

**** Shaar HaBechina - Gate of Examination ****

(with select classic commentaries)
from Chovos Halevavos - Duties of the Heart
by Rabeinu Bahya ibn Paquda zt'l

original english translation by Rabbi Moses Hyamson, former chief Rabbi of British Empire, New York, 1925
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 New revision with select classic commentaries compiled by Rabbi Yosef Sebag
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- [Rabbi YS's Foreword](#)
- [Introduction](#)
- [Chapter 1](#) - What is the examination
- [Chapter 2](#) - Is examination a duty or not
- [Chapter 3](#) - Its various ways
- [Chapter 4](#) - the diverse marks of divine wisdom in created things which we should examine
- [Chapter 5](#) - Which of these is closest to us and should receive more attention
- [Chapter 6](#) - factors that are detrimental to examination

Rabbi YS's Foreword:

The following is a translation of the second gate of one of the earliest of the classic mussar works, Chovos Halevavos by Rabeinu Bahya. The book has inspired many great men to walk in its ways and review it throughout their lives.

This is a new revision of the brilliant old-english translation by Rabbi Moses Hyamson O.B.M., the former chief Rabbi and head Dayan of England between 1911 and 1913 which I obtained with permission from hebrewbooks.org (only gates 2 and 3 are available there). I have tried to add classic commentaries and adapt the translation based on those commentaries. Rabbi Yosef Sebag studied in various yeshivas under great Torah scholars such as Rabbi Dov Shwartzman zt'l (~2 years), Rabbi Nachman Bulman zt'l, Rabbi Nissan Kaplan (~5 years). He also completed a degree in physics at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst and was a research associate in nuclear physics for some time before heading off to yeshiva.

- Yosef Sebag, Jerusalem Adar 5775 - March 2015

Abbreviations used in this translation:

MH - Manoach HeLevavos commentary by Rabbi Manoach Hendel (1540-1611)
TL - Tov HaLevanon commentary by Rabbi Yisrael Halevi (1700-1777)
PL - Pas Lechem commentary by Rabbi Chaim Avraham Hacoen (1740-1815)
ML - Marpe Lenefesh commentary by Rabbi Refael Mendel (1825-1895)
LT - Lev Tov commentary by Rabbi Pinchas Lieberman (1929-2005)
MC - Matanas Chelko* commentary by Rabbi Mattisyahu Solomon (with permission)

* MC commentary available from Israel Bookshop Publications

***** Shaar HaBechina - Gate of Examination *****
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by Rabeinu Bahya zt'l

On the examination of created things and G-d's abounding goodness towards them.

***** INTRODUCTION *****

(Rabbi YS: note that this gate has many commentaries due to its being densely packed with hidden meaning. I tried to include only those that seemed to me essential for understanding the author's intent.

Matanas Chelko: the custom practiced in the yeshiva world is not to study the Shaar Yichud

(Gate#1). And even though, there is no doubt whatsoever that all of what he says there is absolute² truth, nevertheless, his words are of philosophical inquiry and this inherently leads to many questions in the mind of the person studying them, and not every person is capable of fully understanding them. It is possible therefore that one could remain with unresolved questions, or at least with doubts, that would not have occurred to him had he not studied this work. Therefore, it is customary to walk simply and accept as a given, simple faith that the Creator is One. And the explanation of One is that there is no power in the world besides Him, no place in the world devoid of Him, and nothing in the world without Him. These things are above the powers of our minds to grasp.

The author says: Since we began in the previous treatise, with the various ways in which the Unity of G-d can be demonstrated so that it shall be wholeheartedly acknowledged, and we found that the examination of the wisdom manifested in the universe is the nearest way to clarify His existence and the clearest path to know His reality. [Therefore] we deem it our duty to deal with this theme, so that to each treatise, the one most nearly resembling it should be joined, and each topic should be followed by the most appropriate topic - this being among the subjects which we have to deal with in regard to the Almighty's service, the purpose for which we were created, as the wise man said (Kohelet 3:14) "*And G-d has so made it that man should fear before Him*".

(*Pas Lechem*: "*nearest way...the clearest path*" - ... nearest in that it does not require many logical constructs and preliminary introductions like the other ways [such as philosophical inquiry]. Clearest in that it is a well-trodden path by many people, and a well-trodden path is free from stumbling blocks, mishaps, and errors. In other ways of inquiry, a man is not assured against mishaps and mistakes in treading them, as in truth, there are many, many casualties strewn along the path of philosophical inquiry unlike the path of examination [of G-d's wisdom], which none grow weary or stumble in it.

Rabbi YS: If you ask, if so why do so many modern scientists err and do not ascribe the wisdom in the universe to G-d? Answer: The role of the scientist is to consider only naturalistic, materialistic explanations. This is his job as a scientist. Hence, he is not allowed to consider supernatural explanations (such as G-d) despite that ultimately there is no other way to explain much of what we see around us as explained in this gate.

Matanas Chelko: "*And G-d has so made it that man should fear before Him*" - i.e. not only certain specific deeds of G-d bring a man to fear (reverence), but rather everything - everything that G-d has made is in order to bring one to fear. This is the purpose of everything that G-d has created. In truth, the author writes this at the beginning of the introduction to this book... "who created all that is found as a sign of His Unity, who formed beings to serve as witnesses of His power and brought things into existence to testify to His wisdom and great benevolence"...

First we have to note that though the benefits G-d bestows upon His creatures are all-embracing, as Scripture says "*The L-ord is good to all*" (Tehilim 145:9), nevertheless, the majority of mankind are too blind to recognize these benefits or comprehend their high excellence, and they do not think over their matters due to three reasons.

(*Matanas Chelko*: "all-embracing" - i.e. all without exception. This is the contemplation here - that G-d is good to all. Not only human beings, but even to animals.

Pas Lechem: "(1) *too blind to recognize* .. (2) *comprehend* .. (3) *think over*" - He specified three terms corresponding to the three types of blindness which tends to affect human beings. (1) Benefits which one does not recognize at all and which one is completely ignorant of - on this he wrote "*too blind to recognize*". (2) Benefits which he realizes a bit, but he does not contemplate them to "*comprehend their high excellence*" and goodness. (3) Thirdly, and this is worse than the first two, that some benefits seem at first impression to be bad, and they require to deeply "*think over*" to recognize their benefit and understand the good concealed in them. On those like this it is written, "the wicked do not understand, but the thinkers will understand" (Yirmiya 12:10), and the wise man said "he who thinks on the matter will find good" (Mishlei 16:20) i.e. he who is not satisfied with the first impression that appears to him but instead applies his intellect and understanding on it - "will find good", i.e. after thinking it through he will find the thing to be good, unlike the superficial appearance which deemed it evil. He will now explain that these three types of blindness are due to three reasons and that each reason is a cause for one of the above three types of blindness. I will explain each of them, G-d willing, after his words.)

1. One of these reasons: their absorption in matters of this world and its pleasures, their lusting for what they will not attain of it, their neglect to look onto the benefits G-d bestows upon them because their hearts are preoccupied with what they hope for, of satisfying their lusts and fulfilling their wishes. For whatever level they have attained of it, they proceed to seek what is higher than it, and strive for what is after it. The many benefits bestowed on them are, in their view, but few. The great gifts already given to them, they deem small. Until they consider any advantage possessed by another person as if it was taken away from them, and when others attain some benefits, it is as if evil befell them. They do not understand the works of G-d who bestows good to them, as Scripture says (Tehilim 10:4) *"The wicked, in his high arrogance, does not enquire. G-d is not in any of his thoughts"*.

(Pas Lechem: "their absorption in (1) matters of this world and (2) its pleasures" - Two terms corresponding to love of "useful" things and love of "enjoyable" things. For in saying (1) [their absorption in] *"matters of this world"*, the author's intent is on the way of most people, that most of their occupation and most of their time is squandered in fulfilling their lust for "useful" things such as building houses, making garments, and amassing possessions. The author called this "matters" [of this world], since "matters" (inyan) connotes "conduct" [in Hebrew] as Rashi explained on the verse "but to the sinner He has given a matter to gather and to accumulate" (Kohelet 2:26), and "it is an evil matter [that G-d has given to human beings with which to occupy themselves]" (Kohelet 1:13). (2) On the second term *"its pleasures"*, the author's intent is on love of "enjoyable" things such as eating, drinking, marital relations where the [following] term "lusting" applies primarily to this type. *"lusting for what they will not attain of it"* - i.e. they constantly lust to attain more worldly lusts that they have not yet attained in the past. One can also render this as referring to the future, i.e. even for something which is beyond their ability to ever attain, and certainly they will never attain it, nevertheless they strive full strength to attain it. Hence, their heart is forever absorbed in a prolonged longing which never ceases.

"of satisfying their lusts and fulfilling their wishes" - here too, the author's intent is for the two kinds [of love] as above, since for love of "enjoyable things", which a person, by nature, is enthusiastic about fulfilling, it is proper to use the term *"satisfying their lusts"*, while for love of "useful" things, it is proper to use the term *"fulfilling their wishes"*.

"seek what is higher than it, and strive for what is after it" - Two terms. (1) *"higher than it"* refers to increasing the same kind [of worldly thing], such as regarding wealth, where our Sages said "he who has 100 coins wants 200 coins" (Kohelet Raba 1:13). (2) The second term, *"strive for what is after it"* refers to a stage of a different kind which normally follows his current stage. For example, honor seeking normally follows after wealth seeking. Hence, he who has attained the stage of wealth, now strives to attain honor. Therefore, he used the term *"strive"* which connotes great exertion since it is a different stage [and a new beginning] which he has no momentum in and, as is known, (Rashi Shemot 19:5) "all beginnings are difficult".

Tov Halevanon: "any advantage possessed by another person as if it was taken away from them" - It is human nature for one to think that all the good he sees by his fellow is stolen from him and that G-d created the entire universe for his honor only (i.e. selfishness - each person tends to think that he is the center of the universe.)

Pas Lechem: The hunger of lust intensifies so much in them until they will desire everything for themselves, and they will imagine that they deserve everything that is in other peoples' hands and imagine that it is as if other people plundered them and stole from them.

"(1) any advantage possessed by another person as if it was taken away from them...and (2) when others attain some benefits, it is as if evil befell them" - immediately when someone else attains some benefit, their heart will be disturbed and will be bitter on this, as if some evil befell them because good that reaches others is evil to them. The first expression above (1) refers to benefits already in other peoples' possession, and they hope for and long for it, like a man who hopes for and waits to recapture that which was stolen from him. The second expression (2) refers to the initial time when the good reached the other person's hands, they are disturbed and feel bad, since the primary pain of feeling a bad thing is in the beginning of it.

"They do not understand the works of G-d who bestows good to them" - they do not understand that these benefits are the works of G-d, and since they come from Him, and His hand distributed them, there is no room for jealousy, and there is no avail to excessive hishtadlut (striving, since it is all G-d's decree what each person will attain as explained in gate 4).

"The wicked, in his high arrogance, does not enquire" - due to his arrogance, he does not examine

the cause of his benefits to know their Source, because G-d is not in any of his thoughts. 4
Alternatively, due to his arrogance, he thinks he deserves everything. Therefore, he is not content with what he has and seeks what he did not yet attain.

Tov Halevanon: He thinks that the benefits which he is proud of are not from G-d, because he thinks G-d does not exist. Alternatively, he thinks G-d does not help him. Alternatively, due to his arrogance, he thinks he deserves those benefits more than the other person, therefore he thinks that benefit is evil and therefore it must be that G-d did not bestow it. Therefore, he does not pray to G-d to thank Him for his own benefits.)

2. The second reason is that human beings when they come into this world are like foolish beasts and a donkey's colt (without any intellect whatsoever and no sense of good and evil - *ML*), as scripture says (Iyov 11:12) "*Like a wild donkey's colt is man when born*". They grow up with an abundance of continuous and recurring Divine favors which they experience constantly, and to which they become so used to and familiar with that they come to regard these as intrinsic parts of their being, not to be removed or separated from themselves during the whole of their lives. Though their intelligence develops and their mental faculties become strong they (remain ignorant and - *PL*) foolishly ignore the benefits the Creator has bestowed on them and do not consider the obligation of gratitude for Divine beneficence, for they are unaware of the immense degree of the benefit, and of the infinite greatness of the Benefactor who bestowed it upon them.

(*Matanas Chelko:* "donkey's colt" - i.e. a person comes to this world without any intellect like a newborn donkey. He may also remain like this and grow up like this, until he becomes a big and strong adult donkey. For this one must study books of Mussar (torah ethics) so that this does not happen to him and he does not remain thus. For this is the work placed on him - to change himself from a wild donkey to a human being.)

Pas Lechem: "continuous and recurring Divine favors" - on constant favors such as life and health, he wrote "continuous", while for favors which come and go over time, he wrote "recurring".

"they become so used to and familiar with" - on the constant favors, he wrote "used to", while for those that come and go, he wrote "familiar with" since even though they are not so used to them, nevertheless, these are familiar to them and ingrained in their imagination due to their recurring many times.

"not to be (1) removed or (2) separated from themselves" - There are two ways a man can lose his benefits. Either (1) they can be removed from him and cease to exist such as in the death of his children or the burning down of his possessions. Or, (2) they can be separated from him and transferred to someone else.. In truth, they are different calamities. The first case is difficult in that there is no hope left for reattaining this thing which no longer exists unlike something which still exists but is in someone else's possession where one still sits and hopes perhaps it will someday return to him. On the other hand, the second case also has a harsher evil since (Shir 8:6) "Jealousy [is] cruel as the grave", that a man sees his hard earned work in someone else's hands, as written (Yeshaya 1:6) "your land, strangers devour it in your presence".

Matanas Chelko: In truth, this is the reason our sages instituted so many morning blessings on each matter, such as pokeach ivrim (granting eyesight), zokef kefufim (straightens the bent), mitzadei gaver (directs feet), etc. All this is to bring one to recognize that all that he has is a gift from G-d. We mistakenly think we deserve these things. But in truth it is not so. Just because we had these things yesterday, does not necessitate or establish that we will merit these things also today. When we encounter someone who has no eyes to see with, or not feet to walk with, G-d forbid, we think to ourselves "oy to that person, but this is not my lot." This is not true! We are also like these people r"! Only that G-d in His kindness bestows on us limbs and senses at all times. In the blessing of the Shema we say that G-d every day continuously renews (recreates) the universe. This means, every day He gives anew. Hence, in truth, a person has nothing - no eyes, no hands, and no feet - only that G-d, in His kindness and benevolence, renews and regives him these things anew every day. Therefore the proper outlook on these senses and limbs should be from the perspective that one feels that he was lacking them and then afterwards receives them. In this way, he will undoubtedly thank G-d for His kindness and benevolence.)

In this respect, they resemble an infant, found in the desert by a kind hearted man. The man had pity on the infant, brought it into his home, raised it, fed it, clothed it, and generously provided all that was good for it until it grew up and understood the ways of the many benefits it had received.

(*Pas Lechem*: "understood the ways of the many benefits" - the author precisely chose the term "*the ways*", which means, that the infant was ignorant and did not understand from which ways his benefits came from and what chain of causes bring him the benefits. He only experienced the end benefits and its enjoyments. Unlike, when he grew up and understood the ways of his benefits and the chain of causes which bring them to him. Understand this.)

Afterwards the [same] kind hearted man heard about a man who fell in the hands of his enemy who for a long time treated him with utmost cruelty, starved, and kept naked. The prisoner's suffering aroused the kind hearted man's pity. He appeased the enemy (with words - *PL*) until the enemy freed the prisoner and forgave his debt. The benevolent man brought the man into his home and benefited him to a lesser extent than that which he bestowed on the infant. Yet, the man recognized the good more and was more thankful than the infant who grew up with them. The reason is because he went from a situation of destitution and suffering to one of goodness and tranquility while his mental faculties were mature. Therefore, he fully recognized the goodness and the kindness of his benefactor. But the infant did not realize the great extent of the goodness even after his perception and understanding had matured because he was used to them since his childhood.

No person with intelligence will doubt that the kindness to the child was wider in scope and more clearly recognizable, and that consequently there was in its case a greater obligation of constant gratitude and praise to the benefactor.

(*Marpe Lenefesh*: Since if the kind hearted man did not take the infant into his home, it would have died there. But for the prisoner, it is possible that he would have found a way to save himself from his enemy through some strategy. If so, the former should have been more grateful and praised the benefactor more than the prisoner. But he did not do so. The reason being that he is used to the benefits from childhood and thinks that this is normal and that he deserves it. Thus it is so with most human beings, who behave like this infant.)

This is similar to what scripture says (Hosea 11:3) "*And I carried Ephraim (from Egypt - ML), taking them in my arms, but they knew not that I healed them.*" (they did not want to know - *ML*)

(*Matanas Chelko*: they did not know that this was for their healing. Furthermore, they did not even realize that they were sick people in need of healing. All this is due to habit.

Hence the first reason we do not recognize the great divine benefits is because of lackings in the middos (good traits). Firstly, lusts - that we always desire more. Secondly, due to the bad things which befall us, we are not able to contemplate the divine benefits [in them] due to jealousy of others. Hence, the first reason is lacking in the middos (good traits), for even lacking in middos hinders emuna (faith) and consequently, service of G-d.

The second reason is habit. Even if no bad things or sufferings ever befell him throughout his life, and his lot in life was solely to receive good benefits, and even if he is always saying "thank G-d for all the good things", nevertheless he will not be so affected and will not be so moved by it. For being affected and moved by benefits comes only when a man feels he is totally lacking and that he needs help, support, and kindness [of another] - like that child who needed so much help and kindness. but when one recognizes this with a full and mature intellect - then it is possible that he will be touched by all the beneficence G-d has bestowed on him.

3. The third reason is that human beings are struck in this world with various mishaps and damages to their bodies and possessions and they do not understand the ways in which these misfortunes are a means to benefit them, nor the benefits of trial and suffering, as Scripture says "*Happy is the man whom You, O L-ord, chastens and teaches out of Your Law*" (Tehilim 94:12).

(*Pas Lechem*: "(1) benefit them, and the benefits of (2) trial and (3) suffering" - Three terms. The tribulations that G-d brings on a man fall into three categories. Either G-d's intention is that this bad thing will result in benefit for them in this world, such as the sale and imprisonment of Joseph, which eventually caused him to become king [of Egypt]. Some tribulations He intends for the benefit of trial, namely, that the person tested comes to recognize his level. It is very beneficial for them to strengthen themselves and bring out their potential to actuality, as explained in the Sages regarding the trials of the righteous, especially on the binding of Isaac.. On this he wrote "*benefits of trial*". Or G-d's intent is for the benefit of suffering, namely, to bring him suffering in this world in order to save

him from fury and wrath (of the evil forces created by his sins) in the world of retribution.

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Tov Halevanon: "trial" - as written "He fed you in the wilderness with manna, which your fathers knew not, that He might humble you, and that He might test you, to do you good in the end" (Devarim 8:16).

"suffering" - to humble his pride and submit his high heartedness.

Marpe Lenefesh: One should always think that everything G-d does is for the good, and all the bad things are actually good for him. Either they are for the benefits of trial, namely, that G-d tests the righteous to increase their reward. These are the yesurim shel ahava (chastisements of love) or they are in the way of punishment, and his sins are forgiven through them, as written in Gate 8 accounting #27, see there.

Matanas Chelko: a person should know and understand that G-d is bestowing good to him by bringing suffering on him. G-d's wish in this is that the person will listen to the voice of the sufferings and from them he will learn to improve his ways. He should feel great joy when he hears the mussar (ethics) of G-d.

They forget that they themselves and all they have are benefits which the Creator in His generosity and loving-kindness has bestowed on them, and that He decreed on them justly in accordance with His wisdom. They are resentful when His judgment is visited upon them and they do not praise Him when His mercy and loving-kindness are manifested to them.

(Pas Lechem: They resent the things which appear bad, even though in truth, concealed inside them, G-d's intent is for the greatest possible good for them. This leads them to not praise G-d even for the good which manifests openly towards them. Alternatively, even when the thing which appeared bad was visibly seen to result in good, nevertheless they still don't praise Him..

Matanas Chelko: This is another point - they forget that all the good they attained was pure generosity and loving-kindness. For in truth, they deserve nothing whatsoever; i.e. it is not that G-d is not bestowing [good] on them now as He used to do, but rather it is all pure generosity and loving-kindness. The analogy of this is to a fundraiser who collects money for a torah institution. A certain donor who he meets usually gives 1000 dollars but this time gave only 500 dollars. Is this not also charity and kindness?... so too G-d sometimes gives 1000 and sometimes only 500.. Nevertheless, it is all generosity and kindness. Only that sometimes G-d bestows a greater amount than other times. One must realize that the Creator has precise reasons why sometimes He bestows much and sometimes less..)

Their foolishness leads them to deny the benefits and the Benefactor. Their folly may even bring many of them to speculate that they know better concerning G-d's work and the various creations which He created for their well-being.

(Marpe Lenefesh: Like the Moray Nevuchim writes in part 3 ch.12 on the grumbling of a certain philosopher that the bad things in the world are more numerous than the good, etc. The Rambam answered there at length. The summary of his words is that most of the bad things which befall a man are due to his own bad choices, such as due to a bad way of living in eating, drinking, [excessive] marital relations, or that he pursues things which are not necessary for him. Through this, he falls into mishaps and troubles, and he then complains about G-d's traits. But if he had subsisted with the necessary only, he would have been spared from all these troubles, because the minimum necessary is easily obtained and is assured for every human being. see there and Gate 8 accounting #22 for similar to this..

Pas Lechem: "G-d's work" refers to general things in the world such as extreme heat, or extreme cold, which a person's soul hates, and the fools speculate that their absence would be better than their existence. Alternatively, it refers to G-d's providence with which He guides the world... and in truth, most people are resentful in seeing bad things happening to good people or vice versa, and these fools think that if the world's conduct was in their hands, it would be better and more orderly than it is now.

"the various creations which He created for their well-being" - this refers to damaging creatures and poisonous plants, and the like, where, in truth, everything was created perfectly for the well-being of

Tov Halevanon: Since they don't realize that G-d intends good for them, and that He brings these troubles to benefit them in their final end, they may stumble into evil in trying to remove these troubles, until they will say that evil is more prevalent than good, and thus G-d created the world, so man will toil and suffer, and that bad things happen randomly through "nature".

Matanas Chelko: He thinks that if he were G-d, he would do things differently. For example, if a bad dog bit him, he would say "I would not have created bad dogs. But in truth, even bad dogs have a purpose in this world, namely, to inflict suffering on him so that he will learn its lesson. Likewise regarding G-d's conduct, he thinks that if he were G-d, he would not act in this or that way. All this is foolishness for he does not understand in the least the many considerations of the Creator as to why He does this. On this the Talmud says (Bava Kama 38a): "Rav Shmuel bar Yehuda's daughter died. The [Babylonian] Rabbis said to Rabbi Ula 'let us go console Rav Shmuel bar Yehuda'. Rabbi Ula refused to go with them saying 'why should I join the consolations of Babylonians which is blasphemous, for behold they say 'what can we do?', which implies that if it were possible to do something to annul G-d's decree they would have done so." End quote. Hence, one who goes to a mourner and says "what can we do?", this implies "if I were the Master of the world, I would not have done like this." This is blasphemy and heretical towards G-d [as Rashi explains there]. For behold, G-d does what He deems to be the best possible way. Rather one should say something good to console the mourner as the Talmud continues. see there. Hence, one must have complete faith that all that G-d does is for the good. And even if one cannot recognize or see the good in what has occurred, he should nevertheless believe that it is good.

This reason impedes one's ability to examine the beneficence of the Creator more than the previous two reasons. For on the first two, one can overpower them, unlike this reason which depends on faith.)

In this regard, how like are they to blinded people who were admitted into an institution specially built for them and furnished with everything needed for their comfort. Every single thing was in its right place and arranged for their advantage in the way that might best serve the specific purpose of improving their condition. Useful healing potions had also been provided and a skilled physician appointed to heal them by the application of these potions so that their sight may be restored. They however neglected to toil in the healing of their eyes and did not heed the directions of the physicians who sought to cure them (for they sought only leisure there - MC).

They wandered about aimlessly in the institution, miserable because of their blindness. Often as they were walking, they would stumble over objects that had been placed there for their benefit, and fall down on their faces. Some were bruised, others suffered broken limbs. Their pains and injuries increased and multiplied. Then they burst forth in complaints against the owner and the builder of the home, condemned his work, charged him with falling short in the fulfillment of his duty and condemned him as a bad manager. They persuaded themselves that his aim and purpose had not been to do them good and show them kindness, but to cause them pain and injury. This attitude of mind caused them at last to deny his goodness and kindness, even as the wise man said (Koheles 10:3) "*Yea also, when a fool walks by the way, his understanding fails him and he declares to everyone that he is a fool*". (i.e. he tells others that they are fools, but he does not realize that he himself is a fool. Alternatively, he calls everything foolishness even though it is good and done with wisdom. - MH)

(*Pas Lechem: "falling short"* - this refers to one who performs some undertaking in a lazy manner, without proper attention. Then the resulting work does not succeed perfectly. Therefore, he is called "*falling short*", that he reduces the matter from its perfection, and something which is lacking, not only is it not useful, but sometimes it is even harmful.

Pas Lechem: Now that the author has finished presenting the three reasons, you, intelligent reader, put your attention to what I have made known to you - to clarify how they correspond to the three types of blindness mentioned earlier.

(1) For corresponding to the first cause, namely, their great absorption in matters of this world and the endless clamor of its waves of pleasures which do not allow quietude of the imaginations of his heart, behold, for a man caught in this, certainly there is no hope whatsoever that on his own, he will stir himself to recognize the beneficence of the Creator, and praise Him on them. Because, from where will this recognition come? Since his heart is preoccupied with too many things until there is no room left to think of anything else. Combine this, with his imagining always that he is lacking much, and whatever he has is worth nothing to him. Either way, there is way that his heart will come to recognize G-d's beneficence. On this he wrote earlier "*the majority of mankind are too blind to*

recognize these benefits". He wrote "*blind*" without qualification, in that they do not recognize them⁸ at all.

(2) Corresponding to the second cause, namely, being greatly habituated in them from childhood, behold, it is known that habit alone cannot by itself annul and desensitize a person from feeling something. If someone strikes him with a stick every day for several years, he will also feel the latest one, only that his fear of the feeling will not be so great, like someone who never experienced it. Hence, habit alone is not enough to block out the recognition completely. Likewise for the good, due to being habituated in them he does not recognize them properly, relative to their high excellence. On this he wrote: "*or comprehend their high excellence*".

(3) Corresponding to the third cause, namely, that a man is bitter and complains on many of the matters that are actually good for him due to their appearing bad on the surface, without contemplation. On this he wrote "*they do not think over their matters*", as explained earlier. Think and contemplate this for I have been brief.)

Since this is so, men of wisdom and knowledge have deemed it their duty to arouse those who did not understand the Creator's beneficence and instruct human beings to realize through their own intellect the high degree (of this good -PL). For many benefits fail to be enjoyed altogether or their enjoyment is marred because they are not realized and their high degree is not known. But when the attention of the beneficiaries is called to their high degree and what had been hidden from them is revealed to them, they will offer, in more abundant measure, laudation and thanksgiving to their divine Benefactor, and so will have pleasure and happiness in their life here and receive their good reward in the hereafter.

(*Pas Lechem*: "*to realize through their own intellect*" - i.e. the sages do not fulfill their duty in informing the people the high degree of the good by simply informing them so that the people will accept it with faith. Rather, it is their duty to teach them through rational inquiry until they understand it on their own.

Matanas Chelko: "instruct human beings to realize" - The author asserts here that not only is it a duty to inquire of all of the Creator's beneficences in the world, but it is also a duty for one who has attained some wisdom in this and recognizes it - to teach others on these matters. For example, if he hears his friend complaining or condemning, he should tell him: "why are you complaining to G-d? Don't you realize He did everything for your benefit?"

It appears the source of this is from the Sifri. The Rambam brings this Sifri in explaining the Mitzva (precept) of Love of G-d (Sefer Hamitzvot positive commandment #3): "this miztva includes calling all people to G-d's service and believing in Him. As an analogy, when one loves a human being, he will praise him to others and seek that others also love him. So too, when one truly loves G-d according to how much he grasped of His truth, behold undoubtedly you will seek out and call out to the deniers and fools to come to realize the truth which you yourself have come to realize..."

The wise man already said on this subject: "*The words of the wise are like goads; and like nails, firmly fixed, are the compilers (Baale Asufoth)*" (Koheles 12:11). The words of the wise are compared by the sage to goads, because they arouse and stir up; they are also compared to nails firmly fixed, because they (the wise men -TL) fix wisdom in their hearts always, and their wisdom endures in them.

The phrase "Baale Asufoth" means, according to the commentators, compilers of books. The term "*Divre*" in the first half of the verse also applies to its second half; which should be rendered: "*and like firmly fixed nails are the words of compilers*". For books authored on the branches of wisdom endure, their benefit is without interruption (for all generations) and therefore they are compared to nails firmly fixed.

(*Marpe Lenefesh*: Even though the sages do not stir a person to the good, behold, there are books of wisdom and understanding available, and whoever wants to learn and stir himself, let him come and learn. For without toiling in books of mussar (ethics), a man does not fulfill his duty.

Matanas Chelko: "goads" - this is the tool which is used to steer and guide the ox when it plows so that it goes in a straight line. So too, the Sages guide and steer human beings and stir them to go in the just path and to recognize the beneficence of the Creator... By studying their books, a man will come to recognize the beneficence of G-d and will overpower the three reasons mentioned earlier which impede this.

1. What is to be understood by the examination and its true meaning?
2. Is examination of created thing a duty or not?
3. What are the various ways in which it is to be conducted?
4. How many are the diverse marks of divine wisdom in created things which we should examine?
5. Which one of these is closest to us and should receive more attention than the rest?
6. The factors that are detrimental to the examination and its results.

CHAPTER 1

What is the examination? Contemplating the marks of the Creator's wisdom manifested in the created things and evaluating these marks according to (the utmost of -ML) one's mental capacity.

(*Tov Halevanon*: "according to one's mental capacity" - because certainly, no man is capable of understanding G-d's wisdom fully. Only that it is one's duty to recognize a bit according to his mental capacity.)

For [divine] wisdom, though varied in its manifestations in created things, is fundamentally and essentially one - just as the sun is one body, while the appearance of its rays when passing through glasses that are white, dark, red or green, varies and assumes respectively the color of each medium, and just as water with which a park is sprinkled assumes the color of the blooms on which it falls.

(*Tov Halevanon*: The difference in wisdom is not from differences in the Maker but from differences in the receiver of the wisdom.)

Pas Lechem: His intent in this analogy is so that one will not claim: "since we see the marks of wisdom are diverse in the creations, and what appears in this one does not appear in that one, if so, each one must originate from a different source of wisdom... Therefore, since there are so many sources of wisdom, why should I waste my time endlessly examining each one. For certainly many of them are beyond me, and from where will I know how to approach each one? To this, he answered that it is a mistake. Since in truth, even though the marks of wisdom appear different, they are all from one Source, and only one power is needed to recognize them all. Hence, the author continues: "therefore, contemplate...")

Therefore, contemplate G-d's creations, from the smallest of them to the largest, and reflect on those matters which are at present hidden from you; and, with the help of the Almighty, you will find that they are as I have told you. And because these marks of divine wisdom vary in created things, it is our duty to contemplate them and think on them until the whole matter becomes established in our souls and abides in our consciousness.

(*Pas Lechem*: "you will find that they are as I have told you" - You will find that I was right - that all the marks of wisdom manifested in them stem from one root.)

Manoach Halevavos: From every creature one can see the wisdom of G-d, thereby, clarifying His Unity, for the wisdom is fundamentally and essentially one.

Marpe Lenefesh: If you find something which you do not know its benefit and its reason, then when you reflect and examine well all things, you will find that all were done with awesome wisdom, and there is nothing which does not have a purpose and a benefit.

Rabbi YS: Even in the tiniest speck of the inanimate world, there are marks of the infinite divine wisdom as the Nobel prize winning physicist Richard Feynman noted (from his book: *The Character of Physical Law* - Chapter 2 - the relation of mathematics to physics): "It always bothers me that according to the laws as we understand them today, it takes a computing machine an infinite number of logical operations to figure out what goes on in no matter how tiny a region of space, and no matter how tiny a region of time. How can all that be going on in that tiny space? Why should it take an infinite amount of logic to figure out what one tiny piece of space/time is going to do? So I have

often made the hypothesis ultimately physics will not require a mathematical statement, that in the end the machinery will be revealed and the laws will turn out to be simple, like the checker board with all its apparent complexities. But this is just speculation." End Quote.

Pas Lechem: Corresponding to "*contemplate them*", he wrote: "*established in our minds*", i.e. to delve so deeply until one grasps the matter clearly, then his mind will be established and accept the matter without the gnawing of doubt.

Corresponding to "*think on them*" he wrote "*abides in our consciousness*" - that one thinks on them for such a long time, until he is assured it abides by him, and will not be easily forgotten.)

If these marks [of divine wisdom] were the same in all created things, no man would have any doubt in them [that they all stem from one Source]. The wise and the fool would be equal in their recognition. The reason (why the creations are not the same -ML) being that when one and the same thing is always being produced in the same way, it is clear that the maker is not a voluntary agent but a force acting according to the nature imposed upon it - compelling it to act in a definite way which it has no power to alter, just like fire whose sole function is to burn, or water whose nature is to cool. But one who has the power to do as his will prompts him will act in various ways at various times.

(*Pas Lechem*: "*wise and the fool*" - The fool is one who does not realize the qualities of wisdom, and does not want to strain his mind to toil in it. He is satisfied with the first impression. Hence, the author wrote that the wise and the fool would be equal in their recognition. Because the fool also understands things that are common and familiar, and due to repetition he understands certain things without needing to think over and contemplate. Hence, if everything were the same, he would know the hidden from the revealed.)

Since the Creator has free will in whatever He does, is not forced, needs nothing and is not forced by any nature, therefore He created things diverse, according as His wisdom each time dictated; so that the variety shall point to His unity and His free-will in whatever He does, as it is said "*Whatsoever the L-ord pleased, has He done in heaven and on earth*" (Tehilim 135:6).

(*Manoach Halevavos*: i.e. since they are similar in one respect and different in another, they point to His unity. See also my explanation in Gate 1 ch.7 argument 2.

Pas Lechem: "*has free will, not forced, etc.*" His intent in this is that something which is bound to a nature such as inanimate objects, always do the same thing. But something which acts by will and desire, namely, a human being, which possesses free will - he will have different actions, but not at the same time, rather according to his needs of the time. And the Creator is not bound by any "nature", ch'v, nor is he forced, nor needs anything. The latter two terms "not forced" and "needs nothing" the author wrote to contrast with man. Because a man is sometimes "forced" in his actions, to avoid harm, or he needs to bring some benefit. Therefore, though, he acts with free will and desire, one cannot truly call him as doing with "free will", except in a borrowed sense since necessity may prevent him in this. Hence, the term "free will" correctly applies only to G-d, since His will is free of any form of need or necessity, and all the more so of any "nature".

Marpe Lenefesh: "*shall point to His unity*" - it is a clear proof and plain evidence that G-d is alone in His world... All the creations, generally and specifically - all of them guard their post (for example, the planets are forced to revolve around the sun according to His physical law). This points that they are all forced by one Master, and all are under His domain and power.

Matanas Chelko: [If He did not create things diverse] we would think that G-d is like some kind of machine (natural phenomena) which can only do one thing. Even though one would be amazed at such a machine just like we are impressed at various machines such as a machine which manufactures paper. Though we may not know how it manufactures the paper, nevertheless, when we observe it, we are impressed at the engineering wisdom inside it. However, since we see that it can only make one thing, namely, paper, the engineering wisdom inside it is not so impressive to our eyes. We deem that the wisdom is not so great... So too, we would think the same of G-d, that He is forced and limited to this wisdom only and that He is not all-wise and all-powerful... But when we see such a multitude of types of flowers, trees, etc., even though we have no need for all these types, and likewise for all the different varieties in plants, animals, and humans - all this teaches on the wisdom of the Creator. For if there were not such a multitude, a man would not contemplate and

G-d alone knows if it is on this account only that all creatures have not been made in one form and likeness; rationally it would seem that this is the purpose of the variety in the marks of wisdom exhibited in created things. But the Creator's wisdom is too exalted for us. What we have just mentioned is only one out of many other reasons to the knowledge of which we have not attained. Complete wisdom belongs to G-d alone, and there is no power beside Him.

(*Matanas Chelko*: Summary - One is under duty to contemplate the wisdom of the Creator. The first amazement should be at the endless multitude of types of things and endless wisdom exhibited in the natural world. From this we see so many signs of wisdom in the world [such as animals, foods, flowers, trees, human beings.] All this proves and demonstrates to us also on His power and ability, that He is not forced by anything and does as He wishes.

YS: We have prepared a collection of amazing creatures at dafyomireview.com/427

CHAPTER 2

Is it our duty to study created things or not? We reply that the examination of created things and deducing from them the wisdom of the Creator is a duty which can be demonstrated from Reason, Scripture, and Tradition (the oral torah).

From Reason: For our reason bears witness that a rational creature's superiority over an irrational one consists in the former's superior ability to perceive, understand and acquire knowledge of the marks of wisdom found throughout the universe, as Scripture said *"Who teaches us more than the beasts of the field, and makes us wiser than the fowls of heaven"* (Job 35:11).

And when a man thinks of, and reflects upon, these foundations of wisdom and examines its marks in the universe, his superiority over the animals rises in proportion to his understanding. But if he neglects to observe and reflect, he is not equal to the beast, but inferior to it, as Scripture said *"The ox knows his owner, and the donkey his master's crib, but Israel does not know, my people do not consider"* (Yeshaya 1:3).

(*Tov Halevanon*: Even though the animals of the land and the birds of the sky also possess signs of intelligence and amazing things, as known to the studiers of nature, nevertheless, this is set in them only according to their survival needs (it is a "practical intelligence" only), unlike the superiority of human beings whose wisdom is encompassing, allowing him to understand the secret of other creations, in order to understand through this the will of G-d, and His wisdom.

Matanas Chelko: The human being is superior to the animal due to his intellect, namely, that man is able to contemplate wisdom, to make calculations, and draw conclusions. This is his superiority.

Besides this, "a man's superiority over an animal is nothing".

"Who teaches us more.." - he did not bring this verse as a proof to the duty of examination but rather to show that the intellect is man's superiority over the animals.

When a man loses his intellect (becomes insane), he becomes worse than an animal. He can damage himself and others and come to corrupt and destroy. This one can also realize by contemplating the world, for everything has its place. And when it does not use its special abilities properly - it has no place in the world. Regarding this, there is no difference between one who does not use the intellect G-d has graced him with and one who has become insane. Both are worse than the animal. Though, one who does not use his intellect to contemplate and understand is not as wild as one who has become insane, nevertheless, regarding the damage he has caused, they are both equal, for both are inferior to the animal.

From Scripture: The same can be demonstrated from Scriptures, as it is said, *"Lift up your eyes on high and behold, who created these?"* (Yeshaya 40:26). And again *"When I behold Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have established"* (Tehilim 8:4). Scripture also said *"Have you not known? have you not heard? has it not been told you from the beginning? [have you not understood from the foundations of the earth?]"* (Yeshaya 40:21) Further *"Hear O deaf, look O blind, that you may see (the wisdom of the Creator - PL)"* (Yeshaya 42:18); *"Better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting, since that is the end of all men,*

and the living will take it to his heart" (Koheles 7:2); "The wise man, his eyes are in his head; but the fool walks in darkness" (Koheles 2:14). "But the path of the righteous is as the light of dawn that shines more till the day is perfect. The way of the wicked is as darkness; they know not at what they stumble" (Mishlei 4:18-19).

(*Tov Halevanon*: The righteous go in the proper light, i.e. they follow the light of their intellects and gaze with wisdom to examine which path is the proper path so that they do not stumble [in the wrong path].)

Pas Lechem: "and the living will take it to his heart" - Even though death is something everybody knows, since behold, it is the normal way of the world. Nevertheless, it requires contemplation and putting to heart on the sign of wisdom which is manifested in it, as our Sages expounded on the verse "behold it was good" - this refers to death (Midrash Bereishis Raba 9:5).

Tov Halevanon: "and the living will take it to his heart" - i.e. while a man is still alive, he must investigate the purpose of man and his end.)

From Tradition: The sages said (Sabbath 75a) "He who is capable of calculating the courses of the stars and planets and does not do so - of such a one, Scripture said (Yeshaya 5:12) 'And the harp, and the lyre, the timbrel, and flute, and wine, are in their feasts: but they regard not the work of the L-ord, nor do they contemplate the work of His hands'". And they say further (Sabbath 75a) "From where do we know that it is a duty to calculate the courses of the stars and planets?" Because it is said (Devarim 4:6) 'Observe therefore and do them, for this is your wisdom and understanding in the sight of the nations that, when they hear all these statutes, they shall say: 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people'. This verse refers to the duty of making astronomical calculations."

Further they said (Pirkei Avos 2:1) "Consider the loss from doing a mitzvah (precept) against its reward and the gain from doing a sin against the loss it involves".

(*Marpe Lenefesh*: this is a general proof that a man must not be like a wild horse without understanding, rather he must consider and examine all of his actions always.)

And they further said (Eruvin 100b) "If the Torah had not been given to the Jews, we could have learned decency from the cat, chastity from the dove, etiquette from the rooster and honesty from the ant" (hence it is our duty to examine the creations - TL).

(*Pas Lechem*: The cat covers his excrement. The dove does not exchange his mate. The rooster appeases the hen before mating. The ant does not steal the food particle that his fellow ant acquired.)

Thus far it has been demonstrated that it is a duty to examine created things and draw the deductions from the marks of Divine Wisdom exhibited in them. Note it well!

CHAPTER 3

How are the several ways of examination to be conducted?

Examination of created things means a close study of the elements of which the Universe is composed; the products that result from the combination of these elements; the character of the constituents of each composite; the ways in which it is useful; the marks of wisdom exhibited in its production, form and shape, and in the purpose for which it was created; the beautiful spirituality of this world; its causes and effects; and the complete perfection for which it was created; to know its contents - spiritual and physical, rational and irrational, the immobile and the mobile (solid and fluid), minerals and plants; its higher and lower parts; and to realize that the Creator created the Universe in a perfect and orderly combination - each of its parts distinctly recognizable, - so that it hints and teaches on the Creator, as a work points to the workman, or a house indicates the builder.

(*Pas Lechem*: "the marks of wisdom exhibited in its production" - i.e. the beginning of its existence, while it is forming, such as in living things, some species gestate and give birth, others lay eggs, and by plants, this species grows by itself, another through a seed planted. Similarly, there are many many differences in the formation of creatures.

"its causes and effects" - i.e. to know and understand the cause and effect in each thing, that through this thing it is completed and endures, as you will find in living things, that animals need

plants, plants need water and soil. Hence, plants are a cause for the animals, that it becomes complete and enduring in the world. Likewise for all creations - all have a cause which completes it... and to reflect and understand the purpose of all creations, why they were all created and what benefit they have. When one looks and thinks on this, he will see and discern that everything was created for man, as he wrote in the first gate...

Marpe Lenefesh: G-d made the universe so that all who behold it will recognize and know that a wise, mighty, and capable One, of which there is none like Him, created it just like a building teaches on the wisdom and ability of the builder. So too, we can deduce from the world and everything in it on the Creator even though we cannot grasp His essence as explained in Gate 1.

Pas Lechem: "so that it hints and teaches on the Creator" - "hints" refers to a general vague teaching whose explanation is not clear, such as "He winks with his eyes" (Mishlei 6:13). "teaches", however, refers to a clear teaching which explains the thing. Behold, on the surface examination and first impression on the general existence of the universe - immediately, it teaches on the existence of the Creator who created it because a thing cannot create itself, as explained in gate 1, just like a handiwork reveals the existence of the craftsman who made it. However, it is an encrypted teaching, only hinting, since it does not explain His intent, wisdom, and ability. However, after much contemplation on the details of the creations and their connected purpose - it will teach us clearly and explain to us His intent, wisdom, and ability to do as He wishes, just like the existence of a building teaches on the existence of its builder, which certainly also teaches on the builder's intent, wisdom, and ability. Unlike a general vague deed, as before, (that creation alone does not show all this). And this is what he wrote: "as a work points to the workman, or a house indicates the builder". "The work" corresponds to the "hint" (general vague teaching of creation), while the "house" corresponds to the "clear teaching" on His will, wisdom, and ability. Understand this.

Matanas Chelko: those who believe that the world simply popped into existence by itself without a Creator is not only a heretic but also a big fool.

(note: I think the Rav is not referring to the average scientist who was trained in this way of thinking since his youth and is not to blame, but rather to the leaders, the innovators, the militant atheists who are constantly pushing this outlook on humanity.)

For if a person would come and try to convince him that this table assembled itself on its own, he would consider it an insult that the person considers him so foolish and of crooked intellect that he thinks he can convince him of this. In truth, the heretic is not so because he concluded these things (that there is no Creator) in his mind and thoughts, but rather because he concluded this in his heart. For if he admits that this world has a Creator, he would then be under duty to assume His service. Therefore, these people look for and invent all sorts of rationalizations and excuses in order to assert that the universe created itself. And it is all for the purpose of exempting themselves from the service of G-d. They say these crazy things only out of great necessity. For when a man is cornered and has no choice, he will then say or do something foolish. So too here, it is only out of great necessity that they claim the world simply came into existence by itself. So too, for those who accept their theories and fool themselves into believing that it is true. For behold, from the universe itself it is possible to see that there is a Creator.

Behold in science, the more wisdom they discover, the more heretical they become. While for the believer it is the opposite, that their faith becomes strengthened. The reason is that the outlook and attitude of the scientists is "kochi v'otzem yadi" (it is our strength and ingenuity that has accomplished this for us). Therefore, the result is that the more the scientist discovers, the more he will feel he has done more (become more proud). But the believer knows that every new thing he discovers in the world is another strong proof of the Creator...

It is proper that you should know that the whole world (even inanimate things - TL) is synthesized of the physical and the spiritual, so intimately mixed and fused, that each of them sustains the other, like body and soul in living creatures.

(Pas Lechem: "like body and soul (nefesh) in living creatures" - the soul prolongs and sustains the body. When the soul leaves the body, the body immediately inanimates and decomposes ("life" ceases). Likewise, the body sustains the animal soul in animals, and when the animal soul leaves the animal's body, it (the animal soul) ceases and nullifies. Likewise, for the nefesh tzomachat (plant soul) in plants. For the nefesh medaberet (human soul) we can say the same regarding its existing in this physical world, because immediately after the human soul leaves the body, it returns to its place in the higher worlds [as written (Eccl. 12:7) "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the

spirit shall return unto G-d who gave it."].

14

Translator: see Gate 1 ch.5 where we showed that living creatures which can grow and reproduce are simply too complicated for any kind of purely physical machine.)

The marks of wisdom exhibited in all of this are of three kinds.

(1) Those of the first kind are clear and apparent, and do not escape the notice even of the fool, and of course not of the thinking person. An example is the [relative] movement of the sun above the earth to illuminate the habitable portion of the globe, to benefit the creatures that live there; as Scripture said (Tehilim 104:22-24) "*The sun arises, they assemble and crouch in their dens. Man goes forth unto his work and to his labor until the evening. How manifold are Your works, O L-ord! With wisdom have You made them all. The earth is full of Your possessions*".

(2) The second kind consists of marks of wisdom, whose benefit and necessity is hidden from most people and known only to the intelligent person who comprehends that they are right. Such as death, the fate that overtakes all flesh and which is necessary for the welfare of the world. As our sages expounded the verse: (Bereishis 1:31) " 'And G-d saw everything that He had made, and behold it was very good'. 'Behold it was very good' - this refers to death." (Bereishis Raba 9:5). So, too, the wise king said "*wherefore I praised the dead which are already dead more than the living which are yet alive*" (Koheles 4:2).

(*Tov Halevanon*: Even though death appears to be something very bad for that individual creature, but when one reflects on the collective good, one will realize and understand that this is how it must be according to the physical nature of the world, and without this evil, the world could not endure due to the coming generations, for it is impossible for one thing to arise without the loss of something which preceded it.

Marpe Lenefesh: Without death, the human race could not endure for several reasons. Without death, why should a man work endlessly under the sun? When would he take his reward? Since in truth, the good of this world, is not really good and likewise for the bad. The wicked person would not fear death and would always remain in his wickedness. [With death,] the righteous man will receive his reward there according to his deeds... and there are other good reasons for death which we cannot comprehend...

Matanas Chelko: Without death, we would lose this final source of fear of heaven... For when a person remembers the [coming of the] day of his death, he can defeat his base nature and evil inclination. For he reflects how through death, he will go on to a new world, and that he must prepare for this. Therefore death is necessarily very good. Hence, by understanding this, he will recognize how death is a divine benefit to man. Through it he can attain fear of heaven and fulfill his purpose of service in this world, thereby acquiring his portion in the Olam Haba (afterlife).

(3) The third kind consists of marks of wisdom that are partly obscure and partly clear. The man endowed with but little mental power will not recognize them unless he ponders them and studies them in minute detail. An example is the changes that take place in the year, its four seasons etc.

(*Tov Halevanon*: From warm to cold, from summer to winter. It appears that the warm is better, but after examination, one will realize that each one has a specific benefit.

Matanas Chelko: Why we need four seasons, and why is it not enough for less than four. There is amazing wisdom in this to those who know - what each season brings, such as snow in winter, falling of leaves in autumn. Much contemplation is necessary - and to learn from someone who has a mesora (torah tradition) in this subject in order to fully understand it.

The wise and intelligent man will choose from the world for study its fine and spiritual elements; use them as a ladder by which to obtain proofs of the existence of the Creator of all, to Whose service he will then cling to according to his heartfelt recognition of the greatness and exaltedness of the Creator, and his realization of the Almighty's gracious benevolence to all of His creations and that G-d has graciously bestowed abundant benefits to him, and has elevated him (above the animals, etc.) while he had done nothing nor possessed any moral quality that would entitle him to deserve any divine reward.

(*Marpe Lenefesh*: "*study its fine and spiritual elements...obtain proofs*" - i.e. he will not look solely at

the physical side of things, so one should not think man was created for physical things such as eating and other needs. Because then it would not be necessary for each creature to have some fine and spiritual elements. Rather the spiritual in each thing is a clear proof on the blessed Creator, as is evident to one who reflects on this. When a person habituates himself in everything he looks at and in every creature he sees, he will be able to see the work of G-d for it is awesome, and through this he will be able to fulfill the verse: "I have set G-d before me always" (Tehilim 16:8). When he habituates in this, the awe and fear of G-d will enter his heart and "he will then cling to the service of G-d".

Pas Lechem: The wise man will put his attention to know the fine and spiritual side of the world... He will set them as a ladder in intellectual investigation to ascend higher and higher. And the purpose of all this - so that he attains understanding into the greatness and exaltedness of the blessed Creator and clings to His service. The intensity of his clinging will be according to the intensity of the picture in his heart of the greatness and exaltedness of the Creator, and according to how much he recognizes the marks of G-d's benevolence to His creations... i.e. to first contemplate G-d's collective benevolence towards all of His creations and afterwards to contemplate the special favor G-d has shown specifically to him [*Rabbi YS:* such as making him a human being instead of a frog]

Matanas Chelko: the wise man understands that the purpose of this world is not just for his pleasure, but rather it is in order to understand and find the Creator through the manifested wisdom therein. This outlook applies to all physical matters of this world - that one uses them as a ladder, to bring proofs on the Creator. For through every thing, it is possible to see the greatness of the Creator, and through this he will come to thank Him, as the author will explain.

"to Whose service he will then cling" - A man's service towards G-d depends on the degree to which he recognizes the greatness and exaltedness of the Creator."

"and that G-d has graciously bestowed abundant benefits to him" - For even before a man has done anything whatsoever, he already received many benefits from G-d. Through this, he will obligate himself to recognize the good (be grateful) and to try to make a return through his service.

Afterwards, he will select for himself, of the material things, only those that promote his physical benefit and material well-being, but only to the extent needful and sufficient. He will abandon the rest, of the superfluities and worldly desires which turn the heart away from G-d. He will rather busy himself with working for his final home, the place to which he will go after his death. The world and its possessions, he will regard as a means of providing for his appointed day, his latter end. He will take of this world only what can accompany him on his journey.

Matanas Chelko: This is along what is written in chapter 1 of the Mesilas Yesharim: "the primary purpose of a man's existence in this world is solely the fulfilling of commandments, the serving of G-d and the withstanding of trials, and that the world's pleasures should serve only the purpose of aiding and assisting him, by way of providing him with the contentment and peace of mind requisite for the freeing of his heart for the service which is placed upon him" End quote. Hence, this world is built in such a way that a person is required to partake of a certain measure of physical pleasures and tranquility. It is permitted and even a duty to do so according to how much he needs for his particular makeup. One who abstains from physical pleasures and through this he has no peace of mind to serve G-d - this is false religiosity (frumkeit b'alma). And the opposite, one who excesses in worldly pleasures and seeks the superfluous or seeks to indulge in physical pleasures - he is not on the right path and it is forbidden to go in this course. The balance in this is very fine. Every person must carefully weigh himself and estimate himself according to his own particular physical and mental makeup what he truly needs to help and aid him so that he has the proper contentment and peace of mind in order that his mind is free to serve G-d. These are permitted and even an obligation. Conversely, those pleasures which distract and obstruct a person from the service of G-d are forbidden.

But a person ignorant of the ways of the world and of its evidences of divine wisdom, regards it as his everlasting home and fixed abode. He busies himself with it strenuously, sets all his heart and concentrates all his energies upon it, thinking that he is rapidly furthering his own interests and does not realize that the fruits of his toil and the superfluity that he has gathered will go to others possibly during his lifetime and undoubtedly after his death. And thus he totally neglects his interests hereafter.

(Marpe Lenefesh: This world and all of its possessions was created only so that a human being will prepare in it his provisions for the Olam Haba (afterlife). Because there is his true home and residence. While here, he is like a visitor who stopped by temporarily. "This world is like a hallway to

the Olam Haba..." (Avos 4:16), "today to do them and tomorrow to receive their reward" (Eruvin 16 22a). Therefore, one should take from this world only what will be good for him in the afterlife, and not more. But the fool, who does not understand what G-d asks of him, and why he came to this world and in this body, and thinks that here is his home and residence, and that he will be here forever. Therefore, he works only for worldly matters and completely forgets his final end.

Matanas Chelko: "a person ignorant of the ways of the world and of its evidences of divine wisdom" - He does not contemplate them. He does not see the divine wisdom. He does not feel all the good he received and does not long to make a return.

How analogous these types are to two brothers who inherited from their father a piece of land that needed cultivation. They divided it between themselves. Neither of them possessed anything else. One of them was sensible and industrious; the other was the opposite (foolish and lazy - PL).

The sensible brother realized that if he occupied himself solely with his plot of land, this would prevent him from earning his livelihood and attaining his immediate needs. So he hired himself out as a day-laborer in a field belonging to another person and was thus able to subsist on the wages he received. After he had finished his daily task he worked an hour every evening in his own field industriously and zealously. When he had saved enough out of his wages to keep him for one or more days, he stopped working for others and labored on his property with the utmost energy and zeal. In this course he persevered until his plot was in a proper state of cultivation. When the harvest time came he gathered the products of his field and orchard, stored them and had sufficient produce to support himself for the next year. Then he cultivated his land as he desired and planted more trees until it not only produced enough for his maintenance, but yielded a surplus with which he bought additional land.

The foolish brother, recognizing that working on his land alone would prevent him from earning a living, neglected his property completely, hired himself out to others as a field-laborer, spent the whole of the wages he received and saved nothing. Whenever he had enough left of his earnings to provide him with food for a single day, he turned it into a day of rest, idleness and amusement, never giving a thought to his property. The hours during which he was free on the days when he worked, he spent in the bath. His land remained waste and yielded nothing. It was all covered with thorns and thistles. Its fences were broken. Its trees were swept away by a flood (which entered through the breaches in the stone fence - ML). It was in the condition described by the wise man in the text (Mishlei 24:30-31) "*I passed by the field of the slothful and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding and behold, it was all overgrown with thorns; nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down.*"

(*Pas Lechem*: "a day of rest, idleness and amusement" - Three disgraces each worse than the other. The first person who hates hard work, and after a bit of strain, already wants to rest. He does not realize that a "man was born to toil" (Iyov 5:7), and according to the greatness of the purpose will be the greatness of the necessary strain to attain it, as written "[he saw that the rest (in the afterlife) was good, and the land that it was pleasant;] and bowed his shoulder to bear" (Bereishis 49:15). Worse than this person, is a lazy man who loves idleness, and does not desire any work, as written "A sluggard buries his hand in the dish; he will not even bring it back to his mouth" (Mishlei 19:24). Even worse than both of these, some people hate idleness and are energetic. However, all of their toil is in futilities and foolishness, such as playing with dice or the like. Hence, this person sometimes makes "a day of rest", to rest from the feeling of strain of the previous days. Sometimes, even though he does not feel any strain in his body, he desires idleness, and sometime he made that day a day of amusement, to amuse himself with futile toil.)

The intelligent reader who reflects intently upon this parable will draw from it the lesson as to his final end, which is his true home, and he will work on it with all his might. While for his earthly needs, he will work as one does for others, in moderation and only to the extent absolutely necessary. The fool, however, acts oppositely in two ways. His interests here on earth he pursues with zeal and diligence while for his welfare in the hereafter he utterly ignores; even as the wise man said, when he observed the fool (Mishlei 24.32), "*Then I saw and considered it well. I looked upon it and drew lessons* (to the matter of the soul - TL)".

(*Tov Halevanon*: "will draw from it the lesson as to his final end" - For his land refers to his neshama (soul), which G-d gave to him "to work it and to guard it" (Bereishis 2:15) in purity, to succeed in planting and bearing fruit in the vineyard of G-d, until the time it is called back. The intelligent man sees that if he spends all of his time working only for his soul, he will not be able to earn a living to provide for his body, and like our sages said: "all torah study without working for a livelihood will in the end be neglected" (Avot 2:3). Therefore, he sees proper to hire himself out to some work, or

some business dealing with faith, in order to sustain himself. But when he is free from this work, he returns diligently to torah study and service of G-d until he reaches the level of Tzadik (righteous). Then G-d will direct special attention on him to give him abundance and to bless his handiwork, as scripture says: "I never saw a righteous forsaken" (Tehilim 37:25), until he increases strength and pure hands to honor G-d with his money (give charity etc), and to ascend his soul from level to level until he merits the Olam Haba, eternal rewards, and a higher soul. But the fool does not work on his soul. Rather, he only endeavors to make profit, to serve his body, and to amass the superfluous and the pleasures of the masses, and he abandons his soul barren and to waste. Unseeded, it will not sprout, nor receive on it any shefa (spiritual light) or divine clinging until it will no longer be capable even to return to its source due to having defiled itself. Rather, to the sheol (Gehinom) he will descend, and the underworld will blanket over him. On him it is written (Yeshaya 3:9) "Woe unto their soul! for they have brought evil unto themselves".

Marpe Lenefesh: Gan Eden is a person's true home. In this world, he is like a visitor who camped for a temporary stay. Only that he needs room and board, and must therefore prepare his livelihood. But he must not abandon his plot of land in Olam Haba (the afterlife) by ignoring cultivating it lest it become a barren wasteland...)

CHAPTER 4

How many are the marks of divine wisdom in created things which we can examine?

To this we reply that even though there are many kinds of created things and each kind has many constituents, the cornerstones of wisdom found in them are seven classes.

One of these is the mark of wisdom apparent in the primary and fundamental elements of the universe. The Earth, we observe is at the center; close to it and above it is water; close to the water is the atmosphere; above all is fire in a just and unchanging balance and measure. Everyone of these elements maintains its proper position appointed for it. The ocean bed, with the waters imprisoned therein, stays in its place and does not pass beyond its boundaries despite the roaring of the waves and the raging of the winds, as it is written "*And I prescribed for it My decree, and set bars and doors; and said: 'Thus far you shall come, but no further, and here shall your proud waves be stayed'*" (Iyov 38:9-11).

(*Tov Halevanon:* "*The Earth, we observe is at the center*" - the earth and everything in it, is suspended in space by the word of G-d, and its inhabitants dwell all around its surface, and despite that it is a globe, no one falls from it, even though it would seem that those living on the opposite half, who stand opposite us, should fall off. It appears to each of the inhabitants that they are standing on top of the earth, and the heavens are above them. This is an unbelievable wonder of the wisdom of the Creator. [*Rabbi YS: learn to appreciate gravity!*])

Concerning the stability of heaven and earth, Scripture said (Ps. 119:89-91) "*Forever, O L-ord, Your word stands fast in heaven, Your faithfulness is unto all generations; You have established the earth and it stands. They stand this day according to Your ordinances; for all things are Your servants*". David also dwelt on this theme in his Psalm (104) beginning "*O my soul, bless the L-ord. [He dons light like a garment, spreads the heavens like a curtain]*".

(*Tov Halevanon:* "*Forever, O L-ord, Your word stands fast in heaven*" - The word of G-d and the power of His deeds are always in the celestial spheres and all of their hosts - this is what perpetuates their existence, similar to the verse: "You give life to all of them" (Nechemia 9:6). If G-d were to withhold His hashpaa (influence) from them, they would immediately cease to exist.

"*Your faithfulness is unto all generations*" - G-d's kindness is faithfully on all the creatures of the earth.

"*They stand this day according to Your ordinances*" - i.e. the continuous existence of all the creations is due to Your constant ordinance and command.

"*for all things are Your servants*" - none of them exist through "nature", rather it is G-d who grants them existence continuously.

"*O my soul, bless the L-ord...*" the entire Psalm is in the present tense, i.e. G-d does this always, as David ends off "but if You turn away Your face, they shall vanish". All this teaches that G-d's power never ceases to sustain all.

Pas Lechem: The psalm describes how the creations guard the [physical] laws of G-d and never

The second cornerstone is the mark of wisdom apparent in the human species, - a universe on a small scale that completes the ordered series of creation, and constitutes its crowning beauty, glory and perfection. David, peace be on him, referred to Man when he acclaimed "*O Eternal, our L-ord, how glorious is Your Name in all the earth.*" (Tehilim 8:1).

| (*Marpe Lenefesh*: Through man all of what G-d created is completed and perfected for everything was created for the benefit of man and to serve him, and man is in this world, like the owner of the house.)

The third cornerstone is the mark of wisdom apparent in the formation of the individual human being, - his physical structure the faculties of his nefesh (lower soul) and the light of reason with which the Creator has distinguished him and thus given him superiority over other living creatures that are irrational.

Man resembles the large universe, being like it fundamentally and in its original elements. To this Job refers when he said (Job 10:10-12) "*Have You not poured me out as milk and curdled me like cheese? With skin and flesh have You clothed me, and with bones and sinews have knit me together? Life and favor have You granted me, And Your providence has preserved my spirit.*"

| (*Tov Halevanon*: "*faculties of his nefesh (lower soul)*" - the feeling soul from which arise the five senses, and also the power of imagination, and the power of awareness, and other bodily powers. [PL - such as the power of growth, reproduction, etc. The Kabalists counted 70 powers.] "*the light of reason*" - this is the neshama (higher soul). Through it man was distinguished from the animals, since they also possess faculties of nefesh.

| *Manoach Halevavos*: "*Your providence has preserved my spirit*" - i.e. the binding of the neshama (soul) and ruach (spirit) with the body. This is an amazing thing, it is unimaginable, and impossible were it not for the command of G-d, and His decree.)

The fourth cornerstone is the mark of wisdom manifested in other species of living creatures, from the least to the greatest. Those that fly or swim or creep or move on four feet, with their various forms, traits, uses, benefits, and purpose in the world. This is mentioned in the speech in which the Creator rebuked Job in order to arouse him to his duty (Job 38:41) "*who provides for the raven his prey?, etc.*" and the further references (Job 39) to various species of animals that live in the deserts and the seas.

| (*Pas Lechem*: "*forms, traits, uses, benefits, and purpose*" - Each creature reflects a particular part of wisdom. The terms "*forms*" refers to external appearance. "*Traits*" refers to the special traits of creatures, such as bravery of heart to the lion, brazenness to the leopard, anger to the bear, and the wise king attributed zeal to the ant, and similarly for others. The term "*uses*": that man uses each one for a particular use. Such as the ox for plowing, the horse for riding, the donkey for carrying, the camel and elephant for travel in deserts/jungles. "*Benefits*" that man benefits something from each one, such as cattle and sheep for their meat or milk. Wild animals for their skins. These are uses for enjoyment. But some creatures provide man with "*purposeful*" uses such as the crab and the eggs of the "kastor" which are needed for medicinal purposes, and many many more examples, as known by those who study [natural] medicine. Likewise, many others are needed for different benefits. "*the speech in which the Creator rebuked Job in order to arouse him to his duty*" - to arouse his heart to reflect on the greatness of the Creator and His wisdom. Then automatically, he will realize his lowliness relative to Him, and will close his mouth.

| *Marpe Lenefesh*: Rabeinu Tam writes in the sefer hayashar shaar 13 that it is proper to recite that speech in Job [ch.38]

The fifth is the mark of wisdom displayed in plants and other natural products (ex. minerals) that have been provided for the improvement of the human race, because of their usefulness to man in various ways, according to their natures, constitutions and powers. The ancients already expounded this subject in their works, according to their conceptions. Thus it is said (Melachim 5:13) "*And he (Solomon) spoke of trees from the cedar that is in Lebanon*

even unto the hyssop that springs out of the wall: he spoke also of beasts, and fowl, and of creeping things and of fishes".

(Tov Halevanon: "And he (Solomon) spoke of trees" he revealed the benefit of each plant and explained for which use it was created)

The sixth is the mark of wisdom discernible in the sciences, arts and crafts which the Creator, blessed be He, provided for man, to contribute to his improvement, to enable him to obtain a livelihood and gain other benefits of a general and particular character. To this mark of divine wisdom Scripture refers in the texts (Job 38:36) "Who has put wisdom in the inward parts? Or who has given understanding to the mind?" and again (Prov. 2:6) "For the L-ord gives wisdom; out of His mouth comes knowledge and discernment".

(Marpe Lenefesh: "of a general and particular character" - that all human beings need that trade such as plowing and sowing, or the like, while some trades are only for some people such as gold and silver smiths, which are needed only by the wealthy..

"who has given understanding to the mind" - who has given wisdom to man and set understanding in his mind to think thoughts and do all the works and deeds which man does?

Rabbi YS: If you ask, why did G-d conceal modern science from man for thousands of years? Modern technology is far superior to the animal labor of old. Answer: I would suggest that the animal labor way is necessary long term because it limits man's destructive ability. Modern science may seem good now, but in 50 or 100 years from now we will see in retrospect that it was not a good thing - it can really bring tremendous destruction. For mankind to survive in equilibrium long term, the destructive potential of the wicked must be restrained. As to why G-d has granted it in our era, perhaps because we are near the final showdown as described in scripture. Another possible explanation is that it is necessary to maintain free will. Advances in microbiology are increasingly unraveling the inner workings of cells and this is leading to a new and enormously powerful argument to design. Scientists are backing themselves further and further into a corner for the more they discover the harder it becomes to attribute it all to chance. It is, after all, a tremendous feat to produce a contraption which will grow and reproduce itself autonomously. see my treatise on evolution at dafyomireview.com/421 for much more on this.)

The seventh is the mark of wisdom exhibited in the appointment of the Torah and its statutes, to teach us how to serve the Creator and secure for one who diligently lives according to their dictates, immediate happiness here, and reward in the hereafter, as it is written (Is.55:2-3) "Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good (in this world - MH) and let your soul delight itself in pleasantness (in the next world - MH). Incline your ear and come to Me; Hear and your soul shall live." To this should be added the customs by which the government of other nations is regulated together with their useful features. For those nations, these customs take the place of the Torah - but only in secular matters.

(Marpe Lenefesh: G-d set His torah among us so that we may properly know what to do and how to conduct ourselves in this world. Through the torah, we may know how to do G-d's will. Without it, a man is like a fool, walking in darkness. Not only that, but through the torah one also attains the pleasures of this world as explained in parsha Bechukotai: "if you will walk in My statutes, I will give..." (Vayikra 26:3) and many similar verses.

"To this should be added the customs by which the government of other nations is regulated.." - the explanation is like the Chacham, author of Sefer Ikarim, that whatever is found in something incidentally must be found in something else as essence. For example, hotness is found in hot water as an incidental property, therefore it must be found somewhere else as essence, namely, fire. (hotness is an essence property of fire since you cannot remove it without destroying the fire), and the water acquired this property incidentally. Likewise, if a real man did not exist, you would not find forms or statues of man. Likewise, if there did not exist a true divine religion/law, there would not exist other forms of religion/law....)

It has been stated that the relation of nature to the Torah is that of a servant to his master. The forces of nature in the universe operate in harmony with the teaching of the torah, as it is said (Shemot 23:25) "And you shall serve the L-ord your G-d, and He will bless your bread and your water; and I will take away sickness from your midst". And again, (ibid. 15:26) "If you will diligently hearken to the voice of the L-ord your G-d, and will do that which is right in

His sight and will give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes, none of the diseases which I have brought upon the Egyptians will I bring upon you, for I am the Lord that heals you", and many other passages like this.

(*Marpe Lenefesh*: Even though it appears that the world acts independently according to natural laws, in truth nature is under rule of the torah, i.e. those who fulfill the torah. They can rule over nature as they wish as a master can rule over his slave (subject to certain limitations by G-d). This is not something supernatural because G-d, who created the universe and the laws of nature - He Himself gave us the torah, and He decreed on all of His creations that they be under the rule of those who fulfill the torah.. And as the verses in the torah teach...)

Some are of the opinion that when the wise man said (Mishlei 9:1) "*Wisdom has built her house; she has hewn out her seven pillars*", he had in mind the seven cornerstones which we have mentioned.

CHAPTER 5

Which class [of Evidences of Divine Wisdom] is nearest to us, so that it is our duty to examine it more? To this we reply that, while the close study of each and everyone of the [seven] classes previously enumerated is necessary and obligatory more [than it seems at first sight - PL], the evidence of divine wisdom which is nearest and clearest to us is that manifested in the human species, a microcosm of the universe, the closest cause (ultimate purpose) to the existence of the larger world.

(*Pas Lechem*: "*nearest and clearest*" - nearest in proximity because why should a man go out to find other creatures and approach them to observe and contemplate them? Is not man in close proximity to himself? Furthermore, knowledge of himself is clearer to man than knowledge of other creatures. "*the closest cause to the existence of the larger world*" - As our sages said on the verse "this is all of man" (Koheles 12:13) - that the entire world was created for this. The author called man the "*closest cause*", since G-d created many worlds, which emerge and chain out one from the other. And this [physical] world, which is perceptible to us, is the end of the chain. Hence, it arouses through a long series of causes. However, since man is the ultimate purpose - he is the closest cause of all of them, since "the end of action is first in thought". And immediately when G-d thought to create man, He also thought about the creation of our world, and subsequently, the causes through which our [physical] world can come to existence. Understand this.)

Hence, it is our duty to study the beginning of a human being, his birth, the compositions of his parts, the joining together of his limbs, the purpose of each limb/organ and the necessity which caused his being made in its present form. Next, we should study man's advantages, his various temperaments, the faculties of his nefesh (lower soul), the light of his intellect, his qualities - those that are essential and those that are incidental; his lusts, and the ultimate purpose of his being (for what purpose was he created - PL). When we have arrived at an understanding of the matters noted in regard to man, much of the mystery of this universe will become clear to us, since the one resembles the other.

(*Pas Lechem*: "*man's advantages*" - instincts the Creator set for his benefit, such as arousing compassion for him in the heart of his parents, lack of intellect and perception in his early years, benefits of crying in his babyhood, and other matters as will be explained. "*his temperaments*" - such as pride, humility, anger, contentment, or the like. "*faculties of his nefesh*" - such as memory, thought, and also others enumerated such as sustenance, growth, reproduction, and the like, as will be explained. "*his lusts*" - such as eating, drinking, relations.)

And thus some sages declared that philosophy is man's knowledge of himself, which means, knowledge of what we have mentioned regarding the human being, so that through the evidence of divine wisdom displayed in himself, he will become cognizant of the Creator (and His wisdom and ability - ML); as Job said (Job 19:26) "*From my flesh, I see G-d*".

(*Marpe Lenefesh*: "*philosophy*" - i.e. general wisdom, because all the wisdoms and all the rational investigations are given the general term "philosophy". And the author says that the general principle of wisdom is only man's knowing himself. *Tov Halevanon*: the "Aruch" explained that in Greek language, "philosopher" means "one who loves wisdom". The term "philosophy" is derived from the term "philosopher".)

Since this is so, it is proper that we should call a bit of attention to each of the topics noted in regard to man, in order to arouse the negligent person to what it is his duty to always have in mind; and thus he will be induced to investigate further into matters that I have not mentioned. And then, realizing the abundance of G-d's loving kindness and goodness toward him, he will be filled with the spirit of humility and submission towards the Creator, and his gratitude towards his Maker will abound, as David, peace be upon him, said: *"I will give thanks to You for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; wonderful are Your works; and that, my soul knows right well. My frame was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret, and wrought (with flesh and sinews - ML) in the lowest parts of the earth (i.e. the womb - TL). My unformed substance Your eyes did see; and in Your book were they all written, in the days when they would be fashioned, while as yet there was none of them."* (Tehilim 119:14-16)

(Pas Lechem: "in order to arouse the negligent person" - He who is by nature lazy and negligent, we must arouse his heart and make him understand "what it is his duty". "he will be induced to investigate further" - after he investigates these matters and his palate will taste the taste of understanding and its delectable sweetness, this will induce him to desire more, and to investigate further on his own even on what we did not mention.)

The first topic to which it is right that you direct your attention is the origin of a human being and the earliest processes of his development. You will then see that it is the divine loving-kindness that has brought him into existence out of nothing. The fundamental elements of the world, out of which he is formed, pass into the vegetable state which becomes nourishment and changes into seed and blood. This is transformed into general life which finally assumes the form and nature of a human being - living, rational and mortal - who travels through life, experiencing changes and metamorphoses and continually varied conditions and circumstances that are connected according to a properly thought out and coordinated plan.

(Tov Halevanon: all the changes and variations of circumstances are according to a properly thought out plan to benefit him in his final end and to complete his tikun (rectification/mission) in this world)

When you will contemplate this and will see the evidence of the Creator's goodness, wisdom and power manifested in everything, consider and reflect upon the visible constituents of man's being, namely his body and his soul. You will observe that his body is composed of various elements with dissimilar qualities. These the Creator put together by His Almighty power, combined by His wisdom, and formed out of them a stable organism which in appearance has the character of unity but his body is composed of various elements with diverse natures. To this human body, G-d has joined a spiritual and intangible essence akin to the spirituality of the higher beings (angels). This essence is his soul, bound up in him with the body by means adapted to serve both these extremes. These means are the Ruach Chaim (spirit of life), natural heat (life force), the blood, the veins, nerves, and arteries. To protect and guard them against injuries, G-d has provided flesh, bones, sinews, skin, hair and nails. All these are shields and defenses to ward off injuries.

(Pas Lechem: "the visible constituents of man's being, namely his body and his soul" - a human being is a composite of many things, only that these two things, the body and the soul, are the roots which include generally the entire structure... He called them "visible" because the particular parts are hidden, such as in the body, the intestines, small veins, biles, etc. or, in the soul, the hidden powers inside it. However, the general structure of body and soul are visible, i.e. generally perceptible. The body is perceptible to the eyesight, and the soul is perceptible in the intellect, in that the body can feel and move when the soul is inside it, and the opposite when the soul leaves it. Rabbi YS: The soul animates the body to life. Life is not just a physical process. Likewise all life forms, even bacteria, have a spiritual component which animates it. It is simply beyond the ability of any kind of physical machine, which necessarily functions in a direct manner, namely, one thing reacts which causes another to react, etc. motorically - to grow and reproduce as we explained in Gate 1 ch.5 . Too many things need to happen simultaneously, see there.

Marpe Lenefesh: "G-d has joined a spiritual and intangible essence" - A complete independent spiritual creature, with 248 limbs and 365 sinews just like the body (see Shaarei Kedusha 1:1), and it is intangible and invisible to the physical eye, like the higher beings, namely, the spiritual melachim (angels).

Tov Halevanon: "This essence is his soul, bound up in him with the body by means" - Behold, the physical and the spiritual are opposites of each other, only that they are joined through intermediate means suited to receive both of them. The Ruach Chaim (spirit of life), which is the nefesh bahamit

(lower soul) is bound to the spiritual, namely, the neshama (higher soul), and it is also bound to the natural heat (life force), and the natural heat is bound to the blood, and the blood to the sinews, and the sinews to the bones.)

After this, reflect on the favor shown by the Creator in His providential guidance of man.

At the beginning of a human being's existence, the Creator appointed the mother's body to serve as a crib for the fetus so that it might abide in a safe place, a strongly guarded fortress, as it were, where no hand can touch it, where it cannot be affected by heat or cold, but is shielded and sheltered and where its food is ready for it. Here it continues to grow and develop, even becomes capable of moving and turning, and receives its nourishment without any effort or exertion. This nourishment is provided for it in a place where no one else can in any way reach it, and is increased as the fetus develops until a definite period.

Then it goes out from its mother's belly through a narrow track without any contrivance or help on its part, but solely by the power of the wise, merciful and gracious One who shows compassion to His creatures; as He said to Job (39:1-2) *"Do you know the time when the wild goats of the rock-bring forth? Or can you mark when the hinds do calve? Can you number the months that they fulfill? Or do you know the time when they bring forth?"*

(*Pas Lechem: "wise, merciful, and gracious One"* - G-d is merciful towards him that he not be injured in going through a narrow track, and in His wisdom, He made the birth canal widen and expand then to make for him a secure exit path.)

Afterwards, the infant emerges into this world - all its senses, except those of touch and taste, being weak - the Creator provides for it food from its mother's breast. The blood which had been its nourishment before it was born, is now converted into milk in the mother's breast, pleasant and sweet, flowing like a gushing spring whenever needed. The milk is not so abundant that it might become burdensome on the mother and drip out without suction (thereby going to waste - *ML*), nor so scarce as to tire the child when taking the breast.

Divine grace is also manifested in His having made the orifice of the nipple like the eye of a needle, not so wide that the milk would run out without suction, in which case the child might be choked while being suckled, nor so narrow that the infant would have to exert itself in drawing its nourishment.

Afterwards, the infant's physical faculties grow stronger, so that it is able to distinguish sights and sounds. G-d inspires the parents' hearts with kindness, love and compassion for their offspring, so that raising it is not overly burdensome to them. They are more sensitive to its needs in regard to food and drink than to their own requirements. All the labor and trouble involved in bringing it up, bathing and dressing it, gently leading it, and warding off everything harmful, even against its will, is of little account in their sight.

(*Marpe Lenefesh: "G-d inspires the parents' hearts with kindness"* - G-d implanted in human nature that the infant finds favor in his parents' eyes. Without this, no kids would ever be raised [properly].)

Tov Halevanon: "They are more sensitive to its needs" - the parents feel the infants pain and exertion more than they feel their own pain.

Pas Lechem: "warding off everything harmful, even against its will" - For behold, the infant is foolish, and tends to pursue even harmful activities, such as to hold a razor with his hand, or grasp a burning stick, or instigate a dangerous dog, or the like. When the parents remove him from these things, he screams and cries, and anguishes his parents with his screams.)

Afterwards, the offspring passes from infancy to childhood. His parents do not tire of him nor become angry at his numerous needs and little recognition of the burden which they bear in caring and providing for him. On the contrary, the concern they feel on his behalf increases until he reaches adolescence, when he has already learned to speak correctly and properly, and his physical senses and mental faculties have become strong enough to acquire wisdom and knowledge. Then he apprehends some physical phenomena with his senses, and some intellectual ideas with his mental faculties, as the wise King said (Prov. 2:6) *"For the L-ord gives wisdom: out of His mouth comes knowledge and discernment."*

(*Pas Lechem: "little recognition of the burden"* - when the receiver of benefit knows and recognizes the good that another is bestowing on him, and he also recognizes the exertion that the person is exerting himself for him and he appreciates it - through this the benefactor feels some contentment

Among the many benefits to a human being is that during his childhood he is not a thinker and is unable to distinguish good from evil. For had he, while growing up, been endowed with a ripe intellect and mature powers of perception and had he been able to discern the superiority of adults, in their ability to manage for themselves, move freely and keep clean, and realized the opposite case presented by his condition in all these respects, he would have died of worry and sorrow.

(Pas Lechem: "he is not a thinker and is unable to distinguish good from evil" - He has no knowledge, neither from intellect, nor from recognition. For the power of recognition is something independent of the intellect, and even other creatures (i.e. animals) have the power of recognition despite that they have no intellect.

"manage for themselves" - The adults are able to manage their needs, and do not depend on the management of another unlike him whose management is not according to his will.

"move freely" - unlike him that due to his weakness all his movements are sluggish.

"and keep clean" - while he, due to his weak ability to hold in, is forced to roll in his own excrement and urine, and dirty himself with filth.

"he would have died of worry and sorrow" - worry on each detail of his lackings, and general sorrow on his lowly situation.)

Remarkable too it is that crying, according to what learned physicians state, is beneficial to an infant. For in the brains of infants there is a humor (mucous), which, if it remained there undischarged, would produce evil results. Weeping dissolves this humor and drains it away from the brain, and thus the infants are saved from its injurious effects.

The Creator's abounding grace to man is also manifested in that the new teeth come out singly, one after another, and so the gradual falling out of the old teeth during the process of replacement does not interfere with his ability to chew.

Later on he is subjected to illnesses and meets with painful incidents so that he recognizes the world, and that its nature is not concealed from him. Thus he is put on his guard against trusting in this world thereby permitting his lusts to rule over him, in which case he would become like the animals that neither think nor understand; as it is written *"Be ye not as the horse or as the mule which have no understanding"* (Tehilim 32:9).

(Tov Halevanon: "illnesses" - such as chicken pox and measles. "painful incidents" - many weaknesses come in the boyhood years. PL - accidents such as stepping on a metal nail.

"Be ye not as the horse or as the mule" - they need to be leashed and muzzled, so too man. The painful incidents humble his lusts.

"so that he recognizes the world" - how a person's situation can change swiftly from contentment to pain so that he realizes not to trust in it and its tranquility - rather to always be afraid and to seek refuge in G-d's shadow.

Marpe Lenefesh: If a human being had only constant good in this world, he would forget and not recall the matters of his final end, and he would trust (hope) in this world and follow the musings of his heart and his lusts for all of his days. Therefore, it was among the divine plan to send him sometimes bad illnesses, even during his youth in order that he recognize and know that there is no complete good in this world. And even if he is in a very good situation, the bad illnesses can come and ruin his joy, so that he won't trust in this world.)

One should then consider and reflect upon the usefulness of the limbs and organs and the ways of his rectification through them - the hands serving for taking and giving; the feet for walking the eyes for seeing; the ears for hearing; the nose for smelling; the tongue for speaking; the mouth for eating; the teeth for chewing; the stomach for digestion; the liver for purifying the food; the tubes for removing superfluities; the bowels for retention. The heart is the sanctuary of the natural heat and the well-spring of life. The brain is the seat of the spiritual faculties, the well-spring of sensation, and the root from which the nerves begin.

The womb (in a woman) serves to preserve and develop the seed. And so it is with the rest of the bodily organs. They all have their specific functions, of which more are unknown than are known to us.

(Pas Lechem: "the usefulness of the limbs... the ways of his rectification from them" - some of the 24 limbs are crucial for preserving his body while some were created so that his body will be in a better way, as the scholars wrote regarding the doubling of the limbs of senses (2 eyes, 2 ears, etc.). For the first kind, he wrote "the usefulness", while for the second kind, he used the term "rectification". Understand this.

Marpe Lenefesh: "The heart is the sanctuary of the natural heat" - in the heart all the blood of the body is drawn through. The nefesh chiyuni (lower soul) is bound to the heart, like a flame to a candle as I quoted earlier the words of the Kuzari, see there. [Rabbi YS: and likewise, the neshama (higher soul) is bound to the brain like a flame to a candle wick]

So too, one who reflects on these matters will take notice of the natural processes by which the nourishment received by the body is apportioned to every one of its parts. These marks of wisdom observed by him will stir him to thank His Creator and praise Him for them, as David said *"All my bones shall cry out: 'O G-d, who is like You' "* (Tehilim 35:10). Thus the food passes into the stomach through a tube that is utterly straight, without bend or twist. This tube is called the esophagus. The stomach grinds the food more thoroughly than the teeth had already done. Then the nutriment is carried into the liver through fine intermediate veins which connect these two organs (bile ducts), and serve as a strainer for the food, permitting nothing coarse to pass through to the liver. The liver metabolizes the nutrient it receives into the blood which it distributes all over the body, sending the vital fluid to all parts of the body through conduits formed for this purpose, and resembling water-pipes.

The waste substances that are left are eliminated through canals specifically adapted to that purpose. What belongs to the green gall goes to the gall bladder. What belongs to the black gall goes to the milt (spleen); other substances and fluids are sent to the lungs. The refuse of the blood passes into the bladder.

Reflect, my brother, on the wisdom of the Creator manifested in the formation of your body; how He set those organs in their right places; to receive the waste substances, so that they should not spread in the body, and cause it to become sick.

Then consider the formation of the vocal organs, and instruments of speech. The trachea, hollow for the production of sound; the tongue, lips, and teeth serving for the clear enunciation of consonants and vowels. These organs have other uses also. The air enters the lungs through the trachea; the tongue is the organ which enables one to taste things, and aids also in the moving around of the solid and liquid food. The teeth serve to chew solid food. The lips enable one to retain liquids in the mouth, and swallow the quantity desired, and only when one wishes to do so. In regard to the other organs, the uses of some are known to us while others are unknown.

Then, my brother, reflect on the four bodily faculties with their respective functions: (1) the drawing faculty by which food is received and carried into the stomach; (2) the faculty of retention by which food is retained in the body till nature has done her work on it; (3) the digestive faculty which digests the food, extracts the finer elements, separates it from the useless refuse, and distributes the former to all parts of the body; (4) the excretory faculty which ejects the refuse that remains after the digestive processes have taken from the food all that the body needs.

(Pas Lechem: "carried into the stomach" - we cannot say it is simply gravity, since the food would then easily get delayed or stuck in the esophagus, and certainly, when a person is lying down or on his side, whereby the stomach and the esophagus would in be of equal height. Hence, it is clear that there is a faculty (muscles) specially made for this, to draw the food and pull it to the stomach.)

Observe how all these faculties have definite functions, whose purpose it is to promote physical well-being. It is just like a King's court where there are servants and officers appointed over the royal household. One of them is charged with the duty of supplying the servants' need and delivering these to the king's steward. The second official has to receive the necessaries brought in by the first, and place them in the store-room, until they are prepared. The business of the third official is to prepare the stores and, after rendering them fit for use, distribute them among the servants. The task of the fourth servant is to sweep and cleanse the palace of all dirt and refuse, which he has to remove.

(Marpe Lenefesh: "like a King's court" - the body is like the king's court and the king which dwells there is the Sechel (mind). All the limbs and organs are like servants of the court. There are officers appointed to provide food for them so that they can minister to the king, i.e. the intellect. Hence, it is no wonder that a human being is called a "miniature world", for his inner workings is like the entire world.

Tov Halevanon: "there are servants and officers" - this corresponds to the four powers in the stomach he mentioned. The servants are the organs/limbs and sinews, veins, etc. generally and specifically. On them are four officials which are: drawing, retention, digestion, excretion.

"One of them is charged with the duty of supplying the servants' need and delivering these to the king's steward" - i.e. the man in totality is the king over the body's limbs/organs. The official who receives all income from the king designated for the needs of the servants and deposits them to the steward who collects all goods for this purpose. This official is the power of "drawing" and the steward refers to the stomach, where all food and drink descend there. The second official refers to the power of "retention", just like the treasurer of a king manages the property of the king and distributes meat, bread, and wine, or the like according to the needs of each one of the king's servants. The third official corresponds to the power of digestion, while the fourth refers to excretion.)

Afterwards, reflect on the faculties of the soul and their place among the benefits bestowed on man - the faculties of thought and memory, the power of forgetting, the feeling of shame, the faculties of understanding and speech. Picture to yourself, what would a man's condition be if even one of these were lacking. Take memory, for instance. How much loss a person would suffer in all his affairs if he were unable to remember what he owned and what he owed; what he had taken and what he had given; what he had seen or heard; what he had said and what had been said to him; if he could not remember the one who had done a benefit to him and the one who had brought him harm; the one who had rendered him a service, or inflicted upon him an injury. Such a person would not recognize a road even if he had frequently traversed it, nor remember any wisdom though he had studied it all his lifetime. Past experience would not be of any benefit to him. He would not weigh any matter by what had happened in the past. Nor could he estimate future events by what was taking place in the present. Such a person would be almost entirely outside the class of human beings (without memory, he would be like an animal - *ML*).

Among the benefits of forgetting: Were it not for the ability to forget no man would ever be free from sorrow (such as due to death of loved ones - *PL*). No joyous occasion would dispel his sadness. The events that should bring him joy would give him no pleasure, when he recalled the troubles of life. Even from the realization of his hopes he could not hope to derive rest and peace of mind. He would never refrain from grieving. Thus you see how memory and forgetfulness, different and contrary to each other as they are, are both benefits bestowed upon man, and each of them has its uses.

(Tov Halevanon: "forgetting" - i.e. that the matter dissipates from his mind, and it is not constantly held at attention in his thoughts. It remains only as long as he wants to remember it.)

Afterwards, reflect on the feeling of shame with which man alone has been endowed. How high is its value! How numerous are its uses and advantages. Were it not for this feeling, men would not show hospitality to strangers. They would not keep their promises, grant favors, show kindness, nor abstain from evil in any way. Many precepts of the Torah are fulfilled only out of shame. A large number of people would not honor their parent if it were not for shame, and certainly would fail to show courtesy to others. They would not restore a lost article to its owner, nor refrain from any transgression. For whoever commits any of the disgraceful acts which we have mentioned, does so only when he has cast off the garment of shame. As Scripture said: "*Yea they are not at all ashamed, neither know they how to blush*" (Yirmiyahu 6:15), and "*The sinner knows no shame*" (Tzefania 3:5).

(Pas Lechem: "shame with which man alone has been endowed" - unlike the other characteristics which are also found in the animals such as memory, forgetting, anger, as mentioned in the books of the scholars.

"Many precepts of the Torah are fulfilled only out of shame" - i.e. come and see how powerful this trait is, since behold it stops a man from evil more than the commandments of the torah. And if you ask, "even though this trait is implanted in human beings, nevertheless there are still evil doers. Hence, that which stops them [from evil] is not shame." To this he answered, that whoever you see doing one of these things, know that it is due to their divesting themselves from the garment of shame out of their evil choice as written...

Marpe Lenefesh: And likewise our sages said (Pirkei Avot ch.5): "a shamed face person is destined for Gan Eden (paradise)", and (Nedarim 20a) "whoever has shamefacedness will not sin swiftly"...

It is a great amazement that G-d has implanted man with shame in the presence of other human beings due to the

advantages we mentioned and others we did not mention, and yet G-d did not implant man with shame in the presence of his Creator who observes him continually. The reason for this is so that a human being would not be forced in the service of G-d whereby its reward would not be deserved (since man would have no free will in this - *PL*). It is, however, our duty to feel shame in the presence of the Creator, as a result of reflection, realization of the service we owe to Him, and our consciousness that He observes every thing that we do openly or secretly; as Scripture said "*Be ashamed and humiliated of your ways, O House of Israel*" (Yechezkel 36:32).

(Pas Lechem: This is a great amazement at first thought, but with a bit of reflection the answer is nearby...

Marpe Lenefesh: ...the reason is so that man would not be forced in his actions. For a man would never sin if he reflects that the great King, the holy One, blessed be He, stands over him and observes his deeds, as written in the Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim Siman 1, see there. Hence, if it were naturally so that a man were ashamed before his Creator, just like he is before human beings, he would be forced, and would not be deserving of any divine reward. And in truth, "everything is in G-d's hands except the fear of G-d" (Berachos 33b), so that there would be room for reward and punishment for his free will.

Pas Lechem: "it is our duty to feel shame...as a result of reflection" - i.e. general reflection, which is the subject matter of this gate, namely, a man's examination of the marks of wisdom manifested in the creations. Through them he will grasp the greatness of the Creator.

"realization of the service we owe to Him" - through this one will reflect on how much he is falling short in G-d's service [and be ashamed].

"Be ashamed and humiliated of your ways" - two expressions corresponding to falling short in avoiding evil and in doing good.)

The abounding goodness of G-d to us is manifested in, the capacities of thought and perception with which he has uniquely endowed us and distinguished us from other living creatures. The value of these faculties in the care of our bodies and ordering of our activities is known to all, with the exception of those who have suffered a loss of these faculties due to brain damage.

The (good - *ML*) traits which we can attain through the understanding are many. Through the understanding we know that we have a Creator, wise, everlasting, [absolutely] One, who has existed from all eternity; infinite in power, unbound to time and space; exalted above the qualities of His creatures and beyond the conception of all existing beings; merciful, gracious and beneficent; resembling nothing nor does anything resemble Him.

(Marpe Lenefesh: "unbound to time and space" - God is not bound to time, all of the past and the future are before Him simultaneously as something in the present. For time is His creation. He was, is, and always will be. And even though we are not capable of understanding this, the verse already says: "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts" (Yeshaya 55:9), as the Rambam wrote on the mishna in Rosh Hashana "all are examined in one sweeping look", see there amazing words, and the book Shomer Emunim [Kadmon] spoke of this at length.

"and space" - as the Midrash (Bereishis Raba 68:9) expounded the verse "place is by Me" Shemos 33:21.

Matanas Chelko: it is obvious that all of these traits are nothing whatsoever relative to what G-d truly is. However, all of what we understand and grasp of the Creator is through our intellect. This is the quality of the human over the animal. And even though animals have some spiritual connection to the Creator, nevertheless the connection between man and G-d is through the intellect. Therefore it is incumbent on a man to contemplate on this great gift from G-d.

It is through the understanding that we realize the Creator's wisdom, power and mercy, of which the universe provides clear evidence. It is the understanding which shows us that we ought to serve Him, because service is rightly due to Him (on account of His greatness and exaltedness - *ML*), and because of His beneficence, bestowed upon all universally and on each one specifically. Through the understanding we are confirmed in our faith in the truth of the Book of G-d's Law given to Moses, His prophet, peace be upon him. Because of a human being's faculty of reason and perception, he is an accountable creature whom his Creator will hold to a strict reckoning (in the future - *MH*). A person who has lost his understanding, loses all the excellencies of a human being and is exempt from the mitzvot (precepts), and (receives no - *ML*) reward and punishment.

(*Tov Halevanon: "to a strict reckoning"* - he whose understanding is greater, G-d holds him to a stricter reckoning, because he understands more to guard from sin. 27

Pas Lechem: This is the purpose of man - to receive the reward of his deeds, and this is impossible without a reckoning.)

Among the benefits of the understanding: through understanding man obtains his knowledge of all things perceived by the senses or apprehended by the intellect (common sense - MC).

By the understanding he discovers aspects of visible objects, unrevealed to the physical senses, as for instance, the movement of the shadow (on a sun-dial), or the action of a single drop of water on the hard rock.

(*Tov Halevanon:* it appears to the eye, that the shadow is something "tangible", since it moves from place to place. But with the understanding, he understands that the shadow is not, rather it is due to an obstruction between the rays of the sun and the place of the shadow... Likewise, it appears impossible that a single drop of water, small and weak, can carve a hole in a hard rock. But we can see that if this happens continuously for a long time, on a hard rock, a hole is carved out. The understanding grasps that the drop caused this hole. Because each time the drop fell on the rock, it carved out a tiny amount which the senses cannot detect until many drops like this combine their effects.)

By the understanding man distinguishes between truth and falsehood, between excess and deficiency, between good and evil, between the praiseworthy and the disgraceful, between the necessary, the possible and the impossible.

(*Pas Lechem:* A man needs to be complete in three areas, deot (outlook/thought), midot (character traits), and in peulot (deeds).

Corresponding to "deot", he wrote "*truth and falsehood*", for example, the belief in the Unity of G-d is truth, while ascribing plurality to Him is a falsehood, and similarly for all other contemplations in chakira (inquiry). Likewise for "*excess and deficiency*" - just like G-d is exalted beyond all praise, while the opposite for flesh and blood which is much deficient in praises.

Corresponding to peulot ("deeds"), he wrote "*good and evil*", namely that doing kindness and justness is good, while corruption and oppression is evil.

Corresponding to the "midot" (character traits) he wrote "*the laudable and despicable*". For instance humility is a praiseworthy trait while arrogance is disgraceful.

"*the necessary, the possible and the impossible*" - this refers to the two extremes and the middle way. "Necessary" is what the understanding obligates that it should be this way. While "impossible" is the opposite. The "possible", which is the middle way between the necessary and the impossible.)

By his understanding, man makes other living creatures work for his benefits and pleasures (such as the horse to ride on, the donkey to carry loads, or sheep and cattle for food and clothing - ML). By the use of this faculty, he recognizes the position of the planets (PL), determines their distances and their movements in their orbits, comprehends the relations and comparisons treated in the sciences of mathematics and engineering, the figures and modes of demonstration [syllogisms] set forth in logic, and other sciences and arts too numerous to mention.

So too, all the other faculties of man, if you study them, you will find, display the utmost perfection and are of the utmost benefit to him, as we have shown, regarding the understanding.

(*Pas Lechem:* such as anger and tranquility, generosity and stinginess - all are for man's benefit, for each one has a time and place.

Marpe Lenefesh: All the traits in man are designed in the utmost perfect and beneficial way, provided that man uses his understanding in them. But if he does not use his understanding, then he cannot rectify any trait or any deed properly.)

Afterwards, reflect further on the benefits G-d has bestowed on man by the gift of speech and the orderly arrangement of words, whereby he gives expression to what is in his mind and soul and understands the conditions of others. The tongue is the heart's pen and the mind's messenger. Without speech, there would be no social relations between one person and another; a human being would be an animal. Through speech, the superiority of an individual among his fellows becomes apparent. The pacts between man and his fellow are made through

speech, and likewise between G-d and His servants. By means of speech, a man turns away from his perverseness and seeks forgiveness for his iniquities. Speech is the greatest evidence of a man's nobility or ignobility. Man, it has been said, is heart and tongue. And this completes the definition of a human being. For a human being is defined as a "living, speaking, mortal creature" and by speech, he is differentiated from the brute animals (who are defined as "living, mortal creatures" [not "speaking"], hence speech alone differentiates man from them - PL).

Then consider the advantages derived from written characters and the art of writing. By their aid, the deeds and affairs of those who have passed away and of those who are still existing are recorded for the benefit of those who will come after them; communications reach the absent, and information is received concerning those far away and concerning relatives in another country; and it is possible that the receipt of this information may save their lives or deliver them from misfortune and mishaps. By this means, knowledge of the sciences is preserved in books; dispersed thoughts are gathered together. Men write down their dealings with each other in commercial transactions, in loans, purchases, marriages, divorces. The subject is too wide to be dealt with completely.

Among the completing benefits bestowed on man is that he has been provided with hands and fingers, with which he can draw, write, embroider, kindle fire and perform other acts and fine operations that are beyond the capacity of other living creatures, because these are not needed by them.

(*Pas Lechem: "Among the completing benefits..."* - this is one of the things which demonstrates that G-d's will is that man's good should be to the utmost extent, i.e. that he should be lacking nothing that could possibly be beneficial to him.)

I assert that there is not one of these organs the uses of which I have mentioned that does not show to one who reflects on them marks of divine wisdom in its structure, form and combination with other organs. They display strong evidence and clear proof of the Creator's mercy towards us. Galen, in numerous treatises, has expounded the functions of the bodily organs. Were we to do so in the case of one of these, we would depart from our goal of conciseness. What we have brought with G-d's help, is sufficient to arouse any one to whom the Creator will teach (arouse his heart to - PL) the way of His salvation.

(*Pas Lechem: "clear proof of the Creator's mercy towards us"* - since behold, our eyes can see that everything was designed in the most perfect and most beneficial possible way for man.)

STUDY OF NATURE

The study of the other species of living creatures, their habits and their sustenance will not be concealed by one who observes them and reflects upon the marks of divine wisdom manifest in them. Hence, the scriptures repeatedly refer to them when mentioning G-d's wonders: "*Who provides for the raven his prey when his young ones cry unto G-d*" (Job 38:41), and "*He gives to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry*" (Tehilim 147:9). There are many other similar passages.

And so too, when one studies the course of the heavenly spheres, distinguished by their various movements and the individual luminaries all contributing to the order of the Universe - he will see in them evidences of power and wisdom, such as the human mind cannot grasp and would become weary in attempting to describe. As David, peace be upon him, said, "*The heavens declare the glory of G-d, and the firmament show forth His handiwork*" (Tehilim 19:2), and "*When I behold Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars which You have established*" (Tehilim 8:4) .

It is a wonder that among all the great works of the Creator, which the human eye beholds, the heavens are always present For wherever on earth a man stands, he sees above his head a hemisphere of firmament encompassing the earth. And when he contemplates it thoughtfully, he will realize that the One who created it by His Will is infinite in power, wisdom and greatness.

For the sight of any example of architecture of the ancients arouses in us wonder at their ability to make anything like it, and indicates to us the physical strength and fine souls of those who constructed a strong fortress for themselves. Now if such very small and petty work that transcends our capacity by only little, looms so large in our sight, how exceedingly indeed should we marvel at the infinite greatness of Him who created the heavens and the earth and all that therein is, without effort or exertion, labor or fatigue, out of nothing, with [the aid of] nothing, solely by His will and wish. As it is said "*By the word of the L-ord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth*" (Tehilim 33:6).

(*Pas Lechem*: "solely by His will and wish" - this is to exclude the view of those who believe in the²⁹ "necessity" of creation, y"sh. See Morey Nevuchim II ch.13-15, that they ascribe the creation to G-d as a kind of "necessity", like a shadow to a pillar, without will.)

Among the benefits bestowed upon man, the following is to be noted. When you contemplate the marks of divine wisdom in created things, you will find that, besides testifying to the divinity and might of the Creator they all without exception are in various ways useful to man and contribute to his improvement. Only that some of these uses are evident, while others are obscure. Take light and darkness for instance. The benefits of light are obvious and evident, but those of darkness are hidden. For human beings are weary in the dark; their activities and movements are interrupted at its arrival. But were it not for the darkness of night, the bodies of most living beings would be worn out by their incessant toil and protracted movements. Through the recurrence of night, one interval of time is separated from another. It gives knowledge of periods which would otherwise be unknown, (e.g. counting days and weeks;) and makes known the respective length or brevity of human lives.

If time were uniform (i.e. without alternation of day and night,) there would be no commandments for special seasons, such as Sabbaths, festivals or fasts; no appointments could be made for a definite date; most of the sciences related to time would be unknown. Even food would not be perfectly digested by any living creature (sleep aids digestion - TL).

As man however needs light at night to do some of his work, and to nurse the sick, the Creator has provided him with a substitute in the light of fire which he can kindle at any time and extinguish whenever he pleases.

Wondrous too it is that the hue of the sky belongs to the colors that strengthen the sight, For it inclines to black which has the special quality of gathering together and strengthening the light that enters the eyes Had the color of the sky been white, it would have injured the eyes of living creatures and weakened them. Similarly, other marks of wisdom are exhibited by other created things.

Out of G-d's abounding goodness to mankind, He put the fear of man into other creatures that are dangerous, as it is said (Bereishis 9:2) "*And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth,*" so that an infant is secure against hurt by a cat or rat or similar creature, while a grown-up man, after death, is not safe from their attacks; even as our sages said: "A living child, a day old, need not be guarded against rats; Og, [the giant] king of Bashan, dead, needs such protection."

(*Tov Halevanon*: "*He put the fear of man*" - this is due to the spiritual powers in man... [*Rabbi YS*: this fear has been dulled due to the diminishing spiritual level of man])

What you should also realize is the exalted [or mysterious] property in all things created - the higher and the lower, from the smallest to the greatest - by which the entire universe is ordered and perfected, and which is not apprehended by the physical senses. This is the quality of motion (change), inherent in everything composite. None of the bodily senses can grasp it, but the intellect grasps it by inference from the moving/changing object which the senses detect. Had there been no motion, not one of existing things would have been brought into complete being, nor could any of them suffer destruction. A philosopher said that the majority of physical things are in a state of motion.

(*Pas Lechem*: His intent is on "coming to be" and "ceasing to be" (havaya v'hefsed), whereas a thing moves and changes from one stage to another until its form ceases to exist. This "changing" he called "motion".

"the intellect grasps it by inference" - i.e. the essence of change is grasped by us through the thing changing, namely, that we saw it at first in one state, and now we see it in a different state. Besides this, we have no knowledge of what "change" is in of itself. Likewise, for time. For time and change are two sides of the same coin, and both are intangible to us. This matter is exceedingly deep and impossible to grasp for one who is not accustomed to thinking on these things.

Manoach Halevavos: One can explain this to refer to two forms of "motion": 1. Physical motion that is not perceptible to the senses. Such as the movement of the sun [i.e. rotation of the earth]. Only that we see the sun here, and after some time, there. This is what he meant, "*but the intellect grasps it by inference from the moving/changing object*"... 2. All change is called "motion". For example, growth in a plant. It is not perceptible to the senses, but at first the plant was tiny and after some time it is large. Because in that time, it grew slowly (i.e. soil, minerals and water moved and combined - TL). This kind of change applies to all things composite and assembled [i.e. everything

When you will understand the mystery of motion, comprehend its true essence and spiritual character, realize that it is one of the marvels of divine wisdom and recognize in it the Creator's abundant compassion towards His creatures, it will become clear to you that all your movements are tied to the Creator's desire, guidance and will, whether these movements be great or small, visible or invisible, with one exception only, namely those movements that He has left to your free will, in the choice of good or evil.

(*Tov Halevanon*: "all your movements are tied to the Creator's desire" - the "Moray Nevuchim" Part 1 ch.72 writes that all "motion" found in the world, ultimately started from the tenuat hagagal (movement in the mystical worlds). For certainly, all the movements and changes of living creatures which are not related to the commandments of G-d are due only to "movements" in the time and circumstances. Hence, the creature depends on the "movement". Likewise, when a living creature moves to seek food, this is due to hunger, whereby the previous food has now been digested and consumed, and this is also a "movement". Likewise, any human desire, or wish comes due to something else which aroused him on this. Hence, everything depends on the "movement". Ultimately, the root of all movements is tied to the "galgal elyon" (upper mystical worlds), which changes the times and circumstances - and the "movement" of the galgal elyon is tied to the Creator's desire. Understand this. Hence, remember that every turn which you turn to is tied to the wish of the Creator, except for matters of good and evil.

Marpe Lenefesh: This power that a man possesses, whereby he "moves" - it is a spiritual power, and certainly the spiritual is tied to something else spiritual, namely, the will of G-d. Through changes, G-d directs a man any way He wishes, like an animal's leash in the hand of the herdsman. Thus, we are in G-d's hands. In all of our movements, big or small, visible or invisible - everything is in His hand and His power.

Rabbi YS: Even though we have free will, G-d has total control over our lives. An analogy is playing chess with a chess grandmaster. Even though you have free choice, nevertheless he can manipulate you any way he wishes. And how much more so, when the Grandmaster knows your thoughts and every move you will ever make.)

And when this will have become clear to you, watch yourself in every movement that you make. Be ever conscious of the bond by which the Creator has attached you to Him; always feel abashed in His presence; fear Him; submit to His judgment; accept His decrees. And so you will attain His favor, and your final end will be good, as it is said (Tehilim 32:10) "... *But he that trusts in the L-ord, will be surrounded by kindness.*"

(*Pas Lechem*: "feel abashed in His presence; fear Him" - for things which a man knows and senses are disgraceful, namely, what the Understanding obligates, he wrote "feel abashed". While for the received commandments [whose moral wrongness is not detectable by the Understanding], he wrote "fear Him".

Matanas Chelko: "the bond" - In the book Chochma U'Mussar, it is explained from the first Mishna in Tractate Shabbat how through a mere, small turning of the hand (with warning) one can incur a Biblical capital offence of transgressing the Sabbath thereby forfeiting his life. But if he did not turn his hand and instead the other person took the object from him, he is exempt from a painful execution. Hence, a man is bound by his movements. For every one of his movements, he is bound to the Creator, that it be according to His will. This is what follows from this Gate to the next gate (Gate of Service of G-d). The explanation is that if a man does something contrary to the will of G-d, then he is employing the power which the Creator has bestowed on him to do against His will. This feeling is what brings a person to assume the duty of serving G-d. Not that serving G-d is a [forced] obligation, but rather it is a responsibility. For to use the powers of the Creator which He has given you and to do against His will - this is ingratitude. It is literally no different than one who G-d gave rocks to use for a good purpose and he turns around and throws them at Him... see the Tomer Devorah ch.1)... And when a person transgresses G-d's will, not only does G-d not remove His life-force from this person, but He also continues to bestow it on him.. Contemplate the ingratitude in this, and the corresponding duty and responsibility one has to serve G-d.

Marpe Lenefesh: "And when this will have become clear to you" - hence, it is proper that in all your movements, you will remember and check yourself, and think to yourself what you will do with this movement so that it will not be against the will of G-d, since you are tied to Him and He has the

ability to change it. If you do thus, that all your deeds will be l'shem shamayim (for G-d), and you fâel abashed always before Him, since behold, He is always with you in all your deeds then you will...
"submit to His judgment" - i.e. trust in Him, that everything that He does to you is certainly good.
"accept His decrees" - that you are content with whatever He decrees on you.
"And so you will attain His favor" - there is no greater good thing, namely, that G-d finds favor in us and in our deeds. This is the purpose of this world and the next as the author wrote in the introduction.)

In regard to secular matters, it is proper that you should always look to the final outcome of hard experiences. You will discover the surprising fact that many seemingly adverse events turn out in the end to be to our advantage, and vice versa. A story is told of a company of travelers who lay down near a wall to rest overnight. A dog, passing by, wetted one of them. The man awoke and got up to wash off the uncleanness. After he had gone some distance from his fellows, the wall fell down on his companions and killed them, while he alone escaped. Events frequently happen in similar fashion and vice versa.

Matanas Chelko: The Rambam wrote (Berachos 9:5): "that which the sages said just like one must bless on the good [he should bless on the bad], this means to accept the bad with joy and a good heart and to subdue his anger. He should be just as glad when he blesses "dayin haemes" (on the bad) as when he blesses hatov v'hametic (on the good). End quote. It would seem to us that this matter depends on the degree of one's faith that G-d does only what is good for him. But the Rambam does not continue like this. He continues: "this is a principle of reason to those who understand. And even if the verse did not tell us, for we see many times that certain things appear good in the beginning but turn out in the end to be great calamities. Therefore, it is not proper for the understanding person to be upset when a great calamity befalls him because he does not know what its end will be. Likewise, the sages forbade one to be excessive in joy and laughter. Rather, let his joy be in spiritual deeds, namely righteousness, and to pursue that." End quote This is also the author's intent here. For since G-d runs the world entirely, according to the final end purpose, it is not proper to praise the good, or despise the bad done to him. But rather, to wait patiently to see what will be the end of the matter.

One of the most important subjects on which you should reflect is the wonderful gift of G-d to living creatures and plants - the rain, which besides falling in its due season, descends in showers when needed. As Scripture said, (Yirmiya 14:22) "*Are there any among the vanities of the nations that can cause rain? or can the heavens give showers? are You not He, O L-ord our G-d? therefore we will hope unto You: for You have made all these things*" (Yirmiya 5:24) "*Neither say they in their heart: Let us now fear the L-ord, our G-d, that gives rain, both the former and the latter, in due season; that reserves for us the appointed weeks of the harvest.*" The importance of the rain, you will find also emphasized in the text (Job 5:9-11) "*Who does great things and unsearchable; marvelous things without number: Who gives rain upon the earth and sends water upon the fields; so that He sets upon high those that are low, and those that mourn are exalted to safety.*"

How astonishing too is the growth of foods from seeds. A single grain that has been saved from mishaps, produces a thousand grains and more. It has even been stated that out of one grain of wheat, as many as three hundred ears will spring up, each containing over twenty grains. We also come across gigantic trees whose roots have sprung out of a single seed or a single shoot and have increased many times as much as those mentioned. Praised be the All-Wise and Gracious One who brings into existence such vast effects from causes so small and weak, as Scripture said (Shmuel 2:3) "*And by Him actions are weighed.*" The foods assigned to different living creatures are too numerous to specify. The wise man, when he reflects on them and understands their causes, will recognize the supreme wisdom of the Creator's plan. Concerning these things David said (Tehilim 124:27-28) "*All of them wait for You, that You may give them their food in due time. You give it unto them they gather it; You open Your hand, they are satisfied with good*". He says further (Tehilim 145:16) "*You open Your hand, and satisfy every living thing with favor*". I will clarify this topic further in the "Gate of Trust" with G-d's help.

(Marpe Lenefesh: "A single grain that has been saved from mishaps produces a thousand grains and more" - this is a wonder and a great benefit. Were it not for this, that the land would produce such great amounts, how would human beings attain their sustenance? And their toil would be for nothing.

Tov Halevanon: "mishaps" refers to our sins which diminish the good.)

The greatest of the benefits that the Creator has bestowed upon man and the strongest proof of His existence is the

Torah that was delivered to Moses, His prophet, peace be upon him, and the manifestation of [supernatural] signs by him - changes in the normal natural phenomena, and exhibition of awe-inspiring miracles to bring faith in the Creator, blessed be He, and in His prophet; as it is said (Shemot 14:31) *"And Israel saw the great work which the L-ord wrought upon the Egyptians, and the people: feared the L-ord, and they believed in the L-ord and in Moses, His servant. (Deut. 4:35-36) "Unto you it was shown, that you may know that the L-ord, He is G-d; there is none else beside Him. Out of Heaven He made you to hear His voice, that He might instruct you; and upon earth He made you to see His great fire; and you did hear His words out of the midst of the fire."*

(Marpe Lenefesh: "strongest proof" - ...that all these miracles were done before millions of people, and no nation can refute this to us due to its being so openly well known... The "Kuzari" book expounded on this at length, and it is the central theme of the book from beginning to end. see there.

Matanas Chelko: "the greatest of the benefits..." - i.e. even without the giving of the torah, and even without the exodus from Egypt, we would need to believe in G-d. Namely, we would need to delve into all this on our own in the way our forefather Abraham did. Hence, it is among the benefits of G-d to have given us the torah and done for us miracles in Egypt, for through both there is strong proof of the truth of Judaism.

If any one seeks evidence at the present day similar to those just mentioned, let him look with candid eyes at our position among the nations since the Exile began and our orderly condition in their midst, notwithstanding that we do not agree with them in belief or practice - of which disagreement they are aware. Observe that even so, our financial situation is close to theirs, and perhaps even better than theirs. You will see that an average person among them must toil more for his livelihood than an average or even a below-average among us. This is like our Creator promised us: *"And yet for all that, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not reject them neither will I abhor them, utterly to destroy them and to break my covenant with them for I am the L-ord their G-d" (Vayikra 26:44), and "For we are bondmen; yet our G-d has not forsaken us in our bondage" (Ezra 9:9). "If it had not been the L-ord who was for us, let Israel now say, if it had not been the L-ord who was for us, when men rose up against us, then they had swallowed us up alive, when their wrath was kindled against us" (Tehilim 124:1), and the rest of the Psalm. In the Gate of the "Service of G-d", I will expand on the exceeding favor G-d has bestowed upon us in His Torah which he gave to us.*

(Matanas Chelko: "If it had not been the L-ord who was for us.. when men rose up against us, then they had swallowed us up alive" - Not only by the tradition do we have proofs for these things, but also even in our time we can see the truth of this with our own eyes. The survival of one sheep among 70 wolves (see Midrash Raba Esther ch.10). This is the greatest miracle, no less than the exodus from Egypt. A sheep is a weak, helpless creature, and it is among 70 wolves who want and are able to rip apart and annihilate that sheep. Furthermore, the nations know full well that we do not accept their belief and practices. Nevertheless, even though we suffer from them every generation, we are always saved by miracles in every generation. Furthermore, we even live among them, side by side, year after year. This is the fulfillment of the prophetic verse written 3000 years ago, "and even though they shall be in the land of their enemies..." (end of Lev.) That G-d promised to save us from their hands.

Likewise, the Torah is still among us, despite decrees and persecutions forbidding torah study and burning the torah, periods when the gentiles forbade us to educate our children in torah, even so He promised us "and when many disasters and calamities come on them... it will not be forgotten by their descendants" (Deut. 31:21). It remained intact among us through miracles.

Hence we do not need to contemplate on the great miracles of the Exodus, in order to examine and demonstrate G-d's goodness and infinite power. For behold, we have a faithful witness which cannot be denied - our survival during this exile among the nations. It is proper to quote the holy words of Rabbi Yaakov Emden (sidur beit kel):

"Who is so blind as to not see the divine providence below, that His eyes are on them always. How could the denier of providence not be ashamed and stand disgraced? He who examines our unique situation and standing in the world. We the exiled nation, a dispersed sheep. After all the troubles and shifts for two thousands years. No nation in the world is as pursued as us. How great have been our troubles! How powerful have been those who lifted their heads against us from our earliest beginnings - to exterminate us, root us out, and eradicate us, due to their intense hatred which stems from jealousy. They have brought on us great sufferings but were never able to triumph over us, to eliminate us and destroy us. All these ancient, powerful nations - have gone by, their strength has withered, their protection has eroded - but we who cling to G-d are all alive today (Deut. 4:4). We have not lost in this long, intense exile even a single letter or vowel of the written Torah. The

words of the Sages (oral law) endured. The hand of time did not prevail over us, they were not able to prevail over us. What will the sharp philosopher answer to this? Can the hand of chance do all this? I swear by my soul, for when contemplating these things, they are greater in my eyes than all the great open miracles G-d has performed for our forefathers in Egypt, the Sinai Desert, and in the land of Israel. (the author wrote that the miracle of our survival in this exile is equal to the miracles of Egypt, but Rabbi Yaakov Emden holds that it is an even greater miracle) The longer the exile, the more the miracle is confirmed, and G-d's strength and power becomes apparent. For the prophets already saw the exile's intensity, complaining and moaning on its amazing protracted length before it happened. Behold, none of their words fell to the ground (failed to happen)..." End quote
As Moshe Rabeinu told us from the outset that such and such as trouble would befall us, and thus it happened. Likewise, for all of our exile - the prophets already predicted what will happen. For all the persecutions and pursuits that befell us, such as the holocaust, it is all spelled out in the verses of the Torah which speak on those times... Can we not see these things with our own eyes?! Behold, only by examining and contemplating is it possible to see them. Without contemplating them, we remain totally blind.

What you should also attentively consider and examine is the fact that despite the wide diversity of dispositions among human beings there is whole-hearted agreement among them in the appointment of one of their number to rule over them (a king); they assume the option to serve him, and render him obedience in all that he commands and charges them. He on his part protects them, treats them with sympathy, judges their causes righteously, governs them for their common good, so that their interests shall not suffer and no enemy prevail against them. If every individual only cared for himself and only troubled to ward off hurt from his own person, men would never agree or build a tower or wall, and their common interests would be unprotected. This also is to be noted that the ruler himself observes the statutes, governs his people in accordance with righteous judgments and in good and upright ways, and overall is a servant of the law and observes righteousness. So conducting himself, his dominion will be established and his sovereignty endure, as it is said (Mishlei 20:28) "*Mercy and Truth preserve the king.*" Our sages also have said "Pray for the welfare of the government; since if not for the fear thereof, men would swallow each other alive" (Pirkei Avot 3:2).

(Marpe Lenefesh: i.e. G-d puts in the heart of the king to govern his kingdom with righteousness and justice, and to punish the wicked, and to benefit the good so that his rule will endure and so that he does the will of G-d..

Matanas Chelko: it is human nature that each person wants only what is good for him. Each person looks at things with a different outlook and thinks that his way of looking at things is right and correct. Nevertheless, they come to an agreement on one view and to one leader. This is one of the wonders of the Creator.

Another subject that you need to examine, and understand from it marks of the divine wisdom and beneficence, is the agreement of human beings to buy and sell goods for gold and silver which, through G-d's mercy they endeavor to accumulate and thus improve their positions, though their actual needs cannot be satisfied with gold or silver. For when any one is afflicted with hunger and thirst through want of food or lack of water, an abundance of gold and silver will not avail him or cure his lacking. And if any one suffers pain in any of his limbs, he will not be cured by silver and gold; for while other minerals are largely used for medicinal purposes, this is less so in the case of gold or silver.

(Matanas Chelko: in truth it is strange and unusual that a person will desire something he cannot use...

Pas Lechem: That which human beings tend to yearn for and endeavor to amass gold and silver - this is a nature implanted in them by G-d in order promote their welfare. The proof is that they themselves are of little use, since they have no food or thirst value, therefore it must be that it is an implanted nature that man loves them without a reason.

Tov Halevanon: It is a nature implanted in man to pursue business dealings and to hoard money in order to give to he who is good before G-d and to strengthen society.

A wondrous evidence of wisdom is also that, while a few individuals possess large amounts of these precious metals, the majority of mankind have but little of them. If all human beings possessed them in abundance they could

not use them as a medium for obtaining what they desire (they would be worthless, like rocks - ML). Some people have much and others have little. They are precious from one point of view and of little account from another, because intrinsically they are useless. This too is within the plan of the Creator's supreme wisdom.

(*Pas Lechem: "the plan of the Creator's supreme wisdom"* - since most of the testing of man which demonstrates his free will, whether he chooses good or evil - is through them. For money pulls from one side and pushes from another. Understand this. [*Rabbi YS: this will be explained in the Gate of Trust.*])

Tov Halevanon: When the thing to buy with them is not available, they are useless, as written regarding a famine: (Yechezkel 7:19) "they will cast their silver to the street and their gold will be worthless...")

Then consider carefully the things on which depend the life of human beings and continuance of their normal state and condition until the end of their lives. You will find that all things are more or less plentiful in proportion to the need for them. Whatever is greatly needed is readily at hand. Whatever, on the other hand can be dispensed with, or one can for a time do without, is scarcer and harder to obtain.

For example, the air that is breathed - since one cannot possibly exist without air for any length of time, the Creator has so provided, that at no time and in no place shall a human being be deprived of it. And since human beings, while also needing water, can exist without it for a longer period than they can without air, the Creator distributed it over the entire surface of the earth, collecting it however in particular places to which creatures go and from which they are not excluded. But such places where water is collected are not found everywhere as is the case with air. Water has to be bought with money by some people. This is not the case with air. Water is more readily obtained by some than by others, air exists for all and is obtained by all equally and in the same way.

Food is also a necessity from which however we can abstain and for which we can find a substitute for a longer time than is possible in regard to air or water. Hence food is scarcer and harder to procure than water. But normally it is abundant and human beings are not deprived of it altogether.

So too with regard to garments of skin, wool and vegetable fiber. Substitutes for some of these can be more easily obtained than in the case of food; and clothes take time to make up, the reason being that for a short period a person can dispense with a new supply of clothing, and content himself with a scanty wardrobe for a longer period than he can with a small supply of food.

But precious stones, gold and silver and other minerals are essentially little needed. Their occasional use is due to convention. Hence a smaller quantity of these minerals is found among a multitude of human beings than of the food possessed by a single individual. The reason is, as we have stated, that a human being can do without these things.

(*Rabbi YS: as to why G-d did not make everything readily available, this is to provide a framework for testing man's free will as will be explained in the Gate of Trust.*)

Praised be the All-Wise and Compassionate Creator who shows mercy to His servants towards whom He directs His beneficent regard for all that is for their improvement. Even as He said to Yona (4:10), *"you have had pity on the gourd, for which you have not labored, neither made it to grow, which came up in a night, and perished in a night; and should not I have pity on Nineveh, that great city...?"* And David said *"The L-ord is good to all and His mercies are upon all His creatures."*

CHAPTER 6

Regarding the factors detrimental to the examination and the things it depends on, I would say that all the factors noted in the first treatise as detrimental to the study of the Unity of G-d are equally injurious to the study of His works.

(*Marpe Lenefesh: "the factors noted in the first treatise"* - since one who does not believe in the One Master of the universe, that He alone created all these things, certainly such a person cannot discern the benevolences of the Creator, and to thank Him for them, etc., since for such a person, there is nothing fitting to serve, "the fool says in his heart, 'There is no G-d'" (Tehilim 53:2). But if he would examine with an open eye, on the greatness of the Creator, and His wisdom and providence - he would believe in the Master of the world, and that inevitably, He alone created all this, as explained there. Hence, this depends on that.)

In addition, there are the three factors mentioned at the beginning of this treatise. Another detrimental factor is the arrogant attitude towards the Creator's favors which the simple fool thinks are his due, and yet more beside. He does not examine these favors nor recognize any obligation on his own part to render praise and thanks to the Creator for them. Of such a person, the wise man said (Mishlei 16:5) *"Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the L-ord."*

(Pas Lechem: "arrogant attitude towards the Creator's favors" - The author spoke on the three detrimental factors at the beginning of this gate. There, however, he focused on the great toil, etc. which distracts a person, while now, he is adding the detriment due to arrogance.

Tov Halevanon: This is one who has a proud spirit, the entire world and everything in it is not enough for him.

Matanas Chelko: "the three factors" - (1) that man always chases after the vanities of this world, and lusts to obtain more than what he has. Due to this, he does not contemplate what he has. (2) That he is used to these benefits, and therefore does not contemplate them. (3) Man is not happy with his lot and does not accept everything with the proper faith. This certainly is detrimental to contemplating the beneficence and kindness of the Creator. A person should be happy with his portion so that he recognizes that hidden inside everything is only the goodness and kindness of G-d. Hence, it is necessary to strengthen oneself in these things so as not to ruin this awareness and contemplation.)

The things that the examination depends on:

(Marpe Lenefesh: i.e. there are some things which depend and are related to the examination, and it is proper to mention them.)

Among them, that a person understands the benefits he receives from G-d and will assume the obligation of serving Him because of them.

(Marpe Lenefesh: Because for what purpose, should a person examine and know the greatness and goodness of G-d without assuming His service, as our sages said (Berachot 17a): "the purpose of wisdom is repentance and good deeds")

Among them, that one will constantly recall the marks of divine wisdom and will never cease to think of them and investigate them-both those that can be apprehended by the senses and those comprehended only by the intellect. And so he will discover every day a new mark of divine wisdom, as David said (Ps. 19.3) *"Day unto day utters speech."*

(Pas Lechem: "constantly recall...never cease to think" - to keep in mind what he has grasped and to inquire on what he does not yet know of them.

Marpe Lenefesh: To not cease to think all the time, every second, and everything that he beholds of G-d's creations, whether it is big or small, and especially on his own self, how G-d guides him in all matters. If a person puts his mind to all these things mentioned earlier, certainly, he will see new marks of the Creator every day and every hour. See also Gate 8 ch.3 #23

Matanas Chelko: i.e. there is an additional benefit and result (from the examination), namely, that through this, a man will come to constantly contemplate the marks of divine wisdom. He will come to recognize always that everything is goodness and kindness from G-d. Hence, the Gate of Examination has no limit and no end. It continues and intensifies in awareness and grasp. Every day, a person needs to contemplate on a new good and a new greatness of the Creator.)

You should know that what I have called your attention to in this treatise, is but a small portion of the vast knowledge concerning the mysteries of wisdom you can acquire by your own understanding-mysteries which will be revealed to you if you purify your heart and refine your soul. When you have attained in these matters the utmost knowledge of which you are capable, you should realize that all this knowledge which you have acquired of the Creator's wisdom

and power, as manifested in this universe, is as nothing compared to His real power and wisdom. For what ~~is~~ manifested is only that which is needed for a human being, not according to the true extent of His power, for it is infinite. Hence you should think of the awe-inspiring nature of G-d and His infinite might as they essentially are, not as you with your limited intelligence can perceive them.

(Pas Lechem: "purify your heart" - that one's heart is simple, without ulterior motives or pretentiousness, while "refine your soul" refers to refining the soul through deeds, either by doing good, or refraining from evil.

Matanas Chelko: i.e. a person must stand in awe and fear before the greatness of G-d. However, it is difficult to do so since it is impossible to attain a clear conception. Hence one must contemplate the following analogy.

Imagine rather that your condition here on earth is like that of a child born in a prison pit belonging to a king. The king took pity on the infant and ordered that it should be provided with everything good for it and needed for its well-being until it grew up and attained mature intelligence. But the child had knowledge of nothing except the prison and its contents. A royal officer of the king (Moses) visited the lad regularly, brought him all necessaries-light, food, drink, clothing; and informed him that he was a servant of the king, and that the prison and all it contained as well as the food brought him, belonged to the king; and that therefore he was under an obligation to thank his royal benefactor and laud him.

The lad replied, "I praise the owner of this prison who has accepted me as his servant, singled me out with all of his good and placed his eye and heart on me."

(Pas Lechem: "eye and heart" - a caretaker must first see what is lacking in his subject, and afterwards put to heart how to fill his lacking.)

Said the officer, "Do not say so lest you sin. For the royal domain does not consist of this prison alone; but his widely extended lands immeasurably exceed its limited area. Nor are you his only servant, for his subjects are countless. And the benefactions and kindnesses you have received are insignificant compared to those he has bestowed on others. The care that he has taken of you is as nothing compared to the care of others."

(Pas Lechem: and in truth, one must also praise G-d also on the beneficence He bestows on others, as our sages said in the blessing of "haTov vahaMetiv" [Who is good, and bestows good].)

"I know nothing of what you mention", the lad replied. "As to the king, I can only understand what I have myself experienced of his goodness and dominion." The officer then said to the lad: "Say, I praise the exalted sovereign to whose dominion there are no bounds and whose goodness and kindness are without limit. Among his countless hosts, I am of no account, and in the greatness of his might my affairs are as naught."

The lad now obtained some understanding - such as he had never had before - of what the king was, and thus his respect for the sovereign's exalted state increased. Reverence for the ruler penetrated his consciousness. Owing to the lad's realization of the king's high position and his own utter insignificance, the royal goodness and benefits extended to him as well as the gifts bestowed upon him were magnified in his eyes.

And you my brother, put your heart to this parable when you behold the vast universe that encompasses the earth. What happens in a small area on earth we cannot understand. How much less can we understand the whole of the earth and how much more so for what is beyond this universe (the mystical worlds).

Consider, brother, this parable. Study it thoroughly, and then think of the Creator as He is, and His goodness and loving-kindness with which He has favored you will be more appreciated by you. From among all His creatures, He has taken special notice of you for your benefit.

(Pas Lechem: i.e. even though He has countless creatures like you, nevertheless, He put His eye on you with hashgacha pratis [special providence]

Matanas Chelko: We are living in the microcosm of our tiny physical world. In truth, there are countless other worlds which the Creator sustains and presides over. Above all this, is His essence which we have no grasp of whatsoever.

Look to His Scriptures, His commandments and statutes with a broad vision. Consider the great awe and respect you feel towards any man who has acquired more worldly good than you have. For the higher his position is compared with yours, and the less he stands in need of you, the more will you esteem his greatness and his beneficence; the more will you respect his commandments and prohibitions; the more energetically will you strive and labor in his affairs. Think and reflect and you will find with G-d's help.

(Marpe Lenefesh: put to heart how you humble yourself before a rich person who has more than you, and all the more so if he is beneficent towards you, the favor will be great in your eyes, and you will revere him and esteem him since he does not need you, and you need him, and his status is higher than yours. Likewise, you run to do the command of this rich person according to how much he is important in your eyes.

"the more energetically will you strive" - i.e. strive and labor to do His service with all of your might.

May the Almighty set us among those who are in His service and who realize His goodness, mercies and kindnesses. AMEN.

(Matanas Chelko: Rabeinu finishes with an additional point. We must realize that G-d grants us the powers and merit to realize His goodness. This is as we conclude every prayer service "Aleinu Leshabeach...", i.e. that we must also be grateful for the ability and merit to be able to recognize the King and all of His goodness and kindness on us.