

THE LAWS OF REPENTANCE

These chapters discuss the single positive commandment to confess and return to God if one sinned.

CHAPTER ONE

This chapter discusses levels of repentance, sins which are forgiven immediately upon repentance, and sins which are forgiven only after some time after repentance.

1) If one transgressed any commandment of the Torah, whether a positive or a negative one, whether deliberately or accidentally, then when one repents one has to confess verbally to God, for it is written, "When a man or a woman commits any sin that people commit...then they shall confess their sin which they have done". This means verbal confession, which is commanded positively to do, and is performed by saying, 'O Lord, I have sinned, transgressed and rebelled before You, and have done such- and-such, and I am ashamed by my actions and will never do it again'. This is the main part of verbal confession, and expanding on it is praiseworthy. A sin- or guilt-offering when brought because of sins committed either deliberately or accidentally are of no effect unless the person bringing it repents and confesses verbally, for it is written, "...that he shall confess that he has sinned in that matter". Similarly, capital and corporal punishment do not atone unless the recipient repents and confesses verbally. Likewise, if one does financial damage to someone one is not forgiven unless one repents and resolves never to do it again, even if one paid back the money, for it is written, "...any sin that people commit".

2) The goat sent to Azazel on the Day of Atonement is an atonement for all of Israel. The High Priest confesses verbally over it for all Jews, as it is written, "...and confesses over it all the iniquities of the Children of Israel". This goat atones for all transgressions of whatever severity of any of the Torah's commandments, whether they were committed deliberately or accidentally, whether the transgressor had confessed or not, provided that the guilty parties had repented, for without repentance the goat sent to Azazel repents only for the less-severe transgressions. Severe transgression are those which a Court of Law can punish by death, or which carry a penalty of excision, and also false oaths and falsehood, even though they do not bear a penalty of excision. Transgressions of negative commandments or other transgressions the transgression of which does not carry a penalty of excision are considered less-severe.

3) In this day and age we have only repentance, for we don't have the Temple and Altar. This repentance [that we have to do nowadays] can atone for all sins. Even a person who was wicked throughout his life but at the end repented does not have any of his wickedness remembered, as it is written, "...as for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not stumble because in the end he turned from his wickedness". The very aspect of the Day of Atonement atones for penitents, for it is written, "For on that day He will forgive you".

4) Even though repentance atones for all transgressions, as does the very aspect of the Day of Atonement, there are nevertheless some sins which are not atoned for immediately upon repentance, and there are some which are atoned only after some interval [after repentance]. If, for example, one had transgressed a positive commandment which does not carry a penalty of excision and one then repented, one is not atoned until one has been forgiven,, for it is written, "Return, faithless children, and I will restore your decline". If, for example, one had transgressed a negative commandment which does not carry a penalty of excision or death and one then repented, then one's repentance is held in suspense, and the Day of Atonement completes the atonement, for it is written, "For on that day He will forgive you"⁶. If, for example, one had transgressed a commandment which carries a penalty of excision or death and one then repented, then one's repentance and the atonement of the Day of Atonement are held in suspense, and one's death completes the atonement. Full atonement is never really achieved until the punishment is carried out, for it is written, "...then I will punish their transgression with the reed, and their iniquities with lashes". This is talking only about a situation where one hadn't desecrated God's Name when one transgressed, but if one had desecrated God's Name then even if one repented and the Day of

Atonement arrived and one received one's punishment, one's atonement is completed only after one's death, for it is written, "And it was revealed to me by the Lord of Hosts; surely this iniquity shall not be forgiven for you till you die".

CHAPTER TWO

This chapter discusses complete repentance, at what times repentance is especially received, those sins which have to be publicized at the time of repentance, and how to ask forgiveness from someone else.

1) Repentance is completed when an opportunity to commit one's original transgression again arises but one doesn't and repents instead, but not if the reason for repenting was that someone was watching or because of physical weakness. For example, if one copulated in sin with one's wife, and then later one had another opportunity to do it again but didn't, then even though one may still love her and she may be in perfect physical health and was even in the same country [when the opportunity arose], one has repented completely. Solomon said, "Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come, and the years draw near when you shall say, 'I have no pleasure in them'". If one repented only one's old age, or at a time when one can no longer commit the original sin, then it is not the best type of repentance, but it is to his advantage and is nevertheless repentance. Even if one sinned throughout one's life but repented on one's dying day and died atoned, then all one's sins are forgiven, as it is written, "...before the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars are darkened, and the clouds return after the rain", which refers to the day of one's death. The general rule is that one is forgiven provided one repented before dying.

2) What exactly is repentance? Repentance involves forsaking sins and removing such thoughts from one's way of thinking and resolving firmly never to do it again, as it is written, "Let the wicked man forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return to the Lord". One should also be remorseful over what one has done, as it is written, "For after I had returned away I repented". One also has to testify to God that one will never return to that sin, as it is written, "...nor shall we say any more to the work of our hands". All of these three declarations have to be made out loud.

3) Anybody who follows this procedure but does not resolve in his heart never to do it again is like someone who ritual immerses himself [in a mikveh] while holding a defiling object in his hand, for in that case the ritual immersion is useless. It has been said, "Whoever confesses and forsakes his sins shall have mercy". One also has to detail one's sin, for it is written, "Oh, this people has committed a great sin, and they have made for themselves gods of gold".

4) One of the ways to repent is to cry out to the Lord with supplications, to give as much to charity as one can, to remove oneself as far as possible from the original sin, to change one's name, thereby saying that one is not the person who did those sins but that one is someone else, and one also has to change one's actions for the better and to be upright in character. One should also exile oneself from one's hometown, for exile atones for sins, for this will cause one to be subdued, humble and meek.

5) It is very praiseworthy for a repentant to confess verbally in public, and to reveal any sin which he committed against someone else, by saying, 'It is true that I have sinned against so-and-so and did such-and-such, but I hereby regret it and am doing repentance'. Anybody who hides his sins and does not make this declaration has not done full repentance, for it is written, "He who covers up his sins shall not prosper". This is talking only about sins committed against one's fellow man, but one does not have to publicize any sins against God. Nevertheless, one is being insolent if one hides them, and one has to declare one's sins in public to God. It is better if one doesn't reveal one's sins [against God], for it is written, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered".

6) Even though repentance and pleading for forgiveness are always appropriate, they are even more appropriate in the ten days between New Year and the Day of Atonement, when they are accepted immediately, as it is written, "Seek out the Lord while He may be found". This is referring to the repentance of an individual, but sincere communal repentance is always accepted, as it is written, "...as the Lord our God is in all things that we call him for?".

7) The Day of Atonement is a time of repentance for all, whether individually or with the community, and completes the pardoning and forgiving of Israel. Therefore, one is obligated to confess and repent on the Day of Atonement. It is also a mitzvah to recite a confession on the day before the Day of Atonement before eating the last meal before the fast, in case one chokes to death during the meal, so that one won't die without having confessed. Even though one may have confessed before this meal, one still confesses again at each of the five prayers - the evening prayer, the morning prayer, Musaf, the afternoon prayer, and Ne'ilah - on the Day of Atonement. An individual confesses after his prayer, whereas the Cantor confesses in the middle of the fourth blessing of his prayer.

8) The confession which all Jews recite starts, 'For we have sinned, et cetera'. This is the core of confession. Any sins which one may have committed on the Day of Atonement one repents for on the following day of Atonement, even though one is repenting at the time, for it is written, "For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me".

9) Repentance and the Day of Atonement atone only for sins, such as eating a forbidden food, having prohibited intercourse, et cetera, which are committed against God. Sins such as injuring, cursing, stealing, et cetera, which are committed against one's fellow man are never atoned for until one has paid any necessary fines to the person against whom one sinned, and discussed it with him. Even though one may have paid back any due money one still has to discuss the sin with him and ask for forgiveness. Even if one teased someone else just verbally one has to appease him and make up for it, in order that he will forgive one. If the person against whom one had sinned did not want to forgive one then one has to ask him for forgiveness in front of three of his friends. If he still didn't want to forgive one then one asks him in front of six, and then in front of nine, of his friends, and if he still didn't want to forgive him one leaves him and goes away. Anybody who does not want to forgive is a sinner. If one had to ask one's Rabbi for forgiveness, one has to approach him even a thousand times until one receives forgiveness.

10) It is forbidden for one to be harsh and non-appeasing. One should rather be forgiving and slow to anger, and whenever a sinner asks one for forgiveness one should grant it wholeheartedly. Even if the sinner had distressed one considerably and sinned against one a lot, one should/may not take revenge or bear a grudge, in the manner of a true Jew, and not like that of idolaters, who always bear grudges. Concerning the Gibeonites, who did not forgive or appease, it has been said, "The Gibeonites were not of the Children of Israel".

11) If one sinned against someone else and he died before one could ask forgiveness from him, then [in order to gain forgiveness] one has to go to his grave with ten people, where one says, 'I have sinned before the Lord, God of Israel, and to this person, for I did such-and-such to him'. If one had to pay him money, one pays it to his heirs instead. If one could not find any heirs, then one leaves the money in a Court of Law and confesses.

CHAPTER THREE

This chapter describes who is righteous, who is average and who is wicked, why the shofar is sounded on New Year, that pious gentiles have a share in the World To Come, the types of people who don't have a share in the World To Come, and defines an infidel and a heretic.

1) Each and every person has merits as well as sins. Somebody whose merits outnumber his sins is considered to be righteous, but somebody who has more sins than merits is a wicked person. Somebody who has equal amounts of merits and sins is an average person. Righteousness is when one's merits are more numerous than one's sins, and wickedness is when one's sins are more numerous. The whole world operates on this principle.

2) Somebody whose sins are more numerous than his merits will die because of his wickedness, as it is written, "...for the multitude of your iniquity". Similarly, a country which has a multitude of sins will be destroyed as a result, as it is written, "Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very serious, et cetera". In the same vein, if the sins of the entire world were more than its merits it will become corrupt as a result, as it is written, "And the Lord saw that the wickedness of Man was very great on the earth". This measuring system does not work on a one-for-one basis, as there are some merits which outweigh many sins, as it is written, "...because of him some good thing is found". On the other hand, there are some sins which

outweigh many merits, as it is written, "Wisdom is better than weapons of war, but one sinner destroys much good". Only God knows how to evaluate sins and merits in this respect.

3) Somebody who is casual about fulfilling mitzvot, regrets achieving merits, wants to know what he will gain from them and regrets having done them in the first place will lose everything and will have no merits at all, as it is written, "The righteousness of the righteous shall not save him on the day of his transgression", which is referring to someone who regrets earlier merits. Just as one's merits and sins are counted on the day of one's death, so also are they counted on New Year. Anyone who is found to be righteous will continue living, whereas anyone found to be wicked will have death decreed against him. An average person is held in suspense until the Day of Atonement - if he repented he will continue to live, but if not he will be decreed to die.

4) Even though the sounding of the shofar on New Year is a statute of the Torah, it nevertheless carries a message, instructing sinners to arouse, become aware of their actions, and repent, for anyone who has forgotten the truth and engaged in useless activities to give up such activities, and for everyone to give up their bad ways and return to the good. Therefore, one has to see oneself throughout the year as having an equal number of merits and sins, which is the same outlook that the whole world should have. If one committed a sin, one is damaging and corrupting both oneself and the whole world. When one achieves a merit one brings salvation to oneself and to the whole world, as it is written, "...but the righteous is an everlasting foundation". Somebody who is righteous is supporting and saving the world. Because of this, all Jews have the custom to engage in more charitable, righteous and meritable acts between New Year and the Day of Atonement than normal. They all are also accustomed to getting up during the night during this period to pray in matters of supplication in the synagogue until daybreak.

5) When one's transgression are evaluated, one's first two transgressions are not counted, and the counting starts from the third transgression. If one's transgressions as counted in this way are more than one's merits, then the first two [uncounted] transgressions are now counted in order to tip the balance. If the number of one's merits and the number of one's transgressions when counted from one's third transgression were equal, then one's transgressions are recounted from the fourth one, and then from the fifth one, and so on in steps of one, for when the third one is counted as the first one it has pardoned the first two, and when the fourth one is counted as the first one it has pardoned the third one. Counting in this way is continued until no transgressions are left. This process is carried out only with an individual, as it is written, "God does all these things twice or three times with a man". The transgressions of a congregation, however, are counted from the fourth one onwards, as it is written, "For three transgressions of Israel I will turn punishment away, but for the fourth I will not turn away his punishment". {When the transgressions of a congregation are counted they are counted from the fourth one onwards.} Concerning someone who has an equal number of merits as sins: If his transgressions included never having put on tephillin then he is judged according to his sins but still has a share in the World To Come - every Jew has a share in the World To Come even if he sinned, for it is written, "Your people also shall be righteous; they shall inherit the land for ever". The word 'land' here refers to the Land Of Life, namely the World To Come. Similarly, pious gentiles also have a share in the World To Come.

6) The following types of people have no share in the World to Come, and are cut off, destroyed and excommunicated for ever on account of their very great sins and wickedness: An infidel; a heretic; one who denies the Torah; one who denies that there will be a Resurrection; one who denies that there will be a Redemption; one who converts from Judaism; one who causes a lot of people to sin; one who withdraws from communal ways; one who publicly sins in a defiant way like Jehoiakim did; an informer [against Jews]; one who instills fear in the congregation but not in the Name of God; a murderer; one who relates loshan ho'rah; and one who pulls back his foreskin [in order to cover his brit milah].

7) Five types of people are classified as infidels: One who says that there is no God and that there never has been a Leader; one who admits that there is a Leader but that there is more than one; one who admits that there is a single God but that He has a body and form; one who says that God is not the first and that He did not create everything; and one who worships a star or constellation in order for there to be an advocate between himself and God. Each of these opinions counts as infidelity.

8) There are three types of heretic: One who says that there is no Prophecy at all and that there is no knowledge given by God to men; one who refutes the Prophecy of Moses; and one who says that God doesn't know the actions of men. There are three types of people who deny the Torah: One who says that the Torah is not Divine (even if he says this about just one sentence or word) and says that Moses wrote the Torah by himself; one who denies the explanations of the Torah, i.e. the Oral Law, and refutes its preachers in the way that Zaddok and Baysoth did; and one who says that God substituted one mitzvah for another and invalidated the Torah, even if it was from God, in the way that Jesuites and Hagarites do. All of these opinions deny the Torah.

9) There are two types of opposer: One who opposes with respect to just one commandment; and one who opposes the whole Torah. Opposing with respect to just one commandment consists of accustoming oneself to committing deliberately, frequently and publicly a particular transgression, even if the transgression in question is one of the lesser ones, such as persistently wearing forbidden mixtures of fibers, or not leaving the corner of one's field unharvested for the poor. This is as if one has permanently abolished for oneself the commandment in question, and one is an opposer with respect to this matter, provided that it was done to enrage. One who opposes the whole Torah is one who, when Jews are being persecuted, adopts the ways of the gentiles and remains with them, and says to himself, 'How unjust is my reward for being Jewish, by being humiliated and pursued; it is better that I side with the attackers'. Such a person is opposing the whole Torah.

10) How can one cause a lot of people to sin? One way involves a big sin, like what Jeroboam, Zaddok and Baysoth did, and another involves lesser transgressions, or even the abolishment of just a single positive commandment. Another way is to persecute people until they sin, in the manner of Menasseh, who killed Jews in order to make other Jews serve idols, and another way is to mislead people so that they leave the ways of mitzvot.

11) Someone who withdraws from communal ways, even if he didn't commit any sins, but differentiates himself from the congregation of Israel and does not fulfil any communal mitzvot or fast any of the communal fasts, but goes in his own ways like one of the gentile nations and as if he isn't a Jew, does not have a share in the World To Come. Someone who, like Jehoiakim, commits sins defiantly, whether the sins are major transgressions or lesser ones, does not have a share in the World To Come. This type of person is one who misinterprets the Torah because of acting in a defiant and brazen manner and was not ashamed to transgress the words of the Torah.

12) There are two types of informer: One who informs on his fellow Jew to gentiles such that he will be killed or beaten; and one who informs on his fellow Jew such that his money will fall into the hands of gentiles or into the hands of a brigand (who is regarded as a gentile in this respect). Both of these types of informer do not have a share in the World To Come.

13) Instilling fear in the congregation but not in the Name of God consists of tyrannizing the community with force so that one will be feared, but that one is doing so only for one's own glory and not for the glory of God. An example of such a person is a king of idolaters.

14) None of these twenty-four types of people has a share in the World To Come, even if he was Jewish. Some of these transgressions are less severe than others, but even so, the Sages said that anyone who accustoms himself to any of them has no share in the World To Come, and that it is [also] fitting to keep away from the following types of people: One who makes a [derogatory] nickname for someone else; one who calls someone else by such a nickname; one who publicly embarrasses someone else; one who enjoys seeing another being embarrassed; one who disgraces Sages; one who disgraces his Rabbis; one who desecrates the Festivals; and one who desecrates any of the holy sacrifices. People who do any of these things do not have a share in the World To Come if they died without having repented, but if they had returned from their wickedness and repented before dying they will receive a share in the World To Come, for there are no sins for which repentance does not atone. Even if one had denied everything throughout one's life but in the end repented on will still get a share in the World To Come, as it is written, "'Peace, peace, both for far and near', says the Lord, 'and I will heal him'". All wicked people, opposers and others, who repented, whether publicly or privately, still get a share in the World To Come, as it is written, "Return, faithless children, et cetera" - even if one is still faithless and one repented privately and not publicly, one will enter the World To Come in a state of repentance.

CHAPTER FOUR

This chapter lists twenty-four things that prevent repentance, and tells us that even so, there is nothing that stands in the way of repentance.

1) There are twenty-four things for which repentance cannot be done. Four of these are very great sins, and if one commits any of them God will not accept one's repentance on account of the seriousness of the sin. These four sins are as follows:

- (i) Causing a lot of people to sin. Included in this category is preventing a lot of people from fulfilling a mitzvah.
- (ii) Bringing one's fellow from good to bad, e.g. by enticing or influencing him.
- (iii) Not preventing one's son from entering a bad culture. Since one's son is in one's charge, then if one had tried to prevent him he wouldn't have entered the bad culture, so it is as if one has caused him to sin. Included in this category is not preventing another person or persons from doing wrong but instead leaving them to their failings.
- (iv) Sinning with the intention of repenting afterwards. Included in this category is sinning with the intention of waiting for the Day of Atonement to atone one.

2) There are five sins which lock the Gates of Repentance for one, and they are as follows:

- (i) Disassociating oneself from the community, for at a time when they repent one won't be associated with them or with the merit of their repentance.
- (ii) Arguing with the words of the Sages, for arguing like this causes one to disassociate, whereupon one won't know [how to reach] the Gates of Repentance.
- (iii) Mocking the mitzvot, which makes them as nothing in one's own opinion, so that one won't fulfil them - if one doesn't fulfil them, how else will one achieve merits?!
- (iv) Disgracing one's Rabbis, for doing this will cause one to be pushed and loathed like Gehazi, and when one is bothered it will transpire that one is not learning, or being taught, the true way.
- (v) Hating the rebukes [in the Torah], for this obstructs repentance. Rebuke leads to repentance.

When one remembers one's sins and is humiliated by them, one will repent, as it is written, "Remember, and don't forget, how you provoked the Lord your God to anger...you have been rebellious, et cetera", and it is also written, "Yet the Lord has not given you a heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, until this day", and it is also written, "Do you thus requite the Lord, O foolish and unwise people? Is He not your father who bought you?". Isaiah similarly rebuked the Jews by saying, "Ah, sinful nation, a people loaded with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that deal corruptly", and, "The ox knows his owner, and the ass his master's crib, but Israel does not know, my people does not consider", and, "Because I know that you are obstinate and your neck is an iron sinew and your forehead brass". In this vein the Lord has commanded us to rebuke sinners, as it is written, "Cry aloud, do not spare, raise your voice like a shofar and show my people their transgression". Similarly, all the Prophets rebuked the Jews until they repented. Therefore, in each and every Jewish community, a wise, God-fearing and great person who is loved by everyone should rise up, rebuke everybody and make them repent. One who hates rebukes will not be affected by them and will remain with his sins, which in his opinion are good.

3) There are five sins for which there is no complete repentance, because they are sins committed against one's fellow man but one doesn't know against whom exactly one had sinned in order to [be able to] pay him back or ask for forgiveness. These sins are as follows:

- (i) Cursing a group of people, but not a particular person, for then one can ask an individual for forgiveness.

(ii) Teaming up with a thief, because one doesn't to whom the stolen articles belong. The thief steals from many people and brings the stolen goods to one, which one accepts. Furthermore, this is encouraging the thief to steal, thereby one is causing him to sin.

(iii) Finding a lost article and not searching for its owner. When, after some time, one repents, one will not know to whom to return it.

(iv) Using charity which has been set aside for poor people, orphans and widows. Such people are miserable and not very well known, move around a lot from town to town, and hardly anybody knows them. Anybody who uses their charity won't know to whom to pay it back.

(v) Accepting a bribe in order to bias a judgement. One who does so will not feel as though he is having is judgement affected and so will not correct it, for this matter is uncontrollable. Furthermore, one is causing the briber to sin.

4) There are five sins for which one [probably] won't repent, because in most people's opinions these are minor sins and not even considered as sins. These sins are as follows:

(i) Eating a meal such that one's host will have insufficient food for his next meal - this is also akin to theft. One who does this will not consider it a sin, and will try to justify it by saying that he had permission to eat.

(ii) Using the guarantee of a loan given to a poor person, for such an item would be a spade or plough. Somebody who acts in this way will think that the poor person isn't lacking the item and will not count it as theft.

(iii) Looking at the nakedness of any of one's close relatives. One who does this will think it as nothing, for the reason that he did not draw near to, or have intercourse with, her. He does not know that staring is a great sin and causes coition, as it is written, "...and that you do not stray after your own heart and your own eyes".

(iv) One who revels in the degradation of someone else will not consider it a sin, because the person in question was not standing there and was not shamed or embarrassed, but he is instead comparing that person's actions to his own so that he will be respected and the other person will be shamed.

(v) One who suspects properly-acting people [of sinning] will not consider it a sin, because he will think that he is not causing any damage, but that there is only suspicion present. He does not know that this is a great sin, for he is considering properly-acting people as sinners.

5) There are five sins to which people who commit them are attracted and find it difficult to retract from. Therefore, one has to be careful not to be attracted by them, for they all extremely bad temperaments. These sins include slander, tale-bearing, having bad thoughts, and making friends with a wicked person, because one will learn from his actions and will become wicked. Solomon said, "A companion of fools shall suffer harm". It has already been explained in the Laws of Temperaments what one has to accustom oneself to - how much more so a penitent [has to accustom himself to these things].

6) None of these sins completely prevents repentance, even though they may inhibit it. If somebody repented for having committed one of these sins his repentance is accepted, and he will get a share in the World To Come.

CHAPTER FIVE

This chapter explains the concept of free will, and how it is not opposed by God's knowledge of everything.

1) One has a free choice to follow either the good ways and to be righteous, or to follow the bad ways and be wicked. The Torah says, "Behold, the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil", i.e. there is only one Mankind in the world and that there is no other type with respect to this matter. One should decide one's opinions and thoughts for oneself, whether they will be good or bad, and to do what one wants. Nobody should influence one to do good or bad. Nevertheless, it is written, "What if he stretches out his hand, et cetera"¹.

2) Do not even consider what the stupid gentiles and most of the idiots of Israel say, that the Holy One, Blessed Be He, decrees upon each person at the time of birth whether he will be good or bad. This is not so - every person has the potential to be as righteous as Moses our Teacher, or as wicked as Jeroboam, clever or stupid, merciful or cruel, misery or noble, or indeed to possess any of the other temperaments. Nobody can force one, decree upon one, or lead one into one of the ways, but one should choose a way out of one's own free will. Jeremiah said, "Does not both good and evil come from the mouth of the most high?", i.e. that the Creator does not decree upon a person whether he will be good or bad. Nevertheless, a sinner damages himself, and it is therefore fitting for him to cry and eulogize on account of his sins and on what he has done to his soul by wrapping it with evil. Jeremiah further said, "Why then does a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?". By this he means that since it is in our own free will to do evil, it is [also] fitting for us to return in repentance and to leave our evils, for this is also in our free will. He further said, "Let us search and try our ways, and turn back to the Lord".

3) This matter [of there being a free will] is a very important principle, and is a support of the Torah and meritorious deeds, as it is written, "See, I have set before you on this day life and good, and death and evil". It is also written, "Behold, I set before you on this day a blessing and a curse". This is to say that one has the free will to do what one wants, whether it is good or bad. It is for this reason that it is written, "O that there were such a heart in them", i.e. the Creator does not force or decree upon anybody to do good or bad, but lets them choose.

4) If the Almighty did decree upon everybody to be righteous or wicked, or if there was something which guided one from birth to one of the many ways, knowledges, temperaments or ways of acting, like the stupid astrologers think, then how could we have been commanded by the Prophets to do one thing and not the other, to improve our ways and not to follow the wicked people?! Has one's destiny been decreed upon one at birth, or does the time of one's birth govern one's destiny irrevocably? Where does the Torah fit into all this? Which law or statute disturbs a wicked person but rewards a righteous one? Do not consider and ponder how a one can have a free will and do what one wants, for there are things in the world over which one has not control, as Scripture says, "Whatever the Lord wishes He has done in heaven and on earth" - recognize that everything was made according to His wishes, even though our actions can affect them. What does this mean? Just as it is the Creator's will that the fire and wind rise up, that the water and earth sink down, that the spheres move in circles, and that all creations will do what He wants them to do, so is it also the Creator's will that men should have a free will and should be allowed to do what they want without having to be forced or directed, but should always want to do [what they do] out of their own minds, which the Almighty has given to them. Therefore, one is judged according to one's actions, whether they are good or bad. The Prophets have said, "...this has been your own doing", and, "For they have chosen their own ways". Solomon said on this subject, "Rejoice, O young men, in your youth...but know that for all these things God will bring you into judgement". This is to say that one has the potential to do what one wants, but that one will be judged accordingly.

5) The Holy One, Blessed Be He, knows everything that will happen before it has happened, so does He know whether a particular person will be righteous or wicked, or not? If He does know, then it will be impossible for that person not to be righteous. If He knows that he will be righteous but that it is possible for him to be wicked, then He doesn't know everything that He has created. To prevent one from thinking on this subject, know that the explanation of this paradox is very long and complicated, and that there are many important principles which depend on it. One first has to understand that I am talking about the following: I have already explained in the second chapter of the Laws of The Basic Principles of The Torah that the Holy One, Blessed Be He, does not have any temperaments and is outside such realms, unlike people, whose selves and temperaments are two separate things. God and His temperaments are one, and God's existence is beyond the comprehension of Man. just as one cannot comprehend or behold the Creator's existence, as it is written, "...for no man shall see Me and live", so is it also beyond one's capabilities to comprehend or behold His temperaments. One of the Prophets said, "'For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are My ways your ways', says the Lord". Nevertheless, we do not have the capabilities to comprehend how the Holy One, Blessed Be He, knows all creations and events. Know without doubt that people do what they want without the Holy One, Blessed Be He, forcing or decreeing upon them to do so. Do not accept this fact solely because of religious acceptance, but out of common sense. It has been said because of this that a man is judged according to all his actions - if they are good or bad. This is the principle on which all prophecies are dependant.

CHAPTER SIX

This chapter discusses how verses in the Torah are interpreted, and how one's existence is apparently governed by one's actions.

1) There are many verses in the Torah and the words of the Prophets which would appear to contradict this principle [of free will]. Most people deduce from these verses and make it their opinion that the Holy One, Blessed Be He, decrees upon a person whether he will do good or bad and that one's will is not given to one for doing what one wants. I am hereby going to explain a major principle from which a means of explaining such verses can be deduced - when a person, or the people of a country, sins, and commits a sin out of free will and with the knowledge that it is a sin, then it is fitting to treat him (or them) accordingly. The Holy One, Blessed Be He, knows how to treat him (or them) accordingly: there are some sins which the Law punishes in this world, whether physically, financially or through one's small children, for one's children who are so small that their intelligence has not yet started to develop and who have not yet started to fulfil mitzvot are considered merely as possessions, and it is written, "Every man shall be put to death for his own sin", but not before he has become a man. There are some sins which the Law punishes in the World to Come and for which people who commit them do not suffer in this world. There are also some sins which are punished in both worlds.

2) This is talking about someone who didn't repent. If he did repent, then his repentance is like a shield in front of punishment. Just as one can commit sins knowingly and out of one's own free will, so can one also repent knowingly and out of one's own free will.

3) It is possible to commit a great sin or a number of sins until one comes before the True Judge for judgement, but one's punishment will be according to the sins which one had committed knowingly and willingly, which hinder repentance and do not allow one to return from one's wickedness, so one will therefore die and be destroyed because of one's sin. The Holy One, Blessed Be He, said through Isaiah, "Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and smear over their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and return, and be healed". It is similarly written, "But they mocked God's messengers, and despised His words, and scoffed His Prophets, until the Lord's wrath mounted against His people, till there was no remedy". This is saying that they sinned willingly and their iniquities were numerous, until we were obligated to suppress their repentance, repentance being the 'remedy'. Therefore, the Torah says, "And I will harden Pharaoh's heart" - because he initially sinned willingly and caused bad for the Jews living in his country, as it is written, "Come, let us deal wisely with them", the Law permitted the suppression of his repentance until it was denied to him. Therefore, the holy One, Blessed Be He, hardened his heart. So then why did He send Moses to say, "Send them, and repent" when He had already decided that he won't send them, as it is written, "But as for you and your servants, I know that you will not yet fear the Lord God", and, "And in very deed for this cause I have raised you up, to show My power by you; and that My Name may be proclaimed throughout the whole world"? This was to make it known to Mankind that once the Holy One, Blessed Be He, denies repentance to a sinner he cannot return, and will die on account of his initial and willing wickedness. Similarly with Sihon - since he had committed so many sins he was denied repentance, as it is written, "...for the Lord your God hardened his spirit and made his heart obstinate". Also with respect to the Canaanites, to whom repentance was denied on account of their abominations until they fought with Israel, as it is written, "For it was of the Lord to harden their hearts, that they should come against Israel in battle, that He may totally destroy them", that is to say that they were denied repentance. It transpires from this that it was not decreed upon him to harm Israel, or on Sihon to sin in his land, or on the Canaanites to commit acts of abomination, or on Israel to worship idols, but all of them sinned willingly, and were therefore liable to being denied repentance.

4) On this subject, the righteous people and Prophets have requested of God in their prayers to Him to guide them on the true path, like David said: "Teach me Your way, O Lord; I will walk with Your truth", that is to say, 'Don't deny me the way of truth because of my sins, for by this path I will now Your ways and the Oneness of your Name'. It has similarly been said: "...and uphold me with a willing spirit", that is to say, 'Adjust my spirit so that it will do what You want, and don't let my sins cause a denial of repentance, but the power to do what I want should be in my hands until I understand, know and return to the true path'. All similar verses should be understood in this way.

5) What did David mean when he said, "Good and upright is the Lord - therefore He instructs sinners in the way, He directs the humble in justice, and He shows the meek His way"? This is referring to the Prophets who were sent to publicize the ways of God and to make the people return by repentance. Furthermore, people have been given the power to learn and understand. This is characteristic of any person: So long as he is pulled by the ways of wisdom and righteousness he is attracted by them and will pursue them. The Rabbis, of blessed memory, said that we should purify those who follow these ways, i.e. that one will find oneself helped in this matter. It is written in the Torah, "...and shall serve them, and they will afflict them" - was it decreed upon the Egyptians that they will do bad? It is also written, "...and this people will rise up, and go astray after the gods of the strangers of the land" - apparently it was decreed upon the Jews to serve idols, so why is he disturbed by them? The decree was not made upon a particular person about whom it was known that he would commit adultery, but out of all those adulterous people, if there was someone who didn't want to be idolatrous as well then he didn't have to, so he wouldn't have served, and so the Creator would have made known [to Moses] only the ways of the world. This is similar to saying that there will be both righteous people and wicked people amongst the nation. It is not because of this that a wicked person will say to himself that it has been decreed upon him for him to be wicked, for it was made known to Moses that there will be wicked Jews, as it is written, "For the poor shall never cease out of the land". It was the same with the Egyptians - of all the Egyptians and [other] persecutors of the Jews, if one of them had not wanted to persecute us he wouldn't have, for such decrees [to persecute the Jews] are not made on individual people. It was, however, made known to Abraham that his children will, in the future, be enslaved. We have already said that it is beyond one's capabilities to understand how the Holy One, Blessed Be He, can know things that will occur in the future.

CHAPTER SEVEN

This chapter discusses the ways of a penitent, and how wonderful his level is.

- 1) Since, as explained, one has the freedom to do what one wants, one should endeavour to repent, to confess verbally and to keep away from sins, so that when one dies one will have the status of a repented person, and will merit life in the World To Come.
- 2) One should consider oneself as if one is about to die [and one that one should therefore repent], in case one dies without having repented. Therefore, one should repent immediately and not wait until one becomes obligated to, in case one dies first. Solomon said in his wisdom, "Let your garments always be white".
- 3) Do not think that repentance is only for sins which involve an action, sins such as adultery, theft and robbery, but just as one has to repent if one committed such sins, so also does one have to seek out one's bad characteristics and abandon [those such as] anger, hatred, jealousy, jesting, financial greed, honour, megalomania and similar characteristics - one has to return in repentance from all of these. These are the more serious sins which involve an action, for once one sinks into them it is very difficult to leave them. It is written with reference to this, "Let the wicked abandon his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts".
- 4) Somebody who repents should not consider himself as being far below the standard of righteous people because of the sins and misdeeds which he committed. This is not so - he is loved and endeared by the Creator as if he had never sinned. Furthermore, his reward is very great, for he had tasted sin but nevertheless turned away from it, and conquered his inclinations. The Sages said that the perfectly righteous people can't stand in the rank of a penitent, i.e. a penitent's standard is higher than that of someone who had never sinned, for [the reason that] a penitent exercises more control over his inclinations.
- 5) All the Prophets commanded us to repent, for Israel cannot be redeemed without having repented. The Torah has already promised that Israel will repent at the end of her exile and will then be redeemed immediately, as it is written, "And it shall come to pass when all these things have happened...and shall return to the Lord your God...and then the Lord your God will turn your captivity, and have compassion on you, and will return and gather you from all the nations, amongst whom the Lord your God has scattered you".
- 6) Great is repentance which draws a person near to the Divine Presence, as it is written, "O Israel, return to the Lord your God". It is also written, "'Yet you have not returned to Me', says the Lord", and it is also written, "'If

you will return, O Israel', says the Lord, 'return to Me'" - i.e. if we return in repentance we will be attached to God. Repentance draws near [even] those who are far away - one day someone can be hated by God as an abomination and a distant loathsome object, and [through repentance] he can be loved the next day, and be [held] close and endeared. One sees in this manner with the same phraseology that the Holy One, Blessed Be He, repels the sinners He [also] attracts the penitents, whether singly or in numbers, as it is written, "And it shall come to pass that instead of that which was said to them, 'you are not My people', it shall be said to them, 'You are the sons of the living God'". It is written about the wickedness of Jechoniah, "Write this man childless, a man that shall not prosper during his life", and, "If Konaih the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, were the signet on my right hand, yet would I tear you off". Since he returned from exile, it is said about Zerubbabel his son, "'On that day', says the Lord of Hosts, 'I will take you, O Zerubbabel My servant, the son of Shealtiel' says the Lord, 'and will make you like a signet ring'".

7) How wonderful is the uplifting of repentance! Somebody can, on one day, be separated from the Lord, God of Israel, as it is written, "Your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God"; we beg but are ignored, as it is written, "...even when you make many prayers I will not hear"; we perform mitzvot but they are discarded by Him, as it is written, "...who has required this at your hand, to trample my courts?", and, "'O that there were one among you who would shut the doors that you might not kindle fire on My Altar for nothing! I have no pleasure in you', says the Lord of Hosts, 'nor will I accept an offering at your hand" - and on the next day he can attached to the Divine Presence, as it is written, "But you who cleaved of the Lord your God"; he begs and is answered immediately, as it is written, "And it shall come to pass, that before they call I will answer"; he performs mitzvot and they are accepted with repose and joy, as it is written, "...for God has already accepted you works". Furthermore, God prefers such people, as it is written, "Then shall the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant to the Lord, as in the days of old, and as in former years".

8) The manner of penitents is to be meek and humble. If fools tease them about their previous actions by saying, 'Yesterday you used to do such-and-such; yesterday you used to say such-and-such', then they shouldn't feel badly towards them, but should listen carefully and rejoice by knowing that this [teasing] is a merit for them, for whenever they are shamed about their previous actions and are ashamed of them, their merits are increased and their standard improves. It is an outright sin to say to a penitent, 'Remember your previous actions!', or to mention them in his presence in order to embarrass him, or to mention matters or topics which are similar [to his previous actions] in order to remind him of his previous actions - it is forbidden to do any of these. This is warned against by the Torah in the concept of causing pain with words, as it is written, "You shall not therefore defraud each other".

CHAPTER EIGHT

This chapter discusses the reward of the righteous and the punishment of the wicked in the World To Come, and what existence there is like.

1) The goodness reserved for the righteous is life in the World To Come. Such life is life without death, and has goodness without badness. It is written in the Torah, "...that it may be well with you, and that you may prolong your life". According to a tradition, we learn that the words, 'that it may be well with you' refer to a world where all is good, and that the words, 'and that you prolong your life' refer to a world which is eternal, i.e. the World To Come. The reward of righteous people is that they will receive this pleasantry and goodness, whereas the punishment of the wicked is that they will not receive this life, but are cut off and die. Anybody who does not receive this life dies without receiving an eternal afterlife, and is cut off on account of his wickedness and is lost like an animal. This is the cutting-off which is mentioned in the Torah, such as when it is written, "...that soul shall be utterly cut off". According to a tradition we learn that the words, 'cut off' refer to being cut off from this world, and that the word, 'utterly' comes to include [being cut off from] the World To Come, i.e. that soul which was separated from its body in this world will not merit life in the World To Come, but is cut off from there as well.

2) Life in the World To Come does not involve a body or an inner body. The World To Come is inhabited by souls of the righteous people without their bodies, like the ministering angels. Since they do not have any bodies they don't need to eat or drink, nor do they need to do any of the things which men's bodies in this world need,

and nor do they do any of the things which people in this world do with their bodies, such as standing, sitting, sleeping, dying, feeling pain, acting frivolously, et cetera. The first Sages said that in the World To Come there is no eating, drinking or coition, but that the righteous people sit with their crowns on their heads and benefit from the radiance of the Divine Presence. This shows that because there is no eating or drinking there is no [physical] body. When they said that the righteous people sit they meant it figuratively, i.e the righteous people are there, without laboring or pains. Similarly, when they said that the righteous people have crowns on their heads they were referring to the knowledge because of which they inherited a place in the World To Come. This knowledge is always with them, as is their crown, as Solomon said, "...with the crown with which his mother crowned him". It is also written, "..and everlasting joy shall be upon their head" - this is not physical pleasure which they will receive, but the crown of the Sages, i.e. knowledge. When they said that they will benefit from the radiance of the Divine Presence they meant that they will know and understand the existence of God in a manner that they couldn't while in their gloomy and paltry bodies.

3) Whenever the word `soul' is mentioned, it does not mean the soul-body combination but the actual soul itself, which is the understanding given by the Creator and which causes other understandings and actions. This is the form which was explained in the fourth chapter of the Laws of The Basic Principles of The Torah. It is called `soul' with respect to this matter. This life, which does not involve death, for the reason that death is an occurrence of the body, or a body is called the bond of life, as it is written, "Yet the soul of my lord shall be bound with the bond of life" - this is the reward above which there is no other rewards, and the goodness above which there is no other goodness, and with which all the Prophets were granted.

4) Look how many figurative names this goodness has: "The mountain of the Lord" (Psalms 24:3) "The place of His Holiness" (ibid) "The holy way" (Isaiah 35:8) "And the courtyards of the Lord" (Psalms 92:14) "The beauty of the Lord" (Psalms 27:4) "The tent of the Lord" (Psalms 15:1) "The temple of the Lord" (Psalms 5:8) "The house of the Lord" (ibid) "The gate of the Lord" (Psalms 118:20), et cetera. By way of illustration, the Sages called this goodness an invitation to a `meal', which is always called the World To Come.

5) The ultimate revenge and punishment is the cutting off of the soul so that it won't enter the World To Come, as it is written, "...that soul shall utterly be cut off; his iniquity shall be upon him" - this is the destruction. This is what the Prophets figuratively called a pit of destruction, general destruction, a hearth, a leech, and all sorts of other forms of destruction and annihilation as well, for this is an irreversible annihilation, and a damage for which there is no remedy.

6) Do not under-rate this goodness by reckoning that the reward for mitzvot is not that one will be perfect on the way of truth, but that one will eat and drink good foods, involve oneself in coition with people of outstanding appearance, dress in purple embroidered clothes, live in a tent of ivory and use vessels of gold and silver, and have similar things, in the way that the stupid and adulterous Arabs occupy themselves. The Sages said that those who possess knowledge know that all these things are just rubbish and nonsense, and are useless. We have no goodness better than this in this world, for we have physical bodies. All these things are bodily requisites, and the soul desires and wants them only for the sake of the body so that the body's wants will be met and will continue to exist. When there is no body, all these things become as nothing. The great goodness which the soul experiences in the World To Come is beyond any means of comprehension in this world. In this world we know only the physical pleasures to which we are tied, but that goodness [in the World To Come] is exceedingly good, and has no rating when compared to the pleasures of this world, except figuratively. In the way of truth, however, which continues physical pleasures into the World To Come for the soul by way of food and drink is not so, but that goodness is beyond investigation, and has no limit or comparison. David said, "How great is Your goodness which you have laid up for those who fear You; which You have performed for those who trust in You in the sight of the sons of men!".

7) How much David yearned and hungered for life in the World To Come, as it is written, "Were it not that I believed I should see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living". the first Sages have already made it known that it is beyond one's capabilities to comprehend the goodness of the World To Come at all, and that one cannot know its greatness, beauty and very essence, but it only the Holy One, Blessed Be He, who can understand it. All the goodnesses which the Prophets prophesied to Israel are only physical pleasures from which they will benefit in the days of the Messiah and when monarchy has been returned to Israel. The goodness

of the World To Come, however, has no limit or size, and was not discussed by the Prophets so as not [even] to hint that it might have a limit. Isaiah said, "Neither has the eye seen that a God besides You should do such a thing for him who waits for him", i.e. the goodness which the Prophet did not see but only God saw was made by (that) God for those who wait for it. The Sages said that all the Prophets spoke only about the days of the Messiah, but with respect to the World To Come: "Neither has the eye seen a God beside You"⁹.

8) This is what the Sages referred to as the World To Come, but not because it is not in existence now and that it will follow after this world is destroyed, for such is not the case. The World To Come does exist, as it is written, "O how great is Your goodness, which You have prepared for those who fear You". It was called the World To Come only because life there comes to one only after life in this world, where we exist in a body- soul combination, which is how people exist first.

CHAPTER NINE

This chapter explains verses which seem to imply that the righteous people are rewarded and the wicked people punished in this world.

1) Once it is known that a reward is given for fulfilling commandments and that the goodness which we will receive if we follow the way of God as mentioned in the Torah is life in the World to Come, as it is written, "...that it may be well with you, and that you may prolong your life", and that the revenge which shall be unleashed upon the wicked people who disregarded the righteous mannerisms as mentioned in the Torah is excision, as it is written, "...that soul shall utterly be cut off; his iniquity shall be upon him" - then what is it that is written in throughout the Torah, that if one listens, one will receive such-and-such, and that if one doesn't listen such- and-such will happen to one, as well as all earthly matters such as plenty, famine, war, peace, monarchy, humility, living in Israel, exile, success, misfortune and other covenantal matters? All these matters were true and always will be. Whenever we fulfil the commandments of the Torah we will receive all good earthly matters, and whenever we transgress them, all the mentioned evils will befall us. Nevertheless, the goodness is not all that the reward for fulfilling commandments consists of, and the evils are not the entire punishment received by transgressors. This is how all matters are decided: The Holy One, Blessed Be He, gave us this Torah, which is a support of life, and anybody who does what is written in it and knows that everything contained in it is complete and correct, will merit life in the World To Come. He will merit [a portion] in proportion to the magnitude of his actions and to the extent of his knowledge. The Torah assures us that if we fulfil it with joy and pleasure and always act according to it, then all things such as illness, war, famine, et cetera, which could prevent us from doing so will be removed, and all things such as plenty, peace, richness, et cetera, which will aid us in fulfilling the Torah will be influenced to come our way so that we will not have to occupy ourselves all day in [obtaining] bodily needs, but that we will be free to sit all day, learn and gather knowledge and fulfil commandments, in order to merit life in the World To Come. In this vein it is written in the Torah after the assurance of goodness in this world, "And it shall be accounted virtue in us, if we take care to do all these commandments before the Lord our God, as He has commanded us". The Torah also tells us that if we willingly neglect the Torah to pursue valueless activities, like it is written, "But Jeshurun grew fat, and kicked", that the True Judge removes from the transgressors all the goodness of this world which they had in their possession but rejected, and will bring upon them all the evils which will prevent them from attaining life in the World To Come, so that they will be lost in their wickedness. It is written, "Because then would you not serve the Lord your God...therefore shall you serve your enemies which the Lord shall send against you". It would seem that all the blessings and curses are fulfilled in this manner, namely that if one serves God with joy and follows His ways one will be blessed accordingly and all the curses will be removed far away from one so that one will be [entirely] free to become knowledgeable in Torah and busy oneself in it, in order to merit life in the World To Come. If one does not acquire wisdom and if one has no meritorious deeds, then with what will one merit life in the World To Come?! For it is written, "...and there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in Sheol". If one ignores God and transgresses by means of food, feasting, adultery or similar activities, then one will bring upon oneself all these curses and remove all the blessings, so that one's days will end in panic and fear and one will not have the opportunities or perfect body to perform mitzvot, and one will not merit life in the World To Come, and then one will have lost out on two worlds, for when someone is troubled in this

world by illness, plague or hunger he does not busy himself with learning or mitzvot, with which life in the World To Come is merited.

2) Because of this, all Israel, her Prophets and her Sages, has yearned from the days of the Messiah, in order that they will be free of any monarchies which do not let them occupy themselves suitably with Torah and mitzvot, and they will have a repose and will be able to increase their knowledge in order to merit life in the World To Come, for in those days [of the Messiah] knowledge, wisdom and truth will be increased in the world, as it is written, "...for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord". It is also written, "And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother", and it is also written, "...and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh". That king who will arise from the descendants of David will be even wiser than Solomon, and will approach the level of Moses our Teacher in prophecy, and he will therefore [be able to] teach the people the ways of God and to fear them. All the nations will come to listen to him, as it is written, "And it shall come to pass, in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, et cetera". The ultimate reward and goodness, which is continuous and uniform is life in the World To Come. The Messianic age will consist of this world continuing in the normal way, except that monarchy will be returned to Israel. The first Sages all ready said that the only difference in the world between now and the Messianic age is that now we serve their kings, and then we won't.

CHAPTER TEN

This chapter discusses serving God out of love and fear, how to teach Torah to children and ignoramuses, and those who study Torah solely for the sake of it.

1) One should not think to oneself that one will fulfil the commandments of the Torah and occupy oneself in its wisdom in order to receive the blessings mentioned therein, or to merit life in the World To Come, and to avoid the transgressions against which the Torah warns in order to be saved from the curses mentioned therein, or in order not to be cut off from life in the World To Come, for it is not fitting to serve God in this manner. Anyone who does serve in this manner is doing so out of fear. This was not the [spiritual] level of the Prophets and Sages. Only ignoramuses, women and children serve in this manner, for they are educated to do so until their knowledge has increased sufficiently so that they will serve out of love.

2) Anyone who serves out of love and occupies himself with Torah and mitzvot and follows the ways of wisdom should not do so for any earthly reason[s] or out of fear of the curses or to receive the blessings, but should fulfil the truth because it is the truth. Out of this he will receive goodness. This level is a very high one, and not every wise person attains it. This is the level of Abraham the Patriarch, whom God called His 'friend', for the reason that he served God solely out of love. This is a level which God commanded, via Moses, us [to attain], as it is written, "And you shall love the Lord your God". Once a person loves God appropriately, he will fulfil the commandments out of love.

3) What is appropriate love? This is an extremely strong and profound love of God, so that one's soul is committed to the love of God and that one will be so preoccupied with it that one will appear to be lovesick, in which one's mind is perpetually occupied at all times with a particular woman. Apart from this, one's love of God has to be absolute and continuous, as we have been commanded: "...with all your heart and with all your soul"². Solomon said by way of example, "For I am sick with love". The entire Song Of Songs is exemplary of this concept [of the love of God].

4) The first Sages said that to prevent us from [falling into the trap of] learning Torah in order to become rich or to be called a Rabbi or to be rewarded in the World To Come, the Torah says, "...to love the Lord your God", i.e. all that one does should be done purely out of love. The Sages said further that the verse, "Happy is the man who fears the Lord, who delights greatly in His commandments" refers to the commandments, and not to the reward. In this vein, the greater Sages commanded just their wiser students and told them not to be like a servant who serves his master solely for payment, but to be like a servant whose attitude is that because his master is the master it is fitting to serve him, i.e. to serve purely out of love.

5) Anyone who occupies himself with Torah in order to receive reward or to prevent any troubles is not doing so for the sake of it, whereas anyone who does so out of love for the Master of this world, and not with any ulterior motives, is doing so for the sake of it. The Sages said that one should always occupy oneself with Torah even if not for the sake of it, for out of doing so not for the sake of it one will come to doing so for the sake of it. Therefore, when one is teaching children, women and ignoramuses one should teach them to serve God out of fear and in order to be rewarded. As their knowledge increases and they become more wise, we reveal this 'secret' to them bit by bit and accustom them to this concept in repose until they totally understand it, and will serve out of love.

6) It is a known matter that the love of God is not permanent in a man's heart until he attunes himself to it appropriately, as we have been commanded, "...and with all your heart and with all your soul". One loves God only as one thinks fit, and one's love should be according to one's temperament, i.e. the extent of one's love should be as one sees fit. Therefore, one has to discipline oneself to understand the wisdom and reasonings to the full extent of one's abilities to do so, as explained in the Laws of The Basic Principles of The Torah.