

The Shema must be said with intense concentration. See laws 347-351. When not with a minyan, say:

God, faithful King!

The following verse should be said aloud, while covering the eyes with the right hand:

Listen, Israel: the LORD is our God, the LORD is One.

Deut. 6

quietly: Blessed be the name of His glorious kingdom for ever and ever.

וְאֵהָבֶתָּ Love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might. These words which I command you today shall be on your heart. Teach them repeatedly to your children, speaking of them when you sit at home and when you travel on the way, when you lie down and when you rise. Bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be an emblem between your eyes. Write them on the doorposts of your house and gates.

Deut. 11

If you indeed heed My commandments with which I charge you today, to love the LORD your God and worship Him with all your heart and with all your soul, I will give rain in your land in its season, the early and late rain; and you shall gather in your grain, wine and oil. I will give grass in your field for your cattle, and you shall eat and be satisfied. Be careful lest your heart be tempted and you go astray and worship other gods, bowing down to them. Then the LORD's anger will flare against you and He will close the heavens so that there will be no rain. The land will not yield its crops, and you will perish swiftly from the good land that the LORD is giving you. Therefore, set these, My words, on your heart and soul. Bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be an emblem between your eyes. Teach them to your children, speaking of them when you sit at home and when you travel on the way, when you lie down and when you rise. Write them on the doorposts of your house and gates, so that you and your children may live long in the land that the LORD swore to your ancestors to give them, for as long as the heavens are above the earth.

The Shema must be said with intense concentration. See laws 347-351. When not with a minyan, say:

אל מלך נאמן

The following verse should be said aloud, while covering the eyes with the right hand:

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל, יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ, יְהוָה אֶחָד:

דברים 6

quietly: בְּרוּךְ שֵׁם כְּבוֹד מְלֻכּוֹתוֹ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד.

וְאֵהָבֶתָּ וְאֵהָבֶתָּ אֶת יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ, כָּל-לִבְבְּךָ וְכָל-נַפְשְׁךָ וְכָל-מְאֹדְךָ; וְהָיוּ הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה, אֲשֶׁר אֲנֹכִי מִצְוֶיךָ הַיּוֹם, עַל-לִבְבְּךָ; וְשִׁנַּנְתָּם לְבִנְיָךְ וְדַבַּרְתָּ בָם, בְּשִׁבְתְּךָ בְּבֵיתְךָ וּבְלִכְתְּךָ בַדֶּרֶךְ, וּבְשֹׁכֶבְךָ וּבְקוּמְךָ; וְקָשַׁרְתָּם לְאוֹת עַל-יָדְךָ, וְהָיוּ לְטֹטְפֹת בֵּין עֵינֶיךָ; וְכָתַבְתָּם עַל-מְזוּזֹת בֵּיתְךָ וּבְשַׁעַרְיֶיךָ:

דברים 11

וְהָיָה אִם-שָׁמַעַתְּ שְׁמֵעוּ אֶל-מִצְוֹתַי אֲשֶׁר אֲנֹכִי מִצְוֶה אֹתְכֶם הַיּוֹם, לְאֵהָבָה אֶת-יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם וּלְעֲבֹדוֹ, כָּל-לִבְבְּכֶם וְכָל-נַפְשְׁכֶם; וְנָתַתִּי מְטַר אֲרֻצְמָם בְּעֵתוֹ, יוֹדֵה וּמְלֻקֹּשׁ, וְאִסַּפְתִּי דָגְנְךָ וְתוֹרִישְׁךָ וַיִּצְהַרְךָ; וְנָתַתִּי עֵשֶׂב בְּשָׂדֶךָ לְבְהֵמֹתְךָ, וְאִכְלִיתָ וּשְׂבַעְתָּ; וְהִשְׁמַרְנוּ לָכֶם פֶּן-יִזְפֹּתֶה לְבַבְכֶם, וְסוּרְתֶם וְעַבַדְתֶּם אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים וְהִשְׁתַּחֲוִיתֶם לָהֶם; וְחָרָה אַפֵּי-יְהוָה בְּכֶם, וְעִצֵּר אֶת-הַשְּׁמַיִם וְלֹא-יִהְיֶה מָטָר, וְהִאֲדַמָּה לֹא תִתֵּן אֶת-יְבוּלָהּ, וְאִבַּדְתֶּם מִהָרָה מֵעַל הָאָרֶץ הַטֹּבָה אֲשֶׁר נָתַן לָכֶם; וְשָׁמַתֶם אֶת-יְדֵיכֶם, אֶלָּה עַל-לִבְבְּכֶם וְעַל-נַפְשְׁכֶם, וְקָשַׁרְתֶּם אֹתָם לְאוֹת עַל-יְדֵיכֶם, וְהָיוּ לְטֹטְפֹת בֵּין עֵינֵיכֶם; וְלִמְזוּזֹת אֹתָם וּבְשַׁעַרְיֶיכֶם לְדָבָר בָּם, בְּשִׁבְתְּךָ בְּבֵיתְךָ, וּבְלִכְתְּךָ בַדֶּרֶךְ, וּבְשֹׁכֶבְךָ וּבְקוּמְךָ; וְכָתַבְתֶּם עַל-מְזוּזֹת בֵּיתְךָ וּבְשַׁעַרְיֶיךָ; לְמַעַן יִרְבּוּ יְמֵיכֶם וְיָמֵי בְנֵיכֶם עַל-הָאָדָמָה אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע יְהוָה לְאֲבֹתֵיכֶם לֵאמֹר, לָהֶם, פִּימִי הַשְּׁמַיִם עַל-הָאָרֶץ:

go applies], for whenever he himself may acquire it his courtyard acquires it for him, but whenever he himself may not acquire it his courtyard cannot acquire it for him either.¹ If so, why are they forbidden as theft in the interests of peace? If he² let the dam go, then [to take the eggs] is actual theft,³ and if he did not let it go, then he is bound to let it go?⁴ — We are referring to a minor.⁵ But is a minor subject to provisions enacted in the interests of peace? — It means this: The father of the minor must return [the eggs]⁶ in the interests of peace.

Levi b. Simon assigned to Rab Judah the young of his dove-cote. When the latter came before Samuel he advised him: 'Go, knock on the nest so that [the brooding birds] shall rise up, and then take possession'. But why was this necessary?⁷ If in order to take possession of them;⁸ but surely he could have acquired them by means of a 'cloth'.⁹ And if for the purpose of the Festival,¹⁰ [142a] it is sufficient to stand by and say, 'This one and that one I shall take'.¹¹ — These eggs¹² were newly laid and Levi b. Simon himself had not yet acquired them.¹³ [Samuel] therefore said

(1) And since he cannot acquire it himself, for the dam is sitting on it, his courtyard likewise cannot acquire it for him, so that it is not at his disposal, and therefore the law of letting the dam go applies. (2) Sc. any person who comes to take the eggs. (3) For as soon as the dam is lifted up from the eggs the latter become the property of the owner of the courtyard. (4) Before the eggs can be taken, so that they are forbidden in any case. (5) Who is about to take the eggs from the dove-cote and upon whom the law of letting the dam go is not binding. (6) To the owner of the dove-cote. (7) To knock on the nest so as to make the birds rise up. (8) According to the usual manner of acquiring a thing by lifting up. (9) The passing of a cloth or any article from one party to the other effected the transfer of the subject matter of the transaction. V. B.M. 47a. Cf. Ruth IV, 7. (10) Whatever is intended to be used on the Festival must be set in readiness before the Festival, otherwise it would be regarded as *mukzeh*, i.e., laid aside and not to be used on the Festival. The knocking on the nest would therefore be regarded as setting them in readiness for the Festival. (11) In accordance with the view of Beth Hillel, Bez. 10a. (12) Lit., 'these fruits'. The eggs were newly laid and the dam was still sitting over them. (13) For so long as the dam was sitting upon them his courtyard could not acquire the eggs for him.

this to him [Rab Judah], 'Go knock on the nest so that [the brooding birds] shall rise up and Levi b. Simon shall acquire them, and afterwards let him assign them to you by means of a "cloth"':

MISHNAH. A MAN MAY NOT TAKE THE DAM WITH THE YOUNG EVEN FOR THE SAKE OF CLEANSING THE LEPER.¹ IF IN RESPECT OF SO LIGHT A PRECEPT, WHICH DEALS WITH THAT WHICH IS BUT WORTH AN ISSAR,² THE TORAH SAID, THAT IT MAY BE WELL WITH THEE, AND THAT THOU MAYEST PROLONG THY DAYS,³ HOW MUCH MORE [MUST BE THE REWARD] FOR THE OBSERVANCE OF THE MORE DIFFICULT PRECEPTS OF THE TORAH!

GEMARA. It was taught: R. Jacob says,⁴ There is no precept in the Torah, where reward is stated by its side, from which you cannot infer the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead.⁵ Thus, in connection with honouring parents it is written, *That thy days may be prolonged, and that it may go well with thee.*⁶ Again in connection with the law of letting [the dam] go from the nest it is written, '*That it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days.*' Now, in the case where a man's father said to him, 'Go up to the top of the building and bring me down some young birds', and he went up to the top of the building, let the dam go and took the young ones, and on his return he fell and was killed — where is this man's length of days, and where is this man's happiness? But '*that thy days may be prolonged*' refers to the world that is wholly long,⁷ and '*that it may go well with thee*' refers to the world that is wholly good.⁷

(1) For whose purification rites two birds were required, one to be slaughtered and the other to be set free into the open field, cf. Lev. XIV, 4ff. (2) V. Glos. Rarely would the dam be worth more than an *issar*. (3) Deut. XXII, 7. (4) The word יצא 'in the school of' is to be omitted, so in MS.M. and in Kid. 39b. (5) Lit., 'upon which the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead does not depend'. (6) Deut. V, 16. (7) The promise of bliss is to be fulfilled in the world to come, and one must not expect to receive the reward of a good deed in this world; v. *infra*, and Kid. l.c.

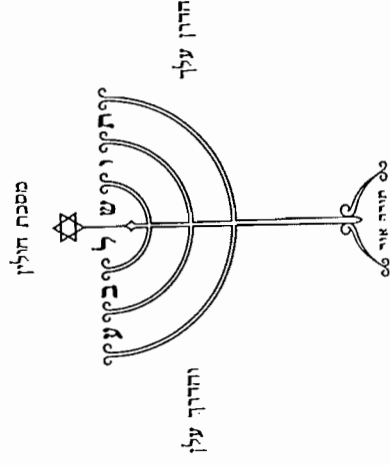
But¹ perhaps such a thing could not happen?—R. Jacob actually saw this occurrence. Then perhaps that person had conceived in his mind a sinful thought?—The Holy One, blessed be He, does not reckon the sinful thought for the deed.² Perhaps then he had conceived in his mind idolatry, and it is written, *That I may take the house of Israel in their own heart,*³ which, according to R. Aḥa b. Jacob, refers to thoughts of idolatry?⁴—This was what he [R. Jacob] meant to convey: if there is a reward for precepts in this world, then surely that [reward] should have stood him in good stead and guarded him from such thoughts that he come not to any hurt; we must therefore say that there is no reward for precepts in this world.

But did not R. Eleazar say that those engaged⁵ in [the performance of] a precept never come to harm?—When returning from the performance of a precept it is different. But did not R. Eleazar say that those engaged in a precept never come to harm, either when going [to perform it] or when returning [from the performance thereof]?—It must have been a broken ladder [that was used],⁶ so that injury was likely; and where injury is likely it is different, as it is written, *And Samuel said, How can I go? If Saul hear it, he will kill me.*⁷

R. Joseph said, Had Aḥer⁸ interpreted this verse⁹ as R. Jacob, his daughter's son, did, he would not have sinned. What actually did he see?—Some say, He saw such an occurrence.¹⁰ Others say,

(1) The rest of this chapter from this point is omitted in MS.M., and apparently it was not in the text before Rashi; cf. Tosef. Hul. end. It has been inserted here from Kid. l.c. (2) Lit., 'He does not combine the (evil) thought with the (evil) deed'; i.e., God does not punish for the sinful thought. (3) Ezek. XIV, 5. (4) I.e., the intention to serve idolatry is punishable like the act. (5) Lit., 'sent'. (6) By the person who went up to the top of the building to fetch the young ones. (7) I Sam. XVI, 2. Although Samuel was bidden by God he nevertheless hesitated for the danger of his mission was apparent. (8) Lit., 'Another', a stranger, the name attached to Elisha b. Abuyah, the great scholar and teacher of R. Meir, on his apostasy, V. Hag. 15a. (9) Which promises happiness and length of days to him that performs the commandment; cf. Deut. V, 16, and XXII, 7. (10) Where a person engaged in the performance of a precept met with an accident and was killed. This

He saw the tongue of R. Ḥuzpith the Interpreter¹ lying on a dung-heap, and he exclaimed, 'Shall the mouth that uttered pearls lick the dust!' But he knew not that the verse, *'That it may go well with thee'*, refers to the world that is wholly good, and that the verse, *'That thy days may be prolonged'* refers to the world that is wholly long.



incident made him doubt the truth of the Torah and he turned unbeliever.

(1) A martyr of the Hadrianic persecution. He is mentioned in the Mishnah once only, Sheb. X, 6. He acted as Interpreter or Amora (v. Glos.) for R. Gamaliel, v. Ber. 27b.

The Eleventh Fundamental Principle is that God rewards those who perform the commandments of the Torah and punishes those who transgress its admonitions. The greatest reward is the world to come; the worst punishment is extinction. We have already made this sufficiently clear. The Scripture which teaches this fundamental principle is "If you will not forgive their sin, extinguish me." To which God replied, "I will expunge from My book only the man who has sinned against Me" (Ex. 32:32 ff.). This proves He knows both the obedient and the sinner, and rewards or punishes each.

The Twelfth Fundamental Principle refers to the Messianic Era. We are to believe as fact that the Messiah will come and not consider him late. If he delays, wait for him (Hab. 2:3); set no time limit for his coming. One must not make conjectures based on Scripture to conclude when Messiah will come. The sages said: "May the Spirit depart from those who calculate the end-time" (Sanhedrin 97b). One must believe that the Messiah will have more station and honor than all the kings who ever lived, as all the prophets from Moses to Malachi prophesied. Whoever doubts this or minimizes it denies the Torah which testifies to it explicitly, in the Balaam story and in the passage that begins, "You are standing . . ." (Deut. 29:9). A corollary of this principle is the assertion that the king of Israel must come only from the house of David and the seed of Solomon. Anyone who rejects this family denies God and the words of His prophets.

The Thirteenth Fundamental Principle is the Resurrection of the Dead, which we have already explicated.

When a man believes in all these fundamental principles, and his faith is thus clarified, he is then part of that "Israel" whom we are to love, pity, and treat, as God commanded, with love and fellowship. Even if a Jew should commit every possible sin, out of lust or masochery by his lower nature, he will be punished for his sins but will still have a share in the world to come. He is one of the "sinners in Israel." But if a man gives up any one of these fundamental principles, he has removed himself from the Jewish community. He is an atheist, a heretic, an unbeliever who "cuts among the plantings." We are commanded to hate him and to destroy him. Of him it is said: "Shall I not hate those who hate You, O Lord?" (Ps. 139:21).

I have spent too much time on these matters, leaving the general subject of my book. But I have done so because I saw their use-

fulness for faith. So I have collected a number of scattered but useful statements from our great books. You must know them well. Repeat them frequently. Meditate on them carefully. If you mind seduces you into thinking that you comprehend them after one reading—or ten readings—God knows you are deceived! Do not read them hurriedly, for I did not just happen to write them down. Only after careful research and introspection, when I came to see which opinions are clearly true and untrue, did I come to know what to accept. I have proved each point systematically. May God fulfill my wish and lead me on the way of goodness.

ments of "all Israelites." This systematic formulation of a specific number of basic principles of belief provided the impetus for the creation of an extensive literature on dogma and triggered a long, sometimes acrimonious debate concerning the role of dogma in Judaism.



THE MISHNAH

All Jews have a share in the world to come, as it is said, "Your people also shall be all righteous, they shall inherit the land forever; the branch of My planting, the work of My hands wherein I glory" (Is. 60:21). But these have no share in the world to come: one who says that the resurrection of the dead is not taught in the Torah; one who says that the Torah is not from heaven; and the atheist. Rabbi Akiva adds: one who reads the apocryphal books or who utters charms over a wound saying, "I will put none of the diseases upon you which I have put upon the Egyptians, for I am the Lord that heals you" (Ex. 15:26). Abba Saul adds: the one who pronounces the letters of the Tetragrammaton.

I must speak now of the great fundamental principles of our faith. Know that the masters of Torah hold differing opinions concerning the good which will come to a person as a result of fulfilling the commandments which God commanded us through Moses our Teacher. As a consequence of their different understanding of the problem, they also hold widely different opinions concerning the evil which the transgressor suffers. So much confusion has invaded their opinions that it is almost impossible to find anyone whose opinion is uncontaminated by error.

One group thinks that the expected good is the Garden of Eden, a place in which one eats and drinks without any physical work or effort. They also believe that there houses are made of precious stones, beds of silk, rivers flow with wine and fragrant oils, and many other things of that sort. This group believes that the evil is Gehenna, a place of raging fire, in which bodies are burned and agonies of all sorts are inflicted upon men. Their descriptions of these afflictions are told at great length. This group adduces proof for their opin-

ions from the words of our sages and from passages in the Scripture whose literal meaning seems either wholly or largely compatible with what they say.

A second group asserts that the good for which we hope is the Days of the Messiah, in whose time all men will be angels, and all of them will live forever. They will be giants in stature and will grow in number and strength until they have occupied the entire world forever. The Messiah will, with the help of God, live forever. They also believe that in those days the earth will bring forth garments woven, bread baked, and many other impossible things. In this view, the evil is that a man may not be alive in those days and may not merit the privilege of seeing them. This group also adduces proof from many statements found in the writings of our sages and from Biblical verses whose literal meaning seems to agree either wholly or partly with what they say.

A third group holds that the good for which we hope is the resurrection of the dead. By this they mean that a man will live after his death and return to his family and dear ones to eat and drink and never die again. According to this opinion the evil is that a man may not live after his death among those who are resurrected. Here, too, proof is adduced from many sayings that are found in the words of the sages and from Biblical verses whose literal meaning seem to teach this, wholly or in part.

A fourth view holds that the goal of fulfilling the commandments is the achievement of bodily peace and mundane success like fertile lands, extensive possessions, many children, health, peace, and security. They also believe that there will be a Jewish king who will rule over those who oppressed us. The evil that will overtake us if we deny the Torah is the opposite of these, as in our present exile. Those who hold this opinion likewise find support for their views in verses of Torah, particularly the curses, and from other passages in Scripture.

A fifth group—and a large one—combines the opinions of all the others. They assert that the ultimate hope is that the Messiah will come, that he will resurrect the dead, who will enter the Garden of Eden where they will eat and drink in perfect health forever.

However, concerning this strange world to come, you will rarely find anyone to whom it occurs to think about it seriously or to adopt it as a fundamental doctrine of our faith, or to inquire what it really means, whether the world to come is the ultimate good or whether some other possibility is. Nor does one often find persons who distin-

guish between the ultimate good itself and the means which lead to the ultimate good. What everybody always wants to know, both the masses and the learned, is how the dead will arise. They want to know whether they will be naked or clothed, whether they will rise in the same shrouds with which they were buried, with the same embroidery, style, and beauty of sewing, or in a plain garment which just covers their bodies. Or they ask whether, when the Messiah comes, there will still be rich men and poor men, weak men and strong men, and other similar questions.

You, however, who read this book thoughtfully, must understand the analogy which I am about to draw for you. Prepare your mind to understand what I tell you about all this. Imagine a small child who has been brought to his teacher so that he may be taught the Torah, which is his ultimate good because it will bring him to perfection. However, because he is only a child and because his understanding is deficient, he does not grasp the true value of that good, nor does he understand the perfection which he can achieve by means of Torah. Of necessity, therefore, his teacher, who has acquired greater perfection than the child, must bribe him to study by means of things which the child loves in a childish way. Thus, the teacher may say, "Read and I will give you some nuts or figs. I will give you a bit of honey." With this stimulation the child tries to read. He does not work hard for the sake of reading itself, since he does not understand its value. He reads in order to obtain the food. Eating these delicacies is far more important to him than reading, and a greater good to him. Therefore, although he thinks of study as work and effort, he is willing to do it in order to get what he wants, a nut or a piece of candy. As the child grows and his mind improves, what was formerly important to him loses its importance, while other things become precious. The teacher will stimulate his desire for whatever he wants then. The teacher may say to the child, "Read and I will give you beautiful shoes or nice clothes." Now the child will apply himself to reading for the sake of new clothes and not for the sake of study itself. He wants the garment more than the Torah. This coat will be the end which he hopes to achieve by reading. As his intelligence improves still more and these things, too, become unimportant to him, he will set his desire upon something of greater value. Then his teacher may say to him, "Learn this passage or this chapter, and I will give you a denar or two." Again he will try to read in order to receive the money, since money is more important to him

than study. The end which he seeks to achieve through his study is to acquire the money which has been promised him. When his understanding has so improved that even this reward has ceased to be valuable to him, he will desire something more honorable. His teacher may say to him then, "Study so that you may become the president of a court, a judge, so that people will honor you and rise before you as they honor So-and-So." He will then try hard to read in order to attain his new goal. His final end then will be to achieve the honor, the exaltation, and the praise which others might confer upon him.

Now, all this is deplorable. However, it is unavoidable because of man's limited insight, as a result of which he makes the goal of wisdom something other than wisdom itself, and assumes that the purpose of study is the acquisition of honor, which makes a mockery of truth. Our sages called this learning not for its own sake. They had in mind the kind of person who performs the commandments and energetically studies Torah not for their own intrinsic worth but with some other purpose in view. Our sages warned against this and said, "Do not make the Torah a crown for self-glorification or a spade with which to dig" (Ethics of the Fathers 4:7). They hinted at what I have just explained to you, that the end of wisdom is neither to acquire honor from other men nor to earn more money. One ought not to busy oneself with God's Torah in order to earn one's living by it; nor should the end of studying wisdom be anything but knowing it. The truth has no other purpose than knowing that it is truth. Since the Torah is truth, the purpose of knowing it is to do it. A good man must not wonder, "If I perform these commandments, which are virtues, and if I refrain from these transgressions, which are vices which God commanded us not to do, what will I get out of it?" This is precisely what the child does when he asks, "If I read, what will you give me?" The child is answered in some such way because, when we know his limited understanding and his desire for something other than a real goal, we answer him on the level of his folly, as it is said in Proverbs 26:5: "Answer the fool according to his folly."

Our sages have already warned us about this. They said that one should not make the goal of one's service of God or of doing the commandments anything in the world of things. Antigonos of Sokho—a man who had achieved perfection and grasped the truth of things—meant precisely this when he said: "Do not be like the ser-

been demonstrated that man has two perfections: a first perfection, which is the perfection of the body, and an ultimate perfection, which is the perfection of the soul. The first perfection | consists in being healthy and in the very best bodily state, and this is only possible through his finding the things necessary for him whenever he seeks them. These are his food and all the other things needed for the governance of his body, such as a shelter, bathing, and so forth. This cannot be achieved in any way by one isolated individual. For an individual can only attain all this through a political association, it being already known that man is political by nature. His ultimate perfection is to become rational in actu, I mean to have an intellect in actu; this would consist in his knowing everything concerning all the beings that it is within the capacity of man to know in accordance with his ultimate perfection. It is clear that to this ultimate perfection there do not belong either actions or moral qualities and that it consists only of opinions toward which speculation has led and that investigation has rendered compulsory. It is also clear that this noble and ultimate perfection can only be achieved after the first perfection has been achieved. For a man cannot represent to himself an intelligible even when taught to understand it and all the more cannot become aware of it of his own accord, if he is in pain or is very hungry or is thirsty or is hot or is very cold. But once the first perfection has been achieved it is possible to achieve the ultimate, which is indubitably more noble and is the only cause of permanent preservation.

The true Law then, which as we have already made clear¹ is unique — namely, the Law of *Moses our Master* — has come to bring us both perfection, I mean the welfare of the states of people in their relations with one another through the abolition of reciprocal wrongdoing and through the acquisition of a noble and excellent character. In this way the preservation of the population of the country and their permanent existence in the same order become possible, so that | every one of them achieves his first perfection; I mean also the soundness of the beliefs and the giving of correct opinions through which ultimate perfection is achieved. The letter of the *Torah* speaks of both perfections and informs us that the end of this Law in its entirety is the achievement of these two perfections. For He, may He be exalted, says: *And the Lord commanded us to do all these statutes [iniquim], to fear the Lord our God, for our good always, that He might preserve us alive, as it is at this day.*² Here He puts the ultimate perfection first because of its nobility; for, as we have explained, it is the ultimate end. It is referred to in the dictum: *For our good always.* You know already what [the Sages],

1. Cf. II 39. 2. Deut. 6:24.

Chapter 9*

(¶ 1 It is known that the reward for the fulfillment of the commandments and the good to which we will attain if we have kept the way of the Lord, as prescribed in the Law, is life in the world to come, as it is said, "That it may be well with you, and that you may prolong your days" (Deut. 22:7), while the retribution exacted from the wicked who have abandoned the ways of righteousness prescribed in the Torah is excision, as it is said, "that soul shall be utterly cut off; his iniquity shall be upon him" (Num. 15:31). What then is the meaning of the statement found everywhere in the Torah that if you obey, it will happen to you thus; if you do not obey, it will be otherwise; and all these happenings will take place in this world, such as war and peace; sovereignty and subjection; residence in the Promised Land and exile; prosperity in one's activities and failure and all the other things predicted in the words of the Covenant (Lev. 26, Deut. 28)? All those promises were once truly fulfilled and will again be so. When we fulfill all the commandments of the Torah, all the good things of this world will come to us. When, however, we transgress the precepts, the evils that are written in the Torah will befall us. But, nevertheless, those good things are not the final reward for the fulfillment of the commandments, nor are those evils the last penalty exacted from one who transgresses all the commandments. These matters are to be understood as follows: The Holy One, blessed be He, gave us this Law—a tree of life. Whoever fulfills what is written therein and knows it with a complete and correct knowledge will attain thereby life in the world to come. According to the greatness of his deeds and abundance of his knowledge will be the measure in which he will attain that life.

The Holy One, blessed be He, has further promised us in the Torah that if we observe its behests joyously and cheerfully, and continually meditate on its wisdom, He will remove from us the obstacles that hinder us in its observance, such as sickness, war, famine, and other calamities; and will bestow upon us all the material benefits which will strengthen our ability to fulfill the Law, such as plenty, peace, abundance of silver and gold. Thus we will not be engaged all our days in providing for our bodily needs, but will have leisure to study wisdom and fulfill the commandment and thus attain life in the world to come. Hence, after the assurance of mate-

*See *Commentary on Helek*, end; also Book V, Forbidden Intercourse, XIV, 3.

rial benefits, it is said in the Torah, "And it shall be righteousness to us, if we observe to do all this commandment before the Lord our God as He has commanded us" (*ibid.* 6:25). So too, He taught us in the Torah that if we deliberately forsake it and occupy ourselves with temporal follies, as the text says, "But Jeshurun waxed fat and wicked" (*ibid.* 32:15), the true Judge will deprive the forsakers of all those material benefits which only served to encourage them to be recalcitrant, and will send upon them all the calamities that will prevent their attaining the life hereafter, so that they will perish in their wickedness. This is expressed by the Torah in the text: "Because you did not serve the Lord your God with joyfulness and with gladness of heart, by reason of the abundance of all things, therefore shall you serve your enemy whom the Lord shall send against you" (*ibid.* 28:47-48).

Hence, all those benedictions and maledictions promised in the Torah are to be explained as follows: If you have served God with joy and observed His way, He will bestow upon you those blessings and avert from you those curses, so that you will have leisure to become wise in the Torah and occupy yourselves therewith, and thus attain life hereafter, and then it will be well with you in the world which is entirely blissful and you will enjoy length of days in an existence which is everlasting. So you will enjoy both worlds, a happy life on earth leading to the life in the world to come. For if wisdom is not acquired and good deeds are not performed here, there will be nothing meriting a recompense hereafter, as it is said, "For there is no work, no device, no knowledge, no wisdom in the grave" (*Eccles.* 9:10). But if you have forsaken the Lord and have erred in eating, drinking, fornication, and similar things, He will bring upon you all those curses and withhold from you all those blessings till your days will end in confusion and terror, and you will have neither the free mind nor the healthy body requisite for the fulfillment of the commandments so that you will suffer perdition in the life hereafter and will thus have lost both worlds—for when one is troubled here on earth with diseases, war or famine, he does not occupy himself with the acquisition of wisdom or the performance of religious precepts by which life hereafter is gained.

(¶ 2 Hence, all Israelites, their prophets and sages, longed for the advent of Messianic times, that they might have relief from the wicked tyranny that does not permit them properly to occupy themselves with the study of the Torah and the observance of the com-

pretation: 'Such, for example, is our belief that He, may He be exalted, is violently angry with those who disobey Him and it is therefore necessary to fear Him and to dread Him and to take care not to disobey.' Now, Maimonides makes it abundantly clear in many contexts that God does not really get angry.³³ But it is certainly useful for religiously immature people to believe that God gets angry so that they 'take care not to disobey'. At the end of the chapter Maimonides sums up his position very clearly:

In some cases a commandment communicates a correct belief . . . In other cases the belief is [only] necessary for the abolition of reciprocal wrongdoing or for the acquisition of a noble moral quality—as, for instance, the belief that He, may He be exalted, has a violent anger against those who do injustice, according to what is said: 'And My wrath shall wax hot, and I will kill . . .' [Exod. 22: 23] and as the belief that He, may He be exalted, responds instantaneously to the prayer of someone wronged or deceived: 'And it shall come to pass, when he crieth unto Me, that I will hear, for I am gracious' [Exod. 22: 26].

It is hard to state the point more clearly than this: it is important that people believe that God gets violently angry with sinners and it is important for them to believe that God immediately answers the prayers of the wronged. The Torah therefore teaches that these beliefs are true; that does not mean that they are actually true in and of themselves. They are necessary beliefs, not true beliefs.³⁴

The notion that the righteous are rewarded for the fulfilment of the commandments in this world and the next, without any reference to their intellectual attainments, and that the wicked are punished in the next world, if not clearly in this world, for their transgressions,³⁵ is, I submit, a necessary belief without being a true one. As Maimonides himself told us in the introduction to 'Perek helek', very few people are mature enough

³³ See esp. *Guide*, i. 54. Further on Maimonides' extremely negative attitude towards anger, see *Guide*, iii. 8; 'Laws of Character Traits', ii. 3; commentary on *Pirkei avot* ii. 10; and *Book of Commandments*, positive commandment 317.

³⁴ As we saw above, Maimonides writes in his commentary on 'Perek helek', 'in order that the masses stay faithful and do the commandments, it was permitted to tell them that they might hope for a reward and to warn them against transgressions out of fear of punishment'.

³⁵ It is crucial to remember that for Maimonides moral perfection is a prerequisite of intellectual perfection. He does not have to 'worry' that an intellectually perfected wicked person will 'sneak' into the world to come. Wicked people do not achieve true intellectual perfection. This position is, I think, objectively false (Martin Heidegger, for example, was a moral pygmy and at the same time an important philosopher); but that does not mean that Maimonides did not hold it. He is allowed to be wrong.

to fulfil the commandments of the Torah for its own sake. They must be motivated by promises of reward and threats of punishment. These promises are in one sense false: there is no *quid pro quo* reward for the fulfilment of the commandments; one does not earn credit points in some heavenly bank account for obeying the commandments of the Torah. But in another sense these promises are true: obeying the commandments of the Torah is surely good for you. In most cases such obedience in and of itself (with no divine intervention) leads to a happier and more fulfilled life, and to a better and more just society. Obedience to the commandments is also a crucially important, if neither necessary nor sufficient, step towards achieving true human perfection and the life in the world to come which is a consequence of that perfection.