (a) activities, which while enhancing the self, the personality, have no impact on our environment, (b) activities which leave an imprint on our environment. Refinement of our intellectual faculties for instance, leaves the objects of our perceptions completely unchanged. If Job (Job 28,13) asks sarcastically about the value of true wisdom, which seems to him so ineffectual, the truth is, that what appears invisible is in reality the pure intellect. When Solomon states "that the advantage man enjoys over the animal is nil," he means to say that this very "nil," invisible intellect, is what separates man from the beasts. (Kohelet 3,19) Job, (28,12) asking "which is the site of understanding?" suggests that insight cannot be limited to spatial considerations, i.e. makom. "The deep said it is not to be found within me, and the ocean said it is not within me." This means that wisdom is not found in the physical part of the universe. Another distinction of the pure intellect, unencumbered by the physical, is the enduring nature of achievements of the pure spirit. Results of intellectual enquiry etc., are not subject to subsequent mutations through synthesis with something physical. The other accomplishments involving outside objects etc. are subject to whatever it is that happens to such material objects. Since material objects are subject to decay, accomplishments tied to matters material are similarly subject to decay and eventual disintegration. Actions by the Almighty fall into the aforementioned two categories. He is both an intellect, reigns supreme and is majestically separate; but there is also the "yad hachazakah" which while part of His intellect is what He employs when He wills happenings in this universe. By means of the latter, the yesh, is created from the ayin, the visible is created from the invisible, immaterial. The three worlds, the totally physical, the physical/spiritual, and the totally spiritual, abstract, are all part of this second part of intellect. Even the totally inanimate physical world that appears at first glance as everlasting, (planetary system, rocks etc.) is conceived already by our Torah and prophets as having a finite existence. (Isaiah 51,6) "Lift unto the heavens your eyes, and behold the earth; the heavens will melt like salt, the earth will rot like clothing. Similarly, its inhabitants will die were it not for My salvation that will last forever, as well as My righteousness which will not diminish." This and other examples teach us that all that is enduring is so only inasmuch as it uses the spiritual force it has been endowed with. Material things, even those of the most enduring kind, once devoid of spiritual stimulants- will ultimately disintegrate of their own accord. Our own concept of an enduring existence is based on hashgachah peratit, on G-d's Personal attention to the creature or object in question. We do not hold that species as such are self perpetuating, independent of the specific will of the Creator. Despite the fact that we have described the purely intellectual as being superior to the physical, man's advance towards his relative perfection must proceed via the active, not merely the contemplative, since the latter is apt to lead to erroneous conclusions. This is why the Torah demands deeds, which through the system of reward and punishment, assure us of our nitzchiyut, perpetuity, or lack of it, G-d forbid. Aristotele is a prime example of the pure intellect arriving at faulty conclusions. Solomon says (Kohelet 7,16) "do not become too clever or you will be left desolate." The danger is that one may become a blasphemer, inadvertently. Our composition is such that we achieve our goal only through fulfilling the mitzvot. The prophet jeremiah sums it up when he says "let not the wise man boast of his wisdom...but let him who must boast, praise himself for knowing Me, for I do love kindness etc." (Jeremiah 9,23) G-d suggests that man imitate His attributes.

Akeidat Yitzchak 44:4:3 Some difficulties in the text of the Parshah.

Akeidat Yitzchak 57:1:3 Whenever the matter of animal sacrifices is discussed, there are some difficult questions that cannot be ignored. 1) Is it not unavoidable that sacrifices will be viewed as attempts to bribe G'd to forego the anger caused Him by the sinner who offers the sacrifice? 2) Does it not seem that the donor tries to placate G'd just as he would attempt to placate a mere mortal ruler, thereby insulting G'd, reducing His stature? 3) If, on the other hand, the offering is in the nature of a penance, payment for trespass from which G'd receives no more benefit than from say the imposition of corporal punishment on the sinner, what good is it? 4) Is the purpose of the sacrifices perhaps merely to provide the priests with a livelihood, or simply the destruction of the animals that are being offered up? It is clearly erroneous to view the offerings as an attempt to restore the perfection or wholeness of G'd by means of a sacrifice that would complement something incomplete in Him. In Psalms 50, 11-13, "I will not accept bullocks from you, since all the animal kingdom is Mine; if I were hungry, would I have to call you? After all, the whole universe belongs to Me." Isaiah 43,24, states this even more succinctly. "You have not bought for Me fragrant reeds with money..nor have you tired yourself out on My behalf. You have not brought Me the lambs of your total offerings, not honoured Me with your meat offerings;..you have not bought Me with your money! I, I forgive you for MY sake!" Clearly, what the prophet stresses is that none of the things Israel did to placate G'd or bribe Him, has had the slightest impact on the well being of G'd Himself. G'd forgives for His own sake. He emphasizes that there is no other consideration, repeats His name when He proclaims that He dispenses forgiveness, in order to stress that there is no personal benefit involved. There is no aspect of G'd that can be enhanced by the gift of man. If there were a price tag on forgiveness, it would have to be set in motion through mutual action. Since however, there is no exchange of values for the forgiveness, it occurs only through "My righteousness." "I will not remember your sins," so as not to shame you. However, "remind Me of them," you tell of them, so that you can become righteous. (Isaiah 43,26) It is evident that the prophet endeavours to squash the foolish notion of "our contribution" in the matter of sacrifices. It is noteworthy that the term avodah, service, is not used in the Torah concerning offerings that are brought on the altar in order to obtain forgiveness. When Moses did use that term when talking to Pharaoh, (Exodus 10,26) "we do not know what we will serve the Lord," he simply used terminology familiar to Pharaoh. It is the manner of pagans to employ the term avodah for their religious observances. (Deut. 13,7) "Let us go and serve other deities." We find a similar warning (Deut 12,30) "lest you inquire into their deities, saying," how do these nations serve their deities?" The Torah in that instance, continues "do not do thus, for the Lord your G'd etc.," meaning that worship of the G'd of Israel is not of that order. Positive proof that worship of our G'd is of a totally different calibre, is the fact that "they burn their own children in fire to their deities," something the G'd of Israel has described as an abomination. True worship of G'd consists of obeying His commandments, neither adding nor subtracting therefrom. (Deut. 13, 1.) When referring to that kind of worship, the Torah does not shrink from employing the term avodah as in Deut. 10, 12, or Exodus 23,25, and other places. In all matters of piety of the heart, performance of good deeds, the benefit that accrues to the practitioner is stressed. (Deut. 10, 13) "for your own good." "Serving" is for our benefit, not G'ds. It is significant that the rasha, wicked person quoted in Parshat Bo, describes the Passover ceremonial as an avodah, service, stressing "what is in it for you?" It is precisely this attitude to sacrificial service that needs to be debunked. Similarly, the second possible rationale suggested for the requirement of sacrifice, namely atonement, cannot be true. It is obvious that the object used for atonement would have to be in some value relationship to the subject against whom the sin had been committed. Since it is impossible to relate to the Creator in this fashion, the idea of sacrifice sufficing as an act of compensation is quite erroneous. This is what the High Priest Eli (Samuel 1,2,23-24) tells his sons when he remonstrates with them. He had heard that they had acted improperly. "When man sins against man, the judge can mediate and determine fair compensation; but when man sins against G'd, who can determine the amount of compensation due to G'd?" How will one know that one had atoned adequately? Similarly, Michah 6,7, calls out: "Does the Lord want thousands of rams, tens of thousands rivers of oil?" The meaning is "could even the greatest amount of sacrificial animals compensate for the iniquity committed?" Obviously then, the idea of compensation is not the rationale for sacrificial rites. Regarding the third possibility mentioned, that the priests should be provided with a livelihood, the many offerings which are completely burned up, demonstrate that this could not have been the thought behind this legislation. Moreover, the idea that priests should be happy to consume the proceeds of man's sins, that their livelihood would improve in direct ratio to the number of sins committed by their brethren, could hardly be pleasing in the eyes of G'd. The fourth possibility mentioned, the wanton destruction of part of the animal kingdom is also difficult to accept as a possible motivation behind this legislation.

Akeidat Yitzchak 64:1:4 When striving to achieve his potential, man must look beyond himself and attempt to act as if he had become a partner in what he is striving for. When king Saul listened to the people and allowed Agag to live, his

error was that he was too aware of his own shortcomings and not sufficiently aware of the lofty position he occupied by reason of being king of Israel, G'ds holy nation, (compare Samuel I chapter 15) Concentrating on the Divine, which constitutes part of man's roots, is the antidote to dwelling on one's mortality. The latter is depressing, whereas the former is elevating. G'ds imperative "be holy, for I am holy," means "do not use the fact that you are in a mortal shell as an excuse not to strive for the ultimate you are capable of." This seems to conflict with the view expressed by Akavyah ben Mehallalel in Avot 3,1, who states "look at three things and you will not become a sinner. Your origin, i.e. a smelly drop of semen; your destiny, i.e. a place of dust and worms; the celestial tribunal before which you will have to give an account of your life to the Almighty." Surely, a person who is imbued with that outlook is apt to become rather permissive with himself, telling himself that nothing much can be expected of him seeing he is of such lowly origin and headed for such a miserable destiny. This also seems to be what Job argued when he justified his despair saying: "man, the product of woman, of short lifespan and excess of trouble, anger etc." (Job 14,1) Did not Samuel say to Rav Yehudah (Eyravin 54) "smart one, eat and drink while you can, since the world we will depart from is like a feast." Even though the parable may tell us to seek the permissible pleasures of life while we are still here to enjoy them, it is certainly a public pronouncement totally different from that of Akavyah ben Mehallalel. In fact, since man's sins are rooted in any or all of three types of motivations, "jealousy, sensual desire, quest for honour and glory," the considerations Akavyah asks us to bear in mind, will act as brakes to any of the aforementioned causes of sin. How can a person be haughty, seek glory, when he considers his lowly origin? How can a person be consumed with desire to gratify the urgings of his flesh, when he knows all too well that he will soon return to dust, and his own flesh will be food for the worms? How can one be greedy and jealous of someone else's possessions, when one knows full well that all these possessions will be left behind? How can one indulge the flesh when one knows one has to render an accounting of how one spent one's time down here? While Akavyah seems to make a good case, superficially, his arguments can be countered nonetheless. If one will turn into dust and worms, what judgment is there to be afraid of? If one's origin is low, so is everyone else's; how could this be a deterrent to sin then? Pride, i.e. being vainglorious, may reflect merely one's achievements, not one's origin! Why does Akavyah describe the fate of the corpse? It would have been simpler to say "we are all headed for death!" Is not the fact that one has to die a sufficient deterrent? In Kohelet 9,10, Solomon has already said "whatever you are able to do, do it with all your might; for there is neither action nor reasoning nor knowledge nor wisdom in she-ol, [the place] that you are going to." Since your body is finite, all that is connected with it comes to an end when your body dies. Akavyah, however, reminds us that we should consider the elevated part of man, not desecrate it or debase it. To this end, the considerations he suggests to keep in mind are very helpful. It is only the body that is lowly, just as it is only the body that turns into dust and worms; the soul, the Divine part of our roots will live on and have to give an accounting of itself. All phenomena in nature share three criteria. A) They are all observed in their present stage of development, evolution. B) They have all undergone some metamorphosis before they reached their present stage. C) They all appear in a certain format. Remembering these three facts, Rabbi Akavyah says will help one avoid sin. 1) Considering that one's raw material is only matter. 2) Considering that all matter is in a constantly changing state, not enduring as such. 3) Considering that one's format is "in the image of G'd." When considering all these factors combined, remembering the Divine part of our format helps to give us the proper perspective on life. Akavyah's warning then is not to let the yetzer hara mislead us into thinking that because our bodies are transient and our origin insignificant, we are not losing anything by enjoying the pleasures of life, but to remember that there is another part of us that transcends the body, and which we may place in jeopardy if we do not act properly. If the body is subject to metamorphosis, how much more so the soul. Death of the body as an end to existence is quite an illogical premise then. Death is merely a transition to another state, not a final disposition, extinction. It is this thought that is the rationale underlying all yirat chet, fear of sin, the knowledge that there is no escaping the consequences of one's actions. When the Mishnah in Ediyot 5,6-7, describes this same Akavyah as a person possessed both of great wisdom and fear of the Lord in the highest degree, it only shows that the author of the statement quoted in Avot, himself lived in accordance with his own philosophy. He is reported to have declined the highest office in order not to compromise what he believed to be the truth. He preferred to be called a fool, rather than appear wicked in the eyes of G'd by recanting publicly something which he believed privately. He who gives people cause to suspect him of wrongdoing, cannot be well liked in the eyes of the Lord. This is what Rabbi Chaninah ben Dosta had referred to in the opening quote from Tractate Avot. People of Akavyah's caliber require wisdom to help them distinguish true integrity. This is the reason that they are granted such wisdom. If, however, people want to employ their wisdom for ulterior personal motives, they are not really in need of such wisdom. Therefore, it will not endure, they will lose it. G'd does not endow people with the talent to deny their fear of G'd. In the words of the psalmist, Rabbi Chaninah's statement is "the beginning of wisdom is fear of the Lord, ensuring good intelligence for those who practice its dictates." (Psalms 111,10.) Those who act in

accordance with that wisdom will find that their intellect stands them in good stead. When that psalm continues "his fame will endure forever," this is parallel to the statement in Avot "those whose deeds are more numerous than their theoretical wisdom will enjoy enduring wisdom." Anyone whose fear of the Lord is his priority number one, will try and do more than his wisdom dictates. He will do both what his own wisdom dictates and what his mentors have taught him to do. Those people who invert the process are described by the Rabbis as being like builders who have provided doors, but lack the house to put them in. What good are doors when you do not have a house?

Akeidat Yitzchak 77:1:5 Anyone who interests himself too much in his comfort, can do so only at the expense of neglecting useful things and by not allocating enough time to the pursuit of the things his mind is capable of. On the other hand, he, who concentrates most of his energies on the pursuit of purely intellectual matters, will sacrifice some comfort and the attainment of useful things in the process. What is to be aimed at then, is the proper balance between the three disciplines. Anything that interferes with the pursuit of that objective is the fourth discipline, teshukah, adherence to the yetzer hara.. Our sages have described remedies against this teshukah for all the three disciplines. 1) If one is overly interested in one's bodily comfort, the regulatory device is the woman, i.e. one's wife. In other words, marriage is a regulator, safeguarding man against the excessive pursuit of physical comforts, gratifications. 2) The teshukah of rain is that it is restricted to falling on the earth. (in this way the danger of excess rain creating a deluge is regulated) 3) The teshukah of the Almighty (His wide ranging intellect) is that it is concentrated on Israel. This is a voluntary restriction that G'd imposes on Himself. 4) The teshukah of the yetzer hara is that it is restricted to Cain and the likes of him. This shows that even the yetzer hara is subject to self imposed limitations.(see the text of this in Bereshit Rabbah 20) Since all excesses in any of the aforementioned three areas are anathema to G'd, He gave the Jewish people a land, which, in the words of the Torah, supplies all our needs without leading to our indulging in excesses in any area. We read in Deut. 8,7, "for the Lord your G'd brings you to a good land, a land of wheat and barley, rivers etc., where you will not eat bread in paucity; you will not lack anything therein, you will be satisfied and bless the Lord. Be careful that you do not forget the Lord, and over-indulge..." In the paragraph quoted above, we can clearly see that the mitzvot are to act as built in regulators against excessive pursuits of material objectives. The Talmud Menachot 43, points out that the promise of the adequacy of that land to meet our needs, is followed by the line "what is it that the Lord your G'd asks of you, except to observe all the commandments etc." The word mah- is to be read as mey-ah, i.e. one hundred. There is a hint in this that we are to recite one hundred benedictions daily. Israel's trek through the desert for forty years taught them that man and be-er, the manna and the well, were adequate sustenance, that over-indulgence in food and drink were not our purpose.

Akeidat Yitzchak 92:1:3 The Talmud Berachot 33, states in the name of Rabbi Chaninah, that everything is in the hands of Heaven except fear of Heaven. The scriptural proof cited is the verse "for now, what does the Lord your G'd ask of you except to fear the Lord etc." (Deut 10,12) The Talmud asks: "is fear of the Lord then such a minor matter?" The answer given is that from Moses' vantage point it was indeed a minor matter, an insignificant request. It is like someone requesting from the king one of the king's instruments. As long as the king owns the instrument requested of him, the request appears minor since it can be fulfilled easily; if the king does not own such an instrument however, the request looms as very major indeed.

Akeidat Yitzchak 93:1:7 Our Parshah addresses itself to this very problem. The way to salvation is the straight and narrow, whereas the alternative is threefold. "The blessing, that you listen to the commandments of the Lord your G'd." (11,26) However, the curse "you do not listen, you depart from the path- to follow other deities whom you have not known." (11,28) At Sinai we were given three imperatives. " anochi, I am the Lord; lo yihyeh, have no other deities; zachor et yom hashabbat lekadsho, remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. It is these three commandments that remind us that there is a hashgachah peratit, personal Divine Providence that guides our lives here on earth. Ever since Eve had sinned, true freedom has been denied man since the yetzer hara, evil temptation has gained entry into man through her to all subsequent generations, leaving us with less than a fifty-fifty chance to totally defeat the temptation to do evil. But now, after Sinai, that chance had been restored. This is the meaning of Rabbi Eleazar who said that from now on we are the architects of our own evil if we choose the wrong path. Between the time of Eve and Sinai, men were fatalists to whom doing good made no sense, since they were convinced that history was decreed and the future unalterable. As long as the belief existed that all had been pre-ordained, all good and evil emanated from Heaven. Only when the Jewish people were disabused of the idea that all had been pre-ordained, did good and evil, reward and punishment truly become man's choice. The reversal in man's fatalistic outlook on life began with Abraham, of course.

In our Parshah, G'd not only offers the choice, but almost makes sure that we make the right choice by telling us to choose life. (chapter 30) All of mankind may be viewed as guests at G'ds table. Because of the special relationship that

exists between Israel and G'd, the former is offered a choice portion by having its attention directed towards it without depriving Israel of the ultimate decision of what to opt for. "You shall choose!" (Deut.30,19) The public declaration at Mount Gerizim and Mount Eyal immediately following the conquest of the land, point to the urgency of assimilating this lesson especially in the land of Israel, which, since it is under the unceasing surveillance of G'd will not long tolerate non observance of the mitzvot. This is in contrast to Egypt, where pursuit of a hedonistic way of life went unpunished for long periods of time. The first task is destruction of all vestiges of idol worship remaining. Therefore, (12,2) "destroy utterly all the places that served as centres of idol worship." Next comes the need to establish a central place of worship, to minimise the opportunities for any deviationist movements within Judaism. At any rate the message is that it is not man who chooses where he wants to worship, but G'd determines where and when He can be successfully prayed to. After that, the Torah limits sacrificial service to the central site of worship, and states that only certain types of animals will be acceptable as potential sacrifices. In this way, many abominations practiced by the pagans were eliminated as a form of worship, foremost among them child sacrifice. Since a great part of the animal offerings were concentrated on the various holy days that involved pilgrimage to the temple by all males, the Torah stresses that on such joyous occasions the less fortunate must not be forgotten, and must be made to share in these expressions of joy. For that reason, the Levite, the stranger, (convert to Judaism), the widow and the orphan are especially mentioned. Since the true measure of acknowledging G'd lies in one's appreciation of G'ds tremendous generosity to man, man can reflect this pious feeling only by extending his own generosity towards the less fortunate in his society. In order to underscore the serious nature of the sin of idol worship, the Torah reminds us once more that the former inhabitants of Canaan were dispossessed and destroyed because they indulged in these abominable practices. Not only was their philosophy faulty, even their deeds were corrupt, involving sacrificing their own children. We are asked not even to investigate their actions or to enquire into the reasons underlying their philosophy. A second danger the Jewish people may be faced with in their new home, is the call of the false prophet to deviate from the path of tradition. Coming as it does from someone who may have acquired the reputation of being a prophet, such danger is very real indeed. The Torah warns that the surfacing of such people advocating practices inimical to normative Judaism is a test of our faith in G'd, our loyalty, and must be reacted to a such. The third danger, and by far the most difficult to combat, is seduction by one's intimate friends and relatives. (13,7) "When your brother, son or daughter tries to seduce you, privately, saying let us worship other deities that you have not known." We are warned to ignore sentiments of protectiveness for the welfare of family in such cases, and to bring such people to justice. We must not corrupt our sense of pity by applying it to the undeserving. Only when we do not abuse feelings of mercy, pity etc. can we in turn expect the Almighty to employ His sense of pity, mercy etc. when we are in need of it. When G'd sees that we deal with cities in which idol worship has become rampant, according to Torah law, then His wrath that such things have been allowed to happen can be assuaged. Actually, display of sympathy for the corrupt few is equivalent to subjecting the majority to their evil machinations. Cruelty,- if such it be- must be reserved for use against unrepentant sinners. G'ds purpose in educating us, is to eliminate negative character traits and elevate us to a level of banim attem tashem elokeychem, you are true children of the Lord your G'd. We would almost cease to be beney adam, "sons of man," and become "sons of G'd" instead. The fact that the Jewish people or G'd are referred to as children, daughter, mother and sister in their reciprocal relationship in various places in the Bible, indicates that the intimacy of such relationship undergoes changes. Psalms 45,11, speaks of "hearken daughter and see!" Song of Songs 3,11, speaks of "the crown with which his mother crowned him on the day of his wedding." Song of Songs 4,12 speaks of "My sister is like a fenced in garden." The relationship between Israel and its G'd is one that should become progressively more intimate. For these reasons, "do not make incisions on yourselves," is to remind us that the loss of human relatives notwithstanding, the continued presence of G'd, who represents to us all the above listed human relationships, must help us put any personal grief over the loss of dear ones into its proper perspective, and not to "cut ourselves up" over such loss. When members of one's family die,- seeing that theirs was the same relationship with G'd as ours-, He has suffered a loss similar to ours, and it is not fitting therefore for us to disfigure ourselves as a sign of mourning. "Do not make a bald spot on your forehead." (14, 1) This is the true meaning of the verse "for you are a holy nation to the Lord your G'd." (14,2) See our commentary in Parshat Emor. The reason this legislation follows that of the ir hanidachat, the city of idol worshippers that has to be destroyed, is to remind us that inflicting wounds upon one's body in mourning, for people who died as a result of punishment for such sins as idol worship, is just as wrong as treating such people with less than the full force of the law. Finally, to reinforce the holy character of the Jewish people, and to insure their continued adherence to Torah standards, the legislation concerning forbidden foods is appended.

Akeidat Yitzchak 94:1:5 The references to man as beloved of G'd do not mean that the love of G'd was demonstrated before its recipient had demonstrated some personal accomplishment in the field of yir-at shamayim, fear of Heaven. All men are created with equal opportunity in this respect, though G'd provides blandishments to attract those who choose His way, whereas no incentives are provided for the potential sinner. The fact that we find ba-aley teshuvah, repentant sinners on the one hand and on the other hand one encounters people who have lived a devout life most of their years only to suddenly forsake that path, shows clearly that we are all free agents in this respect. The initial amount of Divine love each person is endowed with at birth, is augmented as man pursues the path of righteousness. emet me-eretitz titzmach, truth grows from the earth. (Psalms 85,12) This means the recognition of truth is rooted in our world. "Righteousness however, is subsequently looking down from above." Solomon's prayer at the beginning of his career, (Kings I 3,6) is the best illustration of our contention. Solomon said: "You have done great kindness with Your servant David my father, when he walked before You in truth and righteousness and with upright heart; You preserved this kindness for him, and gave him a son who sits on his throne as of this day." Solomon talks of two acts of kindness by

G'd. The first is the kindness extended to all men at birth, the second that which accrued due to David's personal conduct. In chapter sixteen we have explained in detail why in the case of Abraham, G'd's special love is reported before we know of Abraham's good deeds. The initial endowment of man by G'd at birth can be divided into three categories. 1)

The physical aspect; the gift of life, a sound body. 2) Endowment with certain character tendencies that will help to smooth his path in life. 3) Endowment with certain intellectual powers. When we quoted the Talmud in Makkot at the outset, the three types of decrees the rabbis instituted may reflect these three categories. (1) The reading of the megillah annually, is an act of appreciation that our physical lives had been preserved at the time of Haman. When Jews found that this basic gift of G'd had become endangered, they did penitence, a gift G'd had granted mankind prior to man having been created. This act therefore awakens the bond that links man to G'd. By fasting, i.e. denying oneself the needs of the body, Jews atoned for having indulged their bodies at the feast of Ahasverus some years previously. (2) When the Rabbis expanded the tithes legislation, they imposed restraints on certain character traits, primarily greed. The giving of alms is proof that one is able to restrain one's natural greed. Once man makes a move in this direction, he can be sure that G'd's kindness will respond in equal or even far greater measure. Also, the dispensation of alms, tithes, on a regular basis, eventually results in such acts of kindness becoming part of our very nature. When one observes good deeds being performed, one cannot always be sure of the motive of the person performing such good deeds. It may be an outgrowth of a mature personality, or it may still be motivated by ulterior considerations. The only criterion that offers guidance in this respect is the donor's facial expression at the time he performs the deed of kindness. If he seems to genuinely enjoy performing the deed, we can be sure he has attained the personality level when this mitzvah has become a natural for him. Such a person is called nadiv, generous, the other kind is merely called noten, a donor. David expressed this thought very clearly in Chronicles I 29,17. After having acknowledged that all the silver and gold man has amassed is in truth G'd's, he continues "and I am aware my Lord that you examine the heart, that you are desirous of uprightness; I have donated all these items from the uprightness of my heart; and now Your people present here, I have observed that they donate for You joyfully." G'd can tell motivation by examining the heart. David only has the venue of watching people's faces when they make their donations to tell how genuine their motivation may be. The verse commencing with the words asser te-asser, tithe repeatedly, (14,22) just like the words naton titen, give repeatedly, (14, 10) reminds us that only repeated action of that kind leads to generous gestures becoming second nature to us.

Alternately, the repetition could mean that for every act of generosity we perform, a compensating act is performed in Heaven.

Derashot HaRan 7:23 And Rabbeinu Yonah of blessed memory gives yet another reason. It is well known that fear of the L-rd is the foundation of mitzvot, as it is written (Deuteronomy 10:12): "And now, O Israel, what does the L-rd your G-d ask of you but to fear Him?" And the measures and fences of the sages are the foundation of the road to fear, their having provided measures and distances lest one violate the prohibitions of the Torah themselves in the manner of a property owner who fences off his field, it being so dear to him as to bar others from entering it. As it is written (Leviticus 18:30): "And watch My watching" — "Make a watching for My watching" (Yevamoth 21a). And most of the decrees and fences and furtherings from prohibitions are among the essentials of fear, so that one who is especially heedful of them merits great reward, as it is written (Psalms 19:52): "Your servant, too, was heedful of them; in keeping them there is great reward." And this is the rationale behind "The words of the scribes are sweeter to me than the wine of Torah." For their fences and decrees are the essentials of fear, and the reward for the mitzvah of fear is over and against many mitzvot, serving, as it does, as their foundation.

Derashot HaRan 7:30 But there is a question here. We are saying that fear of the L-rd is the foundation of the Torah, and this is stated in many places, viz. (Shabbath 31b): "R. Yehudah said: 'The Holy One Blessed be He created His world only so that He be feared, as it is written (Ecclesiastes 3:14): "And G-d wrought so that He be feared,""' (Ibid): "R. Yochanan said in the name of R. Elazar in the name of R. Shimon: "The Holy One Blessed be He has nothing else in His world but fear of Heaven alone, as it is written (Job 28:28): "And he said to man: 'Behold, fear of the L-rd — that is wisdom and to depart from evil is understanding.'" And it is explicitly written (Deuteronomy 10:12): "And now, O Israel, what does the L-rd your G-d ask of you? Only to fear the L-rd your G-d." What emerges from all this is that fear of the Blessed One is the intent of the creation and the foundation of the Torah. But the following gives us a different impression (Sotah 22b): "There are seven [negative] types of perushim [abstainers from transgression]... a porush out of love and a porush out of fear" (that is, out of love of reward and fear of punishment). One who serves out of fear is listed here in the category of the wicked! It is stated further there: "Abbaye and Rava said to the Tanna: 'Do not include [as negative types] a porush out of love and a porush out of fear, for R. Yehudah said in the name of Rav: "Let one always occupy himself with Torah and with mitzvot, and even shelo lishmah [not for their own sakes], for by doing so shelo lishmah he will come to do so lishmah [for their own sakes]."' The only point of contention here is that he should not be placed in the category of the truly wicked, but whatever the case may be, his service is referred to as lo lishmah! And in the same tractate we learned (31a): "Two disciples were seated before Rava. One of them said to him: 'It was read to me in my dream (Psalms 31:20): "How great is the good which You have stored up for those who fear You, which You have performed for those who trust in You in the sight of the sons of men."' The other said to him: 'It was read to me in my dream (Ibid 5:12): "But let all those that put their trust in You rejoice. Let them ever shout in joy because You defend them. And let those who love Your name be joyful in You."' Rava responded: 'You are both perfectly righteous, but you [the first] out of fear, and you [the second] out of love.'" Now this is even more difficult than the first question. How can he call "perfectly righteous" one who is included in the class of the seven perushim or one of whom it is said: "Let one always occupy himself with Torah and mitzvot, and even shelo lishmah"!

Duties of the Heart, Eighth Treatise on Examining the Soul 3:164 Through this, it is proper for you, my brother, to understand that the primary intended purpose in the mitzvot which involve the body and the limbs, is to arouse our attention on the mitzvot of the heart and mind, because they are the pillars of the service and they are the roots (and foundations) of the torah, as written: "You shall fear the L-ord, your G-d, worship Him, and cleave to Him.." (Devarim 10:20), and "Rather,[this] thing is very close to you; in your mouth and in your heart to do it" (Devarim 30:14), and "And now, O Israel, what does the L-ord, your G-d, ask of you? Only to fear the L-ord, your G-d, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, and to worship the L-ord, your G-d, with all your heart and with all your soul" (Devarim 10:12).

Duties of the Heart, Fifth Treatise on Devotion 6:2 As the verses say: "Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life" (Mishlei 4:23), and "for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth" (Bereishis 8:21),

"For I know their imagination.." (Devarim 31:21), "for the L-rd searches all hearts, and He understands all the imaginations of the thoughts of every creation; [if you seek Him, He will be found to you, and if you forsake Him, He will abandon you forever]" (Divrei Hayamim 28:9), "Rather,[this] thing is very close to you; it is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you may do it" (Devarim 30:14), "And now, O Israel, what does the L-rd, your G-d, demand of you? Only to fear (revere) the L-rd, your G-d" (Devarim 10:12), and fear (reverence) is in the heart, reflections, and thoughts. Therefore, my brother, strive that all of your actions be devoted only to the blessed Creator, so that your exertion will not be for nothing, and your efforts not for falsehood, as written "Why should you weigh out money for that which is not bread and your toil without satiety?" (Yeshaya 55:2).

Duties of the Heart, Introduction of the Author 35 But when I searched in the torah, I found that it is mentioned frequently. For example (Deut. 6:5-6): "you shall love the L-ord your G-d with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might; And these words, which I command you this day, shall be on your heart", and "so that you may love the L-ord your G-d, and that you may hearken to His voice, and that you may cling to Him" (Deut. 30:20), and "to love the L-ord your G-d and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul" (Deut. 11:13), and "You shall walk after the L-ord your G-d and fear Him" (Deut. 13:5), and "you shall love your fellow as yourself" (Levit.19:18), and "now, Israel, what does the L-ord your G-d ask of you, but to fear the L-ord your G-d" (Deut. 10:12), and "Therefore love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Deut. 10:19). And reverence for G-d and love for Him are among the duties of the heart.

Duties of the Heart, Tenth Treatise on Devotion to God, Introduction 4 Frequently the torah places fear of G-d before love of Him, as written "And now, Israel, what does the L-ord your G-d require of you, but to fear the L-ord your G-d, to walk in all His ways, and to love Him" (Devarim 10:12), and it says: "You shall fear the L-ord your G-d; and to Him shall

you cling" (Devarim 10:20). It is correct to place fear of G-d before love of G-d because [fear of G-d] is the final purpose and furthest end of abstinence, which in turn is the nearest level approaching the lowest level of love of G-d, and the first gate of its gates, and it is impossible for a man to reach it without preceding fear and fright of G-d.

Guide for the Perplexed, Part 2 39:1 WE have given the definition of prophecy, stated its true characteristics, and shown that the prophecy of Moses our Teacher was distinguished from that of other prophets; we will now explain that this distinction alone qualified him for the office of proclaiming the Law, a mission without a parallel in the history from Adam to Moses, or among the prophets who came after him; it is a principle in our faith that there will never be revealed another Law. Consequently we hold that there has never been, nor will there ever be, any other divine Law but that of Moses our Teacher. According to what is written in Scripture and handed down by tradition, the fact may be explained in the following way: There were prophets before Moses, as the patriarchs Shem, Eber, Noah, Methushelah, and Enoch, but of these none said to any portion of mankind that God sent him to them and commanded him to convey to them a certain message or to prohibit or to command a certain thing. Such a thing is not related in Scripture, or in authentic tradition. Divine prophecy reached them as we have explained. Men like Abraham, who received a large measure of prophetic inspiration, called their fellow-men together and led them by training and instruction to the truth which they had perceived. Thus Abraham taught, and showed by philosophical arguments that there is one God, that He has created everything that exists beside Him, and that neither the constellations nor anything in the air ought to be worshipped; he trained his fellow-men in this belief, and won their attention by pleasant words as well as by acts of kindness. Abraham did not tell the people that God had sent him to them with the command concerning certain things which should or should not be done. Even when it was commanded that he, his sons, and his servants should be circumcised, he fulfilled that commandment, but he did not address his fellow-men prophetically on this subject. That Abraham induced his fellow-men to do what is right, telling them only his own will [and not that of God], may be learnt from the following passage of Scripture: "For I know him, because he commands his sons and his house after him, to practise righteousness and judgment" (Gen. 19:19). Also Isaac, Jacob, Levi, Kohath, and Amram influenced their fellow-men in the same way. Our Sages, when speaking of prophets before Moses, used expressions like the following: The bet-din (court of justice) of Eber, the bet-din of Methushelah, and in the college of Methushelah; although all these were prophets, yet they taught their fellow-men in the manner of preachers, teachers, and pedagogues, but did not use such phrases as the following: "And God said to me, Speak to certain people so and so."

Guide for the Perplexed, Part 2 39:3 We intend to discuss in this treatise the reasons of the commandments, and we shall then show, as far as necessary, the justice and wisdom of the Law, on account of which it is said: "The Law of God is perfect, refreshing the heart" (Ps. 19:8). There are persons who believe that the Law commands much exertion and great pain, but due consideration will show them their error. Later on I will show how easy it is for the perfect to obey the Law. Comp. "What does the Lord thy God ask of thee?" etc. (Deut. 10:12); "Have I been a wilderness to Israel?" (Jer. 2:31). But this applies only to the noble ones; whilst wicked, violent, and pugnacious persons find it most injurious and hard that there should be any divine authority tending to subdue their passion. To low-minded, wanton, and passionate persons it appears most cruel that there should be an obstacle in their way to satisfy their carnal appetite, or that a punishment should be inflicted for their doings. Similarly every godless person imagines that it is too hard to abstain from the evil he has chosen in accordance with his inclination. We must not consider the Law easy or hard according as it appears to any wicked, low-minded, and immoral person, but as it appears to the judgment of the most perfect, who, according to the Law, are fit to be the example for all mankind. This Law alone is called divine; other laws, such as the political legislations among the Greeks, or the follies of the Sabeans, are the works of human leaders, but not of prophets, as I have explained several times.

Guide for the Perplexed, Part 3 29:5 All the Sabeans thus believed in the eternity of the Universe, the heavens being in their opinion God.

Guide for the Perplexed, Part 3 29:9 We have shown in our large work, Mishneh-torah (Hilkot, 'Abodah-zarah, 1:3), that Abraham was the first that opposed these theories by arguments and by soft and persuasive speech. He induced these people, by showing kindness to them, to serve God. Afterwards came the chief of the prophets, and completed the work by the commandment to slay those unbelievers, to blot out their name, and to uproot them from the land of the living. Comp. "Ye shall destroy their altars," etc. (Exod. 34:13). He forbade us to follow their ways; he said, "Ye shall not walk in the manners of the heathen", etc. (Lev. 20:23). You know from the repeated declarations in the Law that the principal purpose of the whole Law was the removal and utter destruction of idolatry, and all that is connected therewith, even its name, and everything that might lead to any such practices, e.g., acting as a consulter with familiar spirits, or as a wizard, passing children through the fire, divining, observing the clouds, enchanting, charming, or inquiring of the

dead. The law prohibits us to imitate the heathen in any of these deeds, and a fortiori to adopt them entirely. It is distinctly said in the Law that everything which idolaters consider as service to their gods, and a means of approaching them, is rejected and despised by God; comp. "for every abomination to the Lord, which he hateth, have they done unto their gods" (Deut. 12:3 1). In the books which I shall name to you later on, it is stated that on certain occasions they offered to the sun, their greatest god, seven beetles, and seven mice, and seven bats. This alone suffices to show how disgusting their practice must be to human nature. Thus all precepts cautioning against idolatry, or against that which is connected therewith, leads to it, or is related to it, are evidently useful. They all tend to save us from the evil doctrines that deprive us of everything useful for the acquisition of the twofold perfection of man, by leading to those absurd practices in which our fathers and ancestors have been brought up. Comp. "And Joshua said unto all the people, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, your fathers dwelt on the other side of the river in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nahor, and they served other gods" (Josh. 24:2). It is in reference to these [idolatrous ideas] that the true prophets exclaim, "They walked after [vain] things, which do not profit." How great is the usefulness of every precept that delivers us from this great error, and leads us back to the true faith: that God, the Creator of all things, rules the Universe: that He must be served, loved, and feared, and not those imaginary deities. According to this faith we approach the true God, and obtain His favour without having recourse to burdensome means: for nothing else is required but to love and fear Him; this is the aim in serving God, as will be shown. Comp. "And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee but to fear the Lord?" etc. (Deut. 10:12). I shall complete this subject later on: now let us return to the theme [of this chapter].

HaEmunot veHaDeot, [Treatise X] Moral Conduct; Thought and Belief 15:1 There are many people who say that it is good that a person busy himself in this world with divine service alone, fasting by day, arising at night to praise and thank, and he should leave behind all worldly affairs, for the Lord will fulfill his needs for nourishment, healing, and his other needs. Behold, we find great pleasure in divine service as it is said, "... it is pleasant to sing praise (to our Lord)," and joy and happiness like it is said, "serve G-d with happiness." And (divine service is) stored with the Creator for future reward, like it is said, "And I will be compassionate to them like a man is compassionate toward his son who serves him." These, may the Lord have compassion on you, all that they told you about the service of our Creator are true and clear, and all the characteristics will not reach Him (will not sufficiently describe Him), as it is said, "great is G-d and very praiseworthy and His greatness cannot be fathomed." However, the place of their error is the isolation in it (divine service) exclusively, and their saying that a person should not occupy himself in anything else. If one does not occupy himself with nourishment, his body will not persist; and if he will not engage in fertility, there will be no divine service at all, for if everyone from some generation would agree to this and they all died, divine service would die with them. Rather, divine service is for the parents and children and grandchildren, like it is said, "that you may fear G-d your Lord, to keep all his statutes and his commandments, which I command you, and your son, and your son's son, all the days of your life...."

Kuzari 2:47 47. Al Khazari: Certainly, and rightly so. I think I read in your books as follows: 'What doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God' (Deuteronomy 10:12) and 'What doth the Lord require of thee' (Micah 6:8), and many similar passages?

Kuzari 2:48 48. The Rabbi: These are the rational laws, being the basis and preamble of the divine law, preceding it in character and time, and being indispensable in the administration of every human society. Even a gang of robbers must have a kind of justice among them if their confederacy is to last. When Israel's disloyalty had come to such a pass that they disregarded rational and social principles (which are as absolutely necessary for a society as are the natural functions of eating, drinking, exercise, rest, sleeping, and waking for the individual), but held fast to the sacrificial worship and other divine laws, He was satisfied with even less. It was told to them: 'Haply you might observe those laws which rule the smallest and meanest community, such as refer to justice, good actions, and recognition of God's bounty.'

For the divine law cannot become complete till the social and rational laws are perfected. The rational law demands justice and recognition of God's bounty. What has he, who fails in this respect, to do with offerings, Sabbath, circumcision, etc., which reason neither demands, nor forbids? These are, however, the ordinations especially given to Israel as a corollary to the rational laws. Through this they received the advantage of the Divine Influence, without knowing how it came to pass that the 'Glory of God' descended upon them, and that 'the fire of God' consumed their offerings; how they heard the allocution of the Lord; and how their history developed. These are matters which reason would refuse to believe if they were not guaranteed by irrefutable evidence. In a similar sense it was said to them: 'What doth the Lord thy God require of thee?' (Deuteronomy 10:12) and 'Add your burnt offerings' (Jeremiah 7:21), and similar verses. Can it be imagined that the Israelites observe 'the doing of justice and the love of mercy;' but neglect

circumcision, Sabbath, and the other laws, and felt happy withal?

Kuzari 2:49 49. Al Khazari: After what thou hast said I should not think so. In the opinion of philosophers, however, he becomes a pious man who does not mind in which way he approaches God, whether as a Jew or a Christian, or anything else he chooses. Now we have returned to reasoning, speculating and dialectics. According of this everyone might endeavour to belong to a creed dictated by his own speculating, a thing which would be absurd.

Sefer HaIkkarim, Forward 100 Chapter thirty-one explains the expression serving God from fear, pointing out that the commandment to fear God, though it is special, includes all the commandments of the Torah. Incidentally is explained Deuteronomy 10, 12.

Tradition in an Untraditional Age, TOPICS, Chapter 10; The Word "Now"; Reflections on the Psychology of Teshuvah 15
Meaning: there is one respect in which each of us has precisely the same strength as Moses. Namely, the strength to choose. There is no hand of heaven – no physiological, genetic, psychological or Providential compulsion – that forces us to act one way rather than another. The fear of heaven is not in the hands of heaven; therefore the fear of heaven is as live an option to us as it was to Moses. Here is indeed a thing which, if it is small for Moses is small for us. (See the interesting comment of R. Josiah Pinto (1565–1648) to Ein Yaakov, Berakhot ad loc. Different resolutions are given by Maharsha and Anaf Yosef, ad loc; R. Barukh Epstein, Torah Temimah to Deuteronomy, 10:12.)

Tradition in an Untraditional Age, TOPICS, Chapter 10; The Word "Now"; Reflections on the Psychology of Teshuvah 3 In a famous verse, Moses asks: "Now O Israel, what does God your Lord ask of you?" The sages added a cryptic comment: "The word 'now' means nothing other than teshuvah." (Deut. 10:12; Genesis Rabbah 21:6. On the "now"ness of teshuvah, see Maimonides, Commentary to M. Avot 1:13; M.T. Teshuvah, 2:1, 3:4.)

Yesod Mora VeSod HaTorah 7:2 Now, behold, all the mitzvot can be categorized into three ways: firstly, through belief in the heart; secondly, through speech; and thirdly, through action. Each mitzvah is fundamentally based on one of these aspects. If a mitzvah is dependent on speech or action, it still requires belief in the heart. Without it, everything is in vain and futile. Our Sages of blessed memory said: "The Merciful One desires the heart" (Sanhedrin 106b), indicating that God examines the heart and investigates the kidneys. As it is written: "But the word is very near to you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it" (Deuteronomy 30:14). This verse encompasses the three ways: "in your mouth" refers to speech, and "in your heart" refers to belief in the heart, so that you may fulfill the commandments through action. Similarly, it is written: "What does the Lord your God ask of you but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways, to love Him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul" (Deuteronomy 10:12). King David said: "He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to falsehood" (Psalms 24:4). And it is also written: "He who walks uprightly and does what is right and speaks truth in his heart" (Psalms 15:2-3).

לְשַׁמֵּר אֶת־מִצְוֹת יְהוָה וְאֶת־חֻקָּיו אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי מֵצוּךְ הַיּוֹם לְטוֹב לִי: 13 keeping יהוה's commandments and laws, which I enjoin upon you today, for your good.

Akeidat Yitzchak 22:1:3 In Niddah 16, Rabbi Chaninah ben Papa explained that the angel in charge of pregnancy is called "Laylah," night, since we read in Job 3,3, "And laylah said a man has been conceived." The angel takes a drop of semen, presents it in front of the Almighty and asks in His Presence, "What shall become of this drop? A wise man or a fool, a rich man or a poor man, a strong one or a physically weak one?" He does not ask whether the person will be righteous or wicked. This is in accordance with the dictum taught by Rabbi Chaninah that "All is in the hands of heaven except fear of heaven," since the Torah has said, "Now O Israel, what does the Lord ask of you except to fear Him etc." (Deut. 10,12-13).

Akeidat Yitzchak 44:4:2 In considering that the purpose of observing Torah is to acquire the aforementioned level of partnership with the Divine, the question arises whether this is an exclusive objective, or whether one may have other more mundane benefits in mind which accrue to one in the process of fulfilling G-d's commandments. If the former, the chances are that most people would not be able to take the long term view in order to live a life devoted to the performance of the mitzvot. The argument that mundane side benefits through the observance of mitzvot are not permissible, could be sustained by the following two considerations. 1) The more highly placed a worker or servant, the more lofty are the tasks that he is entrusted to perform. Man, as the most sophisticated creature on earth, would naturally only be concerned with the loftiest endeavours and objectives. 2) If we were to postulate that carrying out G-d's will would have as its purpose merely human objectives, this would contradict the maxim that the objective is primary. If the prophet Isaiah 44,6, proclaims in the name of G-d "I am first and I am last," this clearly implies that the only considerations in all our endeavours must be centred around G-d and His purpose. Antigonus, who has said in Avot,1 "do not be like the servant who serves the master for the sake of the reward," surely had this thought in mind.

Also the saying of Ben Azzai "the reward for performing one mitzvah is another mitzvah, may be understood in a similar vein. In other words, performance of the commandments is an end in itself, not a means to an end. The Sifrey in Parshat Eykev says "a man might say to himself I'll perform the commandments in order to gain riches, or to acquire the title of Rabbi, or even in order to acquire a share in the hereafter; therefore the Torah says (Deut. 11,13) "in order to love the Lord your G-d." Your purpose in obeying should be to demonstrate your love for G-d. The Talmud in Avodah Zarah 19, quotes Rabbi Yoshua ben Levi as interpreting Psalms 112,1, "hail to the man who fears the Lord and is very desirous of His commandments," as referring to people who perform the commandments for their own sake, not for the reward associated with them. Maimonides, at the end of his sefer hamitzvot pursues this line of reasoning also.

However, one can also argue the reverse, again using two lines of reasoning. 1) It is natural for all creatures to be concerned first and foremost with their own physical needs. Although it is a fact that each type of creature serves as a means to sustain a higher category of life, i.e. plants to sustain animals, animals to sustain man etc., we nonetheless observe that they all concentrate on their own needs, their service to a higher category of life being merely incidental. 2) It is a psychological fact that man loses interest, in the pursuit of any task that does not promise tangible rewards within a time frame he considers reasonable. Even an Onan, (Genesis 38,10) was not punished for failing to have issue with Tamar, but only for taking active steps to prevent the fulfilment of the objective of the levirate marriage to provide issue for his deceased brother. Antignos' statement is revised to read "do not make service to the Lord conditional on the receipt of a reward," not as in the version of "make it conditional on being independent of a reward." Also the Talmud in Pessachim 8, states that if someone says he will give charity in order that his children will live, or in order that he himself may enjoy life in the hereafter, he is considered a perfect tzaddik. This seems to contradict the Sifrey in Parshat Eykev that he who studies the Torah in order to be called rabbi is wrong, since the Torah demands love of G-d as one's motivation. Clearly these examples indicate that having in mind personal objectives while performing mitzvot, is permissible. In fact, the Torah promises the attainment of personal objectives such as "so that you will be well off, will live long." (Deut. 22,7) There are many similar statements in the Torah. G-d Himself is quoted as wishing that the Jewish people should revere Him as they did at the time when they received the Torah, in order that He could treat them and their children well. (Deut 10,13) If G-d Himself wishes that our serving Him will result in benefits to us in this world,

how can we say that all our mitzvah performance must be aimed exclusively at our being elevated to the status of becoming His partner, and that other material considerations would negate the moral value of the mitzvah performance? We must therefore believe that as a result of performing mitzvot sufficient benefit will accrue to us to make their performance worthwhile. This is the meaning of the saying in Makkot 23, "because the Lord wished to let us amass many advantages, He provided us with an abundance of mitzvot and good deeds to perform," as is written in Isaiah 42,21, "the Lord was pleased because of His righteousness to render the Torah increasingly great and glorious."

Since both the aforementioned approaches have equally much to recommend them and are in accord with many sayings of our sages, we have to endeavour to reconcile the apparent contradictions. If we consider the word "prass" as referring to the remuneration received for services rendered, then the saying of Antignos becomes clear. Since all our deeds cannot provide G-d with anything that He does not already have, Antignos says " make sure your relationship with G-d is not based on the mistaken belief that there is reciprocity. Rather, remember that whatever you receive as reward for service of the Lord is in fact chessed, a kindness, since your service does not do anything for Him. However,

it is a fact that your service will confer upon yourself both physical and spiritual benefits. "By observing them, the consequences, the benefits are numerous. (Psalms 19,12) This lesson had been misunderstood by Tzadok and Bayssus who believed that their teacher denied the theory of reward and punishment, and who, in postulating their concept of doing good merely for the sake of doing good, became heretics, strange as it may seem. The doctrine of reward as an act of grace, not as a condition for performing the mitzvot, is the true expression of Jewish attitudes then. Any other attitude smacks of an effort to manipulate G-d, of bartering with Him to do your will rather than the reverse, i.e. your doing His will. The Bible as well as our sages have carefully refrained from the use of the term "prass," and have used the term sachar instead. The latter in all its connotations simply means the reverse of hefsed, loss. If Antignos concludes by saying "in order that the fear of heaven be upon you," he warns his students not to relate to other deities which are not even able to confer any benefits upon them, be they prass or sachar. The language employed by the sayings that prohibits performing mitzvot for the sake of, is usually kedey, in order to. The distinction shows already that only when the purpose is reward is such service unacceptable. If, however, the service is not conditional, then the reward element is perfectly acceptable as a by- product. Once we accept that what matters is the purity of motivation of the performance, it is easy to argue that the deed itself is irrelevant as long as the intention to perform it existed. This could be the point raised by the rasha, the wicked son's question in the Haggadah. But the truth is that both deed and motivation are essential. Whenever observances are demanded, the Torah urges that it must be motivated by love for

G-d, and if so, success in the form of visible reward will be the result of such service of G-d. When the Sifrey described a service that has reward as its objective as inadmissible, the reference is only to the objective of obtaining the reward in this life. If the desire is to ensure one's life in the world to come, such an objective is praiseworthy. Also the Talmud in Avodah Zarah 31, which interpreted the words "for His commandments and not for the reward of His commandments," refers only to these worldly rewards as being taboo. This was also Antigonus' meaning concerning the words "today to carry out (the commandments) and not today to receive their rewards. The considerations mentioned, also help us understand the statement in Kiddushin 31, that he who performs a mitzvah because he has been commanded to do this by G-d, has done something greater than he who has performed the same deed voluntarily. One cannot achieve the ultimate tachlit, objective of the commandment unless one performs it as such. Only in this way does one become a shutaph, partner of the Almighty, a goal we have described as the ultimate purpose of mitzvah performance. This is another aspect of the saying that "the reward of the mitzvah is the mitzvah, that the achievement of the mitzvah is predicated on the very fact that it is a commandment.

Akeidat Yitzchak 57:1:3 Whenever the matter of animal sacrifices is discussed, there are some difficult questions that cannot be ignored. 1) Is it not unavoidable that sacrifices will be viewed as attempts to bribe G'd to forego the anger caused Him by the sinner who offers the sacrifice? 2) Does it not seem that the donor tries to placate G'd just as he would attempt to placate a mere mortal ruler, thereby insulting G'd, reducing His stature? 3) If, on the other hand, the offering is in the nature of a penance, payment for trespass from which G'd receives no more benefit than from say the imposition of corporal punishment on the sinner, what good is it? 4) Is the purpose of the sacrifices perhaps merely to provide the priests with a livelihood, or simply the destruction of the animals that are being offered up? It is clearly erroneous to view the offerings as an attempt to restore the perfection or wholeness of G'd by means of a sacrifice that would complement something incomplete in Him. In Psalms 50, 11-13, "I will not accept bullocks from you, since all the animal kingdom is Mine; if I were hungry, would I have to call you? After all, the whole universe belongs to Me." Isaiah 43,24, states this even more succinctly. "You have not bought for Me fragrant reeds with money..nor have you tired yourself out on My behalf. You have not brought Me the lambs of your total offerings, not honoured Me with your meat offerings;..you have not bought Me with your money! I, I forgive you for MY sake!" Clearly, what the prophet stresses is that none of the things Israel did to placate G'd or bribe Him, has had the slightest impact on the well being of G'd Himself. G'd forgives for His own sake. He emphasizes that there is no other consideration, repeats His name when He proclaims that He dispenses forgiveness, in order to stress that there is no personal benefit involved. There is no aspect of G'd that can be enhanced by the gift of man. If there were a price tag on forgiveness, it would have to be set in motion through mutual action. Since however, there is no exchange of values for the forgiveness, it occurs only through "My righteousness." "I will not remember your sins," so as not to shame you. However, "remind Me of them," you tell of them, so that you can become righteous. (Isaiah 43,26) It is evident that the prophet endeavours to squash the foolish notion of "our contribution" in the matter of sacrifices. It is noteworthy that the term avodah, service, is not used in the Torah concerning offerings that are brought on the altar in order to obtain forgiveness. When Moses did use that term when talking to Pharaoh, (Exodus 10,26) "we do not know what we will serve the Lord," he simply used terminology familiar to Pharaoh. It is the manner of pagans to employ the term avodah for their religious observances. (Deut. 13,7) "Let us go and serve other deities." We find a similar warning (Deut 12,30) "lest you inquire into their deities, saying," how do these nations serve their deities?" The Torah in that instance, continues "do not do thus, for the Lord your G'd etc.," meaning that worship of the G'd of Israel is not of that order. Positive proof that worship of our G'd is of a totally different calibre, is the fact that "they burn their own children in fire to their deities," something the G'd of Israel has described as an abomination. True worship of G'd consists of obeying His commandments, neither adding nor subtracting therefrom. (Deut. 13, 1.) When referring to that kind of worship, the Torah does not shrink from employing the term avodah as in Deut. 10, 12, or Exodus 23,25, and other places. In all matters of piety of the heart, performance of good deeds, the benefit that accrues to the practitioner is stressed. (Deut. 10, 13) "for your own good." "Serving" is for our benefit, not G'ds. It is significant that the rasha, wicked person quoted in Parshat Bo, describes the Passover ceremonial as an avodah, service, stressing "what is in it for you?" It is precisely this attitude to sacrificial service that needs to be debunked. Similarly, the second possible rationale suggested for the requirement of sacrifice, namely atonement, cannot be true. It is obvious that the object used for atonement would have to be in some value relationship to the subject against whom the sin had been committed. Since it is impossible to relate to the Creator in this fashion, the idea of sacrifice sufficing as an act of compensation is quite erroneous. This is what the High Priest Eli (Samuel 1,2,23-24) tells his sons when he remonstrates with them. He had heard that they had acted improperly. "When man sins against man, the judge can mediate and determine fair compensation; but when man sins against G'd, who can

determine the amount of compensation due to G'd?" How will one know that one had atoned adequately? Similarly, Michah 6,7, calls out: "Does the Lord want thousands of rams, tens of thousands rivers of oil?" The meaning is "could even the greatest amount of sacrificial animals compensate for the iniquity committed?" Obviously then, the idea of compensation is not the rationale for sacrificial rites. Regarding the third possibility mentioned, that the priests should be provided with a livelihood, the many offerings which are completely burned up, demonstrate that this could not have been the thought behind this legislation. Moreover, the idea that priests should be happy to consume the proceeds of man's sins, that their livelihood would improve in direct ratio to the number of sins committed by their brethren, could hardly be pleasing in the eyes of G'd. The fourth possibility mentioned, the wanton destruction of part of the animal kingdom is also difficult to accept as a possible motivation behind this legislation.

Akeidat Yitzchak 81:1:5 The Torah demands on repeated occasions that we rid ourselves of negative virtues such as hatred, jealousy and the like. Not only are we commanded "do not hate your brother in your heart," (Leviticus 19,17) but we are even commanded to physically assist our enemies in loading or unloading his donkey, should the occasion demand it. We are asked to lend or to give alms repeatedly to the same people even, and to avoid doing so out of a feeling of distaste for such beggars. All this is designed to refine our character. We must not bear tales, avenge unneighbourly behaviour, and similar commandments. The Torah states as the general purpose of the legislation "so it will be good for you; so you will be well off; so it will be good for us." In other words, those who perform these mitzvot will refine their character by doing so. Not only will one merit external benefits from the performance of such social commandments, i.e. reward, but there will be an additional benefit for us, the improvement of our personality.

Whenever the Torah considers a particular commandment of special importance, it repeats the demand to observe such a mitzvah. Sometimes the demand is repeated even more than twice. We are told "do not pervert justice, listen to both sides when sitting in judgment, do not give preferential treatment to either rich or poor, pursue justice with fairness." The greater the negative impact if one should fail to observe certain commandments, the greater the emphasis the Torah places on its observance. In fact, inheritance of the land of Israel is made conditional on the observance of these social statutes. Study of Torah is one of the categories of mitzvot that are the foundation of personal and national well being. This is so, since it not only leads to the development of positive virtues, but also helps us avoid the many pitfalls man is exposed to. For that reason, the mitzvah of Torah study is not like kan tzippor, something to be observed if it happens our way, yet not something that needs to be sought out, but it is a duty incumbent upon each of us at all times, and applies practically within any environment we may find ourselves in. It is immaterial whether a person is highly placed or in very modest circumstances. Joshua (Joshua 1,8) is commanded to have access to a sefer Torah, Torah scroll at all times. Kings are to write it and study it. (Deut. 17,18) History shows that whenever a Jewish king treated Torah as a most precious possession and source of inspiration, so did his people. On the other hand, as soon as the king ignored the Torah, the people were not long in following suit. The result was usually disastrous and not too long in coming. The reason the king is elected as a model for how to treat Torah, is simply that the king's safety is symbolic of the security of the entire nation. When the aging David could no longer actively participate in battle without endangering his life unduly, his generals were most concerned to keep him in a safe place, pointing out that his personal safety was the key to the nation's success in battle, and to the maintenance of morale among the population. (Samuel II chapter 8) The Talmud in Erchin 17, states "each generation according to its leaders." The meaning is that the fate of the generations is in large measure due to the actions of its leaders.

Derashot HaRan 10:1 "AND NOW, O ISRAEL, WHAT DOES THE L-RD YOUR G-D ASK OF YOU? — ONLY TO FEAR THE L-RD YOUR G-D, TO WALK IN ALL HIS WAYS, AND TO LOVE HIM, AND TO SERVE THE L-RD YOUR G-D WITH ALL YOUR HEART AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL" (DEVARIM 10:12-13)

Yesod Mora VeSod HaTorah 2:5 There is a higher principle, as stated in Deuteronomy 10:13, "To keep all the commandments of the Lord," which includes positive and negative commandments. The phrase in Leviticus 23, "And you shall serve the Lord your God," encompasses all positive commandments that involve one's heart, mouth, and actions, which are fundamental or explicitly mentioned. The phrase in Deuteronomy 14:23, "To fear the Lord," includes all negative commandments, and it is derived from the positive commandment, and the reason for it is that one should guard themselves from immorality out of their fear of God, just as a servant fears his master and refrains from doing evil while being constantly aware of his presence. Others may be drawn to their desires and not fear the king, thinking that he may not know their actions or out of disrespect, shame, and disgrace. The phrase in Deuteronomy 13:5, "After the Lord your God, you shall walk," includes acts of kindness, righteousness, and loving peace. The prophet Micah said, "He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness?" (Micah 6:8). This encompasses honoring one's father, not committing murder, adultery, theft, false testimony, or

coveting. It also includes refraining from speaking falsehood, not showing favoritism to the powerful, not accepting bribes, not oppressing one's neighbor, and maintaining just weights and measures. It includes not delaying payment or taking revenge, and providing for the poor and the stranger. If lending money to my people, do not charge interest. Deal kindly with widows and orphans, do not afflict them. There are many more commandments that they have passed, and what is the need to mention them all in six hundred? Examples include the gathering of the hyssop, not leaving the manna overnight, the construction and transportation of the Tabernacle, the waving of the banners, the sending away of the impure, the hand and the peg in the camp, going out to war against the enemy, the blessings and curses, the altar on Mount Ebal, writing the Torah, the cities of refuge, the war against Amalek, and many others.

Yesod Mora VeSod HaTorah 7:3 Now, pay attention, for there is no difficulty in refraining from negative commandments for those who have understanding, as God has implanted in the intellect the ability for a person to guard against any harm. The analogy can be drawn to a doctor who advises a person who is unaware of the foods that can harm them based on their constitution: "Do not eat anything that I warn you against, for if you eat them, you will fall ill and die." A person of knowledge does not desire to eat something that would harm them; rather, they would find it repulsive and abhorrent, even though they may have heard that it is a delicious food. Instead, they prioritize the essential foods for sustaining life and do not seek after life merely through eating, for this is the way of animals who lack a soul that continues to exist after separation from the body. Is it not written in the Torah: "Let the earth bring forth living creatures" (Genesis 1:24)? Water brings forth living creatures, but this does not apply to humans alone. Rather, humans are made in the likeness of angels. If an angel lives forever, then one who is in their likeness should also be immortal. Therefore, one of the wise individuals stated that the punishment for transgressing negative commandments is executed through one of the four types of death imposed by the court, such as stoning or death by the hands of Heaven. However, the reward for fulfilling positive commandments is granted. Our sages brought a proof that there is a reward for refraining from negative commandments, as it is written: "You shall not eat it, so that it will be good for you" (Deuteronomy 13:19). And some say that the reward will return to the one mentioned at the end of the verse: "For you shall do what is right" (Deuteronomy 12:25). Others say that the verse "You shall not eat it" (Deuteronomy 12:16-17) refers to refraining from negative commandments. The verse above it (Deuteronomy 12:16-17), "You shall pour it out on the ground like water, so that you will not eat it," means that one should not consume blood, for blood is the soul, and this is known from the wisdom of tradition. It is also true that the fear of God, which is a positive commandment, encompasses all positive and negative commandments, as Moses mentioned in another place (Deuteronomy 10) "to fear the Lord your God, to keep all His commandments and statutes which I command you today for your good." They include both positive and negative commandments, for one who refrains from transgressing out of fear of God, it is good for them. The phrase "for your good" encompasses the good of this world and the world to come, and the reward for fulfilling positive commandments, as they involve effort. The analogy is like someone who exhausts themselves under the guidance of a doctor to prepare a meal that will be beneficial for them to eat. In return, they receive their reward, and their action is presented before them. It is good for you to receive reward and escape punishment. The true goodness lies in a person who observes the commandments of the Divine Physician, as the physician neither benefits nor harms them, as Eliphaz said (Job 35:6): "If you are righteous, what do you give Him? Or what does He receive from your hand? Your wickedness affects a man like yourself." Now I will reveal to you a precious secret that we have found written: "Why do you afflict yourselves, Lord, departing from Your ways?" (Isaiah 33:17) and "You are the one who troubled their hearts" (1 Kings 18:37). And Moses said (Deuteronomy 30:15), "See, I have set before you today life and good, and death and evil," and furthermore (Lamentations 3:38), "Do not both good and ill proceed from the mouth of the Most High?" And our sages said (Niddah 30b), "Everything is in the hands of Heaven, except for the fear of Heaven." Know that the cultivated vegetation of the earth is superior to the uncultivated vegetation, and there are those that are fat and those that are lean. In a true analogy, I will explain that there are three forces in the living beings. If you wish, you can call them by three names: Neshamah (soul), Ruach (spirit), and Nefesh (life force). The Nefesh is the vegetative force that resides in the liver, and every living being and plant partake of this force. This Nefesh is the body's inclination and desire for food and sensual pleasures. The Ruach resides in the heart and is the source of a person's vitality. It encompasses both humans and animals, and it is also a physical force. When this Ruach departs, resembling the air leaving the body, the person dies, and this departing Ruach becomes intensified and becomes the source of anger. And the soul is the highest and its power is in the brain, and the characteristics of human beings and their inclinations vary. Some possess them in great strength, while others are weakened, and there are those who have them in a balanced measure. There is no need to elaborate, for the soul seeks what benefits it from the actions of God, for He is the source of its life. And the soul seeks the pleasures of the body for its own well-being. Now, the spirit is intermediate, and

because there is a need for the brain to connect to the liver and the heart, both of them are connected to the brain. The general principle is that each aspect complements the other. Therefore, the Hebrews have referred to them as the soul, spirit, and life force. And all of them are interconnected with the body. If a person consumes foods that warm the blood, their anger will increase. And behold, the actions of the body are influenced by the spirit. If the body is in good condition, and another person angers them with their words or actions, the power of the spirit will intensify in the heart, generating heat in the body. Thus, the body undergoes changes due to the influence of the spirit. And every intelligent person should guide their body according to the needs of their soul, while the soul remains unchanged amidst the body's changes. This is the great elevation that God has granted to Israel, for if they observe the commandments of God, there is no need for physicians, with the help of God, as Asa did. Thus, the verse is captured, and there is no contradiction in the phrase (Exodus 21:19), "And he shall cause him to be thoroughly healed," for it is not an easy matter, but rather, it is like (1 Kings 1:12) "And he shall heal the altar of the Lord." It is not like (Deuteronomy 32:39) "I wound, and I heal," and in the case of Job (Job 5:18), "He woundeth, and his hands make whole." And thus, the army of heaven is divided by the Lord among all the nations. This is the interpretation of the verse (Isaiah 24): "The Lord of hosts will reign over the host of the heights." And this corresponds to the one who accepts the wisdom of astrology and relies on fate. But the name (of God) was given to Israel as an inheritance and to remove them from the dominion of the constellations, as long as they are under His dominion and fulfill what is commanded in His Torah. Therefore, the ancients said (Shabbat 129a): "There is no mazal (constellation) for Israel." And for this reason, it is written (Exodus 33:16), "Then we shall be distinguished, I and Your people." And one cannot argue how the laws of heaven can be changed. Here is the proof: The goodness in its entirety is intended for all good, and for a little evil, it is not in the path of wisdom to prevent what is mostly good. Therefore, there is power in the discerning individual to choose between good and evil, for decrees are made based on the recipient. Thus, it is written (Deuteronomy 15:4), "Except that there shall be no needy among you," implying that everything or the majority is good. Similarly, it is written (Deuteronomy 15:4), "Only if you carefully listen." And the individual can benefit his soul in the future.

14 Mark, the heavens to their uttermost reaches (to their uttermost reaches Lit. "and the heaven of heavens.") belong to your God הוה, the earth and all that is on it!

Akeidat Yitzchak 25:1:5 It is clear then that the conclusions arrived at by a human mind need confirmation of its findings by G-d before they can be considered reliable. Our sages tell us that when Yitro advised his son-in-law Moses about the kind of judiciary system Moses was to introduce, he told him to consult with G-d in order to obtain confirmation. "If the Lord will so command you, you will be able to endure" (Exodus 18,23). If the unreliability of our mind is a fact concerning matters that the mind has been specifically equipped to deal with, how much more is this true when the mind is confronted by heavenly visions, to understand which it even lacks basic yardsticks? Moses asked G-d to provide him with such yardsticks, but was told that the human intellect must subordinate itself to heavenly instructions to the point where we apply the words of Isaiah 55,8, "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are My ways your ways." Quite frequently this may result in objective truth being the very reverse of what we think it is. Sometimes, the very willingness to subordinate one's mind makes that mind receptive to matters undreamed of. Jacob is an example of such an attitude. After his dream, he was able to exclaim, "Indeed the Lord is in this place, although such a thought had been furthest from my mind" (Genesis 28,16 approx). This newfound insight had been contradicted by Jacob's thought processes on several accounts. A) The assumption that G-d is subject to physical dimensions as we humans use the term had been quite alien to Jacob. He was amazed to learn that G-d has a permanent residence on earth. B) The idea that G-d moves from place to place accompanying people, would never have occurred to him, had this fact not been revealed to him. C) The thought that G-d's movements, as it were, could be brought about by outside influences, i.e. were not completely self-induced, had likewise been beyond Jacob's wildest imagination. In theology, the points just mentioned were thought completely impossible; Jacob would not have dared think of the Creator in those terms. G-d did not mean to demolish the theories Jacob had believed in; He wanted merely to broaden Jacob's spiritual horizons. The concept of hashgachah peratit, personal Providence by G-d, was the idea conveyed to Jacob in his dream. Philosophy, though it succeeds in arriving at many valid conclusions about G-d, about His uniqueness, His existence etc., nevertheless misses a great deal, as discussed in Chapter seven and forty-eight. Isaiah Chapter 66 verse 1 summarizes the lesson Jacob was taught in his dream in the following words, "Thus says the Lord; the heavens are My throne and the earth is My footstool." On the one hand, the infinite dimensions of G-d are described in a manner that precludes us from imagining G-d as bound by space, since anyone who can consider the whole earth as His footstool can

hardly be contained by man-made structures such as the temple. On the other hand, if such a Being exceeds the whole earth in size, how can such a Being move from place to place since it already occupies more than all the space available?

Also, how could such a Being be in need of anything, seeing it has proclaimed, "Mine is the universe and all that is therein" (Psalms 50,12)? Therefore, G-d asks, "What kind of house can you possibly build for Me?" G-d asks rhetorically, "Why did I command building a temple to dwell therein? Surely not for My need, but for your sake!" Man's logic would not have dared presume all this, had it not been revealed to him. When a king moves his residence away from the capital to one of the country's rural centers, he does so for the benefit of his subjects in that region who will reap economic and cultural advantages by harboring royalty in their midst. However, it is important that his subjects realize what is being done for them, and that they be made aware of their former inferior status. This is the reason G-d says, "I will look towards the poor and low-spirited who relate to My word with a feeling of awe," (Isaiah 66,3) "the ones who are aware of their limitations and wish to uplift themselves, deserve My special attention." Only when we realize the limitations of our powers of perception, grieve over it, and long to expand our spiritual horizons, will G-d grant us greater insights. How does all this relate to Jacob's dream? Over a period of time, Jacob had acquired concepts of the grandeur of G-d, His uniqueness, His power, His being the prime mover of history, to the extent that an unassisted human intellect is able to perceive all this. At the end of Parshat Toldot, we have already read that Jacob went to Padan Aram. We hear now that he first went to Beer Sheva, to inform us, as our sages relate, that he spent fourteen years studying, preparing himself to the extent that such preparation is possible without Divine inspiration.

Guide for the Perplexed, Part 2 9:1 WE have stated above that in the age of Aristotle the number of spheres was not accurately known: and that those who at present count nine spheres consider a sphere containing several rotating circles as one, a fact well known to all who have a knowledge of astronomy. We need, therefore, not reject the opinion of those who assume two spheres in accordance with the words of Scripture: "Behold the heaven and the heaven of heavens are the Lord's" (Deut. 10:14). They reckon all the spheres with stars, i.e., with all the circles in which the stars move, as one: the all-encompassing sphere in which there are no stars, is regarded by them as the second: hence they maintain that there are two spheres.

15 רַק בְּאַבְתִּיךָ חֶשֶׁן יְהוָה לְאַהֲבָה אוֹתָם וַיִּבְחַר בְּזֶרְעָם אֲחֵרֵיהֶם בָּכֶם
מְכַל־הָעַמִּים כְּיוֹם הַזֶּה:
Yet it was to your ancestors that הוּא was drawn out of love for them, so that you, their lineal descendants, were chosen from among all peoples—as is now the case.

Akeidat Yitzchak 67:1:3 Man's actions can be the result of three distinct causes. They can be the result of free choice made intellectually; they can be the result of man liking the activity he performs, or they can be the result of the immediate benefit he expects to derive from his action. A further cause prompting man to act, is an inner urge, which does not bother to rationalise the purpose and sense of one's actions, as long as the action serves to gratify the urge that has prompted it. When a sailor, whose ship is about to founder, throws the cargo overboard in order to lighten the weight of the ship, and in order to avoid sinking the whole ship, he acts from a choice made intellectually, despite the fact that he resents either of the two options that had been open to him. This is similar to the halachic dilemma faced by people who need to violate a commandment in order to survive. Some such decisions must be based on the principle of yehareg ve-al ya-avor, rather be killed than become guilty of that violation; others will be based on the principle ya-avor ve-al yehareg, better to sin and survive than forego the chance of performing other mitzvot through having permitted himself to be killed. These options are discussed in Sanhedrin 76. If Isaac loved Esau because the latter would bring him venison, then an activity which would result in Isaac receiving such venison can be said to have originated in a feeling of love. Such an activity involves more of one's desire plus planning, than the one described previously. When a person is in the grip of lust or similar emotion however, he becomes so irrational that he will pay any price to satisfy his lust or greed. Chamor and Shechem are examples of people who made unreasonable concessions on behalf of their townspeople in order to satisfy the lust to possess Dinah, Jacob's daughter. (Genesis 34,11-19) In order to better comprehend the last example, picture a driver, a carriage and horses. Although the driver is in charge of the carriage, should the horses become unmanageable, the carriage will be drawn in the direction the horses want, and the driver will be powerless to prevent this, as long as carriage and horses are coupled together. In this parable, the horse represents the will, the lust, the urge; the carriage represents the person; the driver represents the choice made intellectually, the ability to discriminate, the gift man has been equipped with. The relationship of G'd to Zion is not based only on bechirah, choice between relative evils, but as the Psalmist 132, 13, terms it "for G'd has chosen Zion because He wanted it as His residence." The choice of the Jewish people as the chosen people, was dictated by intellectual considerations, but it was re-inforced by the Divine equivalent of ta-avah, an almost overpowering urge.

This is underlined in the verse that follows "This is My rest forever, here I will dwell for I have desired it." In Deut. 10,15, Moses describes it as follows: "G'd took a strong liking to your forefathers, to love them; and He chose their descendants after them, more than all other nations, as of this day." This shows that the love sprang from a strong liking G'd had developed towards them, based on their conduct. However, the love for the descendants is due to His choosing them (bachar) in comparison with other nations who were on a lower level, morally. That this is so, is confirmed in Song of Songs, where we read that Israel is "like a lily among thorns, so is My partner among the daughters." (Song of Songs 2,2) The terms chashak, love, choice, are used in descending order of preference. The first one is natural, unreasoning; the second one is deliberate, planned, but based on sound reason for the attraction. The third one is something forced upon one, in which one makes the best of a given situation. Of the many expressions of G'ds love for the Jewish people which are recorded in the Torah, some stem from relatively mild forms of love. None express a stronger bond of love than the setting aside of the mo-adim, the holydays that enable us to commune with G'd, and be in the presence of the shechinah, like children in the company of their father in joy and happiness.

Akeidat Yitzchak 75:1:5 Some problems in the text of our Parshah. 1) When the Torah writes (Numbers 11, 1) "The people were as if complaining, wicked in the eyes of the Lord," what was it that G'd had heard? Why is it not spelled out? When the Jewish people are described as "crying again" in verse four, when was the first time they had cried? 2) How could the people say "who will feed me meat?," when they had enjoyed a regular diet of fowl, quail, since the second month they had been in the desert? How could Moses therefore appear to question G'ds ability to provide meat for the whole nation? 3) Why did Moses not relay the people's request to G'd as had been his custom? 4) If Moses simply wanted to reduce the burden of leadership from himself, why did the elders have to be assembled prior to the provision of meat? 5) The Torah seems extraordinarily long winded when describing how long the meat supply would last, i.e. "not one day, not two days etc. etc.." Why? 6) Moses' question "are You going to provide meat for six hundred thousand foot soldiers that I find myself amongst," seems peculiar? 7) Why did G'd supply this meat?

Akeidat Yitzchak 94:1:5 The references to man as beloved of G'd do not mean that the love of G'd was demonstrated before its recipient had demonstrated some personal accomplishment in the field of yir-at shamayim, fear of Heaven. All men are created with equal opportunity in this respect, though G'd provides blandishments to attract those who choose His way, whereas no incentives are provided for the potential sinner. The fact that we find ba-aley teshuvah, repentant sinners on the one hand and on the other hand one encounters people who have lived a devout life most of their years only to suddenly forsake that path, shows clearly that we are all free agents in this respect. The initial amount of Divine love each person is endowed with at birth, is augmented as man pursues the path of righteousness. emet me-eretz titzmach, truth grows from the earth. (Psalms 85,12) This means the recognition of truth is rooted in our world. "Righteousness however, is subsequently looking down from above." Solomon's prayer at the beginning of his career, (Kings I 3,6) is the best illustration of our contention. Solomon said: "You have done great kindness with Your servant David my father, when he walked before You in truth and righteousness and with upright heart; You preserved this kindness for him, and gave him a son who sits on his throne as of this day." Solomon talks of two acts of kindness by

G'd. The first is the kindness extended to all men at birth, the second that which accrued due to David's personal conduct. In chapter sixteen we have explained in detail why in the case of Abraham, G'ds special love is reported before we know of Abraham's good deeds. The initial endowment of man by G'd at birth can be divided into three categories. 1)

The physical aspect; the gift of life, a sound body. 2) Endowment with certain character tendencies that will help to smooth his path in life. 3) Endowment with certain intellectual powers. When we quoted the Talmud in Makkot at the outset, the three types of decrees the rabbis instituted may reflect these three categories. (1) The reading of the megillah annually, is an act of appreciation that our physical lives had been preserved at the time of Haman. When Jews found that this basic gift of G'd had become endangered, they did penitence, a gift G'd had granted mankind prior to man having been created. This act therefore awakens the bond that links man to G'd. By fasting, i.e. denying oneself the needs of the body, Jews atoned for having indulged their bodies at the feast of Ahasverus some years previously. (2) When the Rabbis expanded the tithes legislation, they imposed restraints on certain character traits, primarily greed. The giving of alms is proof that one is able to restrain one's natural greed. Once man makes a move in this direction, he can be sure that G'ds kindness will respond in equal or even far greater measure. Also, the dispensation of alms, tithes, on a regular basis, eventually results in such acts of kindness becoming part of our very nature. When one observes good deeds being performed, one cannot always be sure of the motive of the person performing such good deeds. It may be an outgrowth of a mature personality, or it may still be motivated by ulterior considerations. The only criterion that offers guidance in this respect is the donor's facial expression at the time he performs the deed of kindness. If he seems to genuinely enjoy performing the deed, we can be sure he has attained the personality level when this mitzvah has

become a natural for him. Such a person is called *nadiv*, generous, the other kind is merely called *noten*, a donor. David expressed this thought very clearly in Chronicles I 29,17. After having acknowledged that all the silver and gold man has amassed is in truth G'd's, he continues "and I am aware my Lord that you examine the heart, that you are desirous of uprightness; I have donated all these items from the uprightness of my heart; and now Your people present here, I have observed that they donate for You joyfully." G'd can tell motivation by examining the heart. David only has the venue of watching people's faces when they make their donations to tell how genuine their motivation may be. The verse commencing with the words *asser te-asser*, tithe repeatedly, (14,22) just like the words *naton titten*, give repeatedly, (14, 10) reminds us that only repeated action of that kind leads to generous gestures becoming second nature to us. Alternately, the repetition could mean that for every act of generosity we perform, a compensating act is performed in Heaven.

16 **וּמִלְתֶּם אֶת עֲרֹלַת לְבַבְכֶּם וְעִרְפְּכֶם לֹא תִקְשׁוּ עוֹד:** Cut away, therefore, the thickening about your hearts and stiffen your necks no more.

Guide for the Perplexed, Part 3 33:2 Politeness is another virtue promoted by the Law. Man shall listen to the words of his neighbour; he shall not be obstinate, but shall yield to the wish of his fellow-men, respond to their appeal, act according to their desire, and do what they like. Thus the Law commands, "Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiff-necked" (Deut. 10:16); "Take heed and hearken" (ibid. 27:9). "If you be willing and obedient" (Isa. 1:19). Those who listen [to the words of others] and accept as much as is right are represented as saying, "We will hear and do" (Deut. 5:24), or in a figurative style, "Draw me, we will run after thee" (Song 1:4).

Yesod Mora VeSod HaTorah 1:3 "And there are others who constantly engage in the study of the Torah, the Prophets, and the Writings, including their translation into Aramaic. They ponder in their hearts, striving to uncover the deeper meanings according to their abilities, reaching higher levels. The truth is that the Torah is a source of life and the foundation of all the commandments. However, the discerning one lacks the power to fully grasp the essence of a single commandment from the written Torah alone unless they also delve into the words of the Oral Torah. As it is written in the Sabbath commandment (Exodus 20:10), 'But the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God; on it you shall not do any work.' 'You shall not do any work...' Who will explain to us the various types of work and their derivatives? And the measurements of the Sukkah, and how much is the required size? And the general principles that apply to all the commandments require interpretation based on the traditions passed down from the Patriarchs. Even all the festivals, whether they depend on the appearance of the middle or corrected moon, or according to the position that the moon is correctly aligned to show, or according to the visible appearance and the many variations due to the length and width and the arch of the appearance, corresponding to the expanse of the earth and the deviation of the moon's path to the right or left of the line of the zodiac. And on which location the calculation of the moon is based, for between Jerusalem and this island there is a difference of four straight hours where the sun rises on them initially as clear evidence from the wisdom of the lunar phenomena. And there are still many commandments whose interpretations are not known from the Torah itself but require reasoning, as stated in Deuteronomy 10:16. "You shall not eat upon the blood..." from the words of Shaul (Deuteronomy 24:16), and fathers shall not be put to death for their children from the words of Amatzia. But the main benefit is in relation to the effort exerted to know the names of the cities of Israel, the words of the judges and kings, the construction of the First Temple and the future one, and the words of prophecy that have passed, some of which are future and can be studied, while others have been examined like blind men feeling a wall, one saying this and another saying that. If only we knew the Book of Psalms, which is all songs and prayers, even though it is said that it does not contain future prophecies. The same applies to Job and the books of Solomon, and the Scrolls and Ezra. And we cannot know the timing of the end from the Book of Daniel, for it is not known as I have explained in its place. And if we observe day and night in all these matters, we will not have the knowledge of a commandment that enables us to attain eternal life in the world to come. Therefore, it is said (Baba Metzia 31a). The study of Scripture is an immeasurable quality; it is only beneficial for the discerning individual who delves into the secrets of the Holy Language from the Scriptures. For from it come life's outcomes, understanding the foundation of the Torah and the secret of reverence. Even the translation is beneficial, even though it is not entirely based on the literal meaning.

Yesod Mora VeSod HaTorah 2:14 Here is a parable regarding a commandment that is considered as two, such as "Remember" and "Keep" the Sabbath, and sanctifying the Sabbath, and finding pleasure, and making preparations, and acquiring desired items, and refraining from speaking mundane matters. These are many commandments, but the essence is "You shall not do any work" (Exodus 20:10). And behold, one is obligated to remember throughout the week which day is the seventh day, and it shall be kept for him. And "remember" means like "keep" and sanctify, that one

should not engage in work on that day, as stated by Jeremiah. And the pleasure is the rest from physical labor, and finding desired items and refraining from doing anything related to work. And within these warnings, "circumcise the foreskin of your heart" (Deuteronomy 10:16) is included in the positive commandments, and "do not be stiff-necked" (Numbers 31) is included in the negative commandments. I asked the great scholars of the generation for the interpretation, and their response was to reject it, holding firmly to their established positions, along with their disciples who lack the discernment to distinguish between truth and falsehood.

17 כי יהיה אלהיכם הוא אלהי האלהים ואדני האדנים האל הגדל הגבור והנורא אשר לא ישא פנים ולא יקח שחד: For your God is God supreme and Lord supreme, (God supreme and Lord supreme Lit. "the god of gods and the lord of lords." Heb. 'adon ("lord") normally denotes a man in a position of authority. Here it is used to claim that Israel's God is beyond the men who sit atop the social hierarchies of rank and gender.) the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, who shows no favor and takes no bribe,

Akeidat Yitzchak 38:1:10 The Midrash quoted at the beginning has this idea in mind. Once G-d chose the world, He determined the dates of new moons, and new years. The new years were indicative of the natural law that was to govern the universe, i.e. the system based on the month of Tishrey. Once G-d saw that the universe could not function successfully on this basis of midat hadin, attribute of justice, He chose Jacob and his descendants, i.e. tzaddikim. Because of the latter's good deeds, G-d was prepared to flood the world with midat hachessed, harachamim, mercy, Personal Intervention. He set aside the beginning of the month of Nissan for commencement of this method of guiding history towards His objectives. "The work of the Lord is great, and consists of the day the Jews took the lamb" (yom hashem hagadol- Compare Tossaphot Shabbat 87). The word hagadol, the great, is used on another day when ideologies of idol-worshippers are upset. This is on the Day of Atonement when the scapegoat is thrown down the abyss to demonstrate how we feel about people who sacrifice to such creatures, and how such an action by us helps our own kapparah, atonement, forgiveness (Yalkut Shimoni Yael, item 2). The word hagadol, the great, may also be a reference to G-d Himself, rather than an adjective describing the importance of that day and date in the calendar. The grammatical construction then would be yom hashem hagadol, the day of the Lord who is great. We find in Jeremiah 10,6, "Great are You O Lord, and great is Your name. This points out the difference between the Lord G-d from mortal kings. The latter are praised, exalted, only to reveal weaknesses after all. Not so with G-d, who lives up to all His advance billing. On the contrary, it is impossible for mere mortals to express all the praise due Him (compare Chronicles I 29,11 "Yours, O G-d is the greatness, the Power etc.")! G-d's characteristics are unlike those of human kings. As long as the latter enjoy physical power, they are hardly concerned with real justice, rely on might rather than right. Not so with G-d. He always has power at His disposal, but He employs justice nonetheless (Psalms 99,4).

Akeidat Yitzchak 40:1:8 Experts at war, choose terrain that they are familiar with, and weapons that are suited to the terrain on which the battle is being waged. Moreover, they choose the battlefield, do not allow the enemy such choice unless they are fighting merely defensively. The Egyptians, it is pointed out, had done exactly the reverse. They moved cavalry into the sea, instead of ships. Moses quotes these illogical activities as proof that G-d had already deprived them of their usual martial intelligence. The shirah shows in detail that whatever happened to the Egyptians was the opposite of what they had planned. Fleetfooted chariots became hindrances in their flight. That these facts penetrated the consciousness of Israel is underlined by the change in language from indirect speech with the words "Your right hand Lord is glorious in power."

Akeidat Yitzchak 45:1:4 It is a well known fact that whenever someone makes extraordinary efforts to accomplish something, that something is of exceptional importance to the person making such a supreme effort on its account. If the Shunamite woman whose house the prophet Elisha used to frequent, built a private apartment for his use, then it is not surprising that the prophet tried to figure out the real reason she had gone to such trouble. When he failed to find the obvious answer such as acting as her attorney at the king's Court, he asked his assistant Gehazi. The latter noted that the woman was childless and had an aging husband. (Kings II chapter 4) After the sin of the golden calf, Moses used the argument that in order to justify all that G-d had done to release Israel from bondage in Egypt, His objective must have been extremely important, else why go to such trouble? To abandon such an objective and to annihilate Israel, would make all of G-d's efforts look foolish, and this would diminish rather than enhance G-d's image in the eyes of mankind. G-d relented and accepted that argument. The same argument may lead to our undeserved redemption in the

future (Ezekiel chapter 36) to justify G-d's "name," i.e. to justify the historic existence of the Jewish people throughout the many centuries of exile. At Mount Sinai then, all G-d's preparations prior to the revelation, all the thunder and lightning accompanying the revelation must have had as its objective something completely beyond anything man had ever experienced. Seeing that the ten commandments do not contain any new philosophic insights, and in fact, most of these commandments could easily have been legislated by human legislators of average intelligence interested in a well functioning society, one wonders wherein lay the great purpose that produced such extraordinary effort. One might have expected answers to the mysteries of the universe, but they do not contain anything of the sort. Even the first two commandments stipulating the uniqueness of G-d etc., are matters easily arrived at by the human intellect as demonstrated by Maimonides chapter thirty three second section of his "Moreh." This in spite of the fact that these two commandments were heard by all the people directly from the mouth of G-d. Similarly, the fact that the tablets were G-d's own handiwork as well as the inscriptions on them, all suggest that the purpose of the revelation must have been an all encompassing one. If it was not its purpose to teach new philosophical insights, what was its purpose? It was first and foremost to disabuse people of false philosophies, many of which were circulating freely. Although the vast majority of mankind may acknowledge the existence of G-d as the Creator, they deny His ability or willingness to guide the fate of man or the history of the universe. It was that kind of the denial of G-d's role that the plagues in Egypt had targeted. It was also what the revelation at Mount Sinai was to impress upon Israel. The purpose was simply to demonstrate the presence and involvement in the personal fate of each and every Jew by G-d. This was demonstrated for all future generations to remember. It was not hearsay, historic fable or legend, but a living experience shared by the entire nation. Henceforth that truth could no longer be denied by speculative reason. The constant nagging doubt "is the Lord in our midst?" was stilled once and for all. A major reason for the reluctance of many Israelites to leave Egypt had been their doubt if the G-d of Israel in all His majesty would concern Himself with such trivial matters as the safety of a people on its march through the desert. Therefore they had preferred the authority of the Egyptian state and civilisation, whose acknowledged task it was to look after its subjects. If, in fact, G-d had indulged Moses at Mount Sinai in answering all the philosophical arguments, the result would have had meaning, at best, for that generation, whereas future generations would have each had to have its own revelation. Therefore G-d addressed Himself exclusively to the fears that lurked in people's minds, and demonstrated that G-d's Providence did indeed extend to each one of them in whatever circumstances they might find themselves. He stressed the love He had demonstrated for them by releasing them from bondage to the cruel and arrogant Egyptian kingdom. He stressed that He wanted them to retain their freedom from any other deity by not worshipping such deity nor building altars or idols for them etc. Lastly, He demanded the honour due Him by not bandying about His name in idle oaths, and positively observing the Sabbath as a day of rest, emulating Him, since He had rested on the Sabbath. After that, He turned His attention to domestic problems between man and fellow man. When the Midrash discusses anthropomorphical problems such as G-d's "right" and G-d's "left," the writing on the tablets with G-d's "finger" etc. it is dear that all these descriptions are allegorical. Let us take a closer look at the ten commandments themselves.

Akeidat Yitzchak 74:1:9 (1,2,3) Just as man is not allowed to enjoy nature's blessings without first reciting an appropriate benediction acknowledging G'd as the source, so the priests remind people of that fact when they say "may the Lord bless you." Constant reminders that G'd is the source of all blessings and well being are important. This too is the purpose of "they will place My name on the children of Israel and I will bless them." The priests' function is to keep Israel aware of this cardinal fact. The function of the priest in relation to G'd, is parallel to the aggadah about Moses assisting G'd in His task of tying the crowns to the letters of the Torah, that we mentioned earlier. The first part of the priests' blessing is essentially material in nature. The additional word "and may He preserve you," is the difference between human and Divine blessings. The former, however generous in nature, does not carry with it the guarantee that it will endure. G'd's blessings however, includes the blessing that it will endure. The second blessing revolves essentially around spiritual matters, the important feature being that the attitude of others towards you will be positive, generous, acknowledge your worth. The third section, "Peace," is relatively the most important of the blessings, as documented by many of the sayings of our sages. They teach that even in death, shalom, peace, is an indispensable attribute. "You will join your fathers in peace." (Genesis 15, 15) See also Jeremiah 34, 4, concerning the death of king Tzidkiyahu. We find a somewhat puzzling statement by Rabbi Eleazar Hakappor, who is quoted as saying "peace is great because even if Israel worships idols, as long as they have harmony, Satan does not touch them." He bases himself on the verse in Hoseah 4, 17, "as long as the idol worshipping Ephrayim live in unity, leave them alone;" but it continues in chapter 10, 2, "when their heart is divided, now they will receive their punishment." How strange that those who destroy the fabric that binds them to their Creator by worshipping idols, should not also burst the fabric of harmony,

peace? But the lesson is that the merit of maintaining harmony gives even sinners an extension before G'd's justice is executed. The three blessings then are 1) Provision of material needs including a healthy body. 2) Provision of the needs of the spirit and soul. 3) Assistance in establishing harmony between man and his Maker, which is true harmony. The tabernacle represents the totality of this world, a microcosm. The *beriach hatichon*, the central bolt joining all forty eight boards comprising the walls, are the thread *shalom*, i.e. "peace" that bonds everything together in harmony. When the Midrash says that when G'd created the world, He desired a dwelling down here, just as He has in the Heavens, the meaning is none other than that He wished to supervise and assist man's activities, just as He supervises all that goes on in Heaven. To that end, He endowed the world with blessings. Adam, unfortunately forfeited that relationship through his sin, and until the arrival of Abraham on the stage of history, the broken thread did not begin to mend. Finally, at the completion of the tabernacle, this thread had been fully restored. This is the reason the Torah records the blessings at this juncture. For this reason also, the Midrash talks about Moses hearing three voices. He called the first voice *hadar*, to paraphrase material well being. He called the second voice *naeh*, to paraphrase spiritual and mental well being. The third voice he called *meshubach*, "choice," since it is the crowning achievement of all. Moses was anxious to have G'd's message spelled out. G'd obliged, saying "I speak *shalom*, I harbour no ill feelings against My children." (Psalms 85,9.) Rabbi Joshua ben Levi says that there is no need at all to quote a verse from the book of Psalms, since the verse in the Torah is perfectly adequate. Since the Torah tells us about blessings, and continues with the line "it was the day the tabernacle had been completed," the word *va-yehee*, it was, always refers to the reestablishment of a situation that had existed at one time, but had been interrupted.

Duties of the Heart, First Treatise on Unity 10:59 The saints and the prophets described His attributes in different ways. Moshe Rabeinu said "The Rock, His work is perfect, for all His ways are justice" (Deut. 32:4), and he also said: "He is G-d of gods, and L-ord of lords, the great G-d, the mighty, and the awesome" (Deut. 10:17), and also "He exacts justice for the fatherless and the widow" (Deut. 10:18). And G-d Himself described His own attributes as written: "And the L-ord passed by before him, and proclaimed: 'The L-ord, the L-ord, G-d, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy unto the thousandth generation, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, etc.'" (Ex. 34:6).

Duties of the Heart, First Treatise on Unity 10:61 A certain person led the prayer service before Rabbi Chanina and said: "the great, the mighty, the awesome, the powerful, the glorious, the potent, the feared, the strong, the powerful, the certain, and the esteemed G-d!". R' Chanina waited until he finished. When he finished, R' Chanina said to him: "did you complete all the praises of your Master? What need is there for all of this? even us, these three praises that we say (in the daily prayers), if not for the fact that Moshe Rabeinu said it in the Torah (Deut. 10:17), and the men of the great assembly came and established it in prayer, we wouldn't be able to say them! And you say all these praises and continue? It is analogous to a king of flesh and blood who had thousands upon thousands of golden coins, and they would praise him for possessing silver coins, isn't this a disgrace to him?"

Gevurot Hashem 1:2 The Talmud relates: "A certain reader went down (In this story, the person who was leading the congregation in prayer added a list of adjectives in praise of God. In the rabbinic world, there was not yet a set liturgy yet so the prayer leader would improvise in phrasing the prayers. Rabbi Hanina chides the prayer leader for adding too many adjectives in praise of God and not using the three terms of praise which Moses stated and the Great Assembly canonized. The Men of the Great Assembly created the first order of prayers at the beginning of the second Temple period.) (to lead prayers) in the presence of Rabbi Hanina and said, 'O God, great, mighty, terrible, majestic, powerful, awful, strong, fearless, sure and honored.' Rabbi Hanina waited till he had finished, and then said to him, 'Have you concluded all the praise of God? Why do we say all this? Even with the three terms that we do say (*haGadol haGibor, v'haNora*, from Deut. 10:17) , had not Moses mentioned them in the Torah and the Men of the Great Synagogue not inserted them in the Amida, we should not have been able to mention them, and you say all these and still go on! It is as if an earthly king had a million denarii of gold and someone praised him as possessing silver ones.'" (B. Berachot 33b)

Gevurot Hashem 1:6 This suggests that if it was not our intention to praise God, then it is not forbidden to speak of God's attributes, as Rabbi Hanina said, "Had Moses our Master not mentioned these three words...we should not have been able to mention them." (If it is one's intention to praise God then one might sound like a servile person who flatters others. Praise serves a higher purpose of developing a sense of reverence in the presence of God. God does not need our praise, in other words; we need these words of praise to develop the proper attitudes in ourselves. We do not call God *Ha-el hagadol hagibor v'hanora* – the great mighty and awesome God - as a means of praising God but simply because this was the formula used by Moses. It serves as a means of developing reverence rather than serving as a means of praising God.) Since praise of God is unseemly, why did Moses offer these words of praise, 'great, mighty, and

awesome?' It was not Moses intention to speak words of praise God but rather to teach the people of Israel to become more God fearing. By contemplating these three terms (God is great, mighty, and awesome) the people could develop fear of God. That is why it was permissible for Moses to recite these words and for the Men of the Great Assembly to insert them into the Amida. Even though they were included in the Amidah, they were not offered as words of praise.

They were simply words that were taken from Scripture.

Guide for the Perplexed, Part 1 37:6 Another signification of the word is "attention and regard." Comp. "Thou shalt not have regard (pene) to the poor (Lev. 20:15); "And a person receiving attention (panim)" (Isa. 3:3); Who does not show regard (panim)," etc. (Deut. 10:17, etc.). The word panim (face) has a similar signification in the blessing, "The Lord turn his face to thee" (i.e., The Lord let his providence accompany thee), "and give thee peace."

The Jonathan Sacks Haggadah; Essays, Building a Society of Freedom 1 Rabbi Yoanan said: Wherever you find the greatness of the Holy One, blessed be He, there you find His humility.... [Thus] it is written in the Torah: "For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, mighty and awe-inspiring God, who shows no favoritism and accepts no bribe" [Deut. 10:17]. And immediately afterwards it is written, "He upholds the cause of the orphan and widow, and loves the stranger, giving him food and clothing" [ibid. 10:18]. (Liturgy for the conclusion of the Sabbath) What is the Talmud, VII What is written in the Talmud?, 2 Fellow man 6 Come and hear [again]: 'Bluria the proselyte put this question to Rabban Gamaliel: It is written in your Law, [she said], who lifts not up the countenance (Deut 10:17), and it is also written, The Lord shall lift up his countenance upon you (Num 6:26). R. Yose the priest joined the conversation and said to her: I will give you a parable which will illustrate the matter. A man lent his neighbor a maneh and fixed a time for payment in the presence of the king, while the other swore to pay him by the life of the king. When the time arrived he did not pay him, and he went to excuse himself to the king. The king, however, said to him: The wrong done to me I excuse you, but go and obtain forgiveness from your neighbor. Similarly here, one text speaks of offences committed by a man against God, the other of offences committed by a man against his fellow man. Rosh Hashanah 17b

עֲשֵׂה מִשְׁפָּט יְתוֹם וְאַלְמָנָה וְאָהֵב גֵּר לְתֵת לוֹ לֶחֶם וְשִׂמְלָה: 18 but upholds the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and befriends the stranger, providing food and clothing.—

Akeidat Yitzchak 14:1:4 Just as it is inconceivable for G-d to create a creature and endow such a being with all the Divine qualities, since the image of Divinity itself would suffer thereby, so it is impossible to imagine that the Almighty in His capacity of absolute perfection would act unfairly or unjustly towards anyone or anything in His universe. Were He to do so, our concepts of what constitutes absolute perfection would be shattered. This thought is expressed by Moses (Deuteronomy 10,17-18), "For the Lord your G-d is the Lord of all lords, Master of masters; the great Power, the mighty and awesome One, who does not show favor or accept bribes. Rather, He does justice with the orphan and the widow, loves the stranger and gives him food and clothing." This teaches that the very essence of being "the Lord of lords" makes it impossible for Him to be reduced to the physical. His very perfection makes it impossible for Him to be unjust. Abraham understood quite correctly when he asked, "It is obviously impossible for the Lord of the universe not to do justice and kill the good together with the wicked!" (Genesis 18,25). Similar thoughts are expressed in Job chapter 34 and Jeremiah chapter 12. This subject will be discussed in connection with the "induced" obstinacy of Pharaoh. Because man is frequently perplexed by the seeming paradox of the suffering endured by the righteous and the success of the wicked, David proclaims in Psalms 145,17, "The Lord is righteous in all His ways, and full of kindness in all His deeds." Despite the rule of justice-- a general guideline--chessed, kindness is employed in all His actions whenever possible (whenever the recipients benefit thereby). Some serious problems in our Parshah:

Akeidat Yitzchak 49:1:4 The instructions concerning the details of the appearance of the menorah which are given before its construction, then again while its construction was in progress, and finally- at least partially- in Parshat Beha-alotcha when the lighting of the menorah is commanded, pose the problem "why all this emphasis on the details?" Since none of the legislation in the Torah contains superfluous detail, it must be that the details are very important if they concern nothing more than a vessel that serves as the vehicle of a mitzvah, not the mitzvah itself. Why do we need to be told at that point that the construction of the menorah conformed to its blueprint? Who was it that carried out its construction? The craftsman who made it is referred to only by the words "he made it." The subject is nowhere mentioned by name, however. Why does Aaron need to be praised for not making any changes? Were the problems of cleaning the menorah so extraordinary that changes in its construction seemed to have been called for? Even stranger is the Midrash Tanchuma in Parshat Beha-alotcha, according to which Aaron was told that lighting the menorah was a

commandment which would never become redundant, whereas offerings on the altar would cease with the destruction of the holy temple. Did not everything cease at that time, including the lighting of the menorah? Maimonides' answer that the Midrash refers to the lighting of the Chanukah lights seems far fetched. Aaron's mind would hardly have been put at rest by being told that a minor Rabbinic ordinance in the future would compensate him for not participating in the offerings that had been brought by the princes in which his entire tribe had not been represented. This is especially so, since even during the seven days of the inaugural service in the holy tabernacle, when Moses himself performed the sacrificial rites, Aaron's mind had already been troubled. This in spite of the fact that he would perform many more such sacrificial rites in the future. We therefore have to look further in order to understand that particular Midrash. There is a basic difference between the way man looks at things and in the way G-d looks at things. Man begins with the phenomena that he sees and hears, and proceeds by means of those phenomena to comprehend or assume the existence of other less familiar phenomena. Such unfamiliar phenomena may exist only in the abstract, never to be perceived visually or aurally. G-d, on the other hand, proceeds in the opposite fashion. So far as the final product had been envisaged at the very outset. This is the way He operates. Every manifestation of any phenomenon represents merely a step planned and necessary to lead to the ultimate total structure. Having planned the final product, He comprehends the significance of every step, every constituent part, even if it is apparently unrelated to the whole. He is aware that such a phenomenon is indispensable, an integral part of the whole to be revealed later. On his way to the inner sanctuary, man, observing the sacrificial rites of the burning of animals which symbolise removal of sin etc., begins to comprehend that the inner sanctuary must be approached only in a state of purity, after washing himself from the copper basin placed in front of the sanctuary. Inside the sanctuary are found the holy vessels of which the menorah represents the concept of enlightenment, wisdom, which though one, seeing the menorah has been hammered out of single chunk of gold, nevertheless contains seven arms, branches. These seven arms suggest seven different disciplines of wisdom and knowledge. Indeed, the wisdom that Solomon (Proverbs 9, 1) refers to, is the Torah itself. We find this also in chapter six of Proverbs, where we read "a mitzvah is a light, whereas Torah is the source of enlightenment." The menorah of the spiritual forces in our world is represented by Torah. It guarantees meshivat nefesh, (Psalms 19,8-11), the return to eternal life by the soul. The six arms are mentioned alternatively left and right, representing the physical forces, (left) and the spiritual forces (right). The words "testimony, mitzvot and judgments," refer to the three arms on the left, whereas the words "mandates, reverence and more desirable than fine gold," refer to the three arms on the right of the stem of the menorah. Simple man does not dream of, or aspire to greatness- even in this physical world. "The testimony of G-d is faithful," teaches that this does not hold true in Judaism. An inferior position in this physical world, does not constitute a barrier to reaching one's perfection, Divinely inspired goals. Machkimat peti," it makes even the fool become wise." Torah promotes that kind of inspiration. The princes which govern this physical world are the willpower and freedom of choice which enable man to aspire to lofty heights in spite of lowly physical surroundings. Since man may have suffered corruption due to other material forces that interact with him, pikkudim, mandates are needed to counteract the inroads made by the aforementioned forces. The purpose of these pikkudim, is to make the positive character traits the norm rather than the exception. mitzvah, are those commandments which ennoble our lives on earth by constituting a symbolic link with our destiny, our relationship with G-d. Examples are tefillin, (phylacteries), tzitzit (fringes), mezuzah, lulav and others. "Enlightening the eyes," refers to the thoughtful performance of the commandments. Yir-ah, refers to the reverence which we demonstrate when we perform commandments which we are unable to rationalise. We demonstrate our obedience to G-d whose superior wisdom we acknowledge by performing these mitzvot. Omedet la- ad, endures forever, means that part of the Torah remains an eternal moral and intellectual challenge. Mishpatim, judgments, refers to the penalties in store for those who choose not to observe the legislation of G-d as revealed in the Torah. This reference is made especially to past generations whose failure in this respect resulted in their being punished in a manner that fitted their crimes. Tzadku, were just. The justness of the punishment suffered by those generations is apparent to the student of history, i.e. the history described in the Torah. Hanechemadim, that are more precious than fine gold, refers to the statutes whose purpose it is to assure us a reward in the world to come, a reward far greater than any material possessions in this world. The symbolism contained in the merit, the right to kindle the menorah which represents man's attempt to perfect himself, becomes clear then. Keeping to the exact order in carrying out this task is laudable since so much depends on its outcome. Just as the name menorah for the whole candelabra suggests enlightenment, its parts, i.e. stem, arms, chalices, and flowers suggest their respective functions. The stem is used to acquire wisdom; the chalice to be the receptacle of such wisdom; the flower suggests additional wisdom sprouting forth once the fundamentals have been observed properly. The height of eighteen tefachim, handsbreadths, represents the height of a man of average height. The number eighteen is symbolic of the word chay, alive, i.e. its numerical value. Man's intellect

is divided into two categories, each of which is subdivided into three parts. There is practical as well as speculative reason. The practical reason deals in the first instance with man's personal concerns, in the second instance with the concerns of his household, and in the third instance with matters affecting the society in which he lives. Similarly, speculative reason. In the first instance, man identifies his own feelings and senses. In the second instance, he learns to determine the validity of all these sensations, whether the information they convey to him is true. (i.e. can one trust one's senses?) In the third instance, man acquires the ability to understand the interrelationship between all these phenomena. This third stage is generally known as beenah, insight. The three arms on the right side of the menorah represent the three kinds of speculative reason, whereas the three arms on the left side of the menorah represent the three levels of practical reason. The "knobs" on the stems are to be seen as "way stations." Since attainment of insights is achieved only gradually, step by step, these knobs represent the steps in man's intellectual progress.

Duties of the Heart, First Treatise on Unity 10:59 The saints and the prophets described His attributes in different ways. Moshe Rabeinu said "The Rock, His work is perfect, for all His ways are justice" (Deut. 32:4), and he also said: "He is G-d of gods, and L-ord of lords, the great G-d, the mighty, and the awesome" (Deut. 10:17), and also "He exacts justice for the fatherless and the widow" (Deut. 10:18). And G-d Himself described His own attributes as written: "And the L-ord passed by before him, and proclaimed: 'The L-ord, the L-ord, G-d, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy unto the thousandth generation, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, etc.'" (Ex. 34:6).

Sefer Yesodei HaTorah 23:1 And in order to exalt even more the virtue of compassion, the Torah attributes this trait to the Blessed one, saying (Shemoth 22:26) "for I am compassionate", (Ibid. 34:6) "The L-rd, the L-rd, a G-d merciful and kind", (Devarim 10:18) "He upholds the cause of orphans and the widow", and many others in the same vein.

19 וְאַהֲבַתְּם אֶת-הַגֵּר כִּי-גֵרִים הָיִיתֶם בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם: You too must befriend the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.

Duties of the Heart, Eighth Treatise on Examining the Soul 3:240 To love another stranger like him, to help and aid him, as written: "you shall love the stranger" (Devarim 10:19), and "But the stranger that dwells with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Vayikra 19:34)

Duties of the Heart, Introduction of the Author 35 But when I searched in the torah, I found that it is mentioned frequently. For example (Deut. 6:5-6): "you shall love the L-ord your G-d with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might; And these words, which I command you this day, shall be on your heart", and "so that you may love the L-ord your G-d, and that you may hearken to His voice, and that you may cling to Him" (Deut. 30:20), and "to love the L-ord your G-d and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul" (Deut. 11:13), and "You shall walk after the L-ord your G-d and fear Him" (Deut. 13:5), and "you shall love your fellow as yourself" (Levit.19:18), and "now, Israel, what does the L-ord your G-d ask of you, but to fear the L-ord your G-d" (Deut. 10:12), and "Therefore love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Deut. 10:19). And reverence for G-d and love for Him are among the duties of the heart.

Leadership in the Wilderness; Authority and Anarchy in the Book of Numbers, Part I, Chapter 5; Leaders and Strangers 42 More than getting along with others who are different than himself, the leader models the reaction of others to the stranger. If the Bible commands us to be gracious to the stranger as a reflection of our historical experience – "You must befriend the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Deut. 10:19) – then the leader shows us how.

Yesod Mora VeSod HaTorah 1:2 "And there are others whose wisdom lies in the intricacies of language, knowing the grammar rules, their divisions, the serving and root letters, the names and verbs, those that stand alone and those that are derived in various ways. They understand the nuances of pronunciation, the meanings of words, and how actions are connected. Truly, it is a splendid wisdom, for its possessors know how to speak with clarity in writing or in poetic form. Many nuances are explicitly derived from the structure of language, such as the commandment 'Love your neighbor as yourself' (Leviticus 19:18), which does not include the word 'אֹת' as it appears in the commandment 'Love the Lord your God' (Deuteronomy 6:5), and the faithful testimony that is written concerning the stranger, 'You shall love him as yourself' (Leviticus 19:34), without adding 'the stranger' as it appears in 'Love your neighbor' (Deuteronomy 10:19). The reason for this is deeply rooted, as explained in its proper context. The truth is that it is good for the discerning one to study this wisdom, but not to immerse oneself in it day after day, reading the books of Rabbi Yehuda the Meticulous, the first book of Rabbi Marinus, and the twenty-two books of Rabbi Samuel the Nagid. Regarding such endeavors, Solomon said, 'Of making many books there is no end' (Ecclesiastes 12:12)."

Yesod Mora VeSod HaTorah 8:2 It is written (Exodus 13) "Consecrate to Me every firstborn," and it is written (Exodus 13) "Therefore, I sacrifice," and the matter of Shabbat (Exodus 20) "For six days," and likewise the Sabbatical year and the release of slaves (Deuteronomy 15) "So that you may remember." And the commandments of Matzah and Maror, and the appointed festivals in the spring—the measurements, the firstfruits of wheat, and the offering brought before the Lord to express gratitude. And it is written (Deuteronomy 16) "Each person shall give as they are able, according to the blessing of the Lord your God that He has given you," give according to their means, as it says (1 Chronicles 29) "For everything comes from You, and from Your hand we have given to You." And He commanded (Exodus 23) "They shall not dwell in your land," and the reason is lest they lead you astray. And it is written elsewhere (Deuteronomy 20) "You shall not let any living thing live," so that they will not teach you to imitate them, and likewise for intermarriage with the nations and taking their daughters, and the reason (Exodus 34) "And they will lead your children astray." And it is said on Shabbat (Exodus 23) "So that your ox and your donkey may rest, and your servant's son and the stranger may be refreshed by your cessation of work." And the reason (Genesis 9) "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for in His image God made man." And (Deuteronomy 24) "You shall not oppress a hired worker who is poor and needy, whether he is your brother or a stranger," for he is a soul to be cherished. And the reason is mentioned (Leviticus 25) "And she has no child, and returns to her father's house, as in her youth." And during the festival of Sukkot (Leviticus 23) "So that your generations may know," and the reason (Leviticus 25) "You shall not sell land permanently, for the land is Mine," and likewise (Leviticus 25) "For the children of Israel are servants to Me," and the reason (Exodus 21) "They shall not be sold as slaves are sold." And He commanded to sound the trumpets for the burnt offering, to serve as a remembrance, as they are sounded in war, as in (Psalms 47) "God has ascended amid shouting." And the tzitzit (fringes) (Numbers 15) "So that you may remember and perform all My commandments," as you see them at all times, and thus "You shall tie them and inscribe them." And it mentioned regarding (Numbers 25) the incident with the Midianites, which had two reasons: one was the matter of Peor, and the other was the scheme they devised to bring further harm to the Israelites through the seduction of the daughter of their leaders. And the reason is mentioned (Deuteronomy 23) "You shall not abhor an Edomite, for he is your brother; you shall not abhor an Egyptian, for you were a stranger in his land," and the reason for the Ammonites and Moabites is that they did not offer you bread and water when you came out of Egypt, and furthermore, Balak was rewarded for his intent to harm you. And the reason is mentioned (Deuteronomy 17) "He shall not multiply wives for himself, so that his heart does not turn away; nor shall he greatly multiply silver and gold for himself," and it is also mentioned (Deuteronomy 17) "Nor shall he return the people to Egypt." And the reason for the Levirate marriage (Deuteronomy 25) is to carry on the family name, so that the children of Israel inherit their fathers' portion, and the reason (Deuteronomy 6) "What are the testimonies and statutes that the Lord our God commanded you?" is because we were servants in Egypt, and He redeemed us, and we are obligated to listen to His voice, as He has done this goodness for us, and furthermore (Deuteronomy 6) "And righteousness will be for us." And the reason for the Sabbatical year (Exodus 23) is that the poor of your people may eat, and the reason (Exodus 23) "You shall not make a covenant with them" is because the Levite has no portion or inheritance with you, for he serves the honored Lord, and the reason (Exodus 18) "The first of your grain, which is the best of it, you shall bring to the Lord, and it shall be a blessing for you" is that the Lord chose to pray for you with it, as in (Leviticus 22) "And Aaron lifted up his hands." And the reason (Deuteronomy 19) for the three cities is lest the avenger of blood pursue the manslayer and shed innocent blood, and the reason for execution and the remaining (Deuteronomy 17) is so that they will hear and fear and not continue to do evil, and the reason (Deuteronomy 20) "You shall not destroy its trees" is that man is like a tree of the field. And the reason for the prohibition of a fence around the roof (Exodus 22) is "You shall not put blood in your house," and the reason is "Lest the fullness of the bloodshed come upon you." The reason for mixed fabrics (Deuteronomy 22) is because everything should return to its sanctity, as explained by Rabbi Menachem Sefardi. The reason for killing the young bird (Deuteronomy 22) is when the young girl does not cry out in the city, indicating that she consented to the act, and it occurred outside the city, as when a man rises against his neighbor where no one sees him. The reason for the obligation of leaving the corner of the field (Deuteronomy 15) is because the Lord has called upon you, and the reason for loving the stranger (Deuteronomy 10) is because you were strangers in the land of Egypt. The reason for the laws concerning the orphan, the widow, and the garment pledge (Deuteronomy 15) is "And you shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt; therefore I command you this." And likewise (Deuteronomy 24) "You shall not take the mill or the upper millstone as a pledge, for he takes a man's life to pledge." And the reason for teaching them the song (Deuteronomy 31) is that it shall be a witness for them. The prohibition of consuming blood (Deuteronomy 12) is "You shall not eat the soul with the flesh," and the command is to offer it on the altar, where one soul is exchanged for another, for the blood atones for the soul. And the command is to bring every sacrifice to the tent of meeting, and the reason is that they should not offer sacrifices in the open field, as

was the custom in Egypt to sacrifice to the satyrs and to put blood on the lintel and the two doorposts. The reason is explicitly stated (Exodus 23) "And the destroyer shall not come in to your houses." This was already mentioned by Moses at the beginning of his approach to speak to Pharaoh, and the reason for asking "Why shall we sacrifice?" (Exodus 5) is "Lest he meet us with pestilence or with the sword." This secret is also well explained in the words of Isaiah, and the intelligent will understand.

20 אֶת־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ תִירָא אֹתוֹ תַעֲבֹד וְבוֹ תִדְבֹּק וּבְשִׁמּוֹ תִשָּׁבַע: You must revere יהוה: only your God shall you worship, to [God] shall you hold fast, and by God's name shall you swear.

Duties of the Heart, Eighth Treatise on Examining the Soul 3:164 Through this, it is proper for you, my brother, to understand that the primary intended purpose in the mitzvot which involve the body and the limbs, is to arouse our attention on the mitzvot of the heart and mind, because they are the pillars of the service and they are the roots (and foundations) of the torah, as written: "You shall fear the L-ord, your G-d, worship Him, and cleave to Him.." (Devarim 10:20), and "Rather,[this] thing is very close to you; in your mouth and in your heart to do it" (Devarim 30:14), and "And now, O Israel, what does the L-ord, your G-d, ask of you? Only to fear the L-ord, your G-d, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, and to worship the L-ord, your G-d, with all your heart and with all your soul" (Devarim 10:12).

Duties of the Heart, Tenth Treatise on Devotion to God, Introduction 4 Frequently the torah places fear of G-d before love of Him, as written "And now, Israel, what does the L-ord your G-d require of you, but to fear the L-ord your G-d, to walk in all His ways, and to love Him" (Devarim 10:12), and it says: "You shall fear the L-ord your G-d; and to Him shall you cling" (Devarim 10:20). It is correct to place fear of G-d before love of G-d because [fear of G-d] is the final purpose and furthest end of abstinence, which in turn is the nearest level approaching the lowest level of love of G-d, and the first gate of its gates, and it is impossible for a man to reach it without preceding fear and fright of G-d.

21 הוּא תְהִלָּתְךָ וְהוּא אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר־עָשָׂה אִתָּךְ אֶת־הַנִּגְדֹּת וְאֶת־הַנּוֹרָאוֹת הָאֵלֶּה אֲשֶׁר רָאוּ עֵינֶיךָ: [יהוה] is your glory and your God, who wrought for you those marvelous, awesome deeds that you saw with your own eyes.

Yesod Mora VeSod HaTorah 6:1 There are commandments that are clearly explained in the Torah, and there are commandments whose true interpretation we only know from the mouths of the holy scribes who received them from their fathers and learned teachers. Without the tradition, one would be able to interpret them differently. And there are commandments that we have received from them, yet they are not explicitly mentioned in the Torah. As a general rule, if not for the members of the Great Assembly, the Men of the Mishnah and the Talmud, the Torah of our God would have been forgotten and its memory lost, God forbid. It is they who established everything on its proper basis and clarified for us the commandments with great precision and all the laws as they received them. Some commandments have clear evidence from the Torah, while others require interpretation, and some rely on logical inference. Those who have understanding can discern when to apply interpretation and when to apply a literal understanding, for all their words are not in one mode. And the One who has granted them wisdom will grant them their deserved reward. In the book of Jeremiah (Jeremiah 17:22), it is written, "Do not carry a burden out of your houses on the Sabbath day." This is not explicitly mentioned in the Torah. There are many commandments that were received by the fathers and have a mention in the Torah, and there are others that do not have a mention. And I will mention some of these, such as the daily blessings, prayers, grace after meals, and Hallel. Rav says in his life that "He is your praise, and He is your God" (Deuteronomy 10:21). There's the recitation of the Shema, eruv, Kiddush, Havdalah, three meals, and some say the Shabbat candle. Similarly, the blowing of the Shofar on the Day of Remembrance, if not for the tradition, it would seem that it is on Rosh Chodesh Nissan, for it is the main day before the period of truth enters, and therefore it is said to be the Day of Judgment. And similarly, the Lulav, for it is not explicitly mentioned in the Torah, only "And you shall take for yourselves" (Leviticus 23:40), and if not for the tradition, it would have a different interpretation. And similarly, the counting of the Omer, for they distinguished between "And you shall count for yourselves" (Leviticus 23) and "And you shall count for her" (Leviticus 15). And similarly, the prohibition of eating a treifah, which has a respected reason from the wisdom of the heavens' generations. And similarly, the seven days of marriage celebration, mourning, visiting the sick, burying the dead, the Hanukkah candle, reading the Megillah, the four cups [of wine], and I have already explained that "And he shall possess her" (Numbers 27:11) is a general source for all these matters.

22 Your ancestors went down to Egypt seventy persons;
and now your God הוה has made you as numerous as
the stars of heaven.

Akeidat Yitzchak 36:1:6 Yet one may strive to understand why the generation of Jews in Egypt was subjected to such a cruel fate at the hands of the Egyptians and Pharaoh. Especially, are we entitled to do so, since scripture does not offer a list of specific wrongdoings of the people? The author rejects many solutions offered by his predecessors as being inadequate. Most of those explanations would violate the principle of our freedom of choice in one form or another. The author insists that statements such as "he went down to Egypt," (Deut. 26,5) or "and Jacob and his sons went down to Egypt," (Joshua 24,4) have to be understood at face value, and confirm that the move to Egypt was entirely voluntary, not preordained in any way. It is interesting that throughout the events leading up to the arrival of Jacob in Egypt, G-d ascribes all happenings to Himself, except this last one (compare Joshua 24,3): "I took your father, I multiplied his seed, I gave him Isaac. I gave Jacob to Isaac," but "Jacob and his sons went down to Egypt." The statement G-d made to Jacob while the latter was on his way to Egypt (Genesis 46,3), "Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt," is to be understood as permission, as an assurance of G-d's continued support. Just as the spies Moses had sent out to check out the land of Canaan were not prevented from setting out on their mission (Numbers Chapter 13), so Jacob was not prevented from going down to Egypt. According to all this, the statement on the occasion of the covenant between the pieces (Genesis 15,13), "Know that your seed will be a stranger in a land that is not theirs etc.," was simply a piece of information to Abraham, not an evil decree. The Torah, by not stating that this occurrence would be due to Divine intervention, as could have been implied by such statements as "I will make them strangers" or "I will bring them down to Egypt," draws our attention to the fact that this was merely an announcement of an event in the future, but was not a decree. The most difficult example in the series dealing with the apparent suspension of free will is the repeated statement by G-d, "I will harden the heart of Pharaoh" or "I have hardened the heart of Pharaoh," as found in the chapters dealing with the ten plagues (Exodus Chapters 4-10). On the other hand, we find that repentance by even the worst sinners is readily accepted, such as the repentance of Achav and Menashe, son of Chiskiyahu (compare Kings I 16 and Kings I 21, Kings II 21, Chronicles II 33,13). The Bible describes those two as being wicked par excellence; yet in the case of Pharaoh it seems that whenever he began to repent, obstacles were placed in his way to prevent him from repenting effectively. The author argues against Maimonides's view (Hilchot Teshuvah 6) that wickedness is cumulative, so that at some point the sinner forfeits his right to free will. The author feels that the repeated missions to Pharaoh by Moses would have been wasted, had they not been intended to produce a change of heart in Pharaoh. Also, since G-d had already told Moses at the burning bush (Exodus 3, 19) that Pharaoh would not release the Israelites of his own accord, this had been prior to any mention having been made that "I will harden his heart."

11

1 Love, therefore, your God הוה, and always keep
God's charge, God's laws, God's rules, and God's
commandments.

2 (Syntax of Heb. uncertain.) Take thought this day
that it was not your children, who neither
experienced nor witnessed the lesson of your God
הוה—God's majesty, mighty hand, and outstretched
arm;

Akeidat Yitzchak 93:1:6 Since it is the Torah's purpose to warn against all these temptations, Torah being the antidote is known by three names corresponding to the three types of temptation. "Chayim," life, "Torah," teaching, "mussar," discipline. Inasmuch as Torah is the antidote against all dangers, it is called "life." "For she is your life." (Deut. 32,47 et al) Inasmuch as Torah is the antidote to all deceptions and misrepresentations, it is called "a teaching", "instruction", something that teaches true values. Inasmuch as Torah is the antidote against bad habits and a tendency to indulge oneself, it is called "a discipline." "Know this day that just as a father disciplines his son, so your G'd disciplines you." (Deut. 8,5 et al) Solomon sums it up in Proverbs 6,23, "for the commandment is a lamp, the law is light itself, and reproofs are the way of life." Only the pursuit of all three aspects of Torah will guarantee man the proper exercise of

free choice granted him by his Maker.

Derashot HaRan 10:10 The second problem lies in the statement (Devarim 11:2-7): "And know this today, for it is not your children who have not known and who have not seen the chastisement of the L-rd your G-d... and His signs and acts... and what He did to the army of Egypt... and what He did to you in the desert... and what He did to Dathan and Aviram... for your own eyes have seen..." Now these verses all mention types of punishment that the Holy One Blessed be He brought upon transgressors of His will. But such a motivation is not appropriate for directing one to service of the L-rd out of love with all his heart and soul; it will lead him, rather, to serve Him out of fear of punishment. And it cannot be contended that this motivation is thematically conjoined with "only to fear the L-rd your G-d," for since the phrase continues: "to walk in all His ways and to love Him," it is obvious that the "fear" intended is of the highest variety, that is, fear proceeding from the exaltedness and greatness of G-d and not from dread of His punishment. For one who fears Him from the latter motivation alone is referred to as occupying himself with Torah and mitzvot "shelo lishman" [not for their own sakes]. This is made clear in the chapter "Haya Notel" (Sotah 22b): "There are seven [negative] types of perushim [abstainers from transgression] ... a porush out of love and a porush out of fear" (that is, out of love of reward and fear of punishment); "and the sages said to the Tanna: 'Do not include [as negative types] a porush out of love and a porush out of fear, for R. Yehudah said in the name of Rav: "Let one always occupy himself with Torah and with mitzvot, and even shelo lishmah, for by doing so shelo lishmah he will come to do so lishmah [for their own sakes]."' It is clear, then, that one who occupies himself with Torah and mitzvot out of love of reward or fear of punishment is regarded as doing so shelo lishman. And Rashi, in his commentary, has questioned from this source the statement in the chapter "Keshem" (Ibid 31a): "What difference is there between one who serves G-d out of love and one who serves Him out of fear? There is this difference: We learned: 'R. Shimon b. Elazar said: "Greater is he that serves out of love than he that serves out of fear, for the merit of the second is suspended [as protection over his descendants] for a thousand generations, whereas the merit of the first is suspended for thousands"' — whereupon Rashi asks: "How can serving G-d out of fear cause merit to be suspended for a thousand generations if it is referred to above as occupying oneself with Torah and mitzvot shelo lishman?" — and he answers that the motivation referred to above is love of reward and fear of punishment, whereas that referred to here is fear of the L-rd, that is, awe of His majesty.

Duties of the Heart, Eighth Treatise on Examining the Soul 2:2 The self accounting for people in their religious and secular matters varies according to their level of perception and intelligence, and clarity of understanding and every person is commanded to deliberate with his soul (i.e. bodily soul/instinct/will) as to what are his duties in the service of G-d, in accordance with his recognition of the favors of the Creator, whether collective or individual as the verse says: "And know this day; for I speak not with your children that have not known, and that have not seen... but your eyes have seen all the great work of the L-rd which He did" (Devarim 11:2-7). The verse means to say, that the claim from the Creator on you is stronger and more evident than the claim on your descendants who did not witness the miracles of the Creator, since you witnessed them with your own eyes, and only you were bestowed these great favors and were spared from the plagues of Egypt, and of Korach. But your descendants were not present, therefore you are more obligated to serve G-d on account of them.

Yesod Mora VeSod HaTorah 1:7 Furthermore, there are commandments that are not obligatory for everyone, but only one individual can fulfill them on behalf of the public. For example, sounding the shofar on Yom Kippur and Memorial

Day, the daily burnt offering, additional offerings, the public Torah reading, and similarly, one judge is sufficient to rectify all the perversions in a public setting. Each person is obligated to improve themselves, recognize the commandments of the Creator who formed them, and understand their own actions. Then they will know their Creator.

Thus, Moses said, "Show me Your ways, that I may know You" (Exodus 33:13), and the prophet said, "Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom" (Jeremiah 9:22), indicating that true wisdom is to know God. It is written in the Torah, "You shall know this day and consider it in your heart" (Deuteronomy 11:2), and David said, "Know the God of your fathers and serve Him with a whole heart" (1 Chronicles 28:9), for this is why humanity was created. And after one has rectified themselves, they may rectify others if they are able. Our ancient sages, may their memory be blessed, knew the secrets of the Divine Chariot (Merkavah) and the measurement of celestial heights. However, it should be emphasized that they only expounded upon these matters. Their words require interpretation, just as the words of the Torah do, as it is written, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness" (Genesis 1:26). In the prophecy of Ezekiel, it is described as "the appearance of a man from above" (Ezekiel 1:26), and it further states, "in the likeness of the appearance of the glory of the Lord" (Ezekiel 1:28). At the end of it all, this book [the Sefer Yetzirah] alludes to this secret.

וְאֵת־אֲתֹתָיו וְאֵת־מַעֲשָׂיו אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה בְּתוֹךְ מִצְרַיִם לְפָנֶיךָ
מֶלֶךְ־מִצְרַיִם וְלִכְל־אֶרֶצוֹ:

3 the signs and the deeds that [God] performed in Egypt against Pharaoh king of Egypt and all his land;

וְאֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה לְחַיִּיל מִצְרַיִם לְסוּסָיו וּלְרֶכֶבּוֹ אֲשֶׁר הִצִּיף אֶת־מִי יַם־סוּף
עַל־פְּנֵיהֶם בְּרֹדְפָם אַחֲרֵיהֶם וַיֹּאבְדֵם יְהוָה עַד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה:

4 what [God] did to Egypt's army, its horses and chariots; how הוהי rolled back upon them the waters of the Sea of Reeds when they were pursuing you, thus destroying them once and for all; (once and for all Lit. "to this day.")

וְאֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה לָכֶם בַּמִּדְבָּר עַד־בָּאֲכֶם עַד־הַמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה:

5 what [God] did for you in the wilderness before you arrived in this place;

Derashot HaRan 10:20 When one finds himself in such circumstances, it is very easy for him to fear and love the Holy One Blessed be He because his intellect finds itself without an opponent; and intellect, by itself, always aspires upwards and it is not beyond its powers to rise and behold the countenance of the L-rd of Hosts. It is in this respect that Moses said to the Jews: "What does the L-rd your G-d ask of you..." For this thing depends upon you and it is very easy in terms of the power of your intellect; for its nature inclines towards it and it is easy to attain all things for which there is a natural inclination. And if you should contend: True, this may be easy for intellect, but it is very difficult for imagination to acquiesce in this, for it is drawn after the images it forms of the things of this world, and man, whose source is dust is drawn after it — to this Moses counters: "And know this today, for it is not your children who have not known and who have not seen the chastisement of the L-rd your G-d." That is, if I were speaking with your children, who did not know and who did not witness punitive retribution in this world, they could say that their imaginations enticed them into seeing the successes of the world as eternal, for they had not seen G-d overturning the seats of kingdom to execute His justice against the transgressors of His will. But you, you have seen the chastisements of your G-d, how could you be enticed by imagination? Have you not seen how the L-rd dashed to the earth and glory of Egypt that was ensconced in might? And you saw, too, how many punishments G-d brought upon you in the desert for your own sins. This is the intent of (Devarim 11:5): "And what He did to you in the desert until you came to this place" (Moses does not elaborate here and speaks only in general terms in deference to the honor of the Jews). And you saw, too, what he did to Dathan and Aviram... And you cannot say that this was a natural phenomenon (fissures sometimes occurring in the earth), for they were "in the midst of all of Israel," and they alone perished in their sin. And since (Ibid 7) "your own eyes have seen all of the acts of the great [and awesome] L-rd," you should not be enticed by this world at all. It is for this reason that Dathan and Aviram are mentioned, and not Korach, the central figure in the rebellion; for man's imagination craves the lusts and pleasures of this world not for himself alone, but to bequeath them to his children — to the point that this constitutes the major objective of most men, so that they give almost no thought to themselves. They infest their souls with sin and heap up transgressions so that they can cause their children to inherit their palaces and dwellings. But this inheritance is a "hasty one, which shall not be blessed with endurance" (see Proverbs 20:21) — so that sometimes, at a man's very height, the fortune he amassed unjustly will leave him in the middle of his days (see Jeremiah 17:11), and he will be left with his transgression alone.

וְאֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה לְדָתָן וְלֵאבִירָם בְּנֵי אֵילִיאָב בֶּרֶאֱוִיבִן אֶשֶׁר פָּצְתָה
הָאֶרֶץ אֶת־פִּיהָ וַתִּבְלַעֵם וְאֶת־בֵּיתֵיהֶם וְאֶת־אֹהֲלֵיהֶם וְאֶת כָּל־הַיְקוּם
אֲשֶׁר בְּרֶגְלֵיהֶם בְּקֶרֶב כָּל־יִשְׂרָאֵל:

6 and what [God] did to Dathan and Abiram, sons of Eliab son of Reuben, when the earth opened her mouth and swallowed them, along with their households, their tents, and every living thing in their train, from amidst all Israel—

Derashot HaRan 10:14 The third problem lies in the statement (Devarim 11:6): "and what He did to Dathan and Aviram, the sons of Eliav, the son of Reuven; how the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, and their households, and their tents, and all that stood at their feet, in the midst of all of Israel." There is cause for wonder here. Why mention Dathan and Aviram and not Korach, the central figure in the rebellion — Dathan and Aviram having joined him because they were his neighbors. Korach, being the central figure, should have received greater mention. This is the third problem.

כִּי עֵינֵיכֶם הָרְאִיתֶם אֶת־כָּל־מַעֲשֵׂה יְהוָה הַגָּדֹל אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה:

7 but that it was you who saw with your own eyes all the marvelous deeds that הוהי performed.

ושמרתם את-כל-המצוה אשר אנכי מצוה היום למען תחזקו
ובאתם וירשתם את-הארץ אשר אתם עברים שמה לרשתה:

8 Keep, therefore, all the Instruction that I enjoin upon you today, so that you may have the strength to enter and take possession of the land that you are about to cross into and possess,

ולמען תאריכו ימים על-האדמה אשר נשבע יהוה לאבותיכם לתת
להם ולזרעם ארץ זבת חלב ודבש:

9 and that you may long endure upon the soil that יהוה swore to your fathers to assign to them and to their heirs, a land flowing with milk and honey.

כי הארץ אשר אתה בא-שמה לרשתה לא כארץ מצרים הוא אשר
יצאתם משם אשר תזרע את-זרעך והשקית ברגלך כגן הזרק:

10 For the land that you are about to enter and possess is not like the land of Egypt from which you have come. There the grain you sowed had to be watered by your own labors, (by your own labors Lit. "by your foot.") like a vegetable garden;

והארץ אשר אתם עברים שמה לרשתה ארץ הרים ובקעת למטר
השמים תשתה-מים:

11 but the land you are about to cross into and possess, a land of hills and valleys, soaks up its water from the rains of heaven.

Akeidat Yitzchak 66:1:4 All phenomena in our world share three characteristics. 1) They are composed of matter. 2) They appear in a certain shape or form. 3) They have had a previous existence of some kind. In other words, nature arranges constant metamorphosis of one phenomenon into another. In all these, matter is the common denominator. Form is what makes a specific phenomenon individualistic. The previous existence has a bearing on the present value of the phenomenon in our scale of things. An inferior existence does not suddenly convert into a very superior existence. Phenomena in the "upper" world, the world of space, being direct creations of G'd, nature not having been interposed in their creation, lack the third item that we have mentioned. They have not had a previous existence, are not the result of metamorphosis, but are enduring in the original form G'd has created them. Abstract, spiritual beings in the celestial regions, having no body altogether, therefore exist only as form. When our sages define "heaven" as consisting of eysh umayim, fire and water, we must be careful not to misunderstand that statement. They do not mean that "heaven" is a composition of two kinds of matter, but rather that just as lightning and rain are perceived as descending from "above," they are perceived as descending from "heaven." The term "heaven" does not however, suggest the presence of any matter.. (Bereshit Rabbah 4.) Since other elements are not observed as travelling to earth from outer space, we have the well known saying torah kilshon beney adam medaberet," that Torah employs syntax with which we humans are familiar, in order to help us understand strange concepts. Since G'd is the ultimate cause of all Creation, He is devoid of any tzurah, form, and cannot be conceived of in these terms at all. When the prophet Isaiah 6,1, describes G'd in these words: "I beheld the Lord sitting on the throne, high and exalted," it means that even the world of spirits merely serves as a stool for the Almighty Himself. When the angels proclaim "holy, holy, holy" in this threefold manner, they testify that He is beyond any of the three criteria that we have described as forming all or part of the universe. Since, as humans, we belong to the category that comprises two inferior ingredients, i.e. matter and our previous metamorphosis, (meaning we have already lost our identity at least once previously) G'd in His mercy has given us the Torah to help overcome the need for a further metamorphosis, or death of our personality. G'd said to the Jewish people: "sanctify yourselves and you will become holy" i.e. I will enable you to rise above two of the ingredients that constitute the limitation of all that has been created. This is another way of saying that we can become part of the world of pure spirits. G'd had to reserve for Himself one layer of kedushah by the very nature of things, since only He lacks any beginning at all. "Sanctify yourselves, means by performing good deeds." "And you will become holy," by the survival of your souls, personalities.

ארץ אשר-יהוה אלהיך דרש אתה תמיד עיני יהוה אלהיך בה
מרשית השנה ועד אחרית שנה:

12 It is a land which your God יהוה looks after, on which your God יהוה always keeps an eye, from year's beginning to year's end.

Guide for the Perplexed, Part 1 44:1 THE Hebrew 'ayin is a homonym, signifying "fountain"; e.g., "By a fountain ('en) of water" (Gen. 16:7). It next denotes "eye"; comp. ('ayin) "Eye for eye" (Exod. 21:24). Another meaning of the word is "providence," as it is said concerning Jeremiah, "Take him and direct thine attention (eneka) to him" (Jer. 39:12). In this figurative sense it is to be understood when used in reference to God; e.g., "And my providence and my pleasure shall

be there perpetually" (1 Kings 9:3), as we have already explained (page 140); "The eyes ('ene), i.e., the Providence of the Lord thy God, are always upon it" (Deut. 11:12); "They are the eyes ('ene) of the Lord, which run to and fro through the whole earth" (Zech. 4:10), i.e., His providence is extended over everything that is on earth, as will be explained in the chapters in which we shall treat of Providence.

Kol HaTor 2:115 (Deut. 11:12) "the eyes of the Lord your God are always on it, from the beginning of the year till the end of the year" -- The word "eyes" in plural form refers to the two meshichim. The beginning of the year refers to Mashiach ben Yosef who is the quality of Din; the end of the year refers to the month of mercy -- to Mashiach ben David, who is the quality of Mercy. "The eye of the Lord is on those who fear him, who await his lovingkindness" [Ps. 33:18]. This is from the aspect of Mashiach ben Yosef. This is what is meant by (Job 8:8) inquire now of the first generation. The word equals [566].

Kuzari 2:14 14. The Rabbi: Whosoever prophesied did so either in the [Holy] Land, or concerning it, viz. Abraham in order to reach it, Ezekiel and Daniel on account of it. The two latter had lived during the time of the first Temple, had seen the Shekhinah, through the influence of which each one who was duly prepared became of the elect, and able to prophesy. Adam lived and died in the land. Tradition tells us that in the cave [of Machpelah] were buried the four pairs: Adam and Eve, Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, Jacob and Leah. This is the land which bore the name 'before the Lord,' and of which it is stated that 'the eyes of the Lord thy God are always upon it' (Deuteronomy 11:12). It was also the first object of jealousy and envy between Cain and Abel, when they desired to know which of them would be Adam's successor, and heir to his essence and intrinsic perfection; to inherit the land, and to stand in connexion with the divine influence, whilst the other would be a nonentity. Then Abel was killed by Cain, and the realm was without an heir. It is stated that 'Cain' went out of the presence of Lord (Genesis 4:16), which means that he left the land, saying: 'Behold, Thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth, and from Thy face shall I be hid' (Genesis 5:14). In the same way is it said: 'But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord' (Jonah 1:3), but he only fled from the place of prophecy. God, however, brought him back there out of the belly of the fish, and appointed him prophet in the land. When Seth was born he was like Adam, as it is said: 'He begat in his own likeness, after his image' (Genesis 5:3), and took Abel's place, as it is said: For God has appointed me another seed, instead of Abel, whom Cain slew (Genesis 4:25). He merited the title: 'Son of God,' like Adam, and he had a claim on the land, which is the next step to paradise. The land was then the object of jealousy between Isaac and Ishmael, till the latter was rejected as worthless, although it was said concerning him: 'Behold, I have blessed him, and will multiply him exceedingly' (Genesis 17:20) in worldly prosperity; but immediately after it is said: 'My covenant will I establish with Isaac' (Genesis 17:21), which refers to his connexion with the divine influence and happiness in the world to come. Neither Ishmael nor Esau could boast of a covenant, although they were otherwise prosperous. Jealousy arose between Jacob and Esau for the birthright and blessing, but Esau was rejected in favour of Jacob, in spite of his strength and the latter's weakness. Jeremiah's prophecy concerning Egypt was uttered in Egypt itself. This was also the case with Moses, Aaron and Miriam. Sinai and Parān are reckoned as belonging to Palestine, because they are on this side of the Red Sea, as it is said: 'And I will set thy bounds from the Red Sea, even unto the sea of the Philistines, and from the desert unto the river' (Exodus 23:31). The 'desert' is that of Parūn, 'that great and terrible wilderness' (Deuteronomy 1:19), being the southern border. 'The fourth river is Euphrates' (Genesis 2:14), designates the northern border, where there were the altars of the Patriarchs, who were answered by fire from heaven and the divine light. The 'binding' of Isaac took place on a desolate mountain, viz. Moriah. Not till the days of David, when it was inhabited, was the secret revealed that it was the place specially prepared for the Shekhinah. Araunah, the Jebusite, tilled his land there. Thus it is said: 'And Abraham called the name of the place, The Lord shall see, as it is said to this day, in the mount of the Lord it shall be seen' (Genesis 22:14). In the Book of the Chronicles it is stated more clearly that the Temple was built on mount Moriah. These are, without doubt, the places worthy of being called the gates of heaven. Dost thou not see that Jacob ascribed the vision which he saw, not to the purity of his soul, nor to his belief, nor to true integrity, but to the place, as it is said: 'How awful is this place' (Genesis 28:17). Prior to this it is said: 'And he lighted upon a certain place' (Genesis 28:11), viz. the chosen one. Was not Abraham also, and after having been greatly exalted, brought into contact with the divine influence, and made the heart of this essence, removed from his country to the place in which his perfection should become complete? Thus the agriculturer finds the root of a good tree in a desert place. He transplants it into properly tilled ground, to improve it and make it grow; to change it from a wild root into a cultivated one, from one which bore fruit by chance only to one which produced a luxuriant crop. In the same way the gift of prophecy was retained among Abraham's descendants in Palestine, the property of many as long as they remained in the land, and fulfilled the required conditions, viz. purity, worship, and sacrifices, and, above all, the reverence of the Shekhinah. For the divine

influence, one might say, singles out him who appears worthy of being connected with it, such as prophets and pious men, and is their God. Reason chooses those whose natural gifts are perfect, viz. Philosophers and those whose souls and character are so harmonious that it can find its dwelling among them. The spirit of life, pure and simple, is to be found in beings which are endowed with ordinary primary faculties, and particularly adapted to higher vitality--viz. animals. Finally, organic life finds its habitat in a mixture of harmonious elements, and produces--plant.

וְהָיָה אִם־שָׁמַעַתְּ תִּשְׁמָעוּ אֶל־מִצְוֹתַי אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי מְצַוָּה אֶתְכֶם הַיּוֹם
לְאַהֲבָהּ אֶת־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם וּלְעִבְדוֹ בְּכָל־לִבְבְּכֶם וּבְכָל־נַפְשְׁכֶם: 13 If, then, you obey the commandments that I enjoin
upon you this day, loving your God יהוה and
serving [God] with all your heart and soul,

Akeidat Yitzchak 44:4:2 In considering that the purpose of observing Torah is to acquire the aforementioned level of partnership with the Divine, the question arises whether this is an exclusive objective, or whether one may have other more mundane benefits in mind which accrue to one in the process of fulfilling G-d's commandments. If the former, the chances are that most people would not be able to take the long term view in order to live a life devoted to the performance of the mitzvot. The argument that mundane side benefits through the observance of mitzvot are not permissible, could be sustained by the following two considerations. 1) The more highly placed a worker or servant, the more lofty are the tasks that he is entrusted to perform. Man, as the most sophisticated creature on earth, would naturally only be concerned with the loftiest endeavours and objectives. 2) If we were to postulate that carrying out G-d's will would have as its purpose merely human objectives, this would contradict the maxim that the objective is primary. If the prophet Isaiah 44,6, proclaims in the name of G-d "I am first and I am last," this clearly implies that the only considerations in all our endeavours must be centred around G-d and His purpose. Antignos, who has said in Avot,¹ "do not be like the servant who serves the master for the sake of the reward," surely had this thought in mind.

Also the saying of Ben Azzai "the reward for performing one mitzvah is another mitzvah, may be understood in a similar vein. In other words, performance of the commandments is an end in itself, not a means to an end. The Sifrey in Parshat Eykev says "a man might say to himself I'll perform the commandments in order to gain riches, or to acquire the title of Rabbi, or even in order to acquire a share in the hereafter; therefore the Torah says (Deut. 11,13) "in order to love the Lord your G-d." Your purpose in obeying should be to demonstrate your love for G-d. The Talmud in Avodah Zarah 19, quotes Rabbi Yoshua ben Levi as interpreting Psalms 112,1, "hail to the man who fears the Lord and is very desirous of His commandments," as referring to people who perform the commandments for their own sake, not for the reward associated with them. Maimonides, at the end of his sefer hamitzvot pursues this line of reasoning also.

However, one can also argue the reverse, again using two lines of reasoning. 1) It is natural for all creatures to be concerned first and foremost with their own physical needs. Although it is a fact that each type of creature serves as a means to sustain a higher category of life, i.e. plants to sustain animals, animals to sustain man etc., we nonetheless observe that they all concentrate on their own needs, their service to a higher category of life being merely incidental. 2) It is a psychological fact that man loses interest, in the pursuit of any task that does not promise tangible rewards within a time frame he considers reasonable. Even an Onan, (Genesis 38,10) was not punished for failing to have issue with Tamar, but only for taking active steps to prevent the fulfilment of the objective of the levirate marriage to provide issue for his deceased brother. Antignos' statement is revised to read "do not make service to the Lord conditional on the receipt of a reward," not as in the version of "make it conditional on being independent of a reward." Also the Talmud in Pessachim 8, states that if someone says he will give charity in order that his children will live, or in order that he himself may enjoy life in the hereafter, he is considered a perfect tzaddik. This seems to contradict the Sifrey in Parshat Eykev that he who studies the Torah in order to be called rabbi is wrong, since the Torah demands love of G-d as one's motivation. Clearly these examples indicate that having in mind personal objectives while performing mitzvot, is permissible. In fact, the Torah promises the attainment of personal objectives such as "so that you will be well off, will live long." (Deut. 22,7) There are many similar statements in the Torah. G-d Himself is quoted as wishing that the Jewish people should revere Him as they did at the time when they received the Torah, in order that He could treat them and their children well. (Deut 10,13) If G-d Himself wishes that our serving Him will result in benefits to us in this world, how can we say that all our mitzvah performance must be aimed exclusively at our being elevated to the status of becoming His partner, and that other material considerations would negate the moral value of the mitzvah performance? We must therefore believe that as a result of performing mitzvot sufficient benefit will accrue to us to make their performance worthwhile. This is the meaning of the saying in Makkot 23, "because the Lord wished to let us amass many advantages, He provided us with an abundance of mitzvot and good deeds to perform," as is written in Isaiah 42,21, "the Lord was pleased because of His righteousness to render the Torah increasingly great and glorious."

Since both the aforementioned approaches have equally much to recommend them and are in accord with many

sayings of our sages, we have to endeavour to reconcile the apparent contradictions. If we consider the word "prass" as referring to the remuneration received for services rendered, then the saying of Antignos becomes clear. Since all our deeds cannot provide G-d with anything that He does not already have, Antignos says "make sure your relationship with G-d is not based on the mistaken belief that there is reciprocity. Rather, remember that whatever you receive as reward for service of the Lord is in fact chessed, a kindness, since your service does not do anything for Him. However, it is a fact that your service will confer upon yourself both physical and spiritual benefits. "By observing them, the consequences, the benefits are numerous. (Psalms 19,12) This lesson had been misunderstood by Tzadok and Bayssus who believed that their teacher denied the theory of reward and punishment, and who, in postulating their concept of doing good merely for the sake of doing good, became heretics, strange as it may seem. The doctrine of reward as an act of grace, not as a condition for performing the mitzvot, is the true expression of Jewish attitudes then. Any other attitude smacks of an effort to manipulate G-d, of bartering with Him to do your will rather than the reverse, i.e. your doing His will. The Bible as well as our sages have carefully refrained from the use of the term "prass," and have used the term sachar instead. The latter in all its connotations simply means the reverse of hefesed, loss. If Antignos concludes by saying "in order that the fear of heaven be upon you," he warns his students not to relate to other deities which are not even able to confer any benefits upon them, be they prass or sachar. The language employed by the sayings that prohibits performing mitzvot for the sake of, is usually kedey, in order to. The distinction shows already that only when the purpose is reward is such service unacceptable. If, however, the service is not conditional, then the reward element is perfectly acceptable as a by-product. Once we accept that what matters is the purity of motivation of the performance, it is easy to argue that the deed itself is irrelevant as long as the intention to perform it existed. This could be the point raised by the rasha, the wicked son's question in the Haggadah. But the truth is that both deed and motivation are essential. Whenever observances are demanded, the Torah urges that it must be motivated by love for G-d, and if so, success in the form of visible reward will be the result of such service of G-d. When the Sifrey described a service that has reward as its objective as inadmissible, the reference is only to the objective of obtaining the reward in this life. If the desire is to ensure one's life in the world to come, such an objective is praiseworthy. Also the Talmud in Avodah Zarah 31, which interpreted the words "for His commandments and not for the reward of His commandments," refers only to these worldly rewards as being taboo. This was also Antignos' meaning concerning the words "today to carry out (the commandments) and not today to receive their rewards. The considerations mentioned, also help us understand the statement in Kiddushin 31, that he who performs a mitzvah because he has been commanded to do this by G-d, has done something greater than he who has performed the same deed voluntarily. One cannot achieve the ultimate tachlit, objective of the commandment unless one performs it as such. Only in this way does one become a shutaph, partner of the Almighty, a goal we have described as the ultimate purpose of mitzvah performance. This is another aspect of the saying that "the reward of the mitzvah is the mitzvah, that the achievement of the mitzvah is predicated on the very fact that it is a commandment.

Akeidat Yitzchak 58:1:5 Because prayer is service of the heart, we have connected the chapter on prayer with the chapter on the olah, total offering. As an olah is an offering that "rises" towards G'd in its entirety, since the whole of the animal is being offered on the altar, so is prayer an offering of the heart which rises toward Heaven in its entirety.

When our sages describe prayer without concentrating on its meaning, as being comparable to a body without soul, they mean that the warmth of feeling generated by genuine prayer, parallels the ongoing fire on the altar that burns the olah. In Vayikra Rabbah 7, Rabbi Pinchas notes that the Torah does not describe the fire on the altar as being "on" the altar. The Torah does not require that the "fire on the altar burn on it," rather it does say "aysh hamizbeach tukad bo," the fire on the altar shall burn within it, meaning that the entire altar should be permeated by it. (Leviticus 6,2) So our hearts are to be permeated by the outpouring of our prayers. The Talmud Berachot 32, tells us that we have to arrange the praise of the Lord before proceeding with voicing our requests from Him. Since the requests concern mostly our temporal needs, our sages (Shabbat 10) describe the supplicant as someone who temporarily abandons his concern with the values of the world to come, in favour of the mundane needs of this world he lives in at the time. If this is so, the opinion held by many, (including Maimonides chapter one hilchot tefillah) which claims that prayer has been legislated by the Torah, is hard to understand. If the purpose of prayer would be exhausted by our asking for our needs, why should it matter to G'd whether we ask for them or not? We should be entitled to forego the opportunity to ask G'd for His kindness, assistance, etc. However, just as we have described the institution of sacrifice as designed to arouse certain emotions within us which will bring us closer to G'd, so prayer, by means of the trust we express when we ask Him for our needs, will bring us closer to Him. The conviction that He cares, that His Providence watches over us, all this helps to strengthen the existing ties between us and the Creator. The thanks we express for what He has done for us

and for others, all help to cement our relationship with Hashem. The early Chassidim, men of piety and devoutness, are described by the Talmud Berachot 32, as having prepared for prayer an hour ahead of time, and as having spent another hour winding down from the spiritual high achieved during prayer, before returning to the mundane tasks in their lives. Actually, they did exactly what our sages have since built into the formal liturgy that we follow nowadays.

The hymns of praise, *keriyat shema*, are our introduction and preparation for prayer, i.e. the part during which we voice our requests. On the other hand, we are told that he who fails to enunciate the *keriyat shema* audibly, has failed in his purpose, since the praise of G'd and our assuming the yoke of Heaven are to be made known to our fellow men. On the other hand, he who raises his voice during the supplication part of the prayer service, is described as lacking in faith, as a prophet of the *ido Baal*. (Berachot 24) Channah already demonstrated that requests need not be aired audibly. If the High Priest Eli considered her as a drunken woman, this was not because she did not raise her voice in prayer, but because she had chosen a time of day he did not consider suitable for offering up prayer. (compare Samuel I chapter 1) He watched her closely to find out what she had to say to him, since most other women milling around the entrance of the tabernacle always spoke to him. Understanding Eli's error, she told him that her remarks were addressed to Him who does not need audible expression of her words in order to be able to hear and understand them. Since Channah came to the tabernacle after having dined, it was natural for Eli to have misconstrued her purpose, and to have judged same by outward appearances. In fact, one must not raise one's voice, so as not to create the impression that one considers G'd hard of hearing. When Ishmael was close to death, (Genesis 21,17) G'd considered his state of being "as he was then," not the loudness of his prayers. The mental anguish that he was suffering at that moment was the decisive element that led to his rescue. On the other hand, all those paragraphs in the liturgy that teach us knowledge and comprehension have to be recited aloud. "Hear O Israel!" - these words we have to hear with our own ears; they are directed both at ourselves and at our fellow Jews.

Akeidat Yitzchak 67:8:6 The Torah frowns on excessive pursuit of material goods. Therefore we read "if you will listen to My commandments...you will gather in your harvest." This means you engage in necessary activities to assure yourself of your livelihood. Selling oneself to another person in order to gain financial security, and to escape one's responsibilities, is frowned on. The fact that even the most private possessions such as wife and children acquired during servitude, continue to belong to the master, demonstrates that the Torah's message to us is to rely on G'd and not on man. After all, it is He who has commanded the children of Israel "for to Me are the children of Israel servants." He did not take us out of Egypt in order for us to become slaves again. The pursuit of worldly goods is a waste of time, since we leave the world as naked as we came into it. (Job 1, 21, "I came naked out of my mother's womb, and naked will I return there.") The whole paragraph dealing with the Jewish servant can be understood allegorically as reflecting man's experience in this world. He enters alone, leaves alone, leaves his acquisitions behind, and when he expresses the desire to attach himself to a human master, he is brought to *elohim*, to be forcefully reminded of his error. In the seventh decade of his life, his vitality ebbs, and as he approaches his death, i.e. the time he returns to the grave, he does so *chinam*, *chofshi*, without any encumbrance. This is either due to physical decline or because of lack of energy to go on living. The wheel has turned, as a wheel is always apt to do. What had once been thought to be a continuous upward curve, has peaked and become a downward movement. (compare Exodus 21, 2-6) Man will wind up as a servant "forever" to his "Master" in the world of infinity. The purpose of the Torah has always been to liberate mortal man from the inevitable and depressingly terminal state of merely physical existence here on earth. Accepting the yoke of Torah is an incomparably easier burden than living with the thought of the futility of all earthly existence. One of the ways to achieve freedom from the obsessive character of the greed to amass more and more material, i.e. useless wealth, is the Torah's emphasis that one should be satisfied with the necessities of life. All the Torah's promises of reward for performing G'd's commandments are of this nature. "I will grant you rain at the appropriate time;" "you will gather in your grain harvest." "You will eat, be sated and bless the Lord." Performance of G'd's commandments will enable us to feel "satiated" when we have eaten. The greatest lesson in this respect was the experience of man, the heavenly bread the Israelites ate in the desert. This taught reliance on G'd, the futility of amassing for the future as long as one is under the loving care of G'd's Personal Providence.

Duties of the Heart, Introduction of the Author 35 But when I searched in the Torah, I found that it is mentioned frequently. For example (Deut. 6:5-6): "you shall love the L-ord your G-d with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might; And these words, which I command you this day, shall be on your heart", and "so that you may love the L-ord your G-d, and that you may hearken to His voice, and that you may cling to Him" (Deut. 30:20), and "to love the L-ord your G-d and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul" (Deut. 11:13), and "You shall walk after the L-ord your G-d and fear Him" (Deut. 13:5), and "you shall love your fellow as yourself" (Levit.19:18), and "now, Israel,

what does the L-ord your G-d ask of you, but to fear the L-ord your G-d" (Deut. 10:12), and "Therefore love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Deut. 10:19). And reverence for G-d and love for Him are among the duties of the heart.

Guide for the Perplexed, Part 3 28:1 IT is necessary to bear in mind that Scripture only teaches the chief points of those true principles which lead to the true perfection of man, and only demands in general terms faith in them. Thus Scripture teaches the Existence, the Unity, the Omniscience, the Omnipotence, the Win, and the Eternity of God. All this is given in the form of final results, but they cannot be understood fully and accurately except after the acquisition of many kinds of knowledge. Scripture further demands belief in certain truths, the belief in which is indispensable in regulating our social relations: such is the belief that God is angry with those who disobey Him, for it leads us to the fear and dread of disobedience [to the will of God]. There are other truths in reference to the whole of the Universe which form the substance of the various and many kinds of speculative sciences, and afford the means of verifying the above-mentioned principles as their final result. But Scripture does not so distinctly prescribe the belief in them as it does in the first case; it is implied in the commandment, "to love the Lord" (Deut. 11:13). It may be inferred from the words, "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might" (ibid. 6:5), what stress is laid on this commandment to love God. We have already shown in the Mishneh-torah (Yes. ha-torah 2:2) that this love is only possible when we comprehend the real nature of things, and understand the divine wisdom displayed therein. We have likewise mentioned there what our Sages remark on this subject.

Guide for the Perplexed, Part 3 51:10 we will therefore return to the subject of this chapter, and exhort those who have attained a knowledge of God, to concentrate all their thoughts in God. This is the worship peculiar to those who have acquired a knowledge of the highest truths; and the more they reflect on Him, and think of Him, the more are they engaged in His worship. Those, however, who think of God, and frequently mention His name, without any correct notion of Him, but merely following some imagination, or some theory received from another person, are, in my opinion, like those who remain outside the palace and distant from it. They do not mention the name of God in truth, nor do they reflect on it. That which they imagine and mention does not correspond to any being in existence: it is a thing invented by their imagination, as has been shown by us in our discussion on the Divine Attributes (Part I. chap. 1.). The true worship of God is only possible when correct notions of Him have previously been conceived. When you have arrived by way of intellectual research at a knowledge of God and His works, then commence to devote yourselves to Him, try to approach Him and strengthen the intellect, which is the link that joins you to Him. Thus Scripture says, "Unto thee it was showed, that thou mightest know that the Lord He is God" (Deut. 4:35); "Know therefore this day, and consider it in thine heart, that the Lord He is God" (ibid. 36); "Know ye that the Lord is God" (Ps. 100:3). Thus the Law distinctly states that the highest kind of worship to which we refer in this chapter, is only possible after the acquisition of the knowledge of God. For it is said, "To love the Lord your God, and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul" (Deut. 11:13), and, as we have shown several times, man's love of God is identical with His knowledge of Him. The Divine service enjoined in these words must, accordingly, be preceded by the love of God. Our Sages have pointed out to us that it is a service in the heart, which explanation I understand to mean this: man concentrates all his thoughts on the First Intellect, and is absorbed in these thoughts as much as possible. David therefore commands his son Solomon these two things, and exhorts him earnestly to do them: to acquire a true knowledge of God, and to be earnest in His service after that knowledge has been acquired. For he says, "And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart . . . if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever" (1 Chron. 28:9). The exhortation refers to, the intellectual conceptions, not to the imaginations: for the latter are not called "knowledge," but "that which cometh into your mind" (Ezek. 20:32). It has thus been shown that it must be man's aim, after having acquired the knowledge of God, to deliver himself up to Him, and to have his heart constantly filled with longing after Him. He accomplishes this generally by seclusion and retirement. Every pious man should therefore seek retirement and seclusion, and should only in case of necessity associate with others.

Jewish Women in Time and Torah, i "Women Are a People by Themselves" 68 It is impossible for man to change suddenly from one extreme to the other. It is impossible for him suddenly to give up what he has been accustomed to. As God sent Moses to make us "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation,"⁷⁵ (Exodus 9:6.) and to dedicate ourselves to His service, as it is said: "And to serve Him with all your heart"⁷⁶ (Deuteronomy 11:13.), the prevailing custom in the world was to sacrifice animals in the temples which people had erected to their idols, to bow down to them and burn incense before them, etc. God's wisdom counseled Him that to command the Jews to give up all that kind of service and annul it completely would have been something that their hearts could not have accepted. Human nature is forever inclined

towards the accustomed practice. Such a command would be as if a prophet came to us [today] to call us to the service of God and said: "God has commanded you not to pray to Him or fast or ask for help in times of trouble, but to make your service be pure thought without any action." [In fact, this is what Maimonides considered the avodah aharonah, the ultimate service of God by pure thought meditating upon Him.] For this reason, God allowed the [generally practiced] sacrificial services to remain, but directed them away from those created or imagined powers, in which there is no truth, to His own name, blessed be He, and commanded to dedicate them to Him. Thus, He commanded us to build a sanctuary to Him, etc., and that the sacrifices shall be offered to Him: "If one from among you will offer a sacrifice unto Me,"⁷⁷ (Leviticus 1:2.) etc. Thus, this divine guidance achieved its purpose - that even the memory of idol worship was erased among us, and the important truth was established in the midst of our people, i.e., the existence of God and His unity.⁷⁸ (Moreh Nevukhim 3:32.)

Musar Avikha, Introduction 3:2 Our Sages of blessed memory stated ([Sifrei, Ekev.]) concerning the verse "And to serve [Lavodo] Him with all your heart" (Devarim 10:12.) that service of the heart refers to prayer. If so, prayer is of [a similar] nature [to] divine service, and [therefore] one is not fit for divine service unless one is in a mental state of divine reverence such that the elements of prayer are close to one's heart. (That the elements of prayer are close to their heart: As Rav Kook explains in the next paragraphs, if a person has no conceptualization of a given notion, it is impossible for them to pray regarding it.) If a person is oblivious to the value of their soul, how can they pray wholeheartedly and with a sense of need that the Lord, may He be blessed, grant them knowledge, wisdom, and understanding? Given the fact that they are oblivious, since they possess wealth, honor, and all that is good, what are they lacking if, God forbid, they do not become wise and gain understanding? (That they are oblivious ... what are they lacking: If a person does not understand the spiritual nature of their soul, how will they be able to pray properly for their spiritual needs?) Therefore, a person must learn and delve into the matter until the magnitude of their deficiency and the need for knowledge, wisdom, and understanding becomes totally clear to them, that they thirst for it and pray lovingly from the depths of their heart that the Lord, may He be blessed, grant them these [attributes]. And the benevolent Lord will not deprive those who walk in purity of that which is good. (Will not deprive those who walk in purity of that which is good: This means that the effort a person puts into their prayers will be answered accordingly.) Nefesh HaChayim, Gate I 8:3 It seems surprising to explain the text "you shall gather in your grain..." as applying when [Israel] doesn't do God's-Ma-kome will, for just before that is written (D'varim 10:12): "If you are careful to pay heed to my commandments... to love... and to serve Him with your entire hearts/minds." It was in this context that "and you shall gather in your grain" was stated.

וְנִתְּנִי מִטֶּרֶם אֶרְצְכֶם בְּעֵתוֹ יוֹרֶה וּמִלְקוֹשׁ וְאֶסְפֹּתִי דִגְלֶךָ וְתִירְשֶׁךָ וְיִצְהַרְךָ: 14 I (I That is, יהוה; Samaritan reads "He.") will grant the rain for your land in season, the early rain and the late. You shall gather in your new grain and wine and oil—

Akeidat Yitzchak 45:1:11 At the time the ten commandments were given, the cherubs mounted on the holy ark were not included in the prohibition of reproductions of things in heaven or on earth, since up to the moment of their construction they were original, nothing like it had ever existed. Once they had been constructed however, the very fact of their existence made them subject to the prohibitions included in "do not make images." The reason G-d describes Himself as a "jealous HUSBAND," is to emphasize the husband/wife relationship. This explains the extreme patience G-d has demonstrated towards other nations serving idols. Only because Israel is related to Him by marital vows, does the "husband" display jealousy if He is cheated. The punishment that may extend to the fourth generation for those that hate G-d, i.e. who commit acts of idol worship of one form or another, is only the result of mercy. Were G-d to eliminate the aspect of mercy present in that kind of punishment, the second generation already would never have seen the light of day, since the generation guilty of idol worship would have been wiped out. The sin of the golden calf is a prime example. Had G-d wiped out the Jewish people at that time, the chances offered subsequent generations would have been lost then and there. On the other hand, reward for good conduct will be a factor as much as two thousand generations hence.

Akeidat Yitzchak 70:1:6 The third group of people, namely believing Jews, who while steadfast in their belief, would still welcome specific statements in the Torah concerning afterlife, need to appreciate the following. Afterlife is much more than a promise held out in return for specific religious observances. Man's superiority over other creatures on this earth could hardly be demonstrated by anything other than the survival of his soul. Solomon grapples with the problem in the book of Kohelet, and concludes that this is the only thing which makes man stand out over the animals. "Who

perceives that the spirit of man is the one that ascends on high, while the spirit of the beast descends down into the earth?" (Kohelet 3, 21) David and many others do not tire of expressing their longing for the blissful state of afterlife. Abigail refers to it, the Talmud is full of references to it. When one reads the promise of reward in our Parshah, one finds at the end, after the mundane rewards have been listed, "I will place My Residence amongst you." For the believers this is enough. For the scoffers nothing would be enough, since they only believe what their own eyes have seen, anyways.

Nefesh HaChayim, Gate I 8:2 And the matter is, as they said in the Chapter Kei-tzad M'vor-khim (Berakhot 35b): "The Rabbis taught about 'You shall gather in your grain...' (Heb.: V'ah-saf-ta d'ga-neh-kha) (D'varim 11:14). What does it come to teach us in light of what is written (in Yehoshua 1): 'This book of the Torah shall not cease from your mouth...?'

Could the words be taken literally, to teach: "you shall gather in your grain"—'behave in them per the ways of the world (Rabbee Yishmael's words could be interpreted as: "spend time away from involvement with Torah to harvest your grain").'—these being Rabbee Yishmael's words? Rabbee Shim'on Bar Yo-khai said: 'Is it possible that a person should plow when it's the season for plowing... what will then become of Torah?' Rather, when Israel does God's-Ma-kome will, their labors are performed by others for them...; and when Israel doesn't do God's-Ma-kome will, they perform their own labor, as it is said "And you shall gather in your grain..."."

וְנָתַתִּי עֵשְׂבָהּ בְּשָׂדֶךָ לִבְהֵמָתְךָ וְאָכְלָתָּ וְשָׂבַעְתָּ: 15 I (I See note at v. 14.) will also provide grass in the fields for your cattle—and thus you shall eat your fill.

Netivot Olam, Netiv Hatzdaka 5:2 And in the chapter [entitled] HaNizakin (62a:16): Rav Yehuda said that Rav says, "It is prohibited for a person to taste anything until he gives food to his animal, as it is stated: And I will give grass in the field for your animals (Deuteronomy 11:15); and afterward: and you shall eat and be satisfied. To here [is the passage]. The explanation of this thing is that it is like you will find in the creation — that God, may He be blessed, first created animals and afterward created man. So, too, is it fitting in the order of sustenance that the sustenance of animals be before the sustenance of people. And when this is not done, one changes the orderings of creation. And that is why it is written: And I will give grass in your field; and afterward: and you shall eat and be satisfied. And that which the creation of animals was before the creation of people is because something that is not so raised is actualized before something that is more raised. So certainly, the grass grows before the fruit tree. And hence, the animals, which do not have the level of the intellect, were actualized before man. And it should not be asked: Behold the sun and the moon were also created before the animals; and, if so, they are lesser! This is not a difficulty since the intention is only about those created in one day, such that the lesser creation is before the more raised. And this matter is also the case with sustenance. For man is sustained with a unique sustenance, human sustenance, whereas animals are sustained according to what is fitting for animals. And certainly sustenance that is not unique should be before sustenance which is unique sustenance. That is why it is written: And I will give grass in your field; and afterward: and you shall eat and be satisfied. For grass precedes in time that which is the sustenance of man. So if he does not give the animal its sustenance, it is as if he was removing the animal's sustenance. For God, may He be blessed, made the nourishment of animals incumbent upon man, as we said. And hence, it is prohibited for a person to taste anything until he gives food to his animal. So this is clear.

וְהִשְׁמַרְתֶּם לָכֶם מִלִּיכּוֹת אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים 16 Take care not to be lured away to serve other gods and bow to them.
וְהִשְׁתַּחֲוִיתֶם לָהֶם:

Akeidat Yitzchak 17:1:4 Since becoming a morally perfect personality is impossible unless one is in possession of all possible virtues, it is almost impossible to encounter a morally perfect human being, since no one has been endowed with all these virtues. The only way to progress towards moral perfection then is to refine and and constantly purify one's personality. First, impure elements in one's personality have to be eliminated, then the remaining acceptable raw material has to be brought to a state high polish. Just as a mirror which has been silvered with faulty material and the backing of which has not been polished properly, cannot reproduce a true image, so a person cannot reflect Torah and truth in a proper manner unless he has perfected himself in the aforementioned fashion. In Deut. 4,9-10, Moses warns the Jewish people that if they allow the purity they had enjoyed at Mount Sinai to become tainted, they will be headed down the path of corruption. Our soul is like a mirror which reflects the images it has absorbed. Unless the mirror is kept in perfect condition, it will reflect distorted images. Even marginal failings in a person's character distort his whole personality. Maimonides points this out in Chapter seven of his introduction to the tractate Avot. Prophetic visions departed from the prophets when they were angry, i.e. when they suffered personality lapses. A perfect character can

also not be attained unless it is accompanied by a high level of intellectual accomplishments. Similarly, true wisdom cannot be attained without accompanying moral accomplishments. Since we come across many people who possess either moral or intellectual accomplishments but rarely both, we must assume that what we observe are the results of natural endowment only. These endowments do not reflect the results of their owners having refined them in order to attain the maximum achievements they are capable of in either field. Only when morality is the outgrowth of one's intellect can we be sure that such morality is comprehensive and extends to a person's entire personality. This in spite of the fact that certain traits are not necessarily observable by outsiders unless the need arises to demonstrate that their owner indeed possesses such good traits. In Proverbs 20,5-12, Solomon points out that it is a common error to attribute a virtuous personality to someone who has merely displayed a few virtues, without our probing if these virtues are natural or have been acquired, i.e. developed. If these virtues are natural, they are quite meaningless in an ethical sense. Only the Lord can pronounce judgment about whose virtue has been acquired and whose constitutes a natural trait. One way of realizing that it is natural is if one sees a person practice one particular virtue, whereas in all other areas of life that person disregards most virtues. This would prove that such an individual did not come by the virtue he did practice thanks to his own efforts, but that he was fortunate enough to have been born with it. Our sages in Kiddushin 39 tell us that "He who performs one mitzvah is given credit, his lifespan is extended, and he inherits the land of Israel. He, however, who neglects to perform one mitzvah will experience the reverse." Obviously, the performance of one single mitzvah cannot qualify for all that much reward, something which is normally made contingent on the fulfilment of all mitzvot. It is equally obvious that a person who fails to perform a single mitzvah does not need to be told that he does not rate a reward for that failure. The meaning of the passage then is that he who performs one mitzvah in all its ramifications, qualifies for this great reward, because in order to do what he did, all his virtues had to be involved. The manner in which we relate to the that we have an opportunity to perform, reveals the attitude we have towards all mitzvot if we were able to perform them. The Talmud, when questioning the special reward offered those who perform the commandment of honoring father and mother, answers that anyone who performs a commandment thereby exceeding his natural inclination to do so, is in line for such special reward. Since it is natural for a person to honor his father and mother, the Torah, and subsequently the Talmud, use this mitzvah as the example to illustrate the principle involved. Similarly, when the Talmud (Sotah 3) says that if someone has commenced performing a mitzvah, one urges him to complete it. The word "a mitzvah," is the same as "any mitzvah" or all mitzvot. The attitude displayed when performing a mitzvah signals whether such an act would lead to the performance of other mitzvot. The famous principle of "mitzvah gorret mitzvah," that performance of one good deed leads to the performance of other good deeds, reflects the same thought. If any of these good deeds have been performed because of natural inclinations, such performance is no guarantee of the performance of other good deeds in the future; therefore, no credit is given to the one performing it. The Talmud in Horiot 10 tells us that the verse "The ways of the Lord are straight, the righteous can walk therein, whereas the wicked will stumble therein" (Hoseah 14,10), means that he who eats the Passover because he is hungry and wants to stuff himself is called a sinner though he complies with the ritual; this teaches us the same lesson. Abstention from pork should not be dictated by one's natural revulsion to eating pork, but should be due to the Torah having prohibited it (compare Torat Kohanim Parshat Kedoshim 89). Rabbi Akiva in Sofrim 4 relates how it happened to him that even preoccupation with a mitzvah due to a pure motivation, involved him in a sinful act, because he did not have his priorities right. He had dragged a body for six miles on the Sabbath in order to bring it to proper burial. He had been unaware that such a body, if there are no relatives whose duty it is to perform the burial rites on it, automatically acquires the ground it lies on. This would make the act of moving it on the Sabbath unnecessary and a transgression against the law of carrying in the public domain on the Sabbath. The Rabbis chided Rabbi Akiva, saying that he had been guilty of a transgression every step of the way. Aristotle in Ethics Chapter four, also argues that the validity of, say, generosity as a virtue derives from the nature and personality of the donor. Therefore, he who gives to the wrong cause or for the wrong motive, cannot be described as "liberal" or "generous." This trait of "generosity of heart" was an essential ingredient in Abraham's personality, which is always in evidence in conjunction with other virtues, all of which contributed to refinement of his personality even further. No doubt, Abraham had recognized that the acquisition of material wealth could not be the ultimate purpose in life, that there had to be higher values than that. Not only that, but such knowledge could only be attained through prophetic insight. In his search for truths, of which Isaiah 64,3 has said, "No human eye has beheld them without the help of G-d," the term machazeh, vision, is most appropriate at this point. Maimonides in his Moreh, chapter forty-five section two, already pointed out that the lowest level of such prophetic insight is comprehension by means of the parable. Indeed, most of the message Abraham receives during the revelation at the "covenant between the pieces" is by means of the parable. Concerning man's natural fear of the day when the strange union of body and soul is dissolved, the day of death, G-d

reassures Abraham that he should not entertain any fear. Concerning all his other worries, G-d reassures him of His continued support. He also tells him that the reward will be of quite a different calibre than is normally understood by the term "reward." G-d's promise regarding future possession of the land by Abraham's descendants is believed. Abraham, aware of the great difficulties faced by any human being who tries to live up to these lofty principles, asks for a sign to reassure him that his heirs will be able to muster the moral strength to qualify for the fulfilment of these promises. The answer, couched in terms of the sacrifice and what it symbolized, is in accordance with both the views of Rabbi Nechemyah and those of Rabbi Chiyah as stated in Bereshit Rabbah 44. The divided animals represent the nations and their respective leaders, all headed for eventual destruction. The undivided bird, by contrast, represents the Jewish people who will endure and withstand the attack by the vultures, thanks to the merit of their ancestor Abraham. But over and above that, there are inherent values that guarantee the fulfilment of G-d's promise in due course.

Akeidat Yitzchak 66:1:6 Reflecting the high standard of Israel, the opening Midrash described the disease as epilepsy, a temporary affliction, of brief duration. The remedy quoted, the *kami-a*, amulet, is considered spiritual in nature, not something organic, (in Talmudic and Midrashic parlance) This suggests that the aberration had been brief, subject to prompt correction by proper spiritual orientation. Angels achieve their *shleymut*, perfection, by means of a single expression, i.e. experience. (Daniel 4,14), whereas man requires two expressions, i.e. experiences. The first was "let Us make man in Our image," at the time man was being created. The second expression, a further stage leading to complete perfection was the revelation at Mount Sinai. Hopefully, the two experiences between them will achieve mankind's refinement, and convert our potential into the actual achievement of the finest our species is capable of.

Guide for the Perplexed, Part 1 36:1 I SHALL explain to you, when speaking on the attributes of God, in what sense we can say that a particular thing pleases Him, or excites His anger and His wrath, and in reference to certain persons that God was pleased with them, was angry with them, or was in wrath against them. This is not the subject of the present chapter; I intend to explain in it what I am now going to say.

Guide for the Perplexed, Part 1 36:2 You must know, that in examining the Law and the books of the Prophets, you will not find the expressions "burning anger," "provocation," or "jealousy" applied to God except in reference to idolatry; and that none but the idolater called "enemy," "adversary," or "hater of the Lord." Comp. "And ye serve other gods, . . . and then the Lord's wrath will be kindled against you" (Deut. 11:16, 17); "Lest the anger of the Lord thy God be kindled against thee." etc. (ib. 6:15); "To provoke him to anger through the work of your hands" (ib. 31:29); "They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God; they have provoked me to anger with their vanities" (ib. 32:21); "For the Lord thy God is a jealous God" (ib. 6:15); "Why have they provoked me to anger with their graven images, and with strange vanities?" (Jer. 8:19); "Because of the provoking of his sons and of his daughters" (Deut. 32:19); "For a fire is kindled in mine anger" (ib. 22); "The Lord will take vengeance on His adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies" (Nah. 1:2); "And repayeth them that hate Him" (Deut. 7:10); "Until He hath driven out His enemies from before Him" (Num. 32:2 1); "Which the Lord thy God hateth" (Deut. 16:22); "For every abomination to the Lord, which He hateth, have they done unto their gods" (ib. 12:31). Instances like these are innumerable; and if you examine all the examples met with in the holy writings, you will find that they confirm our view.

Guide for the Perplexed, Part 3 29:14 In that book the following story is also related: One of the idolatrous prophets, named Tammuz, called upon the king to worship the seven planets and the twelve constellations of the Zodiac: whereupon the king killed him in a dreadful manner. The night of his death the images from all parts of the land came together in the temple of Babylon which was devoted to the image of the Sun, the great golden image. This image, which was suspended between heaven and earth, came down into the midst of the temple, and surrounded by all other images commenced to mourn for Tammuz, and to relate what had befallen him. All other images cried and mourned the whole night; at dawn they flew away and returned to their temples in every corner of the earth. Hence the regular custom arose for the women to weep, lament, mourn, and cry for Tammuz on the first day of the month of Tammuz.

Guide for the Perplexed, Part 3 29:20 The knowledge of these theories and practices is of great importance in explaining the reasons of the precepts. For it is the principal object of the Law and the axis round which it turns, to blot out these opinions from man's heart and make the existence of idolatry impossible. As regards the former Scripture says: "Lest your heart be persuaded," etc. (Deut. 11:16), "whose heart turneth away to-day," etc. (ibid. 29:17). The actual abolition of idolatry is expressed in the following passage: "Ye shall destroy their altars, and burn their groves in fire" (Deut. 7:5), "and ye shall destroy their name," etc. (xii. 3). These two things are frequently repeated; they form the principal and first object of the whole Law, as our Sages distinctly told us in their traditional explanation of the words "all that God commanded you by the hand of Moses" (Num. 15:25); for they say, "Hence we learn that those who follow idolatry deny as it were their adhesion to the whole Law, and those who reject idolatry follow as it were the whole Law." (B. T. Kidd,

40a.) Note it.

וְחָרָה אֶפְיֹהָהּ בְּכֶם וְעָצָר אֶת־הַשָּׁמַיִם וְלֹא־יִהְיֶה מָטָר וְהָאֲדָמָה לֹא תִתֵּן אֶת־יְבוּלָהּ וְאֲבֹדְתֶם מִהָרָה מֵעַל הָאָרֶץ הַטֹּבָה אֲשֶׁר יְהוָה נָתַן לָכֶם: 17 For יהוה's anger will flare up against you, shutting up the skies so that there will be no rain and the ground will not yield its produce; and you will soon perish from the good land that יהוה is assigning to you.

Akeidat Yitzchak 70:1:10 Since Torah observance intensifies in three stages, so do the rewards for such observance. Stage one of observance, is the general movement in line with G'ds natural law, i.e. "if you will walk in My ways." Stage two is to refrain from violating specific injunctions, i.e. "you will guard My laws." The third category is the carrying out of specific commandments i.e. "and you will perform them." In response to this conduct, the Torah promises (1) rainfall; something that is a natural prerequisite for all specific material blessings. Next the Torah promises bountiful harvests of the field, i.e. your toil will be rewarded, you will enjoy the necessities of life. (2) Next the Torah promises the harvest of the trees, i.e. luxuries rather than necessities. Then comes the promise of dwelling securely, enabling you to enjoy the blessings that have been bestowed on you. You will neither have to fear attack from predators nor from hostile neighbours. (3) When the Torah describes the heroism displayed in chasing off would be attackers, the point is made that such gevurah, bravery, is not handed out to each person in equal measure. Some people can put to flight twenty times their number, others even one hundred times their number. (4) When the Torah adds in verse 11, "I will set My residence amongst you, and My soul will not abhor you," referring to spiritual reward, the last few words need clarification. When a renowned and handsome king marries a lady who seems plain, and comes from a nondescript background, the cultural gap between them may cause the king embarrassment on occasion. When said king's wife acquires her husband's cultural refinements however, there will be no cause for the king ever to feel embarrassed in her company. The ideal relationship between G'd and Israel is similar. The words "My soul will not abhor you" is an intensification of the prior blessing "I will place My residence amongst you." It means "I will never have occasion to be embarrassed by keeping your company." Amos 7,7, may be understood in similar fashion. The whole Song of Songs, similarly extols the Jewish people's role as a partner fit for G'd to keep company with. In verse thirteen, G'd simply states that His right to demand all this from us, stems directly from the fact that He took us out of Egypt, broke our yoke and gave us human dignity. The new yoke G'd placed upon us enabled us to walk upright for the first time. As long as we shoulder this yoke, we are free from the wiles of the yetzer hara, the angel of death etc. The Torah continues that should we, however, fail to observe all that is expected of us, G'd will not punish us immediately, but only after seven fundamental sins have been committed. This is the list contained in verse 14 and 15. Once G'd does react, He will bring samples of the three basic punishments David was given a choice of, in order to alert people to what may be in store for them if they persist in their evil ways. The diseases quoted are not fatal, but leave one at the threshold of death. The planting of seeds, many of which will go to waste, does not yet result in complete starvation. Your enemies, while inflicting defeat on you, are not yet annihilating you. (verse 17) All this so far is in the nature of a warning of what my befall you if you persist in your corrupt ways. Should Israel ignore these warnings, the full force of these three punishments will be unleashed. The sevenfold retribution mentioned in verse eighteen, is to be understood as being seven times the scale of the sample punishment mentioned in verse sixteen. These various punishments do not occur simultaneously as do the blessings mentioned earlier in the Parshah, but in stages, one after another. For this reason we have the constant repetition "if you still do not listen." In verses 21, 23,, 24, 25, 27, 29, 30, 31, 32 and 33, a chain of events will be set in motion of which each is practically a corollary of the one preceding it. The basic tenor of the punishments is that laxity in observing Torah due to not taking the time required, will result in the pressures of time becoming so overwhelming that there really will be felt to be no time for religious observances. This because of the pressing need to do something for one's physical survival. If the four escalations of retributory measures produce no results, then even though there is such a thing as the merit of the ancestors, the need to make up for all the shemittah years that have not been observed in the land, outweighs even the former, and exile continues. (7) Although this merit of the ancestors is not powerful enough to rescind the decree of exile, it does help to prevent total annihilation of the Jewish people while they are in exile. The covenant with G'd will therefore not be broken completely. Finally, G'd says, the one covenant I will remember, is not to nullify My name by the destruction of My people, as Moses had argued after the sin of the golden calf. These are the rishonim, the early ones. We observe this idea reflected in the first benediction of our amidah, central prayer, where we state "He remembers the kind deeds of the forefathers, and brings redemption to their children's children for the sake of His name, in love." When our sages formulated this benediction, they drew attention to the fact that though G'd does indeed remember the deeds of the forefathers, this may not be enough to

guarantee the ultimate redemption. Failing all else, only the need to preserve His own image will guarantee that the redeemer will come. (5) Verse forty one, referring to some kind of humility as on the part of persecuted Jews, means that the humility is not sincere, only lip service due to the plight of the people.

- 18 Therefore impress these My words upon your very heart: (very heart Lit. "heart and self.") bind them as a sign on your hand and let them serve as a symbol on your forehead, (symbol on your forehead See notes on 6.8.)
- 19 and teach them to your children—reciting them when you stay at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you get up;

Duties of the Heart, Tenth Treatise on Devotion to God 7:15 When they counted the commandments, they said: "we will not count in the negative commandments because merely refraining from them is their performance and the fulfillment of their obligation. Such service of G-d seemed too insignificant in their eyes, and their service seemed little to them due to their desire and longing for reaching the favor of G-d. Therefore they sought positive commandments of the limbs for individuals which apply at all times, places, and circumstances. They did not find any precepts that fits this except reading the torah and studying the commandments, as the verse says: "These words, which I command you this day, shall be in your heart; And you shall teach them diligently unto your children, and speak of them.." (Devarim 6:6). And the prophet (Moshe) exhorted on this a second time in saying: "You shall teach them to your sons, speaking of them, when you sit in your house and when you walk on the way and when you lie down and when you rise up" (Devarim 11:19).

Eight Chapters 8:5 In reality, the undoubted truth of the matter is that man has full sway over all his actions. If he wishes to do a thing, he does it; if he does not wish to do it, he need not, without any external compulsion controlling him. Therefore, God very properly commanded man, saying, "See I have set before thee this day life and the good, death and evil therefore choose thou life", (Deut. XXX, 15. 19. Cf. H. Teshubah, V, 3.) giving us, as regards these, freedom of choice. Consequently, punishment is inflicted upon those who disobey, and reward granted to the obedient, as it is said, "If thou wilt hearken", and "If thou wilt not hearken". (Deut. XI, 27. 28.) Learning and teaching are also necessary, according to the commands, "Ye shall teach them to your children", (Ibid., XI, 19.) "and ye shall do them and observe to do them", (Ibid., V, 1.) and, similarly, all the other passages referring to the study of the commandments. It is also necessary to take all the precautionary measures laid down in the Law, such as, "Thou shalt make a battlement for thy roof; that thou bring not blood upon thy house", (Ibid., XXII, 8.) "lest he die in the battle", (Ibid XX, 5 or 7.) "wherein shall he sleep?" (Ex. XXII, 26.) , and "no man shall take to pledge the nether or the upper millstone", (Deut. XXIV, 6.) and many other passages in regard to precautions found in the Law and the Prophets. (See H. Teshubah, V, 4, and Moreh, III, 20; cf. Ibn Baud, Emunah Ramah, II, 6, 2, p. 96.)

Nineteen Letters 12:2 Strive ever to draw nearer to God, to be more closely united to Him in love and piety, more devoted and faithful to thy sacred mission on earth. Strive also to make the earth a truly human habitation, its creatures truly human possessions, in order that, in addition to your internal resources you may acquire also external wealth as means for carrying out your mission of blessing, and in order to be able independently to establish a house, as a temple in which shall be reared young scions of Adam's race as ideal human beings, ideal Israelites. For such purpose, to grace such a house, take a wife and bring her into your home. Next follows the first task of your blessed mission of love, the first and the highest; to be all in all to helpless human creatures without claim or demand upon you; even to sacrifice your own welfare in order that they shall be able to attain to both earthly well-being and spiritual ideal; that your child may become man-Israel.

Nineteen Letters 12:3 Your mission, however, is not limited by the walls of your house; beyond their limits you must assist with every particle of your strength wherever it is necessary to save the life, the property, or the happiness of a human being, to assist the enterprise of a fellow man with your strength or fortune, or to help suffering creatures of the lower order wherever you can, by the use of your wealth, your physical or intellectual strength, or your word, support the needy, clothe the naked, feed the hungry, console the mourning, heal the sick, care for the unprovided, advise those in need of counsel, teach the ignorant, reconcile those sundered by anger and quarrel — in a word, to be a blessing whenever and wherever you can.

20 and inscribe them on the doorposts of your house
and on your gates—
וּכְתַבְתֶּם עַל־מְזוּזוֹת בֵּיתְךָ וּבְשַׁעְרֶיךָ:

Kuzari 2:56 56. The Rabbi: Didst thou not see how David introduces the praise of the Träh, when he first speaks of the sun in the words: 'The heavens declare the glory of God' (Psalms 19:2). He describes how ubiquitous its light, how pure its body, how steady its path, and beautiful its countenance. This is followed by the words: 'The law of the Lord is perfect' (Psalms 19:7), etc., as if he wished to convey that one should not wonder at such a description. For the Träh is more pure, more resplendent, more widely known, more exalted, and more useful still. If there were no Israelites there would be no Träh. They did not derive their high position from Moses, but Moses received his for their sake. The divine love dwelt among the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The choice of Moses, however, was made in order that the good fortune might come to them through his instrumentality. We are not called the people of Moses, but the people of God, as it is said: 'The people of the Lord' (Ezekiel 36:20) and 'The people of the God of Abraham' (Psalms 47:10). Proof of the Divine Influence is not found in well chosen words, in raising the eyebrows, closing the eyes during prayers, contrition, movement, and talk behind which there are no deeds; but a pure mind, illustrated by corresponding actions which, by their very nature, are difficult to perform, and are yet performed with the utmost zeal and love. It is to be found in one who, wherever he may, strives to reach the chosen place three times a year, and bearing with the greatest pleasure and joy all fatigues and expenses connected therewith. He pays the 'first tithe,' and the 'second tithe,' and the 'poor tithe,' and the expenses connected with his apparel for the Temple. He renounces the harvest in the years of release and jubilee, incurs expense for a tabernacle, holy days, and abstention from work; gives the first fruits, the firstborn animals, priests' emoluments, the first of the shearing, and the first of the dough, apart from vows and free gifts, and fines connected with intentional and unintentional sins, and peace offerings. Further offerings due on account of private happenings, impurity, child-bed, issue, leprosy, and many other things. All this is regulated by divine command, without [human] speculation. It is not possible for man to determine the relative importance of each, and he need not fear any deterioration in them. It is as if He assessed Israel, and measured them as well as the harvests of Palestine as regards vegetable and animal life. He also considered the tribe of Levi, and ordained these assessments in the desert, because he knew that, as long as they were not infringed, Israel would retain its surplus, and the Levite would not be in want. It never could come to such a pass that a tribe or family would be reduced to poverty, because he ordained the return of the whole property in the year of jubilee in the same status as it was in the first year of the distribution of the land. The details of these regulations would fill volumes. He who studies them carefully will see that they are not of human origin. Praised be He who has contrived them: 'He hath not dealt so with any nation; they are judgments which they knew not' (Psalms 147:20). This arrangement lasted during the periods of both Temples for about 1,300 years, and had the people remained in the straight path, it would have been 'as the days of the heaven on earth' (Deuteronomy 11:20).

Kuzari 2:57 57. Al Khazari: At present you are in great confusion concerning those heavy duties. What nation could observe such regulations?

21 to the end that you and your children may endure,
in the land that הוֹדָה swore to your fathers to
assign to them, as long as there is a heaven over
the earth.
לְמַעַן יִרְבוּ יְמֵיכֶם וְיָמֵי בְנֵיכֶם עַל הָאָדָמָה אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע יְהוָה
לְאֲבֹתֵיכֶם לֵאמֹר לְתֵת לָהֶם כִּימֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם עַל־הָאָרֶץ*:

Akeidat Yitzchak 50:1:4 The pains taken when constructing a shelter reflect the purpose that shelter is to serve. If the shelter is to be no more than a temporary hut shielding shepherds against the heat of the sun, its materials and the care expended on its construction will be minimal. If, however, it is to serve as an all year residence, the utmost care will be taken to construct it of durable materials and to ensure precise workmanship. Similarly, bodily attributes such as hair, smoothness of skin, clarity of voice, none of which perform vital functions, often deteriorate at a rapid pace. Vital physical attributes such as the heart, digestive system, etc., will be observed to have been constructed of a far more durable nature. Nations whose continued existence in history G-d considered vital, have been given the Torah and commandments, whereas those nations whose future was considered marginal, were only given seven commandments, as if to indicate that their historic lease on life was relatively brief, when compared with that of Israel. Compare Isaiah 40, 15, "here the nations are like a drop fallen from the bucket." On the other hand, concerning Israel, G-d said "Place these My words on your hearts.. so that your days on earth will endure a long time. (Deut. 11,18-21) In view of the above, it becomes difficult to understand why the Torah has expended so much ink and parchment in detailing everything about the tabernacle, since it was not to be a permanent structure. Since the tabernacle was to serve only as

a temporary abode while Israel was on the way to the holy land and until a permanent temple would be built, all these detailed instructions are hard to comprehend. Had it not been for the sin of the spies, Israel would have entered the holy land at once, and construction of the permanent temple would have begun at once. When one compares the brief reference in Chronicles concerning the blueprint for the permanent temple, the contrast becomes even more startling.

One would have expected a wealth of detail either in the book of Kings or in Chronicles, if these events had been described according to normal usage, (compare Chronicles I chapter 28)

Akeidat Yitzchak 74:1:4 It is commonly supposed that "peace" is the restoration of harmony between parties that have been at odds with one another. People who conceive of "peace" as being merely that, deprive the concept of much of its value. If "peace" does nothing more than restore a balance where there had previously been an imbalance, it can hardly be considered a blessing. Shame is not a virtue, since it presupposes that an unworthy act had been committed which the perpetrator is now ashamed of. Actually, peace is more like the silver thread that joins two people or two entities combining them into a unified whole. Why is one of the names of G'd shalom, peace? Because He ties together worlds, keeps them united and preserves their appearance and format. (Midrash Chazit chapter 1) When we read in Samuel II 11,7, "David enquired after the "peace" of Yoav, the "peace" of the people, and the "peace" of the "war," there is certainly no reference intended to the cessation of the war. This war was still very much in progress. David merely asked Uriah whether these people or affairs were all well and proceeding according to plan. The word "peace" in that context describes that there was a common bond between the people or the animals described. A city of people who do not quarrel with one another, who tolerate each other's idiosyncrasies, cannot be said to be at peace with each other as long as they do not share a common purpose or goal. Furthermore, when there is no bond joining people, there is a degree of separateness which may eventually lead to disintegration, decay etc. Isaiah 45,7, has this in mind when he contrasts "fashions light, or creates darkness, makes peace or creates evil, I the Lord do all these." The relationship of ra, evil, to shalom, peace, is like the relationship between darkness and light. Peace, i.e harmony, is the fruitful interaction of the various energies of different bodies, elements. It was Aaron's special talent to have understood that it is the task of a leader to weave that thread, the fabric that binds people to one another, and thus help them to establish harmony by desiring for them what one desires for oneself. Moses, on the other hand, was concerned primarily with the intellectual approach. He believed that without the benefit of Torah, whatever man does is of insufficient value to prolong our days on this earth. Without Torah, no degree of harmony can be achieved that would be capable of overcoming the dichotomy due to the fact that this physical universe has been made up of four distinctly different elements. The Talmud Shabbat 89, illustrates this line of thinking when it describes Moses' arrival on Mount Sinai before he had received the Torah. Moses is described as finding G'd "tying crowns to the letters." G'd asks him: "Moses, is there no "peace" in your city?" (are you people not in the habit of extending greetings of "peace be with you" where you come from?) Moses replies: "how can a slave contribute to the "peace" of his Master?" G'd replies: "at any rate you should have assisted Me." Immediately, Moses said "now let the strength of the Lord become great as You have said." The lesson contained in that Midrash is, that even without the benefit of Torah, man's effort to weave the thread of togetherness, i.e. civilisation, is sufficient to improve his lot down here on earth. This is shalom; peace. When Hillel advised people to emulate the virtue of Aaron, namely to strive for peace, he was quite correct, inasmuch as this is a most positive character trait. Similarly, when Hillel said "do not separate yourself from the community," he was merely describing the other side of the coin. Tzibbur, community, after all, is what has been united by shalom, peace. The holiness of G'd depends on the community. Venikdashiti betoch beney Yisrael, I will be sanctified within the community of Israel. When the community sins, one must abandon it. (Jeremiah 9,1) When only an individual sins, the community must see to it that the individual repents, or they must place him outside the tzibbur, into cherem quarantine. Since peace therefore is of vital importance to the existence of the community, it is clear that precisely at the time the tabernacle was put into service, G'd would pronounce the blessing of peace, as we have noted in our opening Midrash.

Akeidat Yitzchak 78:1:5 The Midrash on Psalms 55,16, describes Doag and Achitofel as examples of such apparent Torah scholars whose true colours did not come to light till later, though their hearts had always harboured their wickedness.

When one observes the sudden death of such people,- David says,- it reveals that the evil essence had not lost its mastery over the characteristics acquired due to Torah study and absorption of its values. These people are punished by sudden death, since they did not use Torah to refine their characters, but abused Torah to advance their egotistical goals. Korach's argument was that since everybody was holy, no one should be a leader. On the contrary, if holiness is a way of emulating G'd in Heaven, everyone in Heaven is certainly not equal, there are certainly leaders there. Why then did Korach use such a patently specious argument? His argument makes no sense at all. If everybody had been granted a degree of prophetic vision at the time of the revelation, part of the reason had been to demonstrate Moses' superiority.

It demonstrated how superior Moses' relationship with G'd had been. The people had even asked him to be their go between. Arguing in favour of a leaderless society was absurd then. Therefore, it is better to understand the line "for the entire congregation is holy" as a sarcastic reference to what is supposed to have taken place at Sinai. Midrash Shocher

Tov on Psalms 1,1, "and has not sat amongst the scoffers," considers that statement as referring to the sarcastic comments Korach had made about the Jewish people. His comment then would read like this: "Enough already! have you peddled the idea of prophecy to the extent where you have convinced everyone that he is holy? Does everyone think that just because he heard the opening lines of the Decalogue from G'ds own mouth that they are prophets already? If this is indeed the message you have peddled, then why are you arrogating to yourselves superior status? The arbitrary appointment of a High Priest then is completely unjustified!" Korach's mockery is directed at three pillars of our faith then. 1) Rav lachem, enough already, questions the concept of prophecy altogether. 2) U-vetocham hashem, questions the Divine Presence, the concept of hashgachah peratit.) Madua titnassu? questions the authenticity of Torat Moshe, the specific commandments recorded in the Torah. Moses' reply, after he had been "floored," i.e. vayipol al panav, he "fell" on his face, by this challenge, is perfectly appropriate. Concerning denial of G'ds special Providence, Moses said "tomorrow morning you will see an example of that very Providence." boker ve-yauda hashem etc. (16,5) (2) Concerning the challenge to his own standing as a prophet, he says "whomsoever He will choose, He will bring close to Himself." (3) Concerning mockery of the institution of prophecy, Moses said "whosoever is holy, He will bring close." (referring to his older brother Aaron whose status as a prophet had preceded his own chronologically.) In his second statement, Moses addressed himself to the underlying motive of Korach's complaint in a more subtle manner. Ha-me-at mikem kee hivdil, are you not sufficiently aggrieved that the elevated position the Torah has granted you as Levites, prevents you from effective land ownership in the land of Canaan, that you want to assume the even heavier burden of the priesthood?" Besides, since you challenge the validity of priestly functions per se, your specific complaint against Aaron surely must hide a personal motive? Why else bother with this detail? Therefore, Moses continued, "I am convinced that you are in effect rebelling against G'd," i.e. ha-noadim al hashem, (16,11) not against us. Though you pretend to challenge our authority, you are challenging G'ds authority. The above is in keeping with what our sages taught in Avot, that any feud which is not designed to advance the cause of Heaven will not endure. However, when the objective of the argument is to further the cause of Heaven, both parties to the argument will endure. (Avot,5, 17) Since it is a fact that in either argument one side must be wrong, the statement of our sages is puzzling. Aristotele teaches that we use the terms "true" and "false" when referring to concepts of the mind. When we refer to physical phenomena or their absence, however, we use the terms "good" and "bad" respectively. Thus a statement that a triangle has three corners would be described as "true," whereas the statement that a particular triangle has four corners would be described as "false." The terms "good" or "evil" cannot be applied to such statements. We feel however, that when a concept lacks a basis in fact, it can be said to be bad. The three categories (a) true or false, (b) good or bad, and (c) extant or non-existent, are all closely intertwined. Mentioning Moses as a party to Korach's quarrel is inconceivable, since Korach had based his whole philosophy on the denial of G'ds authority, as we have explained. Since Shammai and Hillel based their respective disagreements on common ground, their respective opinions will endure, eyloo ve-eyloo divrey elokim chayim, the words of either party have been inspired by the Living G'd. Korach, whose argument was based on sheker, a lie, will, of course, not endure. The importance of the eyloo ve-eyloo concept just mentioned, is best demonstrated in Bamidbar Rabba 19, when G'd is portrayed studying the laws of the red heifer, and quotes a halachic interpretation by Rabbi Eliezer. The fact is that that opinion never became halachically accepted by the sages. Nonetheless, G'd Himself is shown as quoting it. This proves the dictum that any argument that is designed to further the cause of Heaven will endure, i.e. that even the opinion that had been rejected will merit being considered at all times. Korach's attack on the institution of prophecy proceeded as follows. He dressed the elders of the Supreme Court in garments dyed completely in techeylet azure blue, and asked Moses if these garments required tzitzit, "fringes." To Moses' reply that they did indeed require these "fringes," he scoffed, saying "how can a single blue thread accomplish something that an entire garment fails to accomplish?" What Korach was alluding to is this. Since man, nature's choicest creature, having been created in G'ds image, is equipped with the ability to know good from evil, to know what is beneficial and what is harmful, surely whatever any so-called prophetic insight could add to this knowledge would be so trivial as to be of no consequence. Moses' reply pointed out that logic, as characterised by Aristotele's concept of the golden mean, was not an infallible method to arrive at objective truths. Judaism is based on a Heavenly assist, which is symbolized by the single blue thread of tzitzit acting as the reminder that our inspiration derives from heaven. Korach's second question dealt with that of a house full of sacred texts. He wanted to know if such a house required a mezuzah, the traditional scroll containing part of the keriyat shma. Moses explained that in order for such a house to be considered sanctified, a mezuzah would still be needed. Only two passages out of a total of two hundred and seventy

five passages had the power to sanctify the house. Korach challenged the authenticity of this statement, thereby challenging the principle of G'd's special Providence for the Jewish people, the second principle of Jewish faith. Korach and his sympathizers had known in advance the answer they would receive. They felt that when a group of highly placed men presented a challenge, such a challenge would be more formidable, and would be more likely to attract G'd's attention. This underlined the fact that they spurned the notion that G'd would concern himself with the wants or needs of any individual. Jewish philosophy does not hold that the whole is superior to its constituent parts, but rather that the whole is upheld by the merit of each constituent part. The story of Noach, for whose sake the earth was saved, is ample proof of the value of the individual part vis a vis the whole. Proverbs 10,25 puts it thus: "and the righteous is the foundation of the universe." The two passages contained in the mezuzah make the point that when we listen to Divine instructions, we will benefit by the special Personal Providence, and particular attention will be paid to our needs, superseding the normal bounty provided by nature. (Deut. 11, 13-21) The land of Israel will receive such special attention on a year round basis. (verse 11) There are many other such promises. The third argument presented by Korach and company, was intended to inflame the people's sense of outrage against Moses and Aaron. The subject matter was the method used to purify the Levites. Numbers 8,7, states that removal of body hair is a prerequisite for such purification. When Moses, personally, had performed this rite on Korach, he being the senior ranking Levite, the people had no longer recognised Korach minus beard etc. When asked who had done this to him, Korach accused Moses of having abused him personally in this fashion, whereas at the same time Moses had adorned his brother Aaron in the finery of the High Priest's garments. By portraying Moses as high handed, Korach hoped to convince the people that Moses had acted of his own accord. The survival of Korach's sons who did not share in their father's rebellion, demonstrated better than anything that Divine Providence acted selectively by picking only the guilty for the meting out of punishment. By demonstrating that even the most plausible sounding argument had been discredited, since those who presented it had been killed by Divine and supernatural action, the "father knows best" quality of Torah legislation was vindicated. The third point that was to be made, was to show that whereas Korach had intended to downgrade Moses and Aaron in the eyes of the people, their action had boomeranged, producing the opposite result. The greater the stature of the challenger, the more enduring the esteem in which the intended victim is held, after he has succeeded in defeating the challenge. We see therefore, that the reason the Torah first listed all the fine attributes of Korach and his assembly was to alert us to the fact that once this challenge had been disposed of, the "establishment" as it were, had emerged greatly strengthened. The twenty four types of gifts that priests are entitled to, are legislated immediately after this affair, since the prestige of the priests was now at a high, and no one would object when the latter were also rewarded for the duties they performed on behalf of the entire nation.

Derekh Hashem, Part Four, On the Sh'ma and Its Blessings 9 The remembrance of the exodus from Egypt: Afterwards, he accepts the yoke of commandments upon himself with [the passage that begins with,] "And if you listen" (Deuteronomy 11:13-21). And then he mentions the exodus from Egypt with the passage (Numbers 15:37-41) of the fringes (tsitsit). For the exodus from Egypt was a great refinement in which we - Israel - were refined, and the matter stayed forever. And that is because after the sin of Adam, all of humanity remained corrupted, as we have written in Part I (On Mankind 5). And evil was growing until there was no place for the good to strengthen itself at all. And even though our father Abraham, peace be upon him, had been selected - they still did not have a place where they were able to strengthen themselves and establish themselves as a whole nation and merit the crowns that were fit for them, due to the evil that was darkening them and to the earlier pollution that had not yet left them. And hence it was necessary for them to be exiled to Egypt and be subjugated there; such that in that great subjugation, they were refined like gold in a crucible and were purified. And so when the appropriate time came, the Master, blessed be He, strengthened His influence and emanation over Israel, suppressed the evil in front of them, separated them from it, elevated them from their lowliness and raised them to Him. So they were redeemed with a permanent redemption; and from then on, they were established as a whole nation cleaving to Him, may He be blessed, and crowned by Him. And note that this was a refinement that was made forever, as we have mentioned. And all of the good that has come and is coming to us is all dependent upon this. Hence we have been commanded to always remember it and to mention it with our mouths. For through it, this refinement is strengthened upon us, the light is intensified in us, and the purpose that comes out of this refinement is perpetuated.

On Resurrection of the Dead 1:3:8 So that your days and those of your children may be multiplied, on the land that A. swore to your parents to give them, etc.(Deuteronomy 11:21)

22 כִּי אִם־שָׁמַרְתָּ אֶת־כָּל־הַמִּצְוָה הַזֹּאת אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי מְצַוֶּה אֶתְכֶם
לַעֲשׂוֹתָהּ לְאַהֲבָהּ אֶת־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם לִלְכֶת בְּכָל־דֶּרֶכָיו וּלְדַבְּקָהּ בּוֹ: If, then, you faithfully keep all this Instruction
that I command you, loving your God יהוה, walking
in all God's ways, and holding fast to [God],

Derashot HaRan 8:11 And it seems to me, too, that aside from the effect of participation of prophet with prophet and sage with sage on the quality of the wisdom that is received, there is yet another dimension to the situation. That is, there is no question but we should believe that just as when the Temple existed, that sanctified abode was distinctly predisposed to the effluence of prophecy and wisdom, to the extent that through its mediation this effluence was transmitted to all of Israel — so should it follow that the prophets and saints be predisposed to the reception of wisdom and prophecy to the extent that through their mediation they project it upon all who are fit for it, even though the latter not be in immediate conjunction with them, but simply by virtue of the fact that they [the latter] find themselves in their generation, these prophets and saints themselves constituting a kind of sanctified Temple. The Ramban of blessed memory writes in his commentary (Deuteronomy 11:22): "And it is possible with men on this level [of cleaving to the L-rd] that even in their lifetimes their souls are bound up in the "bond of Life," for they themselves are the abode of the Shechinah, as indicated in the Kuzari." It is possible that the Ramban has our idea in mind, too. Therefore, when certain generations are blessed with prophets and saints, they receive the effluence, and, through their agency, can project it upon all the men in their generation who are fit to receive it, especially upon those who draw close to them and participate with them. And this is true not only in their lifetimes; but even after they have died, their burial places are likely to possess certain elements of that effluence. For their bones, which, in their lifetimes had been vessels for the receiving of the Divine effluence still retain enough of their former eminence and glory to suffice for this. Because of this our sages of blessed memory have stated (Sotah 34b) that one should prostrate himself on the graves of the righteous and pray there. For prayer in such places is more readily received because of the presence there of bodies which had formerly been receptacles of the Divine effluence.

Tradition in an Untraditional Age, TOPICS, Chapter 11; Alienation and Faith 75 I spoke earlier about two tendencies in Jewish thought, the one outlined above and the other in which R. Soloveitchik's analysis is foreshadowed. We can trace this back to a disagreement between Nachmanides and Ibn Ezra on the interpretation of the verse (Deuteronomy 11:22), "And you shall love the Lord, to walk in all His ways and to cleave (le-davka) to Him." Is it possible that man should be in intimate relation with God at all times? Or must Majesty sometimes interfere with Covenant?

23 וְהוֹרִישׁ יְהוָה אֶת־כָּל־הַגּוֹיִם הָאֵלֶּה מִלְּפָנֶיכֶם וִירִשְׁתֶּם גּוֹיִם גְּדֹלִים
וְעַצְמִים מֵכֶם: will dislodge before you all these nations:
you will dispossess nations greater and more
numerous than you.

24 כָּל־הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר תִּדְרֹךְ כַּרְיִיגְלֶכֶם בּוֹ לָכֶם יִהְיֶה מִן־הַמִּדְבָּר
וְהַלְבָּנוֹן מִן־הַנָּהָר נְהַר־פָּלַת וְעַד הַיָּם הָאֲחֵרָיוֹן יִהְיֶה גְבֻלְכֶם: Every spot on which your foot treads shall be
yours; your territory shall extend from the
wilderness to the Lebanon and from the River—the
Euphrates—to the Western (Western I.e.,
Mediterranean; cf. 34.2.) Sea.

25 לֹא־יִתְיָצֵב אִישׁ בְּפָנֶיכֶם פַּחַדְכֶם וּמוֹרָאֲכֶם יִתֵּן | יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם
עַל־פָּנַי כָּל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר תִּדְרֹכֶינָהּ כְּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר לָכֶם: No one shall stand up to you: your God יהוה will
put the dread and the fear of you over the whole
land in which you set foot, as promised.

Akeidat Yitzchak 15:1:5 The very idea of Israel's selection as G-d's pilot project is based on the fact that it is the part of the human species which has preserved more of the original tzelem elokim, Divine image, than any other section of humanity. G-d has described the relative standing of the Jewish people among the nations, as similar to the standing of humans vis a vis the animal kingdom. In other words, the nations of the world are aware of our dominance and are afraid of us. This is so at least as long as Jews deserve such status due to their moral superiority. We are described as treating our Canaanite adversaries as if they were "our bread" to be consumed by us (Numbers 14,9). Prior to tackling Goliath, David explains to the startled Saul that his experiences with the lion and the bear, both of which he had slain, convinced him of his chance against the uncircumcised blasphemer (Samuel I Chapter 17). David rejected armour and sword, since his victory over the beasts had also not been due to external weapons. David's enquiry about the type of reward the slayer of Goliath would receive is based on the assumption that killing an uncircumcised blasphemer such as Goliath cannot in itself be much of a heroic deed, since the "laws of nature" almost guaranteed victory to any good Jew, and the risk involved was not of the kind which would call for a major reward. The reputation acquired by such

deed should in itself suffice as reward. Obviously, David's companions did not understand his meaning, as seen from their response to David's enquiry. However, Saul's advisors sensed David's meaning when David said "let no adam have fear of him." The adam David referred to was the kind of a person who had preserved his tzelem elokim, Divine image. Such a person would not have reason to fear the Philistine. Baba Metzia 114 teaches, "Israel is referred to as adam; the nations of the world do not qualify for such appellation." Upon being challenged by Saul, David detailed past events in his life as proof for his confidence. He attributed his success to G-d, and was confident that the same G-d would grant him success against Goliath. "The Philistines will be no better than one of those beasts." To emphasize our point, the book of Samuel relates that David rejected the armor, to show that his superiority did not stem from such sources, but was in the nature of things. After the battle (Samuel I 17,55), Saul wanted to know, "Who is this lad?" a strange request indeed, since his family status etc. had been common knowledge. David had performed as a regular harpist at Saul's Court (Samuel I 16,19). At that time, Saul had begun to wonder about David's ultimate destiny. In view of the fact that his own son Jonathan had performed deeds of valor of a similar nature previously, we can understand the love and mutual attraction that existed between David and Jonathan. The two shared the distinction of being adam in the full sense of the word. This is what our sages call "a love which is not based on something tangible, something material" (Avot 5, 16). The love is for the basic qualities in the other person. When the Torah says "Love your fellow man like yourself," the "yourself" referred to is that same human quality (Leviticus 19,18).

Akeidat Yitzchak 56:1:6 Exodus Rabbah 81, says, "had the nations realised the value of the tabernacle, they would have built castles surrounding it." Until that time, the nations heard the voice of G-d, and whenever something occurred that was inexplicable in terms of natural law, they were frightened. Once hashgachah peratit became a fact in the life of Israel, supernatural events no longer automatically caused panic among the nations of the world. Nebuchadnezzar's experience with the three men who were saved from the furnace, and Daniel who was saved from the lions, are examples of this. (Daniel chapter 3) However, as stated, among the gentiles such occurrences are rare and serve exceptional circumstances, whereas among the Jewish people such events became frequent, almost commonplace as long as the Jewish people were loyal to G-d and the Torah. Some Israelites, of course, treat such awareness as being of secondary significance in their daily lives, though they are aware of G-d and His power. Such people do not rate Divine intervention if and when it would be the only thing that can save them. People like that are like village dwellers who know that a king rules in the capital, but who are not even aware of the king's name, status, etc. Such people are no better than the best of the gentiles, except that they are saved from destruction because of the people around them who do not deserve to be destroyed. Another category are those who, while calling on the G-d of Jacob and wishing to know His whereabouts, are still not close to Him and His temple, like city dwellers who while aware of the palace and who it is that resides in it, content themselves to have dealings only with the king's lowest ranking servants. This group does not deserve Divine intervention on its behalf, and would be saved only by a nissim nistar, a hidden miracle, which occurs daily and is not credited as proof that the hand of G-d is at work. The third category are those who are fully devoted to the king, who register joyfully to offer him their services. Such people are as if at home in the king's palace, the king knows them and the work they perform for him. It is this kind of person who on occasion rates Divine intervention to protect him, and on whose behalf the king does not hesitate to change the laws temporarily. Such a person, in turn, becomes the instrument by means of which G-d's omnipotence and awareness of what occurs in each person's life is demonstrated. It is the prayer of Moses in Psalm 90, that Israel's deeds be such that they can merit Divine intervention at all times, (last verse) After that, Moses details various aspects of hashgachah peratit in Psalm 91. First, he refers to those who complain about the hidden nature of Divine manifestations and tells such people not to worry. G-d would protect them even if the person himself will be unaware how this is done. "For He will save you." If you attain a greater degree of closeness, you will even qualify for protection against commonplace dangers "because His angels he will command for you." This is still not the level of nissim geluyim, visible miracles, since such things as stepping on vipers underfoot do not make the headlines when we speak about hashgachah peratit going out of its way. The help experienced by the likes of Daniel, when the scoffers who attributed his survival to the fact that the lions had not been hungry, were thrown into the same pit and consumed by the lions, demonstrated that kind of hashgachah peratit. Darius' letter proclaiming the power of the Almighty and other such examples, testify to the power of G-d. The reason that such miracles occur, is to enhance G-d's reputation among the gentiles. Moses states in Psalms 91, 14, "for he has clung to Me, therefore I will deliver him, I will elevate him because he knew My name." In Psalm 98,9, we find Moses acknowledging that G-d judges the world in fairness. This in itself is unnatural, since natural law would favour the physically strong over their weaker adversaries. Only the special blessing "and the fear of you and the dread of you will be on all the living creatures of the earth," (Genesis 9, 2) enables physically inferior man to extend his dominion over

the more powerful animal kingdom. This blessing, however, is restricted to deserving man. In that Psalm then, homage is paid to the miracle that notwithstanding inferior status, justice prevails over brute force. This is viewed as a manifestation of hashgachah peratit. Israel is as powerful relative to other nations, as animals are to man. The condition in either case is the preservation of the tzelem elokim the Divine image, in accordance with the respective demands made upon either "man" or "Israel." The prophecy concerning "the latter days" in Isaiah chapter eleven, in which powerful animals are described as no longer molesting the weaker species, is the vision of a world when natural law will have ceased to prevail. Since the degree of personal intervention is in direct proportion to the degree of saintliness of the persons concerned, as we have demonstrated, extraordinary examples of such intervention may occur from time to time, testifying to the deserving nature of the person for whose sake they occur. Once we have seen that quality and not quantity governs the value G-d places on human beings, the fact that we are told that G-d selected the Jewish people "not because of your numerical strength" begins to assume some significance. "For you are numerically smallest" (Deut.7,7) means from you I expect what can be expected only from the select few, due to their elevated moral standards G-d's army is not distinguished by the number of its divisions, but by the excellence of its soldiers. The Exodus from Egypt became possible not due to collective endeavour, but because of the merit of a few select individuals, especially the ones already in their graves, who had been the recipients of G-d's oath due to their merit.

(Abraham)

Akeidat Yitzchak 92:1:4 It is well known that the meaning of the word yir-ah, is twofold. One meaning is the instinctive unreasoning fear of a physically stronger phenomenon, a fear common to both man and beast. Jacob, fearing defeat at the hands of Esau, prays to G'd for help, lest Esau smite both him and his family. (Genesis 32,10-13) Isaac, who is afraid to be murdered on account of his wife, indulges in a white lie. (Genesis 26,7) Another kind of fear is that which recognises superior moral or intellectual qualities in someone whom one confronts. In effect, this fear is reverence. When Miriam and Aaron discussed Moses' marital relationship, (Numbers 12,2) G'd takes them to task for having failed to display that degree of reverence that is due a prophet of Moses' calibre. The Mishnah in Avot 4,15, urges that reverence for one's teacher should be on a level similar to that accorded the Almighty Himself. Whereas the former kind of fear is common both to the sinner and the devout person, the latter, i.e. reverence is a form of fear that sinners do not know. Proverbs 10,24, states: "the fear of the wicked, it shall come upon him, but the desire of the righteous will be granted." The thing that the wicked is afraid of will happen to him, the pious however, will not be denied, since his adversary can sense his moral superiority. G'd promises that the Canaanites will be awed by the Jewish people in this fashion when the latter are about to invade their land. "The fear of you and the reverence for you, the Lord will implant on all the face of the earth." (Deut 11,25) The most interesting example we find of this phenomenon is the account of Saul, who tries to kill David. (Samuel I chapter 18) He tried to make David's death (intended) appear like an accident, and that is why David did not run for his life at once. Twice, during the playing of the harp, David had turned his head at the precise moment Saul had thrown his spear at him. Saul, who realised that David's escape was not accidental, had previously only feared David as a formidable warrior. Now, however, he also developed reverence for him, seeing G'd had so obviously protected him. (verses 12-15) Verse thirteen refers to the reverence, verse sixteen to the fear of an adversary of known superiority. Saul had experienced similar feelings when his efforts to trick David into being killed by the Philistines had failed. At that time he had let it be known that he would give David his daughter in marriage in return for a dowry of one hundred Philistine foreskins, (ibid, especially verse nine) Other examples of fear and terror are found in Psalms 33,8 and 9. Psalms 68,4, and Jeremiah 5,22. On the other hand, the reverence of the righteous is not based on terror. Compare Psalms 34,10 as well as Psalms 145 and 147. The yereyim are not full of terror, but await G'd's kindness with confidence. We must now examine what kind of fear is referred to in our Parshah in chapter 10,22. It is unlikely that Moses would refer to the fear common to man and beast, since one would then have to assume that G'd's main purpose is for man to relive experiences that would remind him of moments of fear and terror. His service of the Lord then would be based only on man's terrifying awareness of G'd's superior power, His ability to punish man. When under the influence of such terror, truthfulness can easily be turned into falsehoods told because one hopes to escape detection of one's sins. Such untruths would then not even be sinful. We find Abraham calling his wife his sister. Isaac does so likewise, each one having feared for his life at the time. (Genesis 12,10 and 20,6) Joseph's brothers told him of a supposed statement by their father Jacob. They too had been motivated by fear that Joseph would revenge himself now that their father had died. Aaron had agreed to make the golden calf after having seen Chur killed. (Sanhedrin 7) It is therefore quite unthinkable that this is the kind of "fear" that G'd asks of the Jewish people. In fact the whole concept of free will would be demolished if that were to be the basis of our relationship with G'd. The statement of Rabbi Abdima ben Chana (Shabbat 88) that G'd had threatened the Jewish people with annihilation should they fail to accept the Torah

at Mount Sinai, is used as evidence that contracts entered into under duress are not binding. Also, it would not make sense if the Talmud in Berachot 33, had described the attainment of fear as a minor accomplishment for the likes of Moses. Surely, any person could possess that kind of fear without even half trying. One certainly would not have to be a Moses to live in terror of G'ds power. On the other hand, if what is meant in our Parshah is reverence inspired by awareness of G'ds many attributes, then such a demand would seem to be the ultimate demand that can be made of any human being. Certainly such a demand ought not to be described as a very modest request. Intellectual awareness of the need for such reverence vis a vis G'd and all He stands for, may indeed be relatively easy to attain, but a lifetime filled with constant awareness of this reverence seems more than can be reasonably expected from any individual. Even of Moses himself it is said: "He turned his face away since he was afraid to look upon G'd." The Torah compliments Moses on this yir-ah, reverence. If a Moses deserves special mention for displaying such reverence, it cannot be come by easily by lesser mortals. (Exodus 2,6)