

**** Shaar Cheshbon HaNefesh - Gate of Spiritual Accounting ****

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

english translation by Rabbi Yosef Sebag

Level: Intermediate

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- Translator's Foreword
- Introduction
- Chapter 1 - What is the spiritual accounting with oneself?
- Chapter 2 - If the accounting is equal for all men or not
- Chapter 3 - How many ways should one bring himself to an accounting?
 1. obligation to serve G-d
 2. debt to G-d for one's body
 3. debt to G-d for one's intellect
 4. debt to G-d for the torah
 5. obligation to study the torah beyond superficial
 6. obligation to not disobey G-d
 7. to complete the conditions of slavehood to G-d
 8. obligation to serve only G-d
 9. intent in prayer and mitzvos
 10. the watching of the creator
 11. regular accounting of one's deeds
 12. the pursuit of physical
 13. not to waste any time
 14. becoming numb
 15. preparing for the journey
 16. reflecting when seeing sudden death
 17. benefits of solitude
 18. the elevation of man
 19. disasters of the world
 20. acquiring and spending money
 21. on divine help
 22. worldly conduct
 23. seeing G-d in nature
 24. reexamining child's eyes
 25. fire and water
 26. fearing a mortal king
 27. bearing suffering
 28. total acceptance
 29. greatness of the soul
 30. stranger in a strange land
- Chapter 4 - What are the benefits of this accounting
- Chapter 5 - Whether or not the spiritual accounting is a constant obligation
- Chapter 6 - Which actions should follow the accounting

Translator's Foreword:

The following is a translation of the eighth 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. The eighth gate is the practical mussar of the entire book. Everything before this was merely introductions. For one

who fulfills this gate the author writes: "G-d will teach you supernal wisdom and beneficial acts, and will grant you divine powers".

In this second revision, I added select commentaries and also checked/compared every sentence against the brilliant translation by Rabbi Moses Hyamson O.B.M., the former chief Rabbi and head Dayan of England between 1911 and 1913. The translator 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, Tishrei 5773 - October 2012

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 Hachohen (1740-1815)

ML - Marpe Lenefesh commentary by Rabbi Refael Mendel (1825-1895)

MC - Matanas Chelko commentary by Rabbi Mattisyahu Solomon (with permission)

***** **SHAAR CHESHBON HANEFESH - THE GATE OF SPIRITUAL ACCOUNTING** *****

from Chovos Halevavos - Duties of the Heart

by Rabeinu Bechaye zt'l

on making a personal accounting of one's duties to G-d

*** **INTRODUCTION** ***

The author says: Since our previous discussion dealt with the essentials of repentance and its conditions, and making a spiritual accounting was one of those conditions, I saw proper to follow with a clarification of the matter of making an accounting with oneself, because this contains matters to arouse oneself for things beneficial in both worlds, as David, peace be unto him, said: *"I reflected on my ways, and turned my feet unto Your testimonies"* (Tehilim 119:59).

Matanas Chelko: David would always make a cheshbon (accounting) where he should go, and he always decided that the best path to go is only the one which brings him to Torah.

It is proper for us to clarify six matters on the subject of the spiritual accounting.

1. What is meant by making a spiritual accounting with oneself?
2. If the accounting is equal for all individuals or not.
3. how many ways should one bring himself to an accounting?
4. What are the benefits of this accounting?
5. Whether the spiritual accounting is a constant duty.
6. Which activities should follow the accounting?

Matanas Chelko: Behold, by servants of G-d, the term "Cheshbon HaNefesh" (spiritual accounting) usually means the accounting of their deeds to examine whether they were good or evil. Namely, that at the end of the day or the week, or the like, they make an accounting of the deeds they did or did not do, whether the mitzvot they did were done properly, whether they stood up to trials and did not fall into sin. Likewise, for their middot (character traits), whether they exerted themselves properly to correct them or they stumbled in one of them.

However, in this gate, Rabeinu's explanation and intent is for a spiritual accounting of a different type. Namely, for careful accountings (cheshbonot) through which a person comes to feel in his soul and rouse his heart that it is his duty (mutal alav) to toil in the service of the Creator and that he is obligated to fulfill His commandments and words. For behold, a man could serve G-d like a soldier in an army, namely, that the Holy One, blessed be He, commanded and the man does what he is commanded to do. However, in this approach, there is not doubt that the Yetzer Hara (evil inclination) will find for the man many rationalizations and excuses for not doing the will of G-d. Thus, the explanation of "Cheshbon Hanefesh" (spiritual accounting) here, is the considerations which obligate a man to do the service of G-d, blessed be He. A man must indeed make an accounting with himself why in truth he is under obligation to do the will of G-d and to

However, after he already did an accounting with himself that he must fulfill the will of G-d, then it is incumbent on him to make another accounting - whether he did so correctly and properly. But this is already a different type of Cheshbon (accounting), the accounting of "examining (pashpesh) his deeds and feeling (mashmesh) them out" (Eruvin 13b). But the "accounting of the soul" (cheshbon hanefesh) which Rabeinu speaks of is one which needs to precede this. For through it, a person connects himself (mitkasher) to the service of G-d, and furthermore, he even becomes zealous (energetic) to do the will of G-d and does all that is incumbent on him with joy.

In truth, the Gate of Spiritual Accounting is a small "Duties of the Heart". I am used to calling it "Kitzur Chovot Halevavot" ("summary of Duties of the Heart"). For it includes the whole book. In this gate one learns all the Cheshbonot (accountings) of Emunah (faith), gratitude, matters of trust, and all the duties (chiyuvim). For this is among the foundations of man's service in this world. In truth, really the entire book is all one big "Cheshbon Hanefesh" of how a man can attach himself (mitkasher) to the service of G-d, blessed be He.

In the 6th great assembly in the year 5740 (1980), the Vizhnitz Rebbe, author of "Yeshuot Moshe", Rabbi Moshe Yehoshua Hagar zt'l, proposed to those present the following undertaking: Since, there are 30 Cheshbons (accountings) in the Gate of Spiritual Accounting (brought in ch.3), and there are 30 days in the month. Thus, each person should take on himself to study one Cheshbon every day, and then review it again each month and delve deeper into it each time. Without a doubt, this is an excellent advice which yields great benefits.

*** CHAPTER 1 ***

- *What is meant by making a spiritual accounting with oneself*

Spiritual account-taking means the deliberation of a man on his Torah and worldly affairs between his nefesh (bodily soul/emotional side/will) and his intellect, so that one may know what one has and what one still owes of his duties. (this will be clarified through examples).

Tov Halevanon: The Torah and the world are like opposites, as they said (Berachos 61a) "Oy li mi yotzri, Oy li miyitzri" (Woe to me from my Creator [Rashi: If I go after my evil inclination], woe to me from my Yetzer [Rashi: if I don't go after my evil inclinations, he will weary me with thoughts/urges]).

The proper way is for a man to go in the middle path between the Torah and the world, namely, that all of one's affairs in his worldly pursuits do not cross the bounds of the Torah's commandments and warnings. Since this is so, behold, all of one's days, a person needs to seek an accounting with himself between the Torah and the world - whether he trampled something of the Torah for a worldly benefit... The accounting is "between his nefesh (bodily soul/emotional side/will) and his intellect" because they are also antagonistic, as mentioned in Gate #3 ch.5 in the debate between them.

The prophet (Moshe) has already exhorted us on this in saying: "*Know therefore this day, and establish it in your heart that the L-ord he is G-d*" (Devarim 4:39), and David, peace be unto him, said: "*O taste and see that G-d is good*" (Tehilim 34:9) (i.e. examine well how G-d is good to us - TL), and "*know the G-d of your father and serve Him..*" (Divrei Hayamim 28:9), and "*be you not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding*" (Tehilim 32:9).

It was said of one who did not examine his matters and did not account with himself on them: "*None returns it to heart, neither is there knowledge nor understanding to say*" (Yeshaya 44:19), and "*they remembered not His hand [nor the day when He delivered them from the oppressor]*" (Tehilim 78:42), and "*remember the days of old...*" (Devarim 32:7), and "*I remember the days of old [I meditate on all Your works; I ponder on the work of Your hands]*" (Tehilim 143:5), and "*I will get my knowledge from afar [and will ascribe righteousness to my Maker]*" (Iyov 36:3).

Tov Halevanon: From these verses we learn that a man must consider whether he has fulfilled his duty to the Creator for the benefits G-d has bestowed on him.

Pas Lechem: (on the verse "None returns it to heart, neither is there knowledge nor understanding") At first one must bring up and remember all the past matters that are forgotten from him, as if he calls up and returns a person who left him, and after this, one needs knowledge and understanding to do the spiritual accounting with his nefesh. But he did not look at his matters nor account with his nefesh.

Matanas Chelko: "so that one may know what one has and what one still owes of his duties" - on a deeper level, the primary Cheshbon HaNefesh is a matter of gratitude, as the Pas Lechem says: "how much has he paid back the Creator with his deeds, and corresponding to this, how much service he owes the Creator for the good He bestows to him." This is along the lines of the verse "Who has gone before Me that I should repay him" (Job 41:11). Thus, there is no claim of reward for mitzvot performed, for what does man do? If he puts a mezuzah on his doorpost, who gave him the house? If he puts tzitzit on his garment, who gave him the garment? Likewise for all things. Therefore, we are not speaking of reward, only debts.

Thus, the explanation of "what one has and what one still owes" is what he has of the gifts G-d gave him and the corresponding debts he is under duty to pay back G-d for them. This is also the explanation according to the Pas Lechem...

"when he delivered them" - one must contemplate that all these miracles were great kindnesses from G-d, and not as a reward for their deeds.. Contemplate very carefully and you will see with your mind's eye that G-d is good, and that you are living out of His goodness, not out of reward for your deeds..

"Remember the days of old..." - this verse screams - "know the history of the world" in order to recognize the Creator of the world (the miracles, providence, etc. such as during the Exodus from Egypt). All these thoughts must obligate a man and stir him to do the will of G-d.

*** CHAPTER 2 ***

- if the accounting of all men is equal or not

Whether or not the spiritual accounting of each person is equal, I will answer this as follows:

The self accounting for people in their religious and secular matters varies according to their level of perception, intelligence, and clarity of understanding. Every person is commanded to deliberate with his soul (i.e. bodily soul/instinct/will) as to what are his duties in the service of G-d, in accordance with his recognition of the favors of the Creator, whether collective or individual as the verse says: *"And know this day; for I speak not with your children that have not known, and that have not seen... but your eyes have seen all the great work of the L-ord which He did"* (Devarim 11:2-7).

The verse means to say, that the claim from the Creator on you is stronger and more evident than the claim on your descendants who did not witness the miracles of the Creator. For you witnessed them with your own eyes, and only you were bestowed these great favors and were spared from the plagues of Egypt, and of Korach (where all the Jews were guilty along with him - TL). But your descendants were not present, therefore you are more obligated to serve G-d on account of them.

Similarly, we can say for other individuals - that their obligation varies in accordance with their level of understanding and the amount of good bestowed to them.

Matanas Chelko: i.e. there is no doubt that each person, without exception, is obligated to do the Cheshbon HaNefesh (spiritual accounting), and this Cheshbon is on the general good which every human being receives. One must also do an additional accounting on the special benefits that one receives personally, only that one is only obligated to do this Cheshbon according to his mental ability and recognition.

Matanas Chelko: *"you witnessed them with your own eyes.."* - with this Rabeinu answers the question as to why these verses were written in the Torah for all generations. The explanation is that even though G-d is speaking to them, the generation of the desert, but nevertheless, we see from here the difference between the obligation of one who saw the matter first-hand versus one who merely heard about it. Although, those who merely heard are also obligated in recognizing this (favor), but the Holy One, blessed be He, claims more from those whose perception was greater..

It is incumbent on the believer to take account with his soul what are his duties to G-d, and to think through this in meticulous details to the utmost extent of his ability, and according to what he is able to grasp of it. Then, whatever one is capable of attaining in practice, he should make diligent efforts in it and exert himself, and that which is

beyond one's ability to attain in practice - he should attain an understanding of it, and desire for it, as David, peace be unto him, said *"O that my ways were directed to keep your statutes!"* (Tehilim 119:5), and *"more to be desired are they than gold, than fine gold"* (Tehilim 19:11). and the Creator will judge him favorably (that he did not fulfill them - LT), and he should be on watch, for the time when he will be able to fulfill what is possible for him of his debts to the Creator.

Let him not try to find escapes for himself, treat this lightly (the personal accounting - TL), leave it, or ignore it (saying that he is not able to do it or that it is not necessary - PL), lest he be in total despair on the great day of accounting, as written: *"Whoever despises the word shall be destroyed by it"* (Mishlei 13:13).

*** CHAPTER 3 ***

- how many ways one should bring himself to an accounting.

Regarding how many ways is the accounting of a man with himself on his duties to G-d, I say, that the ways of accounting in this matter are numerous. However, among them, I will expound thirty ways whereby it will become clear through them, what a man is obligated to his G-d, when he puts them to heart and takes on himself to reflect on them and remember them always.

THE FIRST:

(Obligation to serve G-d for creating him, elevating him over other creations, and taking care of his needs)

Matanas Chelko: Rabeinu already presented [this] in the Shaar Bechina (Gate of Examination). There he wrote on many matters regarding the goodness, loftiness, and wisdom of the Creator, blessed be He, whereby contemplating those things brings a person to do the will of G-d with joy, out of gratitude towards G-d for all these good things. The first few Cheshbonot (accountings) Rabeinu brought here are similar to those Cheshbonot but in a concise manner.

When a man reflects on his own matter, and considers the first beginning of his being, his emergence from non-existence to existence, from nothing to something, without his meriting any of this, but rather solely out of pure kindness of the Almighty, out of His benevolence and generosity. And when he will see with his understanding that he is more important in his matter, more exalted in level, and more elevated in form over the animals, plants, and inanimate objects, he will realize that he is under an obligation to thank his Creator, blessed be He.

Pas Lechem: the phrase "emergence from non-existence to existence" refers to the formation of the drop (of seed) from blood which itself was formed from food. And it was still just a putrid drop, without human form, and afterwards its development and formation in the womb into human form. And still his existence was as nothing, removed from all assemblies, hidden from all eyes, until he was born and came into humanity - this is what he meant by "from nothing to something".

Translator: This kindness is not just something G-d did collectively to humanity, rather, even on a personal level, G-d did you a personal favor. ex. He could have made you a frog instead of a human being.)

Let him take a tangible illustration and imagine that when he was an infant, his mother abandoned him on the road, and a man passed by and saw him, and had pity on him, and took him in to his home, and raised him until he grew and his intellect matured. How greatly is he under an obligation to run to do his adopter's will and follow all of his commands and refrain from his prohibitions. (In short,) how much such a man is obligated to his benefactor! (i.e. even for things he did not explicitly command him to do but he knows that it is his adopter's will that he do them, he is under an obligation to do them - ML)

Likewise according to the Creator's protection of him, and providing for all of his needs, there should be a corresponding drawing towards His service and acceptance of His commandments. And the prophet already rebuked the Jewish people on this matter in saying: *"Is this how you repay the L-ord, you disgraceful, unwise people? (Is He not your Father, your Master? He has made you and established you)"* (Devarim 32:6), and Yechezkel elucidated this saying *"And when I passed by you, and saw you wallowing in your own blood..."* (Yechezkel 16:6), and the rest of the matter. (there this exact illustration is explained in more details - PL)

THE SECOND:

(debt to G-d for one's body)

To bring oneself to an accounting for the great favor of G-d on him in composing his body and completing his form,

his essence, and the anatomy of his limbs, taking him out of his mother's belly, and preparing his sustenance before this (the sustenance for the fetus in the womb - *TL*) and after this (his mother's milk - *TL*) - as fitting for him and according to the amount he needs. All this is a kindness of G-d on him. Let him think to himself, that if in his early creation he were lacking eyes or hands or feet, and a certain man was able to make them for him so that his body would be complete, how would he thank the man, and praise him, and be drawn to do his will, and cling to serving him. According to this one should correspondingly be drawn towards the Creator, who built his body and all of his limbs according to perfect functionality, as written "*Remember now that You made me like clay and to the dust You will return me*" (Iyov 10:9), and the rest of the matter, and "*For You created my reins, You covered me in my mother's womb*" (Tehilim 139:13).

Tov Halevanon: You alone made me and covered me in my mother's belly, a place where there is no light and nothing can reach there.

And "*For You drew me from the womb*" (Tehilim 22:10).

Tov Halevanon: You drew me and extracted me. The previous verse was evidence on the wonder of the formation in the womb and afterwards (the second) on the wonder of birth.

Matanas Chelko: in truth, our sages already decreed for us a place for this contemplation - every morning. For they decreed for us to recite the morning blessings whereby one considers and thanks the Creator for all these matters. The blessing "who made all my needs" is the first Cheshbon of Rabeinu. The second Cheshbon is "who opens the eyes of the blind" (pokeiah ivrim) and "who frees the bound" (matir asurim) - one needs to contemplate how things would be like if he did not have eyes. How would it be like if he had no legs - "who makes man's steps stable" (hamechin mitzadei gaver) - can a man move by himself? Is not everything from the Creator, blessed be He? One is under duty to think on this every morning, to recognize G-d's goodness and kindness. Through this contemplation, a man obligates himself and rouses himself to the service of G-d.

THE THIRD:

(debt to G-d for one's intellect)

To observe and bring oneself to an accounting for the great favor of G-d on him for bestowing him with intellect and understanding and with many good, noble, and honorable traits.

Pas Lechem: The term "good" refers to benefiting others... Among the traits in man, some are of the class "benevolence" such as generosity, some are of the class "noble" such as being content with little, and some are of the class "honorable" such as humility, since "who is honorable..." (Avos 4:1). I have given one example of each type from which you can extrapolate the rest.

Through these he has superiority over the irrational creatures (animals), as written "*Who teaches us more than the beasts of the earth, and makes us wiser than the fowls of heaven*" (Iyov 35:11). Let him imagine that if he were without intellect and understanding and a certain man came and helped him to attain them, and he afterwards understood the superiority he had gained over his previous state.

Would it be enough for him to thank and praise the man for the rest of his days to repay him for his help? How much more so the Creator, for who there is no limit to His favors on us (in the past - *PL*), and no end to His kindness towards us (in the future, since we also need His kindnesses in the future - *PL*), as written: "*Many, O L-ord my G-d, are Your wonderful works which You have done, and Your thoughts which are toward us: they cannot be recounted in order unto You: if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered*" (Tehilim 40:5).

Marpe Lenefesh: Here is a quote from the book Orchos Tzadikim (shaar zechira): "Imagine if he were crazy or insane and would rip his clothes, how much would his affairs be ruined and he would be considered a complete nobody in people's eyes. And if a doctor came and cured him from his craziness and insanity, how fitting would it be to praise him for this, and all the more so for the Creator.."

THE FOURTH:*(debt to G-d for the Torah)*

To bring oneself to an accounting for the great favor of G-d on him for arousing him to what will bring him life in both worlds - the exalted and faithful Torah, to remove his blindness, root out his ignorance, enlighten his eyes, bring him nearer to the will of G-d, make known to him the truth of the existence of his Creator and what is his duty towards Him, and through which he will be successful in both worlds, as written *"The statutes of the L-ord are right, rejoicing the heart"* (Tehilim 19:8).

Let him imagine to himself after he recognized its worth, that if it had been unknown to him, and afterwards he met a certain man who bestowed it to him, would his efforts and abilities to pay him back be enough to convey his gratitude and praise? All the more so, for the Creator who rouses him to it (i.e. rouses his heart to toil in it - PL) and helps him to understand it and to fulfill it. The least debt of gratitude that we are obligated for it is to run to cling to His Torah, and that we hasten to accept the obligation of His commands and His prohibitions, as written *"I made haste, and delayed not, to observe Your commandments"* (Tehilim 119:60), and *"How I love Your Torah"* (Tehilim 119:97), and *"How sweet are Your words to my palate"* (Tehilim 119:103).

THE FIFTH:*(obligation to study the Torah beyond superficial)*

To bring oneself to an accounting for delaying coming to understand the book of G-d's Torah, and his being contented not to grasp its matters.

(Pas Lechem: man wants to be at rest and in tranquility instead of busy toiling to examine and grasp the depth of its matter.)

One would not act like this for a book that was sent to him from a king. If he had a doubt as to its meaning due to its unclear handwriting or words, or due to the depth of its matter, or its subtlety, or confusing mix of subjects or its enigmatic words. Rather, he would apply his whole heart and mind to understand its meaning, and would greatly pain himself until he understood its meaning.

(Marpe Lenefesh: The book Orchos Tzadikim (Shaar Zechira) ends off: "Without a doubt, if there were in his city even the lowest of the lowest person who knew how to explain the part of the letter he did not understand, he would hurry to go to him and would not be embarrassed for this.)

If he does this to understand the words of a weak, mortal man like himself, how much more so is it his duty to do many times more than this until he understands the book of G-d, which is his life and his salvation (from eternal death - PL), as written *"For it is your life and the length of your days"* (Devarim 30:20). How did you permit yourself, my brother, to hide from it, and to content yourself from it with that which is readily familiar of its matter and revealed of its surface meaning, and you were lenient with (knowing) the rest.

(Manoach Halevavos: The plain meaning and that which is readily evident of its matter is enough for you, and the other deep and hidden things, you are completely lenient in them and you do not at all apply your mind to understand them.

Marpe Lenefesh: This refers to the secrets of the Torah, that you cast off behind you the profound matters of the Torah. In the Zohar this is expounded at length (Chelek 3, 152a): "woe to he who says that the Torah is only the plain meaning, because any wise man can also author chronicles and stories like these, and it's not for nothing that it is depicted: 'the Torah of G-d is perfect, it returns the soul...', and it's not for nothing that the Angels (spiritual beings) wanted to receive the Torah, rather certainly there is an inner side to it and great secrets on every letter and crown of letter..." see there.)

Can you see your own faultiness and lowliness in this?

(Pas Lechem: The double expression (faultiness and lowliness): One, for being lazy in the study of the Torah. Two, for not being lazy in the letter of a flesh and blood king. This is like what the prophet said (Yirmiya 2:13): "For My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken Me, the spring of living waters, to dig for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that do not hold water", and likewise for the following story...)

This is similar to the story of who it was said: *"But over the L-ord of heaven you exalted yourself, and the vessels of*

His House they brought before you, and you, your dignitaries, your queen, and your concubines drank wine in them, and you praised gods of silver and gold, copper, iron, wood and stone, which neither see nor hear nor know, but the G-d in Whose hand is your soul and all of your ways - He, you did not glorify" (Daniel 5:23).

Matanas Chelko: i.e. there is in this an aspect of idolatry, as if he bowed down to idols of silver and gold, G-d forbid, and not to the Holy One, blessed be He. For he did not have either a feeling or a mindset like this regarding the letter from a flesh and blood kind.

In truth, this matter is brought in the Torah as written: *"these things which I command you TODAY shall be on your heart"* (Devarim 6:6). Rashi there brings the Sifri: "they should not be in your eyes like an old Diyutgama which a person does not take interest but rather like a new one which everyone runs to read. "Diyutgama" is a decree of the king issued in writing". end quote. This is the explanation of the word "today" - that the Torah was given to us today. This consideration can arouse in a man longing and clinging to the Torah, when he contemplates that the Torah is a letter from the King which grants him eternal life - "for it is your life and the length of your days" (Devarim 30:20).

THE SIXTH:

(obligation to not disobey G-d)

To make an accounting with oneself, when one feels that his tendencies are to rebel against the Creator and to break His covenant. Let him take account with himself and put to heart that all of what he perceives in the world with his senses - whether the foundations of the earth and its branches, or its elements and compounds, its higher (stars, planets) and its lower creations (i.e. physical creatures) - all of them exist by the word of G-d and guard His covenant (follow the laws of physics, etc).

Does one see anything leaving the bound of the service of G-d (being lazy in or not doing its purpose, which is its service - *PL*), rebelling against His word or breaking His covenant? If we would imagine in our mind that one of them would transgress the covenant of the Creator, no human would be left alive.

For example, what would happen if one of the elements would transgress the covenant of the Creator and change its nature, or that the earth would leave its center (its orbit around the sun), or that the waters of the ocean would spill over their boundary and cover everything on dry land. Would any man be left on the face of the earth?

More wondrous than this, regarding the organs of a man, if they were to rebel against the covenant of the Creator, and the organs whose nature is to move (ex. heart, lungs - *PL*) would be stationary, or the stationary ones (such as intestines - *PL*) would move, or that the five senses would not transmit the information they were commanded to transmit - one's formation would break down, his composition would disintegrate, and his normal ability to function would become null and void.

And how can a man not be ashamed to transgress the covenant of his G-d in a world which does not transgress the covenant of G-d, and do so with the help of limbs which G-d has commanded them to obey the man's wish and bear all the man's affairs, and these limbs do not transgress the Creator's covenant?

(Tov Halevanon: How can one lift his face to use matters of this world for his own selfish pleasures against the will of the Creator? And since the matters of the world guard their purpose and do not change their nature which the Creator has set for them, how can one change the purpose the Creator set for him using the matters of this world?)

As an analogy, a king commanded a group of his servants to cross one of his ministers over a wide river with the utmost careful guarding to a specific place and during a specific time. Then, he commanded the minister to do to them during that time certain things. The servants fulfilled what the king had commanded them to do towards the minister, but the minister did not do what the king had commanded him.

One of the servants said to the minister: "you the minister who ignores the command of the king, would you not be afraid if one of us did like you and transgressed the command of the king to guard you, just like you transgressed while with us, thereby you would fall in this great river and die a grim death? Retract from your mistake by repenting and asking for forgiveness, because the king has commanded us to neglect guarding you if you transgress his command while with us." The minister woke up from his neglect (of guarding the king's command), and corrected his mistake.

Consider, my brother, if one of your limbs were to transgress the Creator's command in relation to yourself when you wished to use it. You know that the Creator stipulated in His faithful Torah that everything in the world is in your command and will obey your wish on condition that you serve Him, and (the opposite), that it (the world and everything in it) will go against your will when you transgress His word, as explained in Parsha Bechukotai: "*If you will go in My statutes...*" (Vayikra 26:3), and in other places.

(Tov Halevanon: Parsha Ki Tavo (Devarim 28) "G-d will strike you with 'techorim'...and you will become meshuga (insane)...", that the nature in his body will abandon its post and then many diseases will befall him)

Matanas Chelko: i.e. [the servants said:] if you don't do your part, we do not need to do our part. It is implied that this is included in what they were commanded... Man is the minister of the world. The entire world was given to aid and assist him. However, this was on condition... "*If you will go in My statutes...*", which are all the verses of blessings and curses written in the Torah. Rabeinu gives us a clear picture and simple analogy to fully understand the matter.

THE SEVENTH:

(to complete the conditions of slavehood to G-d)

To bring oneself to an accounting to His G-d regarding assuming the conditions of slavehood, and to take on himself the obligation of masterhood due to His Creator (that one act towards G-d the way a slave is obligated to act towards his master - ML). We have noted most of the conditions in the third gate of this book. Let the seeker find them there.

Marpe Lenefesh commentary: To reflect in his mind whether he is fulfilling all the conditions that a slave is obligated to act towards his master, and to reflect if he also acts at least like this towards his Creator, who is our Master, our Creator, and our King as he wrote in Gate 3 end of chapter 5.

Matanas Chelko: until now, he mentioned various Cheshbons which are understood according to the Shaar Bechina (Gate #2), namely, that we are obligated to do the will of the Creator out of gratitude for the world and all the good the Creator does [to us]. Now he enters into a deeper Cheshbon - the concept of slavehood (hishtabdut)... that one is obligated perforce (even against his will). Not as if he is doing good or paying back good to G-d. But rather, he does out of slavehood, whose explanation is to do in such a manner that he is not serving out of his own volition, but because he is forced in the matter. This is a condition of slavehood, that the Holy One, blessed be He, is a Master over us, due to doing many good things to us always, as explained in Gate #3.

One should think of them when he realizes the constant favors of the Creator on him in preparing what is beneficial to him, having compassion on him, always providing him with the food he needs. Neither did G-d abandon him to himself (during his childhood - TH) when his understanding was weak in the proper way to conduct his affairs, and He bestowed him with wisdom, intellect, and understanding to conduct his affairs. Through them, he will know his debts to G-d, as David said: "I am Your servant; grant me understanding, that I may know Your testimonies" (Tehilim 119:125).

And when a slave recognizes (all the following traits from his Master - ML) the great favors from his Master on his soul and body, and all his movements, and that the Master watches over him constantly, and knows his revealed and hidden matters, and guards all of his movements, and binds them with his bonds and rules over them (that all his movements are bound to the will of G-d, like clay in the hands of a potterer, thus we are in His hand - ML), and (he also contemplates - ML) how the Master tests and checks him with what he granted him (free will, even though everything is in G-d's hands - ML) on whether to use his limbs and turn his thoughts towards his good inclination or whether he will turn them towards his evil inclination. And the slave considers the teachings of the Torah and its rousing as to what is the will of G-d and what is against it and will bring G-d's wrath upon him - (if the slave puts to heart all of this, then certainly - ML) he will use all movements of his body and all powers of his spirit for what will find favor in the eyes of his Master, and bring him closer to Him. He will remove the veil of foolishness from himself, and don the garment of awe and reverence from Him and love of Him, and he will desire what G-d wants - then the great good, and the great light from G-d will come upon him, as written: "*O G-d in the light of Your countenance they shall walk*" (Tehilim 89:16), and "*the Lord will cause His countenance to shine on you and favor you*" (Bamidbar 6:25).

The main thing of all - is to complete the conditions of slavehood and to designate G-d alone with masterhood - that

all this be wholeheartedly and faithfully (all that one does to serve G-d should be wholeheartedly and faithfully, without any outside interests - *ML*), and through this one's love of G-d will be wholehearted and likewise will be G-d's love towards him, as written: *"You have declared the L-ord this day to be your G-d...And the L-ord has declared you this day to be His treasured people"* (Devarim 26:17-18), and *"to make you supreme, above all the nations that He made"* (Devarim 26:19), and *"Then all the peoples of the earth will see that the name of the L-ord is called upon you, and they will fear you"* (Devarim 28:10).

Matanas Chelko: "wholeheartedly and faithfully" - i.e. the intent here is not to do external deeds which demonstrate slavehood. Rather, one must feel slavehood in his inner being truthfully and faithfully. For the Holy One, blessed be He, knows what is in one's heart... then he will come to love G-d and also the Holy One, blessed be He, will love him.

"to make you supreme" - G-d will elevate you higher and greater than everything [in creation].

The reason for this: it is known that the greatness of a slave in the eyes of men is according to the greatness of his master and according to his master's choosing of him, and bringing him close, and since the Name of the Creator is above and higher than all the high in the eyes of the nations, as written *"For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same, My Name shall be great among the nations"* (Malachi 1:11), and the closest nation to Him, which is singled out for His service is the nation of Yisrael. Thus, it would be proper, according to this, that our level and glory be above the other nations.

Matanas Chelko: "the greatness of a slave in the eyes of men is according to the greatness of his master" - for example, if we see a man dressed as a military general, adorned with badges, looking very important, we nevertheless still need to clarify which army he leads and which country he belongs to. For it is possible that he merely leads some small faraway country at the end of the world, whereby he would not be important at all. For the greatness of a general is measured by the country, people, and king who appointed him... For example, if the president of the USA granted him this power and appointed him, he represents the USA and there is in this importance. But if he represents some remote African tribe, even if he wears important clothing, it means nothing.

The reason for *"that the Name of the L-ord is called upon you"* (Devarim 28:10), is that we were called "the nation of G-d", "the nation of the Almighty", "the priests of G-d", "the servants of G-d", "the slaves of G-d", "the sons of G-d", and other titles similar to these of words depicting special treasured status and special choice. But *"they will fear from you"*, is for the honor of the Creator and awe of Him, as written *"Who would not fear you, O King of nations?"* (Yirmiya 10:7), and like the verse says of what in the future we will attain of closeness to the Creator, and being singled out for His service *"One shall say: 'I am of the L-ord'"* (Yeshaya 44:5), and therefore the importance of a person to the Creator is according to the person's closeness to Him and serving of Him.

Matanas Chelko: " 'they will fear from you', is for the honor of the Creator and awe of Him" - for example, for one who has an American passport, it is possible that they will fear him more than one who has a passport from a small country such as Congo. For perhaps, he is a friend of the president (or an important official) of the country and he loves him and will protect him. Thus, the fear is from the fear of the master. Likewise regarding the matter of the Creator...

Thus the Nations will fear the Jewish people because they are servants of G-d, and the nations have fear of G-d, blessed be He. Therefore, according to the strength of our slavehood towards the Creator, so too will be the fear of the nations towards the nation of G-d, and they will fear harming us... And according to the extent of slavehood we have towards the Creator, so too will He guard us and make their hearts fear harming us..

Therefore, my brother, bring yourself to an accounting on this matter and do not be swayed by your evil inclination. Do not consent with your base desires when using your intellect and understanding in this (*accounting - PL*). Put to heart the Creator's observing your making an accounting with yourself in your inner thoughts and let your intent be for the sake of His Name. Carefully think through it for His honor, out of shame of His observing you on it, as written *"The L-ord knows the thoughts of man, that they are vanity"* (Tehilim 94:11).

THE EIGHTH:

(obligation to serve G-d sincerely)

To bring oneself to an accounting in what one is obligated regarding devoting one's heart to G-d alone.

The devotion of heart is in two ways:

One: wholehearted devotion when declaring the unity of G-d, as we explained in the beginning of this book.¹¹
Two: wholehearted devotion to G-d alone when doing an act of the next world (i.e. a mitzvah), whether it is an act one is obligated to do or it is an optional act, as we explained in gate 5 of this book.

Some of the essentials of acknowledging the unity of G-d are:

- * to acknowledge that there is no other god besides Him
- * to not associate Him with any image, form, measure, movement, nor any kind of physical representation, nor any kind of state whether purposeful or incidental (see Gate 1).
- * to believe that there is no beginning to His being and no end to His existence.
- * to know that He is [absolutely] One and there is nothing which is one like Him, and there is no creator other than Him, and no maker besides Him, and likewise for His other Names and attributes (see Gate 1).

Matanas Chelko: when we speak of slavehood to G-d, blessed be He, this is because He is the Ribono Shel Olam, i.e. the L-ord of the whole universe, and Master of all the worlds. Therefore, one must serve Him. This is the point in this cheshbon. One must contemplate on every Hishtabdut (undertaking) that he does, that it be done to G-d [alone]. When we say every morning "Shema Yisrael, the Eternal is our G-d, the Eternal is One" and accept His Unity on the whole world and the four directions and that He is One, one must be aware afterwards when fulfilling His commandments all day that it is for Him... And in the Shulchan Aruch (O.C.231): "our sages said: 'let all your deeds be for the sake of Heaven', that even mundane things such as eating, drinking, walking, sitting, rising, talking, and all bodily needs, etc. should all be directed towards serving your Creator...". This is the Cheshbon before doing a deed, to have intent for His great Name.

(Translator: saying to oneself generally "l'shem shamayim" before doing things helps in this. It is also important to think of some specific intent such as "to be healthy in order to serve G-d" when eating. see the book Shaarei Orah by Rabbi Avigdor Miller, sec. l'Shem Shamayim for powerful words on this.)

Some of the essentials of wholehearted devotion to G-d alone when doing a religious act:

- * to not have intent when doing it other than for the sake of His great Name, not out of love of praise from men, not out of hope to get benefit from them, not out of fear of them, not to bring some benefit or prevent some damage in this world or in the next, as our sages said: *"Be not like servants who minister unto their master for the sake of receiving a reward, but be like servants who serve their master not upon the condition of receiving a reward"* (Avot 1:3).

You can observe this, my brother, with how human beings conduct themselves regarding friendships. When one senses that his friend's heart is not sincere with him, and all the more so a master regarding his slave - he will be angry with him and will not desire his deeds, even if he exerts himself to the best of his ability and appears sincere externally, and even though a man needs his friend and needs his help.

All the more so for the Creator, that all the created beings need Him, and He has no need nor benefit from them. He can see into their hearts and their innermost secrets. How can we expect Him to desire in us with what we would not expect our friends to desire in us with, despite their ignorance of our inner deception and of our little wholeheartedness towards them?

(Pas Lechem commentary: How can we want that our conduct towards G-d be in a manner that we would not be happy with if our colleagues conducted themselves towards us like this? And even if it is possible to say an excuse on our friends, that their heart is not sincere towards us because they do not know if our heart is also sincere towards them, and certainly if our hearts is in truth not sincere with them. And even so, we nevertheless become angry with them for this (despite that we are not sincere with them). This is what he meant by "despite their ignorance, etc". All the more so, if we conduct ourselves with G-d like this.)

Matanas Chelko: for example, he loves mister so and so and is his friend because that person has connections to someone or some place. Thus, in truth, he does not love him at all. Likewise, for a slave, even if he does everything and does more than needed, but when the master perceives that the slave is doing only for himself, all of the master's grace towards the slave will disappear and he will be angry with him. For this is not service of the master but service of oneself!..

When the understanding person will reflect on this matter, he will feel disgrace and shame before the Creator, and will rectify his inner self, and devote his heart to G-d alone when declaring His unity, doing one of His commandments or learning His Torah, and he will do it with exertion and zeal, as David said: *"I will run the way of Your commandments, for You will broaden my heart"* (Tehilim 119:32).

Matanas Chelko: "he will feel disgrace and shame" - in truth, one needs to feel shame when he serves! Not for G-d's sake (shelo lishma).

THE NINTH:

(intent in prayer and mitzvot)

Matanas Chelko: this cheshbon (contemplation) is among the fundamental teachings (min HaChidushim HaYesodiim) of Rabeinu in the matter of the service of G-d. We need to study it in-depth.

To bring oneself to an accounting that one's acts and exertion in doing the various religious activities in the service of G-d be at least as much as what one would do if his (human) king would request of him to do for some physical activity. Surely, one would not hold himself back in the least from exerting himself fully and to the best of his ability [for the human king].

Matanas Chelko: this Cheshbon (contemplation) is on how he would exert himself, watch over and be meticulous in all sorts of deeds which a flesh and blood king had commanded him to do.

And in Pesachim 75b: (regarding the prohibition of bringing coals which make too much smoke for the incense offering) "For that you don't need a verse, [to prohibit it] since before a flesh and blood king, one would not do this, how much more so before the King of kings, the Holy One blessed be He." end quote.

If it were an act requiring investigation, thought and counsel, he would apply all of his heart, understanding, intellect and perception to work on it with the utmost care and zeal.

If he came to praise and thank the king for some good or some favor he received from him, whether he would transmit the message of gratitude through a song or poem whether it be oral or written - he would not refrain from all sorts of eloquence, metaphors, analogies, embellishments whether true or false (such as Melachim 1:31, "may the king live forever" - *ML*), that it is possible to say of him. And if he could praise him with all of his limbs and his inner and outer being he would do so. If he could move heaven and earth and everything in them to praise and thank him in order to show the king his good feelings towards him, he would do so, in spite of his being a mere weak human (like himself - *PL*), small and of swiftly passing days.

Pas Lechem: All this is due to his great desire that he wishes and hopes that the king will perceive his good heart and wholeheartedness towards him.

According to this the intelligent person should conduct himself in the service of G-d. When he does anything of it. Every act of service to G-d must necessarily fall into one of three categories.

(1) Duties of the heart alone. It was our intention to clarify them in this book.

(2) Duties of the heart and limbs together, such as prayer, Torah study, praise and psalms to G-d, study of other wisdoms (needed for Torah such as astronomy or gematrias - *PL*), instructing others to do good or refrain from evil, or the like.

(3) Duties of the limbs alone, whereby the heart has no participation, except for the intent to G-d at the beginning of the act, such as (dwelling in a) sukkah, lulav, tzitzis, mezuza, guarding the Sabbath and the festivals, charity, or others similar where distraction of the heart by other things does not damage the act.

Matanas Chelko: "except for the intent to G-d at the beginning of the act" - Rabeinu writes here a great foundation (Yesod Gadol). The intent of "lishma" (for G-d), whereby one does a mitzva for G-d's sake (l'shem Hash-em) - this is before doing the act. Afterwards, the act can continue onwards. There is no need for intent "lishma" every second after this. For example, one who needs to do an act of kindness, certainly, in the beginning he should have intent to do it "lishma", i.e. that he is doing the mitzva l'Shem Shamayim (for G-d's sake). But afterwards, at the time of doing the act of kindness, he need not think thoughts of lishma and devekut (clinging) to G-d. Then, one needs only to help and be kind to his fellow. This is unlike the second category. For there, one also needs intent of heart all the time he is engaged in prayer or Torah, etc., unlike this [third] category.

However for the duties of the heart, one is obligated to empty his heart from thoughts of this world and its 13 distractions, and to focus his heart and mind to G-d alone at that time, as it was said of one of the ascetics who would say in his prayer to G-d: "my G-d! The sorrow I have for You nullified all my other sorrows, and the worry I have from You (from my sins which distanced me from You - *PL*), distanced me from all other worries".

Manoach Halevavos: The sorrow and worry that I have in my heart due to You nullifies from me all other sorrows and worries of the thoughts and distractions of this world.

Through this, G-d will accept his act and desire it, of these our sages said (Berachot 13a): "mitzvot need kavana (intent)".

If one is engaged in a religious act of the category involving both the heart and the limbs together, such as prayer or praising G-d - he should free his body from doing any worldly or other religious act, and clear his heart from all thoughts which distract him from the matter of the prayer (even thoughts of Torah - *MC*). After he has cleansed himself, and washed from any filth or dirt, and distanced from any bad smell or the like, then he should put to heart:

1. to Whom he has intent to pray to.

Matanas Chelko: first and foremost, he must prepare himself for prayer with the consideration of to Whom he is about to pray.

2. What does he seek from it.

Marpe Lenefesh: i.e. his needs, sustenance, health which are all in the hands of G-d to give or withhold.

Matanas Chelko: "what does he seek from it" - i.e. the explanation of the words. These two matters are laws brought in the Shulchan Aruch O.C.98:1 "the person praying must have intent in his heart for the explanation of the words he utters with his lips and to also have intent that it is as if the Shechina (divine presence) is opposite him" end quote.

One who enters the synagogue, dons tefilin, opens the prayer book and begins to pray - does he realize he is speaking to someone? Without this, it is not called prayer, but merely "reading a Sidur (prayer book)", and as Rabbi Chaim HaLevi's work on the Rambam (Hilchot Tefila) establishes that the intent of "standing before G-d" is a requirement (me'akev). Without it, it is not an act of prayer. For by definition, prayer is speaking to the Holy One, blessed be He. (see there). Without recognizing and feeling this intent, it is not prayer but rather merely 'occupying oneself' (mitasek b'alma).

The difference between a small child in school and an adult praying is only in the kavana (thought) - the thought of to Whom he is praying and that he is now speaking to the King. This is what Rabeinu wrote that even after cleansing his body and mind from all thoughts, it is still not yet prayer until he has intent constantly before Whom he is praying.

Matanas Chelko: the Path of the Just writes (ch.19) that the most difficult matter in prayer is that one is speaking to another. He writes there: "he is actually (mamash) standing before the Creator, blessed be He, engaging in a give and take with Him, even though a man's eye does not see Him. You will observe that this is the most difficult for a person to form a true image in his heart because his senses do not at all aid in this" end quote.

Behold, if we tell someone to hold a telephone to his ear and speak as if he is speaking to someone, he will not be able to do this. But when he calls his friend, he is able to speak to him on the phone for hours even though he does not see his fellow standing before him and merely speaks to a piece of plastic. Nevertheless, he can do this. This is only because he feels his fellow is listening and hears him. Perhaps this is the reason for the invention of the telephone - to teach us [tangibly] that it is possible to speak with another even though one does not see who it is. From there, he can learn a lesson regarding prayer. Namely, that even though he does not see the Holy One, blessed be He, nevertheless, he can feel that He listens and hears his prayer.

And as the "Path of the Just" continues there: "However, he who is of sound intellect can establish in his heart the truth of the matter, with a little contemplation and attention, how he comes and quite literally engages in a give and take with G-d, blessed be He, pleading before Him, and beseeching Him, while G-d, blessed be His Name, lends ear to him, gives attention to his words, just like when a man speaks to his fellow and the fellow

3. With what he will speak before his Creator, of the words and the subject matter of the prayer.

| *Marpe Lenefesh*: These are the words and matters of prayer one speaks with to the King of kings. When one puts to heart these three introductions before his prayer - even after all this, maybe, he will have proper kavana (intent) in his prayer.

Know that the words one is forming with his tongue are like the shell and the meditation on the words is like the fruit, (or) that the uttering of the prayer is like the body, and the meditation is like the soul.

| *Matanas Chelko*: "body..soul" - if we were to compare a prayer to a man or animal, the prayer (meditation) is the "life spirit", the primary thing, while the words are just the physical body.

When one prays with his tongue but his mind is distracted in a matter other than the prayer, his prayer will be like a body without a soul, or like a shell without a fruit, because his body is present but his mind is not with him in his prayer. Of like him, scripture says: *"For as much as this people draw near with their mouth and with their lips do honor Me, but their hearts are far from Me, and their fear of Me is a commandment of men learned by rote"* (Yeshaya 29:13).

| *Matanas Chelko*: the explanation is that it is not that the prayer is on a low level, or that it is not so good. But rather, it is waste (pesolet) and nothing. A body without a life spirit is nothing!

| *Marpe Lenefesh*: In the sefer Chasidim (Siman 46): "To habituate oneself in kavana (intent), to do this small habit before prayer, or any blessing, to pause a bit before and not allow any thought or hirhur (musing) to take hold in his mind, because if one gives a place to laziness, even for one second, or for any thought whatsoever - he is already ensnared in the trap of the yetzer, and he will continue and overpower him...", see there.

An analogy was further said on this regarding a slave whose master came to his home. The slave ordered his wife and children to honor him and do everything for him, but he himself left to engage in merriment and laughter, and refrained from serving his master personally, and from trying to honor him and doing what is proper to him. The master became angry with him and did not accept his honors and service, and he threw everything back to his face.

Likewise for one who prays, while his heart and mind are devoid of the matter of prayer, G-d will not accept the prayer of his limbs and tongue.

| *Matanas Chelko*: since the essence of the person himself is not there.

You can see from what we say at the end of our prayers: "May the words of my mouth and the thoughts of my heart find favor before You O G-d..." And when a man (is distracted and) thinks of any matter in the world, whether it is permitted or forbidden, and afterwards he finishes his prayer and says "imrei fi vehegyon libi lefanecha" (may the words of my mouth and the thoughts of my heart find favor before You), is this not a great disgrace, that he claims to have spoken to his G-d with his heart and mind while his heart was not with him, and afterwards he asks G-d to accept it and favor it from him?

He is similar to one of whom it was said "as a nation that pretends to show righteousness..." (Yeshaya 58:2), and our sages said: "a person should estimate himself - if he thinks he is capable of having intent in heart, he should pray. Otherwise, he should not pray" (Berachos 30b). And Rebbi Eliezer said when he was about to die, among the things he commanded his disciples - "when you are praying, know before Whom you are praying" (Berachos 28b). And scripture says: *"prepare yourselves to greet your G-d, O Israel"* (Amos 4:12), and our sages said: *"When you pray do not make your prayer a form of routine but a plea for mercy and supplications"* (Avot 2:18), and *"When my soul grew faint upon me, I remembered the L-ord: and my prayer came to You to Your Holy Temple"* (Yona 2:8), and *"Let us lift up our heart with our hands unto G-d in the heavens"* (Eicha 3:41).

You should know, my brother, that our aim in prayer is only the longing of the soul to G-d, its submitting before Him, elevating its Creator, praising and thanking His Name, and casting all of its needs on Him.

Tov Halevanon: The praises and psalms with which we exalt and elevate our Creator along with the acknowledging of His many kindnesses on us are in order that we humble/submit ourselves greatly in picturing His greatness and to what extent we are obligated to serve Him....we pray to Him on our needs and troubles even though nothing is hidden from His eyes, and He knows our needs better than we do, and He provides sustenance to all living things according to its deeds and according to what His wisdom decreed. Nevertheless, we pour our prayers to Him in order to feel our great need for Him and to place our trust in Him, as the author writes later in number 18.

Marpe Lenefesh: The matter of prayer is in order that a man humble/submit himself before the Creator...this is the primary mitzva of prayer...therefore a person can pray in any language and for all matters, as long as his intent is to submit himself before the Creator and to request his needs...

Matanas Chelko: "casting all of its needs on Him" - this is a great foundation (yesod) in prayer. Likewise, other Rishonim (early sages) wrote this in the way of pshat (plain meaning). The matter of prayer is that a man changes through it. Namely, even if he prays and asks for his needs or to be saved from some trouble or the like, it is not as if he is trying to change G-d's mind through this. Only that he is changing himself through the prayer and thus incidentally the trouble will be removed or he will find salvation. For he is already a different person, not the same one on whom the decree or trouble was decreed upon.

For example, one who became ill and prays to G-d to heal him. Is it conceivable that if he prays properly, G-d will reconsider and regret what he decreed? Rather, the explanation is that since the man prays and humbles himself before his Creator, blessed be He, and draws closer to Him through his prayer, through his words and trust that only G-d has the power to save him, and G-d alone is the healer of all flesh; if through this, he draws closer to G-d, behold, he is already a different person, not the same one upon whom a decree of illness was decreed [and therefore the decree is no longer needed]....

Matanas Chelko: the matter still requires explanation for one who is sick in such a way that he is unable to pray for himself. Such as a person in the hospital unable to speak. How does the decree become annulled from him? But this also needs to be understood according to Rabeinu's foundation that a person changes himself. [Answer:] for example, if the sick man could give over to the public a lecture of Mussar from his hospital bed through a microphone, and his words would help the public improve their ways, and due to him, they pray better and change themselves as before.

This great merit is credited to the sick man. So too here, even if the sick man cannot speak, but since others pray for him, and through their prayers, they improve, this is a great merit to the sick man. Thus, automatically, it is found that such a decree cannot be decreed on a man with such [great] merits.

We must still clarify the following. According to this, let whoever needs a salvation or healing just study mussar and through this he will change himself. Why then does he need specifically prayer? But this is not difficult. For even though, certainly he should study mussar, nevertheless, prayer has special segulot (abilities) and wonders. This is the path our forefathers set and its matter and effect is lofty as Rabeinu wrote here "longing of the soul [to G-d]". Through it, a man draws closer to the blessed Creator and perfects himself in the trait of Bitachon (trust) "casting all of his needs on Him."

And since it is difficult for the mind to remember all of this, it was necessary for our sages to arrange a written order of the matters which most men need. This demonstrates to them their great need for G-d and their need to submit to Him on account of them. These are the matters of prayer which were ordered and arranged, so that the person can greet his Creator, and not be ashamed in approaching Him, and to see in the prayer matters which bring to humility and submission before G-d.

And since the thoughts of the heart change rapidly, and these thoughts do not hold firmly due to the swift arising of thoughts that flash through the mind, it is difficult for a person to arrange his prayer.

Pas Lechem: The mind does not have the power to hold onto one position and meditate on some thing and this is due to the great swiftness of thoughts and ideas which constantly pass through a man's heart one after the other.

Matanas Chelko: how much more so for our generation, where a man cannot concentrate his mind and thought on one matter for more than a minute and a half. Consider how if one wants to focus his thoughts on some difficulty in a sugya (talmudic topic) he is learning, and instead of looking at the Gemara or book, his eyes roam around the room. How much time can he concentrate his mind on the kushya (question) before outside thoughts enter his mind and distract him?

For this our Sages composed the prayer with fixed words, to place them on a man's tongue, because the thoughts of the mind go after and are drawn after the words one utters.

Therefore the prayer has fixed words and subject matters. For words need a subject matter (i.e. words need to express a subject matter, otherwise they are meaningless - PL). But a subject matter of thought does not need speech, if it is possible to arrange it in orderly fashion in the heart. For the subject matter is the essence of our devotion and the chief aim to which our attention should be directed.

Pas Lechem: through the words, it becomes easier for a man to have intent, since the words rouse the intent, and the intent follows them...and since our primary purpose for uttering the words is to arouse the heart, therefore we find that the heart is the main purpose.

You can see what the sages said regarding a time of difficulty: "a man who experienced a seminal emission should say the blessing in his mind and not utter the words, neither before (the shema) nor after it" (Berachos 20b), and they permitted one to pray a short version of the (amidah) prayer (under some circumstances). And if the uttering of words was the main purpose of the prayer, it would not have been permitted for us to reduce them under any circumstances.

Therefore, my brother, rectify the subjects of your prayer in your heart, so that it will be consistent with your words, and let your intent in both be only to G-d. Keep your body free from any movements and restrain your senses and thoughts from dealing with any worldly matter while you are praying.

Compare i.e. bring for yourself a proof and comparison of what you would do to your (human) king when you are engaged in thanking him, praising him, and lauding him for his good deeds, in spite of his ignorance of your thoughts. All the more so for the Creator who watches your external and internal being, who observes what is visible in your life and what is concealed.

It is a wonder (how one can imagine that he has fulfilled his duty of prayer by praying without intent - PL), since prayer is like a trust and deposit the Creator entrusted you with, since he gave over its matter in your hands and your domain. Nobody can watch over it except Him (unlike the other mitzvot where people can see and watch over and pressure their observance, but nobody can see prayer except G-d, therefore it is like a deposit He entrusted you with - PL)

Matanas Chelko: relative to other Mitvot, prayer is unique in that it is between oneself and G-d. For even in Mitvot between man and G-d, since they contain some form of physical action, he has "fear of flesh and blood". This is as Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakai blessed his disciples before his death and gave them an advice for fear of heaven (Berachot 28b) saying: " 'may it be that the fear of Heaven be upon you like the fear of flesh and blood'. His disciples replied: 'only that much [and no more]'? He answered: 'would that it were (halevai)!', know that when a man is about to sin, he first asks himself 'can any human see me?'" end quote.

For example, in the mitzva of Tefilin, if a flesh and blood king would decree to don Tefilin, there is no doubt that he would fear not fulfilling this decree. Likewise, regarding the fear of other people. If it became known to his peers that he does not put on Tefilin, he would certainly be embarrassed from this. On this it says: 'I hope no human will see me'.

All this is because it is something which depends on an act. But prayer is not like this. There is nobody who knows whether he has intent of heart or not. Therefore, regarding prayer, there is no "fear of flesh and blood", only "fear of Heaven". For a man can come to the synagogue and shake his body during prayer (pretending to be intently praying). Thus, prayer does not have any aspect of "fear of other people" so that a man will learn to fear Heaven through this. Furthermore, it is not shayich (possible to be) shelo lishma (not for G-d's sake) in prayer. Even though, it is possible for one to come to the synagogue shelo lishma and pretend he is praying. But for the actual prayer itself, if he has proper kavana (intent), it is all only lishma (for G-d's sake).

If you pray like the Creator commanded, you will have fulfilled your duty of faithfulness, and He will accept it from you. But if you are not faithful in it, in your heart and tongue, you will be considered among those who betray the trust G-d placed on them, and the verse says of them: "*for they are a very inverted generation (i.e. their hearts and intents are opposite of what comes out of their mouths - TL)*, sons in whom is no faith" (Devarim 32:20), while for those who are faithful the verse says: "*My eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with Me*" (Tehilim 101:6).

DUTIES OF THE LIMBS

If one engages in the duties of the limbs alone such as (dwelling in a) sukkah or (taking a) lulav, or other things we mentioned earlier (Sabbath, festivals, mezuzah, etc.), it is an obligation to precede the intent to G-d before doing it, so that the root of his act is to heed the commandment of the Creator, to elevate, to glorify, to thank Him, and to praise Him - for His great favors and great kindnesses on him.

Pas Lechem: The beginning is the root of every act, therefore the wise man said: "the beginning is half of the whole".

And so he will attain the ultimate purpose of the service, at its beginning, during its performance, and until its completion. That he will do them (1) due to reverence of G-d, (2) desire to fulfill His will, and (3) to keep away from what will bring the wrath of G-d on himself.

Marpe Lenefesh: i.e. that if he does not do it, there will be on him anger and punishment from the Creator. If at the beginning, middle, and completion of the act, there will be these three things... - then he will do it with passion and zeal until he completes the mitzvah wholly.

As David said: "*to do your will, O G-d, I desired*" (Tehilim 40:9), and one should imagine to scrutinize himself with the analogy I preceded at the beginning of this way regarding speaking with a (human) king, and that he should ever keep this on his mind - then he will find zeal in his limbs for the acts of service, with G-d's help, as we introduced from the words of David "*I considered my ways (i.e. my ways with people like myself, namely, the previous analogy, and through that... - PL)*, and turned my feet to Your testimonies; I made haste (behold - zealotry - PL), and delayed not, to observe Your commandments" (Tehilim 119:59).

THE TENTH:

(the watching of the Creator)

To make an accounting with oneself regarding the Creator's watching his outer and inner life. That G-d sees him, remembers all of his deeds and all of the thoughts that go through his mind, whether good or bad. And therefore, one should fear Him always, and make efforts to rectify one's public and private life to be in accord with G-d's will.

Marpe Lenefesh: To always remember that G-d watches him and knows what is visible in a man's life and what is in his heart, in his concealed and in his innermost being...as the Rambam ends off his book the "Guide for the Perplexed" (Chelek 3 ch.54) and the Shulchan Aruch starts off with it in the Ramah, on the verse: (Tehilim 16:8) "I have placed G-d before me always" - this is a great general principle..etc

Let one make the following analogy to himself: If a man was watching him and constantly observing his every movement, would he do something that would cause the man to be disgusted by him? And all the more so, if the man was a benefactor of him, and all the more so, if the man was his master, and all the more so if the one watching him was his Creator. How much greater is his duty to be ashamed (from transgressing His word - PL) and embarrassed (from being lazy in His service - PL) before Him, and to be careful to refrain from rebelling against Him, and to hurry to His service, and to try to obtain His favor and love.

Furthermore, it is known to us that we adorn ourselves with the best clothing we can when going out to greet our kings, high officials, or great men of our generation because they observe our exterior appearance, as written "*for one may not enter the king's gate dressed in sackcloth*" (Esther 4:2), and "*So Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they rushed him from the dungeon, and they shaved and changed his clothes, and he [then] came to Pharaoh*" (Gen.41:14). According to this, we are obligated to adorn ourselves in the service of G-d in our exterior and in our interior for G-d, because He observes us equally in both respects at all times, since if we believed in our minds that the (human) kings were able to look at our interior just like they can see our physical exterior, we would not delay to adorn our interior in a way that they would wish us to do.

You can observe that for the majority of men, the main reason they occupy themselves to study and teach the fields

of wisdom is only in order to become great through them in the eyes of the kings. And likewise for many portions of the laws/culture of the kingdom, for the people are commanded to obey the laws of their king (and they are afraid for their necks of transgressing his laws - TL).

Manoach Halevavos: Much of the laws and customs/culture are adopted by the masses due to their love of the king and fear of him, since most are commanded to follow the culture and religion that their king (society) follows.

Surely, regarding G-d, it is more fitting and more obligatory on us to adorn ourselves in His service in our inner thoughts, heart and limbs, since He watches them and contemplates them continuously and nothing can distract Him from some matter, as the verse says *"I am the L-ord who searches the heart; I test the reins"* (Yirmiya 17:10), and *"the eyes of the L-ord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good"* (Mishlei 15:3), and *"the eyes of the L-ord, that run to and fro throughout the land"* (Zecharya 4:10), and the verse says regarding the awe one should feel regarding the watching of the Creator: *"Be not rash with your mouth, and let not your heart be hasty to utter a word before G-d; for G-d is in heaven, and you are upon earth; therefore let your words be few"* (Koheles 5:1), and *"The L-ord looks down from heaven upon men"* (Tehilim 14:2).

Matanas Chelko: *"I am the L-ord who searches the heart.."* - the intent is not that G-d has the ability to search and examine or that He does this from time to time. Rather, *"I am the L-ord who searches the heart - always"*. Every second, he knows and examines what is in a man's heart.

"The L-ord looks down from heaven upon men" - in truth, this cheshbon (consideration) is the first Halacha in the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 1:1, Rama): *"I have placed G-d before me always"* (Tehilim 16:8) - this is a general principle of the Torah and of the virtues of the righteous who walk before G-d". end quote. This is a simple matter, but it is hidden from us. For when a man understands that the Holy One, blessed be He, is looking straight at him, at his deeds and in his heart, immediately, he transforms to a different person, and does only that which the Holy One, blessed be He, wants from him.

[the Rama continues there:] *"For the way in which a person sits, moves around, and carries out his daily activities while he is alone in his home is not the same way he would engage in these activities while standing before a great king. Furthermore, the way one speaks while amongst those in his home and the conversations he partakes with his relatives is not the same manner in which he would speak while in the presence of a mortal king. Surely when one considers in his mind that the mighty King, The Holy One blessed be His Name, where the whole world is filled with His glory, stands before him and sees his deeds... [immediately the fear and the proper awe of G-d will descend upon him and he will always be abashed before G-d...]"*

When this matter returns in the thoughts of the believer at all times, and the believer will make an accounting with himself on this always, then the Creator will be with him in his inner realm, he will see G-d with the eye of his intellect, and will fear Him always, and glorify Him, and reflect on His works (i.e. in nature. see gate 2 - PL), and examine His deeds in governing His creations, which testify to His greatness, exaltedness, wisdom, and power.

Pas Lechem: *"when this matter returns"* - he used the term "returns", since it is impossible to tell a person to think on this always without any interruption, since many thoughts must pass through one's mind such as Torah matters, prayer, business matters, etc. Rather, the intent is that one should put this to mind only from time to time, that this thought be with him leaving and returning always.

When one does this diligently, the Creator will grant him peace from his sadness and calm his heart from fear of Him.

Marpe Lenefesh: he will no longer be sad due to lack of money or other needs. And likewise, he will no longer fear coming to sin, since G-d will be with him...

Pas Lechem: If until now his service was in sadness...from now on, it will be with joy, and if until now he was always afraid of stumbling in the trap of sin, from now on he will be assured of not sinning again.

And the Creator will open for him the gates of His knowledge, and reveal to him secrets of His wisdom, and G-d will put His attention to guide and lead him, and He won't abandon him to himself and his (limited) ability, as the entire psalm 23 says: *"The L-ord is my shepherd; I shall not lack.."* (Tehilim 23:1), until the end.

Matanas Chelko: on this Rabeinu added more chidushim (novel teachings). Namely, his emotional state will change completely. He will feel that he is always walking with the Master of the world. I.e. not only will he think on matters of fear of G-d, but rather, the Creator will be with him in his inner being, and he will feel that he is with Him always. This is the meaning of "the qualities of the righteous who walk before G-d" which the Ramah (in Shulchan Aruch) referred to, that he walks always with the thought and feeling that the Holy One, blessed be He, is with him right now and that it is always so. Such a person lives in a different world, in the world with the Master of the world...

"He won't abandon him to himself and his (limited) ability" - the Holy One, blessed be He, will make him into almost a Malach (angel). He will conduct Himself with him outside the natural order (supernaturally)...

"as the entire Psalm 23..." - the level of king David was "though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me".

And also "Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me" - he was always with the Creator, and G-d conducted Himself with him always for the good. A person sees this with his own eyes.

Translator: - I have also found that studying nature with proper outlook is extremely beneficial, especially, today when the divine wisdom is being revealed to such a vast extent, it is hard to fail to see the awesome, bottomless divine wisdom.

And he will be on an exalted level, among the levels of the Chasidim (extremely pious), and a high level among the Tzadikim (righteous), and he will be able to see without his physical eyes, and hear without his physical ears, and speak without a tongue (he will be able to speak to others without a physical tongue - ML), and he will sense things without his physical senses, and be able to picture them without need for a [physical] comparison.

Tov Halevanon: All this refers to deep, Divine matters, close to the level of Ruach HaKodesh.

Marpe Lenefesh: he will see with his Ruach Hakodesh (holy spirit) things happening far away that a man is not capable of seeing with his physical eyes, and will see them with his mind's eye since he has purified his physicality to the extent that he fulfills the verse (Tehilim 16:8) "I have placed G-d before me always".

Matanas Chelko: he progresses further in the level of "Ein od Milvado" (there is nothing but G-d - Devarim 4:35) as the Nefesh Chaim explained from the Rambam's Moreh Nevuchim regarding the level of "Ein Od Milvado". How does one attain this level? He starts from the thought of "I have set G-d before me always", and afterwards becomes diligent in the level of Yirah (fear of G-d). For since, G-d sees everything, he must fear Him.

Afterwards, he must adorn himself and his mind since G-d observes him always. And since he understands that G-d looks at him every second without any interruption whatsoever, from now, behold, he walks always with the intent and thought that G-d is with him, and he already feels and recognizes the presence of the Creator of the universe, until he reaches the level of "Ein Od Milvado".

For, "I have placed G-d before me always" is a level every person can attain. In truth, every person feels thoughts of "I have placed.." during times in his life. When he contemplates deeper and diligently into this, he can attain the higher level of "Ein Od Milvado" until he no longer needs to exert and force himself to this. Rather, he has a true feeling that G-d is with him always. And therefore, no creature has any power to harm or help him at all. Rather, everything is from the Creator of the world. When a man adorns his thought and transforms to such a different person, the Holy One, blessed be He, conducts Himself with him in this way, until He does for him things which are supernatural.

He will not dislike any situation nor will he prefer another situation other than what the Creator chose for him.

Tov Halevanon: due to his strong trust in G-d, since everything G-d does is for the good...and he knows that whatever happens to him is a decree from G-d who knows what is good for him better than he does.

And he makes his will like G-d's will, and his love, what G-d loves. He will cherish what G-d cherishes (clings to G-d's traits, ex. merciful - TL), and what is disgusting to him is what is disgusting to G-d. Of like him, the wise man said: "Blessed is the man that hears me (the Torah), watching every day at my gates (this hints at one's constant accounting with himself - TL), waiting at the posts of my doors" (Mishlei 8:34), and "For whosoever finds me (the

THE ELEVENTH:

(regular accounting of one's deeds)

Matanas Chelko: this is much closer to the familiar explanation for "cheshbon hanefesh" (spiritual accounting) we are used to using. But this too, is only in order to activate in oneself the will and desire to the service of G-d with greater strength.

To make an accounting with oneself regarding one's days which have already passed whether he was engaged in the service of G-d or the service of his own yetzer (evil inclination, ex. selfish desires, wasting time). He should apply to himself the following illustration: Let him imagine that a king gave him money to spend for certain purposes, and he commanded him not to spend any of the money for anything else. The king informed him that at the end of the year, he would make an accounting with him and will not forgive him in the least of it. Is it not proper for the man to make an accounting with himself at the end of each month of that year to see how much of the money was spent and with what he had spent it (and if he sees that he already spent more than what is proper, he can rectify it in the remaining months - TL)? And likewise so that he will be careful with the remaining money and the remaining time before the time of accounting suddenly comes and he is ignorant of what he may claim and what may be claimed from him?

Pas Lechem - then he will not know what debts other people owe him and what debts he owes other people, like the common way of all business dealers, who are mingled and entangled with each other.

Alternatively, "what he may claim and what may be claimed from him" refers to between him and the king - *Tov Halevanon*.

Matanas Chelko: "so that he will be careful with the remaining money" - i.e. even if the yetzer hara (evil inclination) tricked him until today and he did not do the cheshbon (accounting). But from now on, he should begin to arrange this cheshbon. For on each and every day there is an accounting.

Similar to this illustration, my brother, you should check with yourself, if you can, each and every one of your days, and make an accounting with it concerning your service of G-d, which is a duty incumbent upon you. And if you have neglected doing this (daily accounting) in the days of your life that already passed, at least do the accounting with yourself for your remaining days. Do not continue neglecting due to your previous neglecting, nor continue overlooking due to previously overlooking it. For before G-d there is no neglect, nor overlooking nor forgetting.

Matanas Chelko: "do not continue..." - do not think "since I refrained from doing the cheshbon until now, I will refrain from it also in the future". This is foolishness. For even if he comes to the world of truth and he will be able to give an accounting for just half of his days, this is better than one who does not have in his hands anything whatsoever.

Tov Halevanon: i.e. do not continue neglecting in thinking that you can continue neglecting making your accounting with the Creator since you see that He did not punish you right away for the previous sin, as if your affairs are hidden from His eyes, and therefore you would like to continue your deeds. Likewise, do not think G-d overlooks, and that He already overlooked your previous sins and He will continue overlooking more.

It has been said: "Days are like scrolls, inscribe on them what you wish to be remembered by". And scripture says: "Be you not as the horse, nor as the mule, which have no understanding" (Tehilim 32:9). It was said of one who prolonged his time of neglect to make a personal accounting "also old age was cast into him, yet he knows not" (Hoshea 7:9).

Matanas Chelko: "days are like scrolls" - every day is a blank page in the book and you can write on it whatever you wish. It is like a diary. Do not write on the paper what you will in the future be ashamed of.

Translator: See Marpe Lenefesh commentary for a mystical explanation on this.

THE TWELFTH:

(the pursuit of physical)

To make an accounting with oneself at a time when one's heart is excited and diligent for worldly matters, applying himself fully with his utmost ingenuity and maximum ability, and to weigh this against one's laxness in matters of his final end, and his straying from the service of his G-d.

Then he will see and feel that his thoughts for matters of this world are the highest of his thoughts, and his aspiration for this world is the higher of his aspirations. For all the various types of possessions will never be enough for him in the least. On the contrary he is like a fire, the more wood is added, the more it increases flames, and all of his heart and intent will be drawn to it (this world - *PL*), day and night. He will not consider anyone a close friend except one who helps him in them, and no one a friend except he who leads him to them. His eye will be to the times it is good to buy, and the times it is good to sell. And he will observe matters of the selling rates for the whole world. He investigates where they are cheap and where they are expensive, and when they go up and when they go down. He will not refrain from travelling to faraway places. Neither heat, nor cold, nor stormy sea, nor long desert roads - all this out of his hope to reach the end of his desire but there is no end to it.

It is possible that all of his efforts will be for nothing, and he will not attain anything except a long suffering, exertion, and toil. And even if he attains some of what he hoped for, perhaps he will not get any benefit from it but instead will only guard it, manage it, and protect it from potential damages, until it will go to he who G-d decreed it should go to, whether while he is still alive, as written: *"at mid life he will leave it"* (Yirmiya 17:11) or after his death, as written: *"they will abandon their fortunes to others"* (Tehilim 49:11).

The wise man already warned us against zeal and exertion for amassing wealth, as written: *"Labor not to be rich: cease from your own wisdom"* (Mishlei 23:4), and he spoke of the calamity found in it, in saying *"Will you set your eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven"* (Mishlei 23:5), and the other wise man (King David) taught us and permitted us to make efforts in earning money for our basic needs only, in saying: *"If you eat the toil of your hands, you are praiseworthy, and it is good for you"* (Tehilim 128:2).

And likewise, the pious man asked G-d to give him his livelihood only in the basic amount, and to distance him from wealth which leads to the luxuries, and from poverty which leads to loss of morals and Torah, in saying: *"Two things have I asked of you; Do not give me poverty nor wealth, provide me with my food portion"* (Mishlei 30:7), and the rest of the matter. Like him, we find our forefather, Yaakov, who asked G-d only for his basic needs, in saying: *"If G-d will be with me, and He will guard me on this way, upon which I am going, and He will give me bread to eat and a garment to wear"* (Gen.28:20).

Wake up my brother! Look at the deficiency of that which you hurry and pursue - to maintain your body in its natural state. Your association with it will only be for a short time (relative to the long afterlife - *TL*), it will not be spared from pain (the body will never be free of pain - *TL*, see Gate #10 which says the body always has a desire or worry, etc) and it will not be saved from troubles while you are attached to it. If it eats too much, it will become sick. If it eats too little, it will become weak. If you clothe it more than it needs, it will become uncomfortable, and if you leave it naked, it will be pained. Furthermore, its health and sickness, its life and death are not according to your will and not in your control, rather everything is directed by your Creator.

Where is the superiority of your soul over your body? And the exaltedness of its world over the body's world, its rising above (after death) while the body descends below, its spirituality versus the body's physicality, its unchanging nature versus the body's changing nature, its eternal existence versus the body's deteriorating and disappearing existence, its simple form versus the body's composite elements, its pure essence versus the body's baseness, its wisdom and understanding versus the body's beastliness, its tendency for the virtuous traits versus the body's tendency for the disgraceful traits.

If you conduct yourself in this kind of zeal and effort for the rectification of your body, in spite of its lowliness and baseness, and despite your weak capacity to save it from damage or to benefit it, how much more is it your duty to conduct yourself with this zeal and effort for the rectification of your soul, which is so important and which you will be left with (forever), and which you were commanded to guide its matter, and to look into things which will rectify it in acquiring wisdom and understanding, as written: *"Buy the truth, and sell it not"* (Mishlei 23:23), and *"Get wisdom, get understanding"* (Mishlei 4:5), and *"How much better is it to get wisdom than gold! and to choose understanding rather than silver!"* (Mishlei 16:16), and *"So shall the knowledge of wisdom be unto your soul"* (Mishlei 24:14), and *"If you are wise, you shall be wise for yourself"* (Mishlei 9:12), which means that the spiritual acquisitions are yours. No one can ever steal them from you, unlike what occurs by physical acquisitions.

See, my brother, what is between the two things, and what is between the two matters. Turn away from the luxuries of your world, and exert yourself in what you need for your final end. Do not say: "I will share the fate of the fool" (who does not make this accounting). Because more will be claimed from you according to your higher level of understanding, and your punishment will be greater. The accounting demanded of you for your neglect will be stricter. Do not rely on a claim which you will have no grounds for, and do not rest assured on a plea which will be used against you and not for you.

The discussion to complete this subject is too lengthy, let it be enough for you what I have aroused you on it, and taught you according to your understanding. Contemplate my words, and understand my allusions. Investigate them in the book of the Torah of G-d, and the words of our sages. You will see their explanation from the verses, from logic, and from Tradition (oral law), with G-d's help.

THE THIRTEENTH:

(not to waste time)

To make an accounting with oneself regarding that one's wisdom is greater than his deeds, that one's recognition (of his duties) exceeds his efforts in the service of the Creator, and that one's capabilities exceeds what he is actually paying back to the Creator, [in return] for His many favors to him.

Matanas Chelko: our sages said: "he whose deeds is greater than his wisdom, his wisdom endures. But he whose wisdom is greater than his deeds, his wisdom will not endure" (Avot 3:9). One must do a cheshbon on whether his deeds are in line with his wisdom or not. This is a cheshbon which rouses him and obligates him to do this...

It is known of the Netziv that when he published his book he said over that as a child, he did not succeed in his Torah studies. His parents wanted him to leave yeshiva and study a trade. He cried on this and from then on began to learn with great diligence until he eventually became a great Torah scholar and merited to publish his commentary on the Sheiltot and other books. He said that without this, when he reached the Heavenly Beit Din, they would have claimed from him: "where is the commentary on the Sheiltot? Where is the HaEmek Davar commentary on the Torah (which he wrote)?"

Behold, Teshuva (repentance) helps on everything, even on Bitul Torah (wasting time that could have been used Torah study). But it does not help for what he needed to do and learn. Even if he did Teshuva on Bitul Torah, he would still not have published through this the commentary on the Sheiltot... My master and teacher, Rabbi Elyah Lopian z"l would say even though it says "let your garments be always white" (Kohelet 9:8), and by going through Gehinom, one's garments become white from the filth of sin, but nevertheless, the missing buttons are not placed on his garment. Thus, a man is roused through this cheshbon.

Let one imagine the analogy of a slave whose master gave him land to sow, and gave him the seeds according to what he needs. The slave planted part of the seeds and used the rest for his own use. When the master checked the land, he found part of it was not sown. When he asked the slave on this, the slave admitted his lacking in this matter, and the master made a calculation based on what the slave claimed he sowed of the seeds in the land, and checked the land to see how much was sowed. He then investigated how much produce grew from the land (to see how much produce each seed makes), and then claimed from the slave the rest of the seeds by charging him to pay what the land would have produced from those seeds - his pain was great and his trouble was multiplied.

Tov Halevanon: Based on the produce that grew from the field, the master calculated how much produce would have grown had the slave planted all the seeds and claimed the whole amount from him. According to this, the more the ground was fertile and blessed, the more he will be claimed for the loss of potential produce. So too by a man, the more his ability and recognition is greater, the more he will be claimed for loss in the service of G-d.

Matanas Chelko: the master did two accountings with the slave. One, that which he used the seeds for his own use instead of the master's. Two, what would have grown if he had done what was incumbent on him to do.

Likewise, my brother, it is proper for you to make an accounting with yourself for what the Creator has graced you with to understand Him and His Torah, and how much strength and ability He has given you to pay back what you owe Him. Then check with yourself what you have actually done and imagine that you are in judgment for all of this, and being taken into account for it (by G-d - *PL*), and all the more so while receiving prolonged and constant benefits

It is proper for you to endeavor with all of your strength, and exert yourself to the best of your ability to pay Him back, and to bring your deeds equal to the level of your wisdom (that your deeds correspond to the wisdom you are capable of - TL), and your exertion to the level of your recognition. And let all your extra toil (beyond what you need to toil for your worldly needs such as earning a basic livelihood) be spent doing according to your level of wisdom. Do not get involved in the luxuries of this world, lest you will weaken from paying your Torah debts. G-d has given a person strength according to what he needs for his Torah and his worldly (needs). One who spends any of it for the luxuries, which he can do without, will be lacking (in strength) that he will need for the necessary things.

Do not absolve yourself with "if only" or "maybe", saying "if only I would reach such and such a level of education or money, then, after that I would pay everything that I am obligated of the service of the Creator", or other similar answers, because they are false claims. One who relies on them will veer away and one who leans on them will fall. This is the greatest mistake of the "deposit takers", which I mentioned to you in (chapter 6 of) the Gate of Trust.

Be careful lest you take it for yourself as an excuse, because then you will be just like any other sinner who claims this, and you already know that this claim does not save a person from punishment, as Shlomo said regarding a thief: *"Men do not despise a thief, if he steals to satisfy his soul when he is starving, but if he be found out, he shall pay sevenfold"* (Mishlei 6:30). Even though his dire situation is clear, and necessity brought him to steal the money of others, even so, he will not be spared from punishment and the fine of Kefel (double payment). How much more so for other sins.

Tov Halevanon: If a man commits some sin, certainly no claim or excuse will absolve him from the punishment, like the thief which he brought as an illustration, that even though desperation pushed him to steal, nevertheless he is obligated to pay Kefel (double), and if he cannot pay, he will be sold (by the Beit Din as a slave for 6 years to repay) for his theft.

Pas Lechem: even though one should not degrade him so much for this ugly deed, since he has a valid, obligatory excuse, namely, to "feed his soul when he is starving", even so, if he is caught, he will pay sevenfold - behold we see from here that an excuse does not save a person from punishment.

Matanas Chelko: so too for all matters, one cannot claim: "if I were not a baal taava (person of strong desires), I would not have sinned". Or "if this trial were not sent to me, I would not have stumbled". Because it is for this that G-d gave you the desires and the trial - in order that you strengthen yourself and stand up to the test!

Instead, make this procrastination time into a bounty (use it properly), while you can still pay back your daily obligations to the Creator, and do not procrastinate doing today's service until tomorrow, lest it will be too much of a burden for you to pay back, assuming that you reach tomorrow and are among its (living) men. Worse than this, if your end comes, your excuse will be cornered, and your claim will be halted, because this world is like a market fair which crowds together and then disperses. He who did business and profited is joyful, but he who lost money regrets. Therefore, the wise man said: *"And remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of calamity come..."* (Koheles 12:1).

THE FOURTEENTH:

(the spider web)

To make an accounting with oneself when feeling love, closeness, or devotion towards someone who one thinks loves him, as written: *"As in water, face reflects face, so the heart of man to another man"* (Mishlei 27:19).

Tov Halevanon: Just like in water, when a person looks on it with a friendly face, it will reflect to him a friendly face. So too, for the heart of a man, if he is in good will towards his fellow, then his fellow's heart will also be in good will with him.

Matanas Chelko: this is human nature.. when a person feels love from his fellow, he too will love him back in return. This is so even if he does not recognize the person. If the person merely shows him love and grace, he too will feel love back towards him... one needs to do this cheshbon when he feels this love [from another person] as Rabeinu wrote "when feeling love..", how G-d bestows so much love to him and gives him so much... and to say to himself "how much more so should I feel love towards G-d on all the good He did and does with me, which are far more than what this man gave to me and loves me". Thus through feeling love towards this man, he can reach love of G-d...

I saw a beautiful point in the book "Ohr Yahel" (end of vol.3): " 'you shall love the L-ord your G-d' (Devarim 6:5) - how much should a Jew rouse himself to love his G-d with all his heart and soul when he sees the wondrous love of G-d towards him. This itself that the Holy One, blessed be He, requests love of Him and commands him "love Me" - is it conceivable that a powerful and awesome king would seek the love of a peasant sheep herder? But everything will make sense when we realize that the peasant is the king's son, who wound up in a lost and faraway village. The prince's blood and soul is from the royal lineage. Therefore, his father falls on his neck and asks of him - "love me!". All this is but an analogy and metaphor so that we may understand the greatness and preciousness of Yisrael, the connection between them and their Maker - "you are sons to the L-ord your G-d"! (Devarim 14:1).

And all the more so, if this person is an important official or a ruler, and still more, when one sees signs from the person such as drawing him close, promising (to help him), or benefiting him and doing kindness to him without needing anything from him in return - then nothing will distract him from remembering his love for the person. He will not hold back any of his ability for the person but rather will use his full capacity to fulfill his friend's command and do his service, and in his gratitude, he will volunteer of himself, of his money, and of his sons to pay the person back.

Since one does this for a weak creation like ourselves, how much more so are we obligated many times more to our Creator, who told us through His prophet that He loves us, as written *"Not because you are more numerous than any people did the L-ord desire in you and choose you, etc."* (Devarim 7:7). And in addition to telling us of His love we saw signs of His love for us, and His help to us, both in the present and in the past, and His drawing us to Him and promising to us for every generation, as written: *"And yet for all that, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away, neither will I abhor them, to destroy them utterly, and to break my covenant with them; for I am the L-ord their G-d"* (Vayikra 26:44), and *"For we are slaves, and in our servitude our G-d has not forsaken us"* (Ezra 9:9).

Matanas Chelko: there are times when a person feels this love from G-d, such as when he merits to make a "simcha" (joyous occasion) in his family. At such times, he should not merely say "Baruch Ha-shem that I merited this". But rather, he should strive to feel that G-d is giving him a kiss, and thus, he should also kiss G-d back with feelings of love... every feeling of love is a fulfillment of the mitzva to love G-d, even if it is only for one second.

More on this matter: it is evident that for a person who was the friend of our fathers and our forefathers, we are obligated to recall this love by honoring him and treating him with love, as the wise man said: *"your own friend, and your father's friend, forsake not"* (Mishlei 27:10). And the Creator reminds us of the bris (covenant) of our forefathers and His providence over us due to them, and in order to fulfill His covenant with them, as written: *"But because of the L-ord's love for you, and because He keeps the oath He swore to your forefathers"* (Devarim 7:8), and many more like this.

If we do not place our trust in Him, and do not rely on His kindness nor move ourselves to love Him and cling to His service, nor pour our prayers to Him - how crude is our nature (for not having any stirring in our hearts to love Him - PL), how stiff-necked (for not clinging to His service - PL) and of little faith our we (for not praying to Him - PL), and how strongly we resist going after the truth!

Matanas Chelko: these are words of mussar (rebuke) that a person speaks to himself. How crude, weak, etc. if one does not reach love of G-d after G-d shows him so much love...

We do not recall His love for our fathers and forefathers nor do we pay back the Creator's love and providence for us, nor for His promises and for drawing us close to Him do we do His service, nor for His great goodness and kindness to us do we listen, nor on account of His creating us and benevolent guiding of us do we feel abashed (before Him in prayer - PL).

Wake up my brother from this slumber. Roll away from your heart the curtain your yetzer (evil inclination) has spread over you, until he separated you from the light of your understanding, like a spider who weaves a web around the window of a house, and when it persists in this, it will thicken the web and block the light, until the light of the sun is completely prevented from penetrating inside the house. In the beginning, when first spun, the web is extremely weak and thin, but as the matter (of weaving) persists more and more, it will strengthen and thicken, eventually completely preventing the light of the sun's rays from penetrating it and entering the house.

Similarly is the work of the yetzer in your heart. At the beginning of the matter, it will be extremely weak, and will not

prevent you from seeing the truths. If you sense it at that time, and drive it out of your heart, it will be an easy matter. But, if you treat the matter lightly and neglect it, the work of the evil inclination will strengthen and he will prevent the light of your intellect from reaching you, and then it will be difficult to remove its (evil) effects from your mind.

i.e. even what you know intellectually to be true will be blocked and prevented from reaching your heart, and therefore won't affect your actions. Like Eisav who knew much of the truth intellectually in his head but could not bring the knowledge to heart due to blockage between the mind and the heart - Lev Eliyahu.

Therefore hurry to save your soul, and plea to G-d to help you drive him off of yourself. Work hard and exert yourself, then you will be illuminated with the light of wisdom, and you will perceive the truth of things with your mind's eye.

Tov Halevanon: When you strengthen yourself, and toil hard on this - then you will be illuminated with the light of wisdom.

The early ones already compared the acts of the yetzer on a man with different analogies based on verses, in saying: "And there came a *wayfarer* unto the rich man, and he refused to take of his own flock and of his own herd, to prepare for the *guest* that had come to him; but took the poor man's lamb, and prepared it for the *man* that came to him" (Shmuel II 12:4), at first he was termed "wayfarer" and then "guest", and after that progressed to "man".

Similarly, it is written: "Happy is the man that *walked* not in the counsel of the wicked, nor *stood* in the way of sinners, nor *sat* in the seat of the mockers" (Tehilim 1:1), at first "went", then "stood", then "sat", and many others similar.

Commune with your soul, my brother, on this and on similar ideas to it, and force it to do that which will be its salvation, because the wise man already said of those who neglect the duty of reflection: "*Evil men understand not justice*" (Mishlei 28:5).

Tov Halevanon: Men who are used to iniquity and [bad] toil - it becomes their nature, until they do not understand the truth, similar to the analogy of the spider web the author mentioned.

THE FIFTEENTH:

(preparing for the journey)

To make an accounting with oneself when preparing provisions before needing them, without knowing whether he will live until the time that he will be able to benefit from them. Likewise, when one needs to go on a long journey, he will prepare matters of his journey many days in advance: he researches which merchandise he will be able to sell at the place he is going, and then prepares what he will ride on, and what he can of provisions and company (he tries join a good company of travellers - *PL*), and which stations he will stop along the way, and similar to this, despite not knowing what the Creator decreed for him on all of this nor how long he will live.

In this way, my brother, we are obligated to be prepared for the appointed time, and to prepare for the faraway journey to the other world, which we have no escape from, and no refuge from (rather, everyone ends up there - *MC*), and to think on the provisions (i.e. what provisions are important there - *MC*), and with what we will greet our Creator on the great day of accounting which scriptures says of it: "*For, behold, the day is coming, it burns as a furnace; and all the proud, and all that work wickedness, shall be stubble; and the day that comes shall set them ablaze, says the L-ord of Hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch*" (Malachi 3:19).

How can we ignore this when the journey is constant, (i.e. we can see every day people dying and making the journey - *TL*, another explanation: "every day we are getting closer to it, and losing vitality due to aging" - *PL*), and the displacing is forever, and the road is long, and the resting place is faraway. (see Marpe Lenefesh commentary for a mystical explanation) Why do we not put to heart to remember our end, and do not think of the provisions we should make for our final abode? We occupy ourselves with a fleeting world, and abandon the everlasting one. We occupy ourselves with the ailing of our bodies, and forget our spiritual ailments, we occupy ourselves with the service of our evil inclination, and abandon the service of our Creator, we serve our base desires and do not serve our G-d.

Pas Lechem: We busy ourselves with saving our bodies from ailments and maladies while forgetting to heal the ailments of our souls. The author specified three points (1) "spiritual ailments" corresponding to faith and character traits, (2) "our evil inclination" corresponding to the lust for bad things, through the enticements of the yetzer, and (3) afterwards said that even without the empowering of the yetzer, human nature tends towards the "base desires"...and on the base desires that a person has pleasure in and rejoices in, he later

Alas to this confusion! How so universal it is (in that it applies to virtually every person - TL)! And to this drunkenness, how strong it is!, as the verse says: "*for their eyes are shrouded, that they cannot see, and their hearts, that they cannot understand*" (Yeshaya 44:18), and "*ye that are drunken, but not with wine, that stagger, but not with strong drink*" (Yeshaya 29:9).

| *Matanas Chelko*: this cheshbon is so evident. But when one learns it, it does not make an impression. Only through contemplation and study with emotion (hitpaalut) time after time, then after 20 times, with proper nigun (melody) in order that the words enter the heart - then fear will seize his heart properly in a good and beneficial manner.

THE SIXTEENTH:

(reflecting when seeing sudden death)

To make an accounting with oneself on the lengthy amount of time he survived in this world, and to put to heart the approaching of his end, and the coming of death on him, at a time when he sees that other living things, whether of the speaking (human beings) or otherwise (the animals), die suddenly without foreknowledge, nor even any hint, and (to put to heart) that there is no time that a person can be assured that it is not his time. It does not refrain from coming any month of the months of the year, nor any day of the days of the month, nor any hour of the hours of the day. It does not come only in old age, sparing the middle aged, or the young men, the young girls, the children or babies, rather it befalls all the living at all times, in every stage, and in every place.

| *Matanas Chelko*: one must think: "perhaps this will happen also to himself". For a man is not assured of life. This is not like that person which the Zohar speaks of (Parsha Nasso) saying: "a man walks in this world and thinks it is his and he will remain in it for all generations". On this it is written: "better to go to a funeral than a party.. and the living will put to heart" (Kohelet 7:2). When one goes to a levaya (funeral procession) to accompany the dead he should contemplate: "this dead person also thought he would live forever, and it did not turn out like this. If so, I am also not assured". The Chafetz Chaim would say: "why does this not make such a strong impression on a person?" He explained that it is because a person is so very strongly used to being alive that he thinks certainly there is a "club of dead people" and he is not part of that club. But in truth, this is blindness from the power of the evil inclination.

A person should imagine to himself as if a king had placed a deposit in his charge, and did not specify the time when to return it. And the king commanded him to be ready for his return at all times, so that he will not go to another city and will be available at the time the king will claim it from him. Is it conceivable for him to dwell outside the city of the king while the deposit is still in his hands?

| *Marpe Lenefesh*: The analogy is that a man must have intent to cling to the Creator, and that if he momentarily forgets Him, it is as if he is outside of G-d's place.

Some make the following analogy: One should imagine himself as if he has a debt to pay with no fixed payment date, expecting every moment to be called for payment. He will not be at peace until he pays it back.

| *Pas Lechem*: The analogy is that a man must fulfill his debts in the service of G-d while he is still alive, and since his lifespan is unknown, it is like a debt without a fixed time of repayment.

When a man considers his long stay in the world, and remembers that many of his friends journeyed to the other world before himself, at a time when they had strong expectations to be in the company of the world (they did not put death before their eyes like himself, but instead their intent was to build and invest in matters of this world - TL), and one does not see any advantage in himself (whether in age or build - PL) that would obligate his living longer than them - his hope in this world will diminish, and he will consider his end. He will think on his provisions for the time of his journey, and will commune with himself before the day of accounting (death - TL).

One of the wise men said: "one who precedes death before him rectified himself".

| *Pas Lechem*: He who pictures in his imagination and thinks always on death - we are certain that this man rectified himself.

Tov Halevanon: One who precedes before himself the matter of death, and places it before his eyes always, rectifies himself

Manoach Halevavos: One who sees his fellows die before him and contemplates on the matter of death, he will rectify himself.

And the wise man said: *"the heart of the wise is in the house of mourning"* (Koheles 7:4), and *"It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting; for that is the end of all men, and the living will lay it to heart"* (Koheles 7:2), the intent of "the living" is he whose heart is living, namely, one who understands and realizes. It is also written: *"Man is like vanity: his days are as a shadow that passes away"* (Tehilim 144:4).

Matanas Chelko: this cheshbon and the previous one are very powerful. The matter is that a man needs to contemplate his own death. Especially, when he hears of one who died or when he goes to a house of mourning. People don't want to think these thoughts because it brings to sadness and they don't want to feel sad thinking of their own funeral. But the idea is only to contemplate that a man does not live forever.

For example, if a person stands on his field and is lazy in working it, and his friend sees him and tells him "work your land while the sun still shines. In a few hours, the sun will set and you will not be able to work". Will the owner of the field reply: "don't remind me of the night. Right now the sun is shining!" Certainly, not. Rather, he understands that his friend's intent is that there is a limit and end to the time he can work. So too, regarding thinking on the day of death. One must do [good] while he still has the ability, while he is still alive, and he must prepare provisions for the journey.

The Yetzer Hara (evil inclination) always tries to distance these thoughts from people. Rabbi Itzele would say (Shaarei Ohr 70): "when a young man dies, people ask how he died and what killed him. Why do they want to know how he died? What difference does it make? Rather, they want to attribute the matter to some cause of nature in order to rest assured that this will not be their fate. For example, if he hears a man died suddenly from a heart-attack. For psychological reasons, a person tells himself: "thank G-d, my heart is healthy", i.e. that heart attack will not happen to me. Or when he hears someone died from a certain illness, he tells himself: "thank G-d, I don't have that illness". Thus, he calms himself like this. But the truth is not so. Rather, when a man dies, all those who hear must tell themselves that they too will die in the end." This is the cheshbon here.

THE SEVENTEENTH: (benefits of solitude)

At a time when one sees himself tending towards association with people and enjoying their company, he should reflect on the benefits of solitude, and separation from people, and with the evil resulting from being in the company of fools without necessity.

Marpe Lenefesh: When a person feels himself desiring and longing to sit with people and enjoying their company, and he thinks it is a good thing for him and an enjoyment, let him reflect in his mind on how many benefits there are in solitude and separation from people and how many bad things come about from being in the company of fools. And the author will now list them, one by one.

Matanas Chelko: - it is natural for people to love to be with others and friends. But one must contemplate that there are a few detriments in joining the company of people of the foolish type, which are most people, for they do not live with cheshbon.

However, certainly there are times when one is forced to associate with others, even fools. Namely, when there is a necessity and need for this. But otherwise, there is no need for this and one should separate and be in solitude.

The evil of their company:

(1) Excessive talk (i.e. one of the evils is that one habituates himself to talk useless speech - TL), "so and so said", "it was said on so and so", long winded confusion without purpose, and the wise man said: *"In the multitude of words there lacks not sin, but he that refrains his lips is wise"* (Mishlei 10:19) (since useless speech leads to slander,

frivolity, disputes and of course - wasting the precious time - *PL,ML*). One of the wise would say: "safeguard the superfluous of your words, and muzzle the superfluous (movement) of your tongue".

(2) Speaking of people, recalling their bad deeds, and mentioning their faults. The verse says of this matter: "*You sit and speak against your brother; you slander your own mother's son*" (Tehilim 50:20).

(3) Falsehood and lies. On this the verse says: "*wickedness in its midst*" (Tehilim 55:12), and "*I hearkened and heard, but they spoke not aright*" (Yirmiya 8:6).

Manoach Halevavos: it is the normal way for groups of people who are sitting idly to discuss falsehood and lies. Likewise, it progresses to all of the following.

(4) False oaths and useless oaths. The Creator said of them: "*for the L-ord will not exonerate one who takes His Name in vain*" (Shemos 20:7), and one of the pious said to his disciples: "the Torah permitted us to make an oath in the Name of the Creator for truth, but I advise you not to swear neither to what is true nor to what is false, rather say only 'yes' or 'no'".

(5) Arrogance and frivolity, and to put down some of those present, and to laugh with them, and I already designated a gate in this book on the subject of distancing oneself from this matter, namely, the Gate of Submission.

(6) Absence of fear of G-d in one's heart at a time when one mingles with people and converses with them (since one is not free to strive in fear of G-d - *TL*), along with little chance of being spared their damaging his business affairs and talking of him.

Pas Lechem: since one may divulge his private dealings with them and afterwards they will be able to use the information to damage him financially or talk to others of his faults which he revealed to them.

Marpe Lenefesh: All these groups he mentioned, they are those "four groups who do not greet the Shechina in the next world" (Sotah 42). They are the groups of flatterers, liars, jesters, and speakers of lashon hara (slander). And all of them are dependent on speech, and are called "evil". And it is written: "You, G-d, do not desire wickedness, evil will not dwell with You" (Tehilim 5:5). And here is an excerpt from the book Reishis Chachma (Shaar Hakedusha perek 12): "One who fixes his place in the street corners for useless conversation and idle talk, is called a jester (letz). Since he was capable of learning Torah at that time but refrains from doing so. He is called a jester (letz), since he is like a man who the king told: "count gold coins for one hour, and all that you count will be yours", but he sits idly.

This man jests from the king's gold coins and they are lowly in his eyes. Is there frivolity greater than this? So too, one who is idle from learning Torah after he understood the great reward for toiling in Torah - he is a real (mamash) jester... and even those who learn Torah must be careful from idle speech, since if words of frivolity enter his heart, correspondingly, words of Torah will spill out of his heart, etc.". He ends off: "whoever wants to distance from sins should distance himself from the company of the wicked", see there for more.

(7) Flattery and love of acquiring a name for oneself, to become proud over them, and to try to be important in their eyes by demonstrating what he knows of the various branches of wisdom and deeds, whether or not he actually knows them.

Pas Lechem: Through his enjoyment of their company, he will crave to acquire a name among them, and this will bring him to try to appear pleasing to them in his deeds.

Matanas Chelko: because he wants to find favor in the eyes of others and to be loved by them, he flatters them and tells them that they are not doing evil. And he also becomes arrogant saying that he knows things which he does not really know and becomes a liar. All this results from joining the company of other people.

(8) The obligation to command others on the good and warn them against evil, which the Creator commanded us in saying: "*you shall surely rebuke your neighbor*" (Vayikra 19:17).

We are obligated to warn against evil in three ways: One, forcibly hitting someone by hand (physically), as Pinchas did in the case of Zimri and Cozby. Two, to verbally protest, as Moshe did in saying to the wicked man: "*Why strike you your fellow?*" (Shemos 2:13). Three, in one's heart, as David said: "*I hated the congregation of the evildoers, and*

If one can protest forcibly (and it will help) but refrains, this will be considered a lacking on his part. If it is difficult for him to protest forcibly, let him protest with words. If he cannot protest with words, it is his duty to do so in his heart.

Therefore, we are obligated to rebuke the wicked, in any event, since the common people are not free from shortcomings.

Pas Lechem: If you ask, on the contrary, this very reason obligates us to join their company and to put an eye on their deeds in order to know their faults and rebuke them, which would be impossible if one kept a distance from them and remained ignorant of their deeds, because then one would be unable to fulfill the mitzva of rebuke. On this he said, this is incorrect since either way - if they will heed his words and he can effectively rebuke them, even if he does not know the details of their misdeeds he can speak general public words of mussar, thereby fulfilling the mitzva of rebuke. And this is what he meant by "rebuke the wicked in any event", i.e. even without knowing anything. And don't say "how can I rebuke without knowing anything? Maybe it is for nothing?" On this he added that rebuking the masses is needed at all times since "the common people are not free from shortcomings".

But when one is alone, undoubtedly, he is absolved of the mitzva of commanding others to good and warning them from evil. And it is difficult to fulfill G-d's command, and to fully discharge one's obligation in this mitzva (unlike rebuking the public which is easy - PL), as the sages said: "it is a wonder if there is someone in this generation who accepts rebuke" (Arachin 16b), and others said: "it is a wonder if there is someone in this generation who knows how to give rebuke" (ibid).

(9) Loss of clarity of thought and intellectual understanding, and strengthening of the yetzer (evil inclination) while in their company and camaraderie, and learning from their bad traits, as the wise man said: "*a companion of fools shall be corrupted*" (Mishlei 13:20), and therefore our sages said: "*conversing with children and sitting in the assembly houses of the unlearned (amei haaretz) takes a man out of the World (To Come)*" (Avot 3:14).

Matanas Chelko: "strengthening of the yetzer" - in the end they will influence him to do evil things.

"*sitting in the assembly houses of the unlearned*" - for they annul him from fear of Heaven and bring him to many sins as before.

The general principle: Most sins cannot be completed without two people, such as illicit relations, corrupt business practice, false oaths, false testimony, all sins which depend on speech. All these cannot be completed without the company of others and by mixing with them.

But solitude and separating from people is a means to be saved from all of the sins we mentioned, and it is one of the strongest things which bring one to good traits, and it was already said that the pillar of a pure heart is love of solitude and choosing to be alone.

Therefore, my brother, be careful lest the yetzer deceive you and embellish in your eyes the company and mingling with people, and lest he entice you to yearn for them at a time when you feel lonely in solitude.

Afterwards (after you listen to my words and learn to love solitude - PL), be careful lest the musings of your heart deceive you, telling you that the company of sages who know G-d and His Torah, and the mixing with great men is detrimental to the matter of solitude, and takes away from the benefits of being alone. Rather, in truth, this is the complete separation and the perfect solitude. Furthermore, to frequent men who excel in good deeds and in Torah has much greater benefits over the benefits of solitude.

Manoach Halevavos: and likewise the Talmud states (taanis 7a): "a sword (death) on those who learn Torah in solitude".

And the wise man said: "*He that walks with the wise shall become wise*" (Mishlei 13:20), and "*hearken your ear, and hear the words of the wise*" (Mishlei 22:17), and it was said of one who refrained from being with pious men:: "*A scorner loves not one that reproves him: neither will he go to the wise*" (Mishlei 15:12). And the sages, of blessed memory, said:

"The gathering together of the wicked is bad for them and bad for the world, but for the righteous, it is good for them and good for the world. The dispersing of the wicked is beneficial for them and beneficial to the world, but for the righteous, it is bad for them and bad for the world" (Sanhedrin 71b). And they said: "Let your house be a meetingplace for the sages and sit amidst the dust of their feet and drink in thirstily their words" (Avos 1:4), and "Then they that feared the L-ord spoke one with another; and the L-ord hearkened, and heard" (Malachi 3:16).

THE EIGHTEENTH:

(the elevation of man)

To make an accounting with oneself when one feels himself becoming arrogant and proud, and (as a result) overly ambitious in this world - to then contemplate one's significance in the creation (before being elevated by G-d), among the lower and the celestial creations. Then one will understand his puniness and lowliness among the works of the Creator, as I clarified on this matter in the sixth gate of this book.

Marpe Lenefesh: In chapter 5 of the gate of submission and in introduction to Gate #3 he explains that man is "lacking and weaker than the animals in three things..." (and much less than the angels with respect to wisdom.. - MC) see there.

Matanas Chelko: when a man sees his matters of this world succeeding, he feels in himself greatness and pride, and he wants to succeed more and more. All this comes from the Yetzer Hara (evil inclination) who entices him to think thus. Instead of thinking of his puniness and lowliness on account of G-d's great kindness towards him, he feels grandeur and that he deserved everything. At that time, a man needs to "contemplate one's significance..."

Afterwards, reflect on the Creator's granting greatness to man, that he made him ruler over the animals, plants, and natural resources, as written "*You (G-d) give man dominion over the work of Your hands; You have placed everything beneath his feet*" (Tehilim 8:7), and He made known to man the statutes of His Torah, and established him (to understand) what will further his welfare of the upper and lower wisdoms of this world.

Matanas Chelko: "*the Creator's granting greatness to man*" - i.e. the qualities of man. For in certain matters he is greater even than the angels since he has free will, and this is solely due to G-d's granting this to him. He did not earn this of himself.

And G-d elevated man further by permitting and desiring his praise and gratitude, and to [allow man to] call to Him during difficulties, and to answer his prayers in difficult times, and chose in him (i.e. G-d chose man to minister unto Him - *PL*), and appointed him over His creations (to rule over them - *PL*), and transmitted to man secrets of His might (the keys to wisdom - *PL*), and made miracles through His treasured ones (the prophets of Israel - *PL*), besides what would be lengthy to recall of the hidden and revealed favors, whether physical or spiritual, general and specific, of His kindness and goodness towards us.

Matanas Chelko: the main principle (Yesod) is: the more kindness a man receives, the more he needs to humble himself. There are some people that even though they don't say "my power and the strength of my hands have produced this good for me" (Devarim 8:17), but nevertheless, when G-d sends them good, they are prone to think they deserve this due to their qualities. This cheshbon that one must do is to think that even though I do not deserve anything, and all I have, and that I am a human being, and even a Jew, and that I understand of G-d's holy Torah - all this is only due to the kindness of G-d and His goodness towards me. With this thought, he can humble himself before G-d, blessed be He.

In Tehilim (8:7): "You give him dominion over the work of Your hands; You have placed everything beneath his feet". But earlier there it says: "what is man that You should remember him, and the son of man that You should be mindful of him?" (Tehilim 8:5) - he deserves nothing, and nevertheless, "You give him dominion.." For man is the master of the creation...

Matanas Chelko: In the morning blessings, we say "who made for me all my needs" when putting on shoes. What is the connection between "all my needs" and shoes? The Vilna Gaon explains (Imrei Noam) that shoes demonstrate man's dominion over the world... a man slaughter's an animal, eats of its meat and makes shoes with its skin - this is ultimate dominion and this is what the verse hints to us: "You give him dominion over the work of Your hands; You have placed everything *beneath his feet*" (Tehilim 8:7)... Thus the way to be saved from pride in this is by thanking G-d for this, out of understanding and realizing that if G-d did not do this, he would not have had any dominion whatsoever.

See, my brother, how little is your worth and how unimportant is your matter, and yet, how much the Creator has elevated you, even though He has no need for you and (just the opposite, see) your great need for His providence. Don't waste this glorious crown He has crowned you with, and the exalted status He has elevated you to in this world, and the great reward He has hidden away for you in the next world when you cling to His service and to thanking Him.

Let not the Creator's elevating you, of what I recalled to you, of his kindnesses and favors, be reason to become proud in your status, and haughty in your spirit, and to glorify yourself due to the kindness of the Creator towards you by thinking that you deserve it, and that you are worthy of it, and that it is befitting you.

Rather, cling to the traits of submission, humility, and lowliness which is fitting for you to cling to when you admit to the truth of your worth among the creations of the Creator, as a weak, unimportant, and petty slave is obligated to do when his master elevates him and places him inside his inner circle of treasured ones out of pure benevolent kindness - he is obligated to humble himself and to see himself as he was in his original status, before his master's kindness towards him, and not to become proud before his master, nor haughty due to reaching greatness and importance, and not to request his own needs to his master in a habitual way (to think: since he gave me until now, he is obligated to continue doing so always - ML) . Rather, he will leave his matters to his master and trust in him and in his kindness.

It was said of one of the tzadikim (righteous) who would say after his prayer: "My G-d, I was not persuaded by my intellect to stand before You due to ignorance of my puny worth and little understanding of Your greatness, that You are high and exalted and I am insignificant, disgraceful, and petty to ask of You and to say before You praises and exaltations, or to sanctify Your holy Name using the words of the holy angels on high. Rather, I was persuaded to do this in that You have elevated me by Your commanding me to plea before You, and have given me permission to praise Your great Name according to my understanding of Your glory, so that I can demonstrate that I am serving You and that I humble myself before You.

You know what is beneficial for me, and how to guide me. I mentioned to You my needs, not in order to arouse You on them but rather so that I feel my great need for You and my trust in You. If, in my ignorance, I ask of You something, which is not beneficial for me, may Your exalted choice override my choice. I have already submitted all of my matters to Your decrees, which endure, and to Your supernal guidance, as David, peace be unto him, said: "O L-ord, my heart was not haughty, nor were my eyes raised on high, and I did not pursue matters greater and more wondrous than I" (Tehilim 131:1).

THE NINETEENTH:

(disasters of the world)

To make an accounting with oneself in that the Creator has spared him from the disasters of the world, its sufferings, the various diseases which strike people, the calamities which befall them such as imprisonment, hunger, thirst, cold, burning, lethal poisons, dangerous animals, leprosy, insanity, paralysis, or the like - all the while knowing that they are fitting for him and he deserves them due to his previous sins and iniquities before the Creator, and the greatness of what occurred in the past, of his rebelling against G-d, and disrespecting His words, and leaving his duty of thanking and praising Him, and turning away from His service, and neglecting repentance and confession before G-d for his prolonged rebellion despite G-d's continuous favors and constant good towards him.

Pas Lechem: "they are fitting for him" refers to refraining from doing good, that just like he strays from His service, so too it is fitting that G-d removes His providence and protection from him, and he winds up prone and liable to all troubles and damages, like a target to an arrow. And for not refraining from evil and actually sinning, he wrote "and he deserves them", that he deserves all these things due to his sins, unlike for refraining from good which the term "deserve" is not correct since punishment is not meted out for positive commandments (Menachos 41a).

Pas Lechem: "due to his previous sins and iniquities": - Due to being comfortable, with a full stomach, and unrestrained in his deeds, it is fitting that he be captured and "imprisoned" in "hunger and thirst" (measure for measure). And for rebelling against his Creator and kindling His anger, it is fitting for him "burning". And since his words and mitzvot were cold and indifferent, he deserves "cold". And since he did not exert his mouth and throat with thanks and praises, it is fitting for him to chew and eat poisons. And for removing the yoke of His service, it is proper that the animals' natural fear of him be removed and the "dangerous animals" rule over him. Likewise leprosy comes from the rebellion of the order of health, and for neglecting to repent and confess and not reflecting with himself and regretting, it is proper "insanity", and that his limbs stop serving

him (loss of senses) as he brought earlier in way #6 the analogy of crossing the minister over the river³. You the reader, put to heart to analyze each corresponding to the other and you will understand his words.

Matanas Chelko: "leaving his duty of thanking and praising Him" - even for neglecting to thank and praise G-d for all the good, he deserves punishment.

Sometimes bad things happen to families and they come to ask why this happened and what should they do. He who has fear of G-d should certainly do a spiritual accounting on what he needs to do then. But in truth, one does not need to do big things. Even through a small thing he can be saved from the trouble.

During the time I was with Rabbi Shach zt'l, when many people came to him seeking his valuable advice on what they need to do to be saved from their troubles or in order to bring blessing to their lives. To all of them, he said that they should bless the Grace after Meals from a *Siddur* (prayer book) or *Birkon* (prayer paper) and to say it with kavana (intent). He said that most troubles come because people don't give thanks to G-d as they are obligated to do. The [only] blessing of thanks which is Biblical is the "Grace after Meals" (Birkat Hamazon). Therefore, through thanking and praising G-d on all the good He gives - who "gives sustenance to the whole world in His goodness", one gives strength to G-d, so to speak, to bestow good to a man and save him from his troubles.

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

THE TWENTIETH:

(acquiring and spending money)

To make an accounting with oneself if he has wealth, in the manners he acquired it, and the ways he spends it, and whether he is fulfilling his obligations to G-d with it (such as tefilin, tzitzit - *PL*), and paying his debts to man (such as charities, favors - *PL*) according to how much he has, and not to think that the money will be for him alone (that the Creator gave him this money only for himself and his own enjoyment - *TL*, alternatively, not to think that he cannot do without it - *MH*). Rather, to know that it is by him like a deposit - it will remain by him for as long as the Creator desires that it be in his hand, and afterwards He will transfer it to someone else when He wishes.

When the rich man contemplates this, he will not fear the damages time brings on him. If the money stays by him, he will thank the Creator and praise him. If it is lost from him, he will bear His judgment and accept His decree. It will be easier for him to use it and spend it in the service of G-d, to do good with it, to return deposits people entrusted him with, and return money he took unjustly, and not to covet another man's wealth nor disrespect a poor man due to his poverty. And it will be a strong cause to help him acquire good traits and to refrain from the bad traits, as written: *"Honor the L-ord from your wealth, and from the first-fruits of all your produce"* (Mishlei 3:9), and *"He that has pity on the poor lends to the L-ord; and that which he has given will He pay him back"* (Mishlei 19:17).

THE TWENTY FIRST:

(on Divine help)

Matanas Chelko: now Rabeinu brings a great foundation (yesod) in the service of G-d, and just how far man's free will goes. He writes an awesome principle (chidush).

Accounting with oneself on the extent of his capability in the service of G-d and to train oneself in it, and be diligent in it, and to hasten and be zealous in doing it until it becomes habit to him, and afterwards to endeavor to do more than what was within one's ability, and to long for it in his heart, and desire it in his thoughts, and to plea to G-d with a faithful and genuine heart and mind to help him and strengthen him for what is above his current ability in

Matanas Chelko: "on the extent of his capability.." - this includes all his powers: His spiritual powers such as to study [Torah] according to his strength and ability, and to delve deeply into the Torah according to his intelligence and ability to grasp, and to designate time to study. Likewise, his physical powers: to do acts of kindness and to exert himself in the general service of G-d according to the bodily powers he has been blessed with and to push himself according to his powers.

"to hasten and be zealous in doing it.." - to push himself and strive to concentrate all his powers and even more than he thinks he can do until he becomes so used to it that it becomes second nature to him.

"afterwards to endeavor to do more.." - this seems impossible. For according to above, this person is already doing all that is in his ability to do and he has also habituated himself in this. How then can he do more? But the chidush (idea) in this is that in truth, the Creator can grace him with additional understanding in Torah and increase his intellectual powers and understanding. He can also increase his bodily powers so that he can learn more and likewise send him his livelihood abundantly so that he does not need to exert himself so much to attain his sustenance and through this he will be more free to learn and to do acts of kindness with others. But Rabeinu explains when a person can hope to this and how it is done.

"to plea to G-d with a faithful and genuine heart" - i.e. that he has will and desire to increase his ability, and that he prays to G-d to help him and strengthen him in order that he will truly be able to increase in the service of his Creator. There is a condition in the matter. Namely, that he wants and prays for this out of a faithful heart. Not so that others will honor him through this. But solely in order to truly draw close to G-d, blessed be He, through the increase in his service.

When one perseveres more and more in this, the Creator will fulfill his request, and open for him the gates of His understanding, and strengthen his intellect and limbs, level by level, to fulfill the commandments on a higher level, above and beyond his abilities, as written: *"I am the L-ord your G-d, Who teaches you for your benefit, Who leads you by the way you should go"* (Yeshaya 48:17).

Matanas Chelko: "level by level.." - one must go in stages and not try to jump to a lofty level in one step. Let us give a small example from which we can apply to other matters. One who feels he must sleep ten hours at night. There is no question that through this he is limited in the amount of hours he can learn and serve his Creator. Therefore, he can hope that G-d will grant him the ability to learn and serve more, and to pray on this. Then "the Creator will fulfill his request", and he will find that he can guard his health through sleeping only eight hours a day. Afterwards, it is possible that he will desire to increase more in the service of G-d, and the Creator will grant him his request so that even 6 hours of sleep will be enough for him. With this example, he will be able to ascend the ladder, level after level properly.

It is like this for all matters and all powers of man. For example, one who learns a Tosfot and strains himself to understand the depth of matter, and nevertheless, he is unable to understand the matter properly. He can pray to G-d to "open for him the gates of His understanding". And even though he does not fulfill the mitzva of talmud Torah through his prayer and request, nevertheless, through his desire and prayer, he can come to a greater grasp and understanding in Torah and to ascend in the levels of his service. In any case, it seems from Rabeinu's words that through this way it is possible to increase, whether in one's bodily powers or mental and intellectual powers.

This is not just for talmud Torah. It is also so for fulfilling the mitzvot. For example, one who gives tzedaka according to his ability and he wants to give more than his ability. He can desire and pray that G-d will bestow to him alot in order that he can distribute more to tzedaka. But one must remember the condition of Rabeinu. One should not hope to this unless he seeks it in a "lishma" (for G-d, i.e. a mitzvah) manner, "with a faithful and genuine heart".

"I am the L-ord your G-d, Who teaches you for your benefit..." - Rabeinu writes that in truth we find this also in other matters. Not just Torah and mitzvot. The explanation is that because everything comes only from the Creator, blessed be He. And just like he granted him those powers he already has, so too, He can grant him more, whether in understanding or in deeds.

The analogy of this regarding learning the skills of a trade and learning mathematics : When one who learns a trade, in the beginning, he will do only parts of it according to his understanding and less than his ability. When his

understanding of the trade strengthens and he persists in it, the Creator will enlighten him to the general principles of the trade and its fundamentals and he will be able to deduce new branches which were not taught to him by other people.

Similarly in learning mathematics: The master of geometry cannot teach his student the theoretical lessons in abstract concepts. Rather, he will first teach him concrete geometric drawings as Euclides organized them in his book of mathematics. When the student understands well, and desires to grasp its branches with diligence and interest, the Creator will help enlighten him on the subject, and establish his general understanding, and then he will be able to bring forth from this wondrous forms and fine works which appear almost divinely inspired.

So too in other fields of wisdom: The student will find when he exerts his mind in the wisdom, that he will feel a higher spiritual power which no human being has the ability to give him, on this the sages said: "the wise man is greater than the prophet" (Bava Basra 12a), and Elihu said: *"But it is a spirit in man, and the breath of the Almighty, that gives them understanding"* (Iyov 32:8).

Matanas Chelko: man can build giant skyscrapers, but he cannot build thoughts. For they come only from G-d. When we examine this more we will see that it is so. For what is thought? Behold, even in Torah matters, when a man has a difficulty in a sugya (Talmudic topic) and he wants to delve deeply in it in order to resolve it, what does he do? He sits and ponders (meharher). What is pondering? He thinks and ponders on the question he has until the answer or idea "falls" in his head. This is from G-d. So too, for all matters. In truth, it should not be possible at all to think "my strength and the might of my hands.." (Devarim 8:17) on any matter, though people still think so, because "behold, the thought fell in my head and not in the head of another person". Understand this.

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

And because this is beyond a man's normal power (that the commandments of the heart are beyond the normal powers of a man - PL), and it is not possible for him until he separates from most of his animalistic desires, and forces his base nature, and takes control of all his movements, [therefore] the Creator has made him serve with his body and limbs with what he is capable of doing, until it will be easy for him to fulfill them.

Then, when the believer engages in them with his heart and mind, and exerts himself to the best of his ability, G-d will open for him the gates of spiritual qualities, and he will attain with them what is beyond his ability, and he will serve G-d with his body and soul, with his outer and inner being, as David said: *"my heart and my flesh cry out for the living G-d"* (Tehilim 84:3).

Matanas Chelko: i.e. a man does not have the power to change his heart. Only through his flesh, namely, by performing the mitzvot through his limbs, G-d will grant him fear in his heart. This is the explanation of the verse brought earlier *"And now, O Israel, what does the L-ord, your G-d, ask of you? Only to fear the L-ord, your G-d.."* (Devarim 10:12). Even though, fear in the heart is not in man's hands. But the explanation is: do the acts of mitzvot, and through this, I, G-d, will implant fear in your heart. This is what Rabeinu wrote earlier, that man needs to do what is incumbent on himself, and afterwards, G-d will grant him what is beyond his ability.

Hence, according to this, whoever is more meticulous in the mitzvot receives more fear of Heaven. It is not like people think, that through fear, a person is more meticulous in them. Rather, the opposite, as before, because the fear is also from Heaven. And even though our sages said: "everything is in the hands of Heaven except for the fear of Heaven" (Berachot 33b), this means, that a man needs to have a will for [attaining] fear of Heaven. Only the will is in his ability. And when he has the will to [attain] fear, he will do what is incumbent on him to do in order to receive the fear, namely, the mitzvot.

However, since even doing the mitzvot is against the will and nature of man, therefore, a man needs to study mussar in order to come to be meticulous in the mitzvot. The Chazon Ish writes (Emuna U'Bitachon ch.4 ot.8-9) that meticulousness in mitzvot and observing the laws in the Shulchan Aruch brings a man to fear [of G-d] and to rectifying his character traits, see there. But one needs to study mussar in order to come to this.

This was already compared to a man who plants trees and digs in their roots. He cleans the soil from rocks, thorns, and weeds, waters it when needed, fertilizes it, and afterwards he hopes that G-d will cause fruits to grow. But if he neglects working the land and supervising its needs, it is not proper for the Creator to give him fruits from them.

Matanas Chelko: in the order of nature itself, G-d demonstrates the order of this unfolding. For a man needs to do only the preparations and works, and afterwards, the matter is not in his hands, and he does not know if the soil will produce fruit, or what their quality and quantity will be. This is already only in G-d's hands.

Likewise for one who strives to do actions for the service (of G-d), if he exerts himself with diligence and zeal to do what is in his power to do - G-d will help him to accomplish what is beyond his ability, namely, the divine fruit and the glorious good from G-d on His treasured ones and His beloved ones in this world, as our sages said: "whoever fulfills the Torah in poverty will fulfill it in wealth" (Avot 4:9), and the wise man said: "*For to a man who is good in His sight, He has given wisdom and knowledge and joy*" (Kohelet 2:26).

Our sages said (Talmud): "Torah brings to action, action brings to watchfulness, watchfulness brings to zeal, zeal brings to abstinence, abstinence brings to cleanliness, cleanliness brings to purity, purity brings to piety, and piety is greater than all of them, as written *'then You spoke in prophecy to Your pious ones'* (Tehilim 89:20)".

But if one neglects from doing what is within his ability, and is lax in doing what is within his power, the help and assistance from G-d will distance from him, as written: "*G-d is far from the wicked*" (Mishlei 15:29), and "*your sins were separating between you and your G-d*" (Yeshaya 59:2).

Matanas Chelko: "*your sins were separating between you and your G-d*" - this is a great principle in the service of G-d - he who does what is in his ability, G-d will grant him more. But when he does not do what is incumbent on him, G-d will take away from him what he has. Likewise the Rambam writes in Hilchot Talmud Torah 3:13, see there and in Hilchot Teshuva 9:1.

THE TWENTY SECOND:

(to love for others what you would love for yourself)

To make an accounting with oneself regarding his joining with people for furthering the general welfare, such as plowing or harvesting, buying and selling, and other societal matters which people help each other in - that he loves for them what he would love would happen to himself, and that he hates for them what he would hate would happen to himself, and that he has compassion for them, and saves them, according to his ability, from what would damage them, as written: "*love your fellow as you love yourself*" (Vayikra 19:18).

Pas Lechem: To consider and see to it, that one loves and is joyous with what would bring them good in these matters. That one yearns that they will attain good in these things, just like one would love and wish and yearn that one attains these good things for himself.

Let one apply in this the following analogy: A group of people travel to a distant land on a difficult journey. They need to stop in several stops along the way, and they have many animals loaded with heavy loads, and the men are few, each one has many animals he must unload and reload frequently. If they will help each other in loading and unloading, and their desire is for the peace of all and to lighten each others' burden, and that they equally share the load of helping each other - they will reach the best results (their conduct is the best possible - *PL*). But if their opinions differ and they do not agree to one plan, and each one exerts to further only his own interests - most will become exhausted.

In this way, my brother, the world is burdensome on its inhabitants, and their work and exertion is many times more difficult. For each one wants his portion to be for himself alone and that he has more than his allotted portion (more than what he needs).

And because they desired more than their proper portion, and seek from it even what does not belong to them, therefore the world withholds from them their portion in it, and does not produce for any of them even their portion in it. Therefore, they are not content with it, and there is not even one who does not complain (for failing to attain superfluous things - *PL*) and weep over it, and because they seek the superfluous in food, they were prevented even from the basic necessities except through tremendous toil and great exertion.

If, however, their basic needs were enough for them, and their exertion was equal and for the benefit of all, and that they were equal in their interests, they would succeed in their world and attain even more of their desire in it. But not only do they not help each other in their worldly interests, but they weaken each other, and each one prevents his fellow and weakens his strength, until not one of them reaches his desire and attains his lusts.

Therefore, my brother, exert yourself, to acquire faithful and pure friends to be your helpers in your Torah and worldly matters (that their love to help you be without personal interests - *PL*) . (How is this done?) When your heart is whole with them, and your heart is pure towards them, and that they are precious to you like yourself (since "just like water reflects a face so too does the heart of a man reflect another" Mishlei 27:19 - *TL*), if you find among them some worthy of this.

Do not reveal your private matters except only to a very select few among them, as Ben Sira said: "let many be your friends, but reveal your secrets to only one in a thousand" (Ben Sira 6:6)

Pas Lechem: strive not to anger any person, so that many will be your friends, but nevertheless, do not reveal your secrets except to one in a thousand which you have tested and verified that he is a faithful friend.

And the wise man said: "*Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart: so does the sweetness of a man's friend by hearty counsel*" (Mishlei 27:9).

Matanas Chelko: after Rabeinu taught us that a man needs to acquire many friends, we may mistakenly think that one must be equal with everyone, and everything one has, he must give and share with others. This is not so. In truth, this was the view of the Communists. In Pirkei Avot (5:10) "one who says what's mine is yours and what's your is mine is an ignoramus". He is not a wicked person but an ignoramus. This is the opposite of the Torah view. The Communist view is that there is no ownership and no possessions to individuals. Rather, everything belongs equally to the community. However, in the Torah we find concepts of personal property, that a man is indeed the owner of his property. Rabbi Yerucham Levovitz of Mir clarifies as follows (Daat Chachma U'Mussar Vol.1 pg.175):

"The depth of the matter of properties and ownership, is that there are things which are "mine", and this is the matter of 'the world was founded on kindness' (Tehilim 89:3). But if a man does not have any ownership in things which belong to him, it is impossible for him to do kindness with others. Then the man no longer has any individuality and he loses his identity. This is the mistake of the Communist view. All the individuality and identity of a man is lost through this type of life". end quote. see there. This we can see even today. The Russian children who grew up in the times when the communists ruled, are not able to smile and laugh. A man's possessions builds him. Not because of what he possesses, but because he is able to give and do kindness to others. Without this, he is not a man.

THE TWENTY THIRD: (seeing G-d in nature)

To investigate all that exists in the universe, from the smallest creations to the largest, and the superior qualities human beings have in the world, and the levels of the creations below and above, and the arrangement of the heavenly spheres, the movement of the sun, the moon, the stars, those stationary and those which move, the falling of the rain, the blowing of the wind, the emergence of a baby from the womb, and other wonders of the Creator, which are more wondrous, more subtle, more apparent (yet) more mysterious which teach on His perfect wisdom and power, and His good guidance, and all encompassing grace, His mercy, and His abundant providence over His creations.

Matanas Chelko: Rabeinu mentioned a few examples from the whole world, in the heavens and earth, of the things that we call "nature". In truth, they are wonders of the Creator. Behold, if a man contemplates even a single drop of rain, he can see how wondrous it is... contemplating the wisdom in nature brings a man to be in wonder at the wisdom of the Creator and also to understand His beneficence...

Do not be deceived due to seeing them so frequently, and being used to them for so long, that you abandon being in wonder of them, and abandon contemplating them, and that it is inevitable that your previous knowledge of them cause you to make light of them due to habitually seeing them and observing them since your childhood.

In this way, we find most of the common people and many of the important men on this matter - that they are in wonder when seeing something they are not used to seeing such as a solar or lunar eclipse, thunder and lightning, comets, earthquakes, hurricanes, or other similar phenomena, but they are not in wonder of the movement of the spheres and their orbits, such as the sun, moon, and stars, the sunrise and sunset, the rain, blowing of the wind, or the like of the things that exist with them, and that they see constantly. Similarly, they are in wonder when seeing the sea, its waves and storms, and the creatures in it, yet they don't wonder at the flow of rivers, drawing of underground springs, and other things like this, which are continuous (around them) day and night.

Therefore, it is proper for you, my brother, to investigate all of what the Creator created, whether you are used to it or not, whether you have already seen it or not. Let not your foolishness entice you, that after you were foolish in your childhood and did not contemplate these matters when you first saw them, that you also do not contemplate them now in your adulthood and time of strong recognition, clear heart, and mature understanding. Rather, look at them and contemplate them, as if you never saw them, and imagine to yourself that you were blind before you contemplated them and afterwards your sight was restored and you could see them and contemplate them.

See my brother, that the fool is like a blind man, and when he becomes intelligent, he will be similar to a blind man whose eyes were healed and can now see, as the verse says on Adam and Eve: *"the eyes of both of them became opened"* (Bereishis 3:7), though we know that they could see before this.

Pas Lechem: Do not think that I was advising you to imagine something false, because in truth it is indeed so, that the fool is like a blind man.

Matanas Chelko: without contemplation, a man is literally blind to these things. Only when he begins to contemplate, it is as if his eyes were opened to see for the first time. For in truth, it is indeed the first time he opened his eyes to see.

"the eyes of both of them became opened" - this is as before, that even though Adam and Eve were not blind. But nevertheless, since they were used to their situation of being naked, they did not contemplate this. But after, they did contemplate, it was considered as if they literally opened their eyes. Thus, it is clear from the verse of the Torah, that when a person grasps a new knowledge, it is considered as if he was blind before this and was now granted the sense of sight. Rabeinu learns from this verse, that without thought and contemplation, one is considered a blind man.

Do not hide yourself from contemplating them, and from investigating all of them - then you will see the truth of the matters, and will recognize some of the wonders of the Creator, which you have long been ignorant of and blind in, as one of the wise men said: *"the hearts of the wise have eyes, they can see what the ignorant cannot see"*, as the verse says: *"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).

Pas Lechem: Not only should one examine the wonders of the Creator which appear infrequently, but also one should examine and contemplate that which a man sees all the time, from the smallest creations to the biggest, and from all of them, he will be able to perceive the wisdom, compassion, and governance of the Creator, which no words can convey. Through this, a man can habituate himself and to fulfill the verse (Tehilim 16:8) *"I have set G-d always before me"*, since *"how great are your deeds, O G-d, You have made them all with wisdom"* (Tehilim 104:24)...

THE TWENTY FOURTH: (child's eyes)

That you make an accounting with yourself and claim from yourself on all matters which have been established in you regarding knowledge of G-d and His Torah, and the words of the ancients, and the metaphors of the wise, and the contents of prayers, which you started learning in your childhood and youth. For the picture of a complex matter by one whose understanding is weak is not like the picture for one whose understanding is strong, and the more a man increases understanding, the more he will increase clarity.

Therefore do not be content with what has been formed in your mind in the beginning of your learning of the difficult matters, and the deep reasons. Rather, it is proper for you to start at the age of mature intellect and understanding to examine the book of G-d and the book of the prophets, like someone who never learned one letter of them.

Habituate yourself to expound and clarify them, and to contemplate their words and structure, and what you can of their interpretation, and what is to be understood literally and what is not, and what is visible and what is concealed, and what is possible to compare to other areas and what is not.

Matanas Chelko: here Rabeinu writes a great principle: if a man does not go back and contemplate and study anew what he already learned in his youth - he will remain with the same childish and weak understanding as he had in his youth...

Similarly do for the prayers and praises, study their words and their intended message, so that when you speak them before your G-d, you will understand the words you are uttering, and what your heart seeks in the matter. Do not conduct yourself in this like the custom of the days of youth, that you pronounce whatever words follow (without understanding the words), and in whatever way you follow (without proper pronunciation, as the children pray - *ML*), without understanding the matter, and we have already dealt sufficiently with this matter (in #9 and #18).

Similarly do for the words of the sages and the words of the oral tradition, that you contemplate them and judge them favorably (for what appears strange to you, do not lay the error on them, G-d forbid, but rather consider that their understanding was greater than yours - *PL*). Do not be satisfied with the clarity you had when you first learned them, rather claim from yourself to be like one who starts learning it. What you understand, recall it and work it through (even something which appears correct without a doubt, recall it to work it through further, so that maybe you will grasp more on the truth of it - *TL*).

What you are now in doubt about its explanation (even after the re-examination), and which you were not in doubt in your youth, investigate after it from the wise men of your generation, then you will see of the secrets of the Torah and the secrets of the prophets and of the sages which was impossible for you to grasp from the learning of your teachers at the beginning of your studies.

Let not arrogance deceive you, to think that your perception did not increase from what it was in your youth, and that what passed into your mind then will not change and become strange in your mind now, because this is an enticement of the yetzer (evil inclination) on you, to weaken your resolve to examine and investigate the truth of the matters, and to imagine to your eyes that you are a completely wise man and lack nothing of what you need, as the wise man said: *"The lazy man is wiser in his own eyes than seven men that can answer reasonably"* (Mishlei 26:16).

Tov Halevanon: One who is lazy from in-depth investigation is wiser in his eyes than multitudes who investigate and back up their words with truth and reason.

Matanas Chelko: - a man refrains himself from reviewing and studying all these things. And even though certainly the primary cause is laziness, just like for all matters which are "sit and do not do" (shev v'al taase) but Rabeinu wrote an additional reason deep in man's soul: *"let not arrogance deceive you..."* for if a man attains a new understanding or deepens more, he will need to admit the truth, that before this, he was not so wise, and the arrogance prevents him from saying and thinking so.

And: *"Have you seen a man wise in his own eyes? there is more hope for a fool than of him"* (Mishlei 26:12), and *"the wise man's eyes are on his head but the fool walks in darkness"* (Koheles 2:14), which means that he looks at the beginning of his matters, and what passed over him of the matters of his Torah and worldly matters, and examines them, and understands the good and the bad of what has happened to him, and strengthens the good and repents from the bad.

But the fool ignores all of this, as one who walks in the darkness of night on a long road. He does not look at what has passed, since if he turns his head what he sees will not be clear to him, rather all of his attention is only on what is in front of him, on this it says: *"but the fool walks in darkness"* (ibid), and *"Then I saw that wisdom excels folly, as far as light excels darkness"* (Koheles 2:13).

Tov Halevanon: The fool's aim is only to traverse the road and he is not interested in looking behind him.

Matanas Chelko: *"the wise man's eyes are on his head"* - Rabeinu gave us a novel insight (chidush) in the explanation of this verse. For generally, we explain it in the manner of "who is wise? he who sees what will be born" (Avot 2:9). Namely, that already in the beginning of the matter, he foresees and understands the end of it (the future consequences). But Rabeinu explains "the wise man's eyes are on his head" to mean "on the beginning", i.e. the wise man always goes back to the beginning of the matters, to see what there is to learn and delve deeper. He learns from experience with what happened to him and to others. Through this, he

strengthens and adds in the good and turns away from evil. Therefore, in all matters of Torah study, the wise man is always prepared to go back and review his lesson, perhaps he will grasp matters and points that he did not discover previously.

"but the fool walks in darkness" - the fool conducts himself in the opposite manner. He does not go back to the beginning of the matter. Therefore, he does not learn from the past. Due to this, it is considered he is walking in darkness. The fool continues with his ideas and knowledge which he has acquired, without going back and looking whether his ideas and views are right and correct, or whether he needs to understand the matters anew in a different way, or in a deeper manner, in order to understand them fully. This is the difference between the wise man and the fool.

THE TWENTY FIFTH:

(fire and water)

To make an accounting with oneself for being sunk in love of this world and strengthening its lusts over the love of Olam Haba (the next world), and to make efforts to remove the love of this world from one's heart, and strengthen the love of Olam Haba over it, by contemplating what will be one's end from both worlds and what will be one's final condition from both abodes, and to try to remove the love of this world from one's heart and to maintain the love of Olam Haba in it always.

Matanas Chelko: logically, we should love Olam Haba more than this world, since it is known to us that it is more essential than this world. But behold, we can see that it is not so. For the yetzer hara intensifies our lusts and love of this world, and we don't have so much love of Olam Haba. Therefore Rabeinu writes to us an advice: "to try to remove the love of this world from one's heart and to maintain the love of Olam Haba in it always".

This requires contemplation without which it is impossible to attain anything. The only advice for this is what our sages have advised us: "look at 3 things and you will not come to sin: know from where you came, - from a putrid drop; and where you are going - to a place of dirt, rot, and maggots; and before whom you are destined to give a judgment and accounting, before the supreme King of kings, the Holy One, blessed be He" (Avot 3:1) end quote.

Rabeinu's words here revolve more on looking "where you are going..". For Olam Haba is only an abstract concept to us. We do not have any picture or photo of it, as the prophet said (Isaiah 64:3) "no eye has ever seen..." And even after the metaphors of our sages to describe to us that it is an eternal world or the like, nevertheless, the love of this world with all its bodily lusts nevertheless still overpowers all our grasp which the words of our sages convey.

Therefore, Rabeinu writes that one must first distance love of this world by looking at its end. For in the end, everything goes to "a place of dirt, worms, and maggots". And even this needs the power of mental imagery - what is "dirt, worms, and maggots"? Behold, when we see a dead animal or bird lying on the road, exuding a rotting stench with many creatures crawling all over it - at that time one needs to contemplate that this is "a place of dirt, worms, and maggots" which our sages depicted to us.

When a man contemplates this, he will find that all benefits of this world are "pleasures of an hour" (taanuge shaah). For example, one who eats something sweet, he enjoys it for a few minutes and afterwards the pleasure passes. If a person were to tell his friend that this world is so good and wonderful, for we can suck on candies and sweets, there is no doubt that he would be considered a lunatic! Every intelligent person knows and understands that for the pleasure of a second, it is not proper to call the place where the pleasure is experienced a "good and wonderful place".

So too for all pleasures of this world, such as a nice car or a luxurious vacation, or anything else which causes the non-Jews to love this world, and which they enjoy and desire so much - behold in the end of the matter, the pleasure and enjoyment ends and afterwards nothing whatsoever is left.

Therefore, our sages said one must look at this world in its entirety and to appreciate what are the important things in it. One who contemplates this and looks from the present to the past on matters of this world, will see that nothing tangible remains in his hand from all his matters. But when he merits and comes to Olam Haba, the world which endures forever and ever - and he will look back on this world and the time he was there, all his lifetime will seem like a minuscule point of time relative to the eternal days of Olam Haba, and in

the end of the matter, what resulted in those pleasures of this world was nothing but dirt, worms, and 40 maggots.

We must emphasize again that without contemplation, it is impossible to uproot love of this world from one's heart and to love Olam Haba. During the study of mussar, one needs to use the power of mental imagery. Due to the many sins in our times, this is difficult for us. Not only because of laziness (even though it is indeed one of the reasons), but because today we have vivid photos of everything in the world. Therefore we think only on what is possible to see with an actual picture and photo. In previous times, when they did not have pictures and photos of every thing, they needed to close their eyes and contemplate to see with their mind's eye in order to make the matters tangible. Therefore, they used to also contemplate on these matters.

They used to employ the power of mental imagery also for matters of Olam Haba, contemplating with their imagination and mental imagery, and delve deeply into what the Talmud states in Berachot 17a: "a favorite saying of Rav was: Olam Haba is not like this world. In Olam Haba there is no eating nor drinking nor procreation nor business nor jealousy nor hatred nor competition, but rather the righteous sit with their crowns on their heads deriving enjoyment from the radiance of the Shechina (Divine presence)." end quote.

They would picture to themselves how this pleasure of "deriving enjoyment from the radiance of the Shechina" was far vastly greater than the pleasures of this world. For it is a pleasure which comes straight from the Creator, blessed be He. Through this, they would be disgusted with this world and would love Olam Haba.

However, today that we have so many pictures and photos, we are not used to employing this power. Thus automatically, we are lazy to contemplate also on matters of Olam Haba despite that we have no picture or photo of it.

Rabeinu wrote that without contemplation, it is impossible to attain any mental impression. Let us take an example. Behold, our sages told us that Olam Haba endures forever and ever (Kidushin 39b) - "a world which is all good, a world which is all-enduring". When Rabbi Simcha Zissel wanted to picture to his students the matter of eternity, he would say:

Imagine to yourself that one person took a box full of small seeds. A bird came and took one seed in its mouth and flew high and far away. After one full year, the bird returned a second time and took another seed and flew away. Likewise, for every year. Afterwards, imagine to yourself that the entire room is full of seeds and once a year the same bird came and took in its mouth one seed as before. Afterwards, imagine to yourself that the entire planet was full of these seeds. Contemplate in your mind how much time it would take until all the seeds were taken away by the bird. Doing this is already a certain grasping of eternity. end quote.

One needs to broaden and expand one's mind through the power of imagery, as before, and to compare this eternity against the seventy years of our life in this world (Tehilim 90:10). Behold, there is no comparison between the two.

Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler z'l explained the matter with additional contemplation such that every person can understand the matter properly. Behold, our sages said: "one pleasure (korach ruach) in Olam Haba is more than all the life of this world" (Avot 4). Thus, our sages gave us a picture so that we may contemplate Olam Haba and weigh the two against each other. This world versus Olam Haba. What is the meaning of the expression: "all the life of this world"?

Rabbi Dessler explains (Michtav M'Eliyahu Vol.1 pg.4): "I wish to reveal what I merited to hear on this from my master and teacher, Rabbi Tzvi Hirsh Broide, z"l. He explained that the matter of "all the life of this world" is as follows. Let us imagine that we concentrated into one second all the hours and seconds of happiness and enjoyment that a man has experienced throughout his entire life and we concentrate all this into one second (for this is the power of imagination). Next stage.

Note that it is impossible to properly grasp the picture immediately. One must picture it in stages. From one stage to the next until the picture is complete and whole. In this way one builds the power of the picture. Through stages, the picture can affect the person properly.

Next, imagine all the happiness and joy that all your friends and acquaintances ever experienced throughout their lives... And likewise, to add all of this into that one second and give it all to that one man as before. Is it possible to imagine the level of enjoyment this man will feel at that moment? But let us continue further.

Let us include into that second and give to that man all the happiness and pleasure experienced by all people of the entire city throughout their lives. And even more than this, we will include all the happiness of all inhabitants of the country and all other countries on the planet. i.e. all the good of the world for one entire generation. We will concentrate all that into one second and give it to that man.

Even with all this, it is still not "all the life of this world". For it is only of that generation. Rather "all the life of this world" means that we include all the happiness of all the generations from the beginning of the creation until the last generation, i.e. all the good of this world without exception. We will give it all to one man and concentrate it all into one second.

Behold, there is no greater pleasure than this anywhere. This second of pleasure is so great that it is already impossible to imagine. And even so, a pleasure of Olam Haba is bigger than this. And what is "korat ruach"? (mentioned earlier - "one pleasure (korach ruach) in Olam Haba is more than all the life of this world")? On this Rabbi Dessler continues: "the level of korat ruach" was explained by my teacher:

"Imagine the great banquet of a great joyous occasion in the palace of a king. (no doubt all kinds of foods and delicacies are found in the banquet hall of a king). A poor man passes there (who is very poor) and takes a whiff of the odor from the banquet when he passes by the street from outside and he derives enjoyment from the pleasant odor. This is the level of "korat ruach". Likewise in Olam Haba, if a man does not merit to Olam Haba itself, and he is permitted to pass from the outside and derive enjoyment only from the good smell of Olam Haba prepared for the righteous - this is the meaning of one who has a korach ruach in Olam Haba. end quote.

This is but a tiny portion of the reward and joy experienced by the righteous in Olam Haba. And this whiff is better and more enjoyable than all the life of this world as before. When one contemplates this, his knowledge and mind begins to explode, of course, for the good, and he begins to understand the greatness of the life of Olam Haba. But without mental imagery, a man has no idea or grasp of it whatsoever.

Translator: one should not forget the other half of that mishna also: "one hour of repentance in this world is greater than all the life of the world to come". i.e. not only is one hour of repentance greater than the blissful life of olam haba but greater than "ALL" the life of the world to come! If a person realized the tremendous opportunity that lies in his hands while he is alive here, he would love this world also in the proper way (based on Ohr Yahel). Namely, love this world for the unique opportunity it gives to serve G-d instead of loving its transient pleasures.

One of the wise men already said: "just like fire and water cannot coexist together in one container, so too the love of this world and the love of the Olam Haba cannot coexist together in the heart of the believer". They also said: "this world and the next world are like two jealous wives (of one husband), when he shows a liking to one of them, the other one gets angry.

Tov Halevanon: that if he thinks to please one of them, the second one, who is jealous of her, gets angry.

Matanas Chelko: "fire and water" - in this Rabeinu gives an insight (chidush) which a man does not want to believe. The Yetzer Hara tries to seduce a man that he can love also this world and also Olam Haba. A man will tell himself "certainly I love Olam Haba, but I also have love for this world." But it is not so. Rather, if he has love of this world, it will extinguish the fire through the water. But if he has love of Olam Haba, the waters will dry out through the burning heat of the fire.

"two jealous wives" - a man thinks: behold I can love this world and immerse in its pleasures and afterwards, I will immerse myself in matters of Olam Haba. But it is not so, for when one loves one of them, the other gets angry like two jealous wives. And when one draws one close, the other gets angry. So too, he who loves one of these two worlds, the other world resists that love. This adds to the first analogy. For the first analogy of fire and water, one of them causes the other to disappear. But here, it makes strife and even hatred towards the other. So that if a man loves this world, he will not find any pleasure or love of Olam Haba. And when the love of Olam Haba strengthens, his connection to love of this world weakens. This is like a poor destitute man who has nothing to eat until he sustains himself by walking around the city to find whatever he can from the trash heaps. Afterwards, he was given an important source of livelihood. From then on, what he previously esteemed to be important [from the trash heaps] becomes disgusting and despicable in his eyes. So too, for the matter of love of this world and Olam Haba.

My teacher, Rabbi Elyah Lopian zt'l would say that he once heard a woman say: "I know that this world is hevel (vanity), but I want a little hevel." So too by us, we know that everything is hevel but nevertheless we want a bit of hevel. But this is only because we don't feel what we are losing in the future, in Olam Haba.

Translator - try to tell someone who just ate a big steak to repent.

Likewise, my brother, both your soul and body need management and thought.

The strengthening and rectification of the soul is through habituating it with morals and wisdoms, and to guide it with words of wisdom, and to teach it the good traits, and refrain from the bodily lusts.

The strengthening and rectification of the body is to provide it with various types of good, tasty food and drink which are suitable to its nature, and to wash it with warm water, and to supervise its benefits and needs constantly.

If your thoughts will be on the needs of your body, and you place all of your attention on it - you will neglect the improvement of your soul. Likewise, if you turn your attention to rectifying your soul by focusing all of your attention on it - you will neglect much of the needs of your body.

Therefore, the proper way is to strengthen your eternal soul over your fleeting body, and that you focus attention on your soul and worry on its needs, but without neglecting the matters that are very necessary for your body, thereby overburdening it and weakening it, as this will be a means to make both weak. Rather, give your body the food it needs to maintain its functioning, and give your soul of the wisdoms and morals more than its ability to take.

Manoach Halevavos: i.e. the yearning and desire for wisdom and mussar should be more than your ability, so that through this you will exert yourself with your little ability and afterwards G-d will help you to reach more than this.

Tov Halevanon: this means to say, more than what you imagine now that your intellect is capable of, because since the soul is spiritual, it can increase for you much wisdom which you cannot imagine, its ability is unlimited, and it is possible to reach with it very exalted levels when you endeavor in this.

Matanas Chelko: it seems from Rabeinu's words that a person must not neglect his body (health). Rather, he must conduct himself in every matter in a measured and weighed manner.

On this the wise man said: "*Be not overly righteous...why should you bring desolation upon yourself? Be not overly wicked, and be not a fool; why should you die before your time?*" (Koheles 7:16), and "*It is good that you should take hold of this, and also from this you shall not withdraw your hand*" (Koheles 7:18), which means:

"Be not overly righteous" - Do not be extreme in the ways of the righteous who separate from this world, lest you become ruined.

Marpe Lenefesh: to be like the first category of ascetics mentioned in chapter 3 of the Gate of Separation, which left civilization and dwelled in the wilderness.

Matanas Chelko: even though one needs to strengthen love of Olam Haba over love of this world, the intent is not that one should not benefit at all from this world and not be involved in it. Rather, one needs to weigh with the scales of righteousness and take from the world only what he needs.

"Be not overly wicked" (ibid), Likewise, do not be extreme in the ways of the wicked who strengthen after this world, and you indulge in base desires more than the amount fitting for your religious and secular needs.

Tov Halevanon - since this weakens the intellect, like the previous analogy with the two wives.

"why should you die before your time" (ibid), this refers to the death of the soul, in being overpowered by the base desires, and drowning in the sea of physical pleasures.

Tov Halevanon: The soul drowns due to excessive physical pleasures, like a man drowns at sea, the physical pleasures are like a torrential flood relative to the spirituality of the soul.

Rather, hold on to the balanced path. Strengthen on your final end (Olam Haba) and do not abandon this world (your body's health - TL), because from it you will take provisions for the eternal world, and it is like the passageway to the place of rest, as our sages said: *"This world is like a corridor to the future world. Prepare yourself in the corridor that you may enter into the palace"* (Avot 4:16).

This is the path of the early pious ones who feared G-d.

He said: "Do not be overly wise", since wisdom has a fixed limit which cannot be crossed. The explanation is that all the various branches of wisdom which lead to the service of G-d, guarding His commandments, or demonstrating His wisdom and power - this category is permitted to us, and it is our duty to investigate it, as written: *"Behold, the fear of the L-ord is wisdom"* (Iyov 28:28), and *"the fear of the L-ord is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy ones is understanding"* (Mishlei 9:10), which means knowledge of G-d, and also: *"The fear of the L-ord is the beginning of wisdom"* (Tehilim 111:10), and *"The wise men are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken; lo, they have rejected the word of the L-ord; and what wisdom is in them?"* (Yirmiyahu 8:9), and all that is a wisdom outside of this way we mentioned - it is forbidden to study it and investigate after it. Therefore he said: *"do not be overly wise"*.

But as for foolishness and frivolity he warned us against the smallest amount of it, therefore he said: "do not be foolish", and did not say "do not be too foolish", because even a small amount ruins much of the good qualities, as written: *"Dead flies make the ointment of the perfumed fetid and putrid; so does a little folly outweigh wisdom and honor"* (Kohelet 10:1).

Pas Lechem: A little foolishness is heavier than, and outweighs all of the wisdom and honor and it nullifies them.

THE TWENTY SIXTH: (fearing a mortal king)

Matanas Chelko: this cheshbon is truly very simple, just like many other cheshbons. However, without contemplation, we will not grasp even one of them.

To make an accounting with oneself that when one is under the commandment of a king, he fears being punished if he transgresses the king's command, yet one does not trouble himself about the commandments of G-d, and does not fear His punishment if he transgresses His command.

How could he neglect to consider the difference between the two commands and the two matters, and not understand the weakness of a mortal king in enforcing his decrees, his possible delay in administering punishment to him, his limited ability to see him, and his many distractions (with other affairs), and (despite all this - TL) the wise man already said: *"fear G-d and the king, my son"* (Mishlei 24:21), and *"the fear of a king is as the roaring of a lion: whosoever provokes him to anger sins against his own life"* (Mishlei 20:2).

How can an intelligent man not be abashed of his G-d, whose decree cannot be overturned, who watches over him always. He cannot be distracted. He cannot be prevented (from enacting His decree) by anything, and yet one does not fear His judgment? How can one rebel against His word when he knows that G-d is watching his inner and outer being. How can one not repent for his past by saying to himself: "how long have I rebelled against His word, while He continues delaying punishing me. I will seek His forgiveness before He destroys me from this world, or afflicts me in the next world", this is what David said: "The wicked, in the pride of his countenance will not seek (to repent - ML); G-d is never in his thoughts" (Tehilim 10:4).

Matanas Chelko: even though in our times, we do not have a king who commands us. But we have laws of the country and police officers and the like. Due to them, a person acts properly. For example, regarding the traffic laws when driving a car on the road, it happens often that a person drives his car faster than the law permits and then he suddenly sees a police car and immediately begins to slow down and drive according to the law. Behold, he thought he could drive fast and was not concerned for the law, but immediately when he sees someone that has the ability to punish him, he becomes a different person.

For then he feels that those who can force him to obey the law are able to see him. At the time he sees the policeman, he should contemplate - am I not foolish! I believe with complete faith that G-d sees me always,

every second, and He commanded me to guard the mitzvot and not transgress His will, and I know that there is reward and punishment on everything. I should conduct myself as if the policeman is standing before me at all times! This is the matter of *"I have set G-d before me always"* (Tehilim 16:8). The Shulchan Aruch (1:1, Rama) claims this level from every Jew as written there:

"the verse states, *'I have set G-d before me always'* (Tehilim 16:8). This is a great principle in the Torah and is a paramount attribute of the Tzadikim (righteous people) who walk in the way of G-d. For the way in which a person sits, moves, and carries out his daily activities while he is alone in his house is not the same way he would engage in these activities while standing before a great King. In addition, the way one speaks while amongst those in his home and the conversations he has with his relatives is not the same manner in which he would speak while in the presence of a mortal king. Surely when one considers in his mind that the mighty King, The Holy One blessed be His Name, whom the whole world is filled with His glory, stands before him and sees his deeds, as it states: 'If a man will conceal his secrets, will I not see it?', says the L-ord'; immediately the fear and the proper awe of G-d will descend upon him and he will always be embarrassed before G-d..." end quote.

This example [of the policemen] is very relevant to our matter. For all the traffic laws are instituted for the good of the man himself and also for the good of other people driving on the road. The transgression of the law is itself the punishment. Such as if he goes and drives on the wrong side of the highway against the flow of traffic. It is very likely that through this, he will be killed or he will kill others, or at least there will be injuries, and he can really cause a great calamity. Thus, the traffic laws are for his good and one who transgresses them will be punished by the transgression itself. Hence, there is no benefit from transgressing. So too, l'havdil, regarding the mitzvot of the Creator. The sin itself damages, and one must make a cheshbon that no benefit whatsoever results from transgressing the mitzvot of the Creator.

Matanas Chelko: "how can one not repent for his past" - this is the claim. How is it conceivable that he not repent for all his previous deeds. Even though, he knows all the previous cheshbon, that G-d sees everything, and is not distracted by other matters, and the punishment is certain to come if he does not repent. Therefore, one must rouse himself to repent.

As we explained in other cheshbons, Rabeinu is emphasizing to us, that one should do these cheshbons at the times when different things happen to him, as he writes here "when one is standing in the commandment of a king" - at that time, it is incumbent on him to implant fear of Heaven in his heart, and to come and repent through this cheshbon.

According to our example, when a man drives a car and suddenly sees that all the cars are beginning to guard the traffic laws, and he wonders about what just happened. Afterwards, he sees police lights and realizes this was caused by fear of punishment from the police. He should then understand that this came to teach him mussar in this cheshbon of Chovos Halevavos, and he should tell himself: "G-d is showing me tangibly the foundation of 'I have set G-d before me always'". For if everyone is afraid of flesh and blood, even though it is only a slight doubt whether they will be punished and perhaps he will not even see me, or will be distracted, etc. as before. And nevertheless, they improve their ways on the road and drive according to the law, all the more so, do I need to fear from the King of kings, the Holy One, blessed be He.

"the wicked...G-d is never in his thoughts" - the wicked man who is arrogant does not seek G-d to repent to him. This due to only one reason - for G-d is not in his thoughts. He does not put to mind that G-d sees him always. The summary is that due to his arrogance, the wicked man lacked the foundation of "I have set G-d before me always".

There is a famous story about the Vilna Gaon who took on himself to wander in exile. He travelled to places where he was not recognized and his name was not known. One time, he travelled in a wagon when suddenly the wagon driver stopped his horses and wanted to steal straw from a nearby field to feed his horses. He told the man riding with him: "stand guard and let me know if there is someone that sees what I am doing". The Vilna Gaon agreed, and when the wagon driver began to steal straw, the Gaon screamed: "someone is looking!". The wagon driver ran back to the wagon and began to drive. Afterwards, he saw that no man was there. "who was there that was looking at me?" He asked. The Gaon replied: "Wasn't the Master of the World looking?"

THE TWENTY SEVENTH:

(bearing suffering)

To make an accounting with oneself when trouble strikes him, whether physically, financially, or any of his other matters. He should receive everything from his G-d with joy, and bear it as one who accepts the judgment of G-d and not bear it as one who is angry on His decree.

Matanas Chelko: "bear it" - the term "bear..accepting" (Sevel), means patient bearing, bearing a yoke, that a man bears on himself some yoke. He can either bear and accept this yoke wilfully or against his will, with joy or with anger. For example, a man bears on himself the yoke of earning a livelihood. Every day, he runs from morning till evening in many different exertions, to call others and arrange sales between buyers and sellers. Even so, since he makes a large profit, he bears this yoke with joy and does it willingly. Thus, Rabeinu writes that every bad and difficult thing which is sent to a man, he should receive it and accept it wilfully and with joy, not angrily. For anyways, he has no choice in the matter and is forced to bear it.

As written *"And I will wait for the L-ord, that hides His face from the house of Jacob, and I will hope unto Him"* (Yeshaya 8:17) (I am waiting and bearing His hiding and *along with this* I am hoping to Him that He will save me - *PL*), and he should not be like the one the verse speaks of: *"and it shall come to pass that, when they shall be hungry, they shall fret themselves, and turning their faces on high, curse by their king and by their god"* (Yeshaya 8:21).

Know, my brother, that for the ten trials which G-d tested Avraham our forefather with, we would not be praising Avraham for standing up to these trials, if it were not the case that he had received everything from G-d willingly and with a good heart, as written: *"And found his heart faithful before You"* (Nechamia 9:8).

Matanas Chelko: "we would not be praising Avraham" - for he was forced to bear these trials and he had no free choice on this. For the case was that G-d tested him with them. Thus all his praise was solely that he accepted them and did them wilfully and with joy...

We must emphasize the matter of emunah (faith) here. Behold Avraham could have said or at least felt that G-d does not appreciate him properly for jumping into the fiery furnace for his faith. On this (kind of self-sacrifice), the Rambam writes that "there is no higher level than this" (Sefer HaMitzvot, Mitzvah 9). For no reward was given to him for this act of self-sacrifice. On the contrary, G-d sent him difficult trials as if He was not happy from Avraham's service. And all the more so [he could have doubted G-d], after every trial. But Avraham did not think like this nor feel like this. Rather, he was only completely faithful and bore all that was given and sent by G-d, and his love of G-d did not diminish for this. This is what we have to learn from Rabeinu's explanation of the verse. For Avraham already demonstrated his love of G-d (at Ur-Kasdim), only afterwards did G-d test him in his levels of this love, whether he would be faithful and firm in it.

As for the generation who left Egypt, they were deserving of condemnation and rebuke in the desert only because they became angry and their hearts were not good with G-d and His prophet (Moshe).

As written: *"But they flattered Him with their mouth, and lied unto Him with their tongue, but their heart was not right with Him"* (Tehilim 78:36). Many times they would show themselves grudging and rebelling against G-d and breaching His covenant, as we find them constantly desiring to return to Egypt, or the like.

Tov Halevanon: even though they accepted everything that came to them and did not sin with their tongues, nevertheless their hearts were always grudging against G-d and not desiring in His decrees but were like one who is forced to accept against his will...and with their lips, they expressed their bad hearts and thoughts, that they did not desire in G-d and in His decrees.

Matanas Chelko: by the generation who left Egypt, it was the opposite [of Avraham]. For G-d already showed them His love towards them in taking them out of Egypt. Afterwards, He tested them whether they would return back this love. Even though it appeared that from G-d's side, His love was not as strong as it was at the time of the Exodus, for He sent them difficult trials now in the desert. All this was in order to test them. Thus, that which Avraham succeeded in the ten trials, many of them [of the generation of Egypt] did not succeed.

Good bearing is a good character trait but one who bears (begrudgingly) out of force does not receive any reward for it, and he does not attain forgiveness (atonement) from it.

Matanas Chelko - the drawing close and distancing from the Master of the world, the ups and downs of man, generally speaking, are measured by the amount that a person bears difficult things during his life. Whether he bears them with joy or the opposite. If he is only forced in them and he accepts them not wilfully, he does not receive any reward for them nor forgiveness of sin.

People are used to saying "let my suffering be a kapara (atonement) for my sins". But it is not necessarily so. For only if he accepts the sufferings willingly and with joy will they bring forgiveness for his sins. This is what Rabeinu writes here. Only if when sufferings comes he says: "Ribono shel Olam (Master of the world), I accept these sufferings which I understand that through them my sins will be atoned for, therefore, I accept them with joy". Then he will have forgiveness (atonement) through them and will also receive reward for them. But one who kicks at sufferings and does not accept them wilfully and has claims against G-d - through this, he loses the opportunity given to him from Heaven, and cannot hope to reward and forgiveness through them. Everything depends on man's approach and outlook...

Consider, my brother, the difference between the two types of bearing suffering, and contemplate the different consequences between them (that the first results in forgiveness of sins and reward, while the other anger/frustration and begrudging - PL).

Matanas Chelko - one must make a simple cheshbon. For either way, he is forced to bear the suffering and difficulty. The difference is only in his reaction and outlook. Therefore, even logically, one should accept them with love.

You will see that the matter of bearing (suffering) divides into three categories:

1. Bearing it in serving G-d.

Marpe Lenefesh: bearing all types of hard work to fulfill the service of G-d.

2. Bearing it so as not to rebel against Him.

Marpe Lenefesh: to bear whatever comes to him so as not to rebel against G-d, as written in Shema: "And you shall love the L-ord...", which the sages expounded: "even if He takes your life".

3. Bearing from the afflictions of the world.

This third category subdivides to two parts:

one: Bearing for a loss (being struck by a loss in his money or his children or relatives - TL)

two: Bearing for lacking of something he loves (that one cannot attain his desires or lusts - TL)

Either way, it is possible this trouble came in the way of punishment, and through it you will be forgiven for a sin you committed or that G-d wants to bring you to a test and trial, and through this the Creator will increase your reward.

Tov Halevanon: For a virtuous man, G-d brings him to a test in order that the good in him can come out from potential to actual, and then through the actions he will attain purity and illumination of the soul far more than if his righteousness did not come into actual action and remained as potential. Through this, his reward will increase. This is the matter of all the tests of the Torah.

Pas Lechem: test and trial - He used the two terms "test" and "trial" since that which comes to purge his traits and humble his heart is called a "test", while that which comes to demonstrate his virtue and love of G-d is called a "trial".

Matanas Chelko: in the way of punishment, and through it you will be forgiven for a sin - if you accept it with love. Then you will merit full reward in Olam Haba for bearing suffering in this world.

"or... increase your reward - these two reasons for which G-d brings sufferings and difficulties on a man in this world - either he is paying for them in the way of punishment due to his sins, or they are in order to increase his reward. And that which the Talmud says (Berachot 5a) "if one sees sufferings coming upon him, let him

examine his deeds". This is referring to a different category of sufferings which Rabeinu is not dealing with. These sufferings are coming to rouse him to repentance, while Rabeinu's words are regarding sufferings coming as a kapara (atonement) after he already did Teshuva (repentance).

The Talmud says (Yomah 86a): "if one transgressed sins warranting karet (early death from Heaven) or death by Jewish court and he repented, repentance and Yom Kippur suspend [the heavenly punishment] and sufferings complete [the atonement]". end quote. One needs to accept these sufferings on himself. But most sins that a man does are not of Karet or unintentional Karet, but are only [simple] "negative commandments". Therefore, most of his sufferings is in the way of punishment or to rouse him to repentance. Therefore, he should examine his ways to know which sin he committed and the Teshuva he needs to do. This is also a kindness of G-d to rouse a man to this.

Whichever way it is of these two ways, it is proper for you to receive what comes to you from G-d willingly and with good acceptance, as King David said: *"all the ways of G-d are kindness and truth unto those that keep His covenant and testimonies"* (Tehilim 25:10), because the trouble that befell you, if it is to forgive your sin - it is a "truth", and if it is the beginning (of a test) in order to give you in exchange for it good reward for bearing the test - it is a "kindness", therefore it is never other than truth or kindness.

Pas Lechem: He used the term "beginning" regarding a test only, since for the suffering which comes from a sin, man is the one who starts it, but that which comes as a test - G-d is the initiator.

If you contemplate well these matters, the result of your bearing will be good, and your reward for it is assured.

Therefore, my brother, do not neglect to check your thoughts constantly in this matter, and then your ability to bear properly to G-d will be strengthened, and it will be easier for you when harsh pain and bitter suffering weighs on your heart, to demonstrate your good acceptance of the decree of G-d, and that you find consolation in Him (when you reflect on the above, it will be a consolation and a medicine for your pain and bitterness - TL), and that your trust is on Him, as written: *"Strengthen yourselves, and He will give your heart courage, all who hope to the L-ord"* (Tehilim 31:25).

Marpe Lenefesh: When troubles come on him, chas v'shalom, he should accept them with a good heart and with joy, as our Sages said (Berachot 60b): "a man is obligated to bless on the bad with joy, just like he blesses on the good with joy". For even though the bad already struck him and he has no escape from it, it is not the same if he receives it with love and says to himself "everything G-d does is for the good, and the bad is for my good, either it is to bring forgiveness for my sins or it is yisurim shel ahava (sufferings of love, see Gate of Trust ch.3)".

If he truly thinks this - he is forgiven for his sins as will be explained. On the other hand, if the bad is a burden and a hassle to him, and he is like one forced to bear it, because he has no escape from it, then since it is against his will, he may also come to complain on G-d's traits, as written: *"A man's folly (i.e. his sins) crushes his way, and his heart is angry with the L-rd"* (Mishlei 19:3). And even though he bears it, he gets angry and complains. With this you will understand well the author's words. And like our sages said Berachot 5a: "Rava said: If a man sees suffering coming on him, let him examine his ways...", as above (i.e. G-d is trying to atone for him on the sin he committed). And Rava said in the name of Rav Huna: "whoever G-d desires in, He will crush him with sufferings, as written 'G-d desired to crush him..' (Isaiah 53:10)... but on condition he receives them with love...

THE TWENTY EIGHTH:

(total acceptance)

Matanas Chelko: this cheshbon is a continuation and increase of the previous one. There Rabeinu explained the verse: "all G-d's ways are kindness and truth" (Tehilim 25:10). That everything done to man is either in the way of punishment to atone for his sins or in the way of increasing his reward in the future. On this Rabeinu adds depth to the matter.

Making an accounting with oneself if, after putting his trust in G-d, giving himself over to Him, his money, his children, and all his matters to G-d's service, then his matters change and the Creator decrees for him something which is

Matanas Chelko: i.e. he did only that which is the will of G-d and was also moser nefesh (self-sacrificing) in this. Furthermore, he gave his money and children towards this - everything for the will of G-d, and despite all this, the Holy One, blessed be He, decrees bad things on him and things which are against his wish befall him such as health or financial troubles, to such an extent that a man wonders to himself and questions - "why did the Almighty do this to me??" At such a time...

He should think to himself: A man gave his friend a house or a field as a gift, and then the recipient of the gift thought in his mind to demolish it and rebuild it differently or to change it from its original manner. Is it right for the donor to mourn what the recipient did, and to grieve for changing it from its original state, after he had already given the house or the field?

Same for you, my brother, if you have given yourself and your possessions to G-d, do not mourn His acting on you as He desires, and conducts Himself towards you as He wishes. And even if it does not appear good to you, nevertheless it is proper for you to be at peace on Him, and rely on His perfect guidance and the judgment of His decree. Do not regret on having given to Him what you think was yours, and do not show anguish for His decree on you - and all the more so being that you are one of His creations, and He is your Maker and the provider of your sustenance, and guides you in what is good for you in your inner and outer matters, even if you don't understand the matter, as written: *"I taught Ephraim also to go, taking them by their arms; but they knew not that I healed them"* (Hoshea 11:3).

Matanas Chelko: Do not regret on having given to Him - i.e. don't regret on the good deeds and service of G-d that you did since now you have no benefit from them. For example, if he gave money to charity and afterwards his financial situation becomes difficult, and the Yetzer Hara (evil inclination) incites him to regret the good deed and say it was not worth doing. G-d forbid to say or even think like this. For "one who regrets past good deeds loses his reward for them" (see Kidushin 40b).

Pas Lechem: That which you considered yourself a Baal Bitachon (one who places his trust in G-d) during the good times is worth nothing, but now when your circumstances change reflect on the above analogy.

Matanas Chelko: there is to explain the matter according to what Rabeinu Yonah writes (Mishlei 3:6 and 3:26). There are two matters of Bitachon (trust in G-d), two levels. The first is that a man believes everything is in the hands of Heaven, and he trusts in G-d and not in man. He does not trust in his own might and ingenuity, and he does the will of G-d without worrying on anything. On this type, it is written: "trust in G-d and do good" (Tehilim 37:3).

However, there is a higher level, namely, that a man tells the Master of the World - "Ribono Shel Olam (Master of the world) - do to me what as You wish. I have no opinion or will. Rather, I will be like "clay in the hands of the potter". This is so whether regarding health of the soul and body, or whether his livelihood will be abundant or tight. On this David said: "my soul is to G-d.." (Tehilim 130:6). This is the level of Mesirut Nefesh mamash (real self-sacrifice), where a man has no questions on G-d. Rather, he accepts everything. This is the level of "[you shall love G-d] with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might" (in the Shema). Rabeinu's words here are referring to this level, where a man gives his soul to G-d to do with it as He wishes... Not because he recognizes that G-d knows better what is the best thing for him, but rather, because he nullifies his opinion and will to G-d's, blessed be He. This is mesirut nefesh (real self-sacrifice)...

This is the addition to the previous cheshbon. Not only should a man receive everything willfully and with joy. But sometimes a man who serves G-d properly thinks that certainly G-d will grant him good and kindnesses, and if it is the opposite, he comes to think that it appears G-d is angry with him and it seems He is not happy with his deeds. He must accept this too willfully for this level is that a man is moser nefesh to the Holy One, blessed be He, to do to him as He wishes.

To contemplate the superiority of the soul over the body, and to realize that some men are greater than other men, until one man can be worth as much as a thousand men, and to know that this superiority is not due to superior qualities of his body, but rather due to the higher degree of his soul, as was said to David: *"but now you are worth ten thousand of us"* (Shmuel II 18:3).

Even for women who are distinguished by physical beauty but are deficient in spiritual qualities, then not only is their beauty not pleasing, but it becomes ugly, as the wise man said: *"as a gold ring in a pig's snout, so is a beautiful woman from who (moral) sense has departed"* (Mishlei 11:22), and *"Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that fears the L-ord, she shall be praised"* (Mishlei 31:30).

According to your understanding of the greatness of your soul over your body, it is proper for you to exert yourself in her rectification and in her salvation, so that she may stay with her L-ord who observes whether she is bright or darkened (by sin), worthy of praise or of blame, whether she has chosen good or evil, and whether she tends to reason or to lust. (the soul is being personified here - Rabbi Moses Hyamson zt'l)

Therefore tend to her matters always, more than you tend to the matters of your body, and know, that it is easier to heal your body from the worst of the diseases that befall it, than it is to heal the soul from the sickness of the yetzer (evil inclination) when he overpowers it, as the wise man said: *"The spirit of a man will sustain him in sickness; but a wounded spirit who can bear?"* (Mishlei 18:14) (if the soul is well, it can support a sick body. But if the soul is sick, it can bear nothing - Rabbi Moses Hyamson zt'l), and *"above all things guarded, watch over your heart"* (Mishlei 4:23).

Matanas Chelko: "more than you tend to the matters of your body" - i.e. since without a doubt the Holy One, blessed be He, measures a man's importance solely according to the greatness of importance of his soul, therefore, a man needs to inspect and work on his soul and examine its needs more than matters of the body.

"it is easier to heal your body..than to heal the soul" - i.e. one needs to guard the soul from illness, namely, to not do things through which it will darken and become foolish (metamtemah), or even things through which the soul will not be able to attain the qualities and perfection that it alone can attain. On this Rabeinu wrote this simple cheshbon, that it is easier to heal oneself from an illness of the body, than to heal the soul if it has become foolish and tameh (spiritually impure) through sin. Therefore, when doing this cheshbon, a man should contemplate and be watchful ahead of time to not make his soul tameh and foolish... for then it is almost in the category of "that which is crooked cannot be made straight" (Kohelet 1:15).

"than it is to heal the soul from the sickness of the yetzer" - as an analogy, bandits captured the king's city and took control of what enters and leaves the gates of the city. Is it conceivable that they will allow messengers informing the king of what has happened and how to defeat the bandits? Surely, the bandits will block them. So too, when the Yetzer has captured a man's heart, he will not allow thoughts of his defeat to pass through his heart - Ohr HaChaim parsha Ki Teitze.

THE THIRTIETH:

(stranger in a strange land)

The thirtieth and concluding accounting - to make an accounting with oneself regarding the conditions which a foreigner in this world (must accept on himself - PL). He should consider his status in it like that of a stranger who came from a faraway land and did not know even one of the inhabitants of the country he came to, and not one of them knew him. The king of the country had pity on him in that he was a stranger, and instructed him in that which will further his welfare. He provided him with his daily sustenance, and commanded him not to rebel against his laws, and not to transgress his commands. And he informed him of the benefit and reward if he obeyed him and scared him with the punishments (he would receive if he disobeyed him), appropriate for the time and place. And the king warned the immigrant that a time will come when he must leave there (suddenly, and that he should always be prepared for this journey - TL), but he did not reveal to him when this time would be.

Among the conditions he is obligated in:

1. Submission and humility, and to abandon arrogance, and to distance from pride and haughtiness, as written in this matter: *"And they said, 'This one came to dwell with us, and now he is judging us (as if he owns this place - MC)?"* (Bereishis 19:9).

Matanas Chelko: a man who comes to a different country and is a stranger there, he does not at all think to become haughty. Rather, humility/submission is naturally fixed in him. So too in this world, one needs to feel thus... It seems the Torah set a specific holiday to review and learn this important principle, namely, Sukkot,

where our sages said: "leave a fixed dwelling and go in a temporary dwelling" (Sukkah 2b). This is the⁵⁰ teaching of Sukkot, to feel that this world is a temporary world (and in Pesach one needs to feel and emphasize the slavery and suffering, etc.). If a person lived with this outlook, that here is not his place, it would be easier for him to fight the evil inclination.

2. To be prepared for the journey and for moving on, and to not become comfortable and settled in, as written: *"The land shall not be sold permanently: for the land is Mine; for you are strangers and sojourners with Me"* (Vayikra 25:23).

Matanas Chelko: this is one of the laws of the Torah so that a man will feel that the land is not his and he will not be so attached to it, and will know and recognize that he is but a stranger in this world.. Behold it is clear from the Torah itself that the foundational outlook in life in order to refrain from sin and not become entrenched in worldly matters is to feel like a stranger in this world.

3. To investigate the ways and laws of the country and what one is obligated to the king, as David said: *"I am a stranger in the land; hide not Your commandments from me"* (Tehilim 119:19).

4. To love another stranger like him, to help and aid him, as written: *"you shall love the stranger"* (Devarim 10:19), and *"But the stranger that dwells with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt"* (Vayikra 19:34)

Pas Lechem: And since all the strangers help each other, certainly they will attain the collective benefit.

Matanas Chelko: Rabeinu's intent is also regarding "love your neighbor as yourself" (Vayikra 19:18). We see in truth a deep psychological matter regarding travellers which we don't find by people who live in fixed homes. When two people who have no connection to each other and don't normally speak to each other while in their city, travel on the road together, they become friends a bit. Since both are on the road, not in their homes, they feel like strangers and draw closer to each other. We also find that people who travel together don't have as much jealousy and strife like there is when they are fixed in their homes. The reason for this is because they need each other and also encourage each other.

One who contemplates this will recognize that jealousy and strife common to people comes from the feeling of permanence and arrogance that they have when in their land and home. But when they travel on the road, they all have one goal - that the journey pass safely and that they reach their destination without harm to their body and money. Therefore, they don't have so much differences of views and divisiveness of heart which disrupts them.

For this reason, when people feel the matter of being a stranger, namely, that all people are strangers and travellers in the road of this world, then, jealousy and strife diminishes between them. For all of them focus their strength and minds towards the journey to Olam Haba. And things which other people are very meticulous about due to thinking themselves permanent dwellers and citizens in this world, these things do not take up any room by them. For in their mind, they are on the road to eternal life. A small example: one who goes on the road is not concerned if his shirt is a bit wrinkled, unlike when he is in his house or city.

One needs to contemplate that the Holy One, blessed be He, created the world in such a way that a man can understand the concept of being a stranger in order to understand that we are only strangers in this world and to live like this always.

5. To hasten and be quick to cling to the service of the king of the land, because he has no friend who can intervene with the king on his behalf if he transgresses the service. His matter is opposite that of the answer the Shunamit gave when the prophet asked her: *"you have been careful for us with all this care; what is to be done for you? would you like to be spoken for to the king, or to the captain of the host?"* (Melachim II 4:13.), she answered "I dwell among my people", she meant to say: "my people and my family will speak to him on my behalf in the time of need". This is not so for a stranger. Rather, he is as written: *"I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would acknowledge me: refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul"* (Tehilim 142:5).

Matanas Chelko: when a man travels on the road, he is careful that all his matters be in order according to the laws of the country that he is travelling to. For example, that his passport be valid, and likewise for all matters which he knows that if he does not attend to them ahead of time, they will stop him at the border and

request of him valid papers, and he will have no one to rely upon. But a citizen and fixed resident in his country trusts that if he transgresses one of the laws, his family or friends will come to assist him. Unlike the stranger who does not trust thus for he does not know anyone who can help him. Therefore, he does not trust in himself and is careful to guard all the laws of the country.

6. To be satisfied with whatever food he gets, and with whatever house and clothing he can find, and to conduct himself in all his manners on subsistence level and not to exert himself (for amassing luxuries).

Tov Halevanon: to exert himself to earn only what is enough for himself, since he dwells in a land which is not his, to who will he leave all the fruits of his toil at the time he will depart from there?

7. To prepare for the journey and to consider what provisions he will need on the way.

8. That it be big in his eyes, a small favor someone does to him, and that he extends praises to someone who benefited him.

Tov Halevanon: since one is a stranger in the land, a little favor someone does for him feels like a great kindness, similar to what Ruth said: "Then she fell on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, and said to him, Why have I found grace in your eyes that you should take knowledge of me, seeing that I am a stranger?" (Ruth 2:10)

10. To bear patiently any evil that befalls him, and monetary damage that strikes him - due to being broken and humble of spirit and due to being weak to prevent it from occurring.

Therefore, my brother, take on yourself the conditions of being a stranger in this world, because you are in truth a stranger in it.

Tov Halevanon: your matter in this world is the true, most extreme state of being a stranger, more than any possible state of being a stranger in the world; here you are by yourself and all alone, no one can help you or redeem you from the time you came to this world until the time you will leave it, as will be explained.

The proof that you are a stranger and all alone in it is that during the time you emerged into the realm of existence and were formed in the belly of your mother - if all human beings in the world were to exert themselves to hasten your formation for even one second or delay it for one second, or to assemble one of your limbs to another one, or to release one from another, or to try to form one of your limbs whether of the external (limbs) or internal ones (internal organs), or to grant movement to a limb which normally cannot move, or to grant rest to a limb which normally moves (ex. heart, lungs), or to advance the time you exit your mother's womb before the time decreed for you, or to delay it for the time to blink an eye, or to make the matter of birth easier for you or harder - they would not be capable of affecting you on this (unless G-d decreed so).

Likewise, after you entered this world, no human being is capable of bringing you sustenance without the help of G-d. No person can make your body larger or smaller. If you could imagine that no one were left in the world except you, and that the entire world was yours alone, this would not increase by even a mustard seed (tiny amount) the sustenance that would reach you until the end of your days.

Similarly, if the population of the world would double many times over, you would not be lacking even a mustard seed of what was decreed for you, no less and no more.

Matanas Chelko: this is a contemplation regarding a man's livelihood - that everything comes solely from G-d, blessed be He, and whether he is alone in the world or among many people, his livelihood is still given to Him by the Creator, blessed be He, in an exact manner. In truth, this thought should bring joy to man. For through it he recognizes that he does not need the help of others. For everything comes solely from G-d, blessed be He.

So too, none of the created beings (human or otherwise) are capable of benefiting you nor of harming you, and not one of them is capable of adding to the days of your life nor of decreasing them, likewise for all of your traits, your nature, and your good or bad deeds (which depend exclusively on your own free will - TL).

If so, what connection is there between you and other creatures? Or, with which kinship are you related to them or they related to you? Are you not in this world just like a stranger to whom its inhabitants however numerous can bring no advantage and whom their small number cannot harm him (since he has no help from them - TL). Are you not in it like a lonely, solitary individual, who has no association except with his Master, and no one to have compassion on him except for his Creator?

Marpe Lenefesh: Since there is no person in the world, even amongst your friends and relatives who are capable of benefiting you in any way or of harming you, rather everything depends on the will of G-d. If so, are you not in this world like a total stranger?

Manoach Halevavos: ...since what use is there for relatives if you have no benefit from them?...

Therefore, my brother, devote yourself to G-d's service alone, just like He alone created you, guides you, provides for you, and that your life and death are in His hands alone.

Marpe Lenefesh: That you do the service of G-d for G-d alone, without any interests or thoughts for anything else, just like He is alone in managing you.

Place His written and oral Torah before your eyes, hope to His reward and fear His punishment, take on yourself the conditions of being a stranger which I aroused you on for all the days of your life in this world and you will reach the bliss of Olam Haba, as the wise man said: "[My son eat honey for it is good, and the honeycomb which is sweet to your palate;] So shall the knowledge of wisdom be unto your soul: when you have found it, then there shall be a reward and your hope shall not be cut off" (Mishlei 24:14).

Marpe Lenefesh: Just like honey is sweet to your palate, so too, put to mind to make wisdom sweet to your soul, and through this, your end will be good, and your hope will never be cut off.

SUMMATION

These, my brother, are thirty ways, among the ways a man should make an accounting with himself before G-d. When you think to yourself on them, and you bring yourself to judgment on them, then their light will rupture through, and their illumination will surround you. Reflect on them constantly.

Tov Halevanon: by reflecting much on them, your understanding on their matters will deepen. Like the nature of truth, the more one contemplates it, the deeper one understands it and it comes closer to the heart.

Review them in your mind all the days of your life. Do not be satisfied with my short discussion on them, and my mentioning them in a concise manner, because each matter, when it is clarified and explained properly, will expand many times over from what I mentioned.

Tov Halevanon: Even though he wrote them briefly, they comprise many matters and branches which can be understood by each person according to his intellectual power and the brightness of his soul.

I merely aroused attention them, and recalled them to their seeker in a concise manner. I did not speak much on them, so that this book will not become too lengthy, and go out of my intent for it, which was to arouse and teach (concisely, as the sages said (Pesachim 3b): "one should teach his students in a concise manner" - ML).

Place them opposite your eyes, and before your vision. Establish them in your heart and in your mind - then when you review them, you will see in them, what you did not originally see, of hidden secrets and spiritual mussar (mussar which penetrates the mind and the soul - TL).

Do not think that when you examine them, and arrive at an understanding of the meaning of the words, that you have already grasped the full concealed matter, because you will not reach this from them until after you put your thoughts on them diligently and with exertion many times and over a long time.

Straighten yourself through them, and straighten others with them, you will reach the great reward from G-d, as written: "And the wise will shine like the brightness of the sky, and those who bring the multitudes to righteousness

like the stars forever and ever" (Daniel 12:3), and the wise man said: "But to them that rebuke shall be delight, and a good blessing shall come upon them" (Mishlei 24:25).

Tov Halevanon: those who rebuke others on their wickedness, the delight of G-d and the blessing of G-d will come to them, and certainly for one who rebukes himself for his wickedness, his reward will be greater and more intense.

Matanas Chelko: it seems from Rabeinu's words what was said in the introduction - that in this gate is mentioned all the foundations of the service of G-d. Therefore, the more one reviews them and studies them, the more he will find in each one more insights and foundations in depth and breadth of the service of G-d and all the obligations of man in this world. Thus Rabeinu claims from us to study and review this gate. For it includes the entire Torah, and all matters of the service of G-d, whether the foundations in the Gate of Examination(#2) or the Gate of Trust (#4), and all of them in a practical manner, until a man can reach lofty levels and great closeness to G-d, blessed be He.

"after you put your thoughts on them diligently and with exertion many times and over a long time" - Ohr Yahel v.3 Vayera pg.41 - on the verse: "I am but dust and ashes" (Gen.18:27), the Ibn Ezra explains: "I was dust and will return to dust".

What is the chidush (novel insight) here? Behold, every sane person knows that he is dust and will return to dust.

The explanation is that we are used to thinking a great and whole man is one who has attained new wisdom which other people don't know. Therefore, when we want to attain wholeness in middot (character traits) or outlook (deot), we search for new insights in books or seek advice which contains novel or interesting ideas. All this is a total mistake.

For a man, whose soul is "hewn" from under the Kisei Hakavod (throne of glory), [potentially] grasps and understands vastly more than the Chayot and Ofanei HaKodesh (holiest angels), who are below the Kisei Hakavod, as explained in tractate Chagiga.

But because man's soul is incarcerated in the dark house of the body - which is the dark and obscuring physical - so that it blocks all light from reaching this holy soul. One should truly fear that he not remain in the bottom level of the pit, G-d forbid.

In any case, we learn that all man's work is not to contrive new ideas (chidushim) in his soul, which he did not know previously until now. But rather, it is to remove the disgrace of the prison (cherpat beit haasurim) which he sits inside, and to remove the dark ropes of the physical obscuring him. Then automatically, he will understand and feel what he already knows, in his nefesh, ruach, and neshama (soul, spirit and higher soul).

Likewise, what our sages said: "look at three things... know from where you came and where you are going..." (Avot 3:1).

Is there anyone who does not know this already? Rather, it is as we said - a man is only asked to know what he himself already knows. That is to say, to feel in his senses what his intellect knows. One does not need anything else more than this. This is everything!

However, this work is exceedingly much more difficult than to think of new insights (chidushim) in some matter. We see that despite all our toil in Torah and fear, we are far away from this as heaven is to earth.

Behold, every person utters with his mouth always that he is but dust and will return to dust, and that man is destined to die, and this world is futile of vanity of vanities (hevel hevelim), etc., etc., but nevertheless, day and night he does not stop from being occupied in this worthlessness (hevel), and he plunges his soul deeper in this abyss - with all his limbs and senses, from the soles of his feet to the top of his skull - every day more and more, as the verse says: "and they went after vanity and themselves became vanity" (Yirmiyahu 2:5).

That is to say, he goes after the vanity until he himself becomes a piece of vanity. This is a wonder! For even an animal will not eat something harmful to itself, and every intelligent person will distance and flee from something which can cut short the wick of his brief life on this earth. But regarding eternal life, which he

himself knows that if he does not put an eye on his ways, he is liable to be destroyed forever and ever, G-d forbid. But nevertheless, he proceeds confidently in his way - the way of his habits, like a horse rushing in - only evil all day!

We must say "nimshal k'behemot nidmu" (he is compared to the silent animals - Tehilim 49:13). For an animal perception has taken root in his heart and in the depths of his soul - there is no calculation or understanding, "A man walks in this world and he thinks that it will be his forever, and that he will remain in it for all time" (Zohar Nasso 126).

But we must know that this awesome physical power which deceives human beings in this world is not tangible. It is but lies, darkness and blindness, concealing the truth from being seen. One need not push away the falsehood with his hands and banish it. For falsehood has no real existence.

Rather, when a man illuminates himself with the intellect of truth he possesses, automatically, the darkness will leave and the falsehood will run away. Likewise, king David said: "take my soul out of confinement to give thanks to Your Name" (Tehilim 142:8), for the soul is imprisoned inside the walls of this awesome prison, namely, man's body. But when the prison is removed and the soul goes out free, it no longer has anything blocking and preventing it. It is then entirely ready to stand before G-d and thank His Name. This is the meaning of "take my soul out of confinement to give thanks to Your Name".

The Torah says: "It is not in heaven, that you should say, 'Who will go up to heaven for us and fetch it for us, to tell [it] to us, so that we can fulfill it?' Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, 'Who will cross to the other side of the sea for us and fetch it for us, to tell [it] to us, so that we may fulfill it?' Rather, [this] thing is very close to you; it is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you can fulfill it" (Devarim 30:12-14).

There is room to contemplate here, if one wants to show his fellow something placed on his table, why the need to first tell him that it is not in the heaven? On the contrary one should tell him he need not move even one step to reach it.

Rather, the Torah teaches us here the fundamental principle we mentioned. For the truth is so obvious and clear that it is in your mouth and heart to do. But the falsehood hides and distances it far out until the heavens and the end of the sea. Thus before removing the obstruction, i.e. while the darkness covers the land, it appears in the heaven and beyond the sea. But after removal of the veil of falsehood and revealing of the truth, behold it is clear before you it "is very close to you".

We learn from all this that regarding Avraham Avinu who said: "I am but dust and ashes", it is correct that there is no real chidush (novel idea) in the matter. But the great difference is in this we said - that by Avraham Avinu it was chiseled as truth that he truly said before the Holy One, blessed be He, who is truth and whose seal is truth, i.e. that he felt in all his limbs the "I am but dust and ashes". This is the great difference between his declaration and ours, like the distance between "heaven.. and beyond the sea" to "in your mouth". This was the lofty level of humility of Avraham Avinu, the giant of giants... (see there for more)

*** CHAPTER 4 ***

- the benefits of the accounting

The benefit the spiritual accountings we mentioned yields are the results which the soul develops after:

- * attaining a clear grasp in the 30 ways of spiritual accounting we mentioned
- * understanding their matters (their surface meaning - PL)
- * understanding their actual form (their inner meaning - PL)
- * understanding the truth of their obligation (to clarify through reason that it is indeed true that one is obligated in them - Lev Tov)
- * the yearning of one's soul to undertake them, according to one's understanding of them and establishing of them in one's thoughts.

Pas Lechem: That the soul yearns and accepts to undertake them on itself. This depends on one's understanding of them, and according to the amount of understanding will be the corresponding yearning.

Tov Halevanon: Establishing of them in one's thoughts means returning to them and reviewing their matters in one's thoughts, time after time.

Note: Rabbi Yosef Shalom Elyashiv zt"l would say: "The primary review which brings benefit is review 55 whereby one learns the matter again anew (od paam mechadash es ha'inyan). This takes a lot of time, though it is quicker than the first time, but it takes time. But the toeles (benefit) is davka (specifically) from reviews like this" (from the book: HaSod on Rabbi Elyashiv chapter 2)

Then, my brother, there will develop in your soul a sublime and lofty result, (1) you will learn from it all the good character traits, and you will reach through it to all the treasured things, namely, (2) purifying the essence of the soul from the obscurity of foolishness, and (3) you will dispel the darkness of doubt that is in your heart.

Tov Halevanon: The darkness which brought the doubts in your emunah (faith) which are stuck in your heart.

You already know that (when learning mathematics), according to the correctness, number, and proper order of the fundamental principles will be the resulting clarity and mastery.

Likewise, for preparing a medication in the field of medicine, the benefit of the medication, and the potency of its effect will be according to the potency of the herbs, which the medication consists of.

Matanas Chelko: one who wishes to become a pharmacist must first know how medicines are made. But this is not possible until he first acquires much knowledge in chemistry and other branches of science, so that he will know how to combine medicines in the proper way. Thus he must first study many preliminary things and fundamentals in the matter.

Likewise for the field of engineering, called in Arabic, Il-Handasa, according to the number of fundamental principles learned in the desired field will be the resulting quality and usefulness of the knowledge.

Matanas Chelko: "Il-Handasa" - i.e. architecture/engineering. One needs to know the constitution of all relevant materials and the amounts needed to combine them, and also the properties of the materials, such as how much weight it can bear. Only after he masters all these things and other areas can he begin to use this trade to design beautiful buildings or the like.

So it is with many things. For example, a leverage scale cannot be designed without prior knowledge in engineering, mechanics, mathematics and weights.

Likewise for the astronomers' measure called in Arabic, Itztrolab, it cannot be designed without prior understanding in engineering, geometry, astronomical movements, and area of the earth.

Matanas Chelko: likewise for the service of G-d, one needs to learn how to fight with one's evil inclination and how to trust in G-d, and in matters of mitzvot between man and his fellow and between man and G-d. There are many preliminaries and fundamentals.

So too, for this matter requested from the soul, it will not be possible for you, my brother, until you first bear accepting what I have aroused you in of the spiritual accountings with yourself in this gate and in the other gates, and are diligent in acting on them.

Tov Halevanon: do not be wearied due to the lengthiness of the introductions, because this is the way of truth. It cannot be clarified except through many introductions due to the depth of its matter.

Matanas Chelko: this is the explanation of "Cheshbon HaNefesh" (spiritual accounting) - to give to the soul the knowledge and powers it needs in order to build the "machine" which it can use afterwards in the service of the soul.

And when you do this with a faithful heart and a pure soul, your mind will become illuminated. You will see the path to all of the exalted qualities, and the yetzer (evil inclination) will not have a way to reach you and entice you, and you will reach the status of one treasured by G-d. A new, strange, supernal sense will arouse in you, unfamiliar to you of all the senses you are used to knowing, as the wise man said: "A man's wisdom makes his face to shine, and the boldness of his face is changed" (Koheles 8:1). Then you will perceive the great matters, and you will see the deep secrets, with your pure soul, pure heart, and strong faith. You will not part from a permanent joy in this world

and in the next, due to the magnitude of what you observed and the greatness of the secret which was revealed to you, with G-d's help.

I saw proper to give you an analogy, which will clarify for you a bit of what I have mentioned to you: Imagine that you are in a place, above this place and behind you is a wondrous image (and an object is blocking you from seeing it - *PL*), and there is no way for you to see it with your eyes, and gaze at it with your sense of sight. A certain person told you that when you make a sheet of metal and polish it until the darkness is removed, and you anoint it with various potions for a long time (some kind of metal mirror - *PL*), and then you place it opposite your face (like a periscope - *MC*) - then you will see the above picture that was previously hidden to you, and you will be able to gaze at it and to enjoy its pleasant appearance and radiant beauty.

Matanas Chelko: but the condition here is only if you polish it time and time again until it becomes very, very, shiny, and you remove the blackness from it. Only then will you be able to see the beautiful form in its radiant beauty and all its colors so that you enjoy it properly.

The high picture, which you have no way to gaze at with your eyes, is the wisdom of the Creator, and His power, and the beauty of the upper world whose form and quality is hidden from us. The sheet metal is the soul of man, the polishing is the guiding it in the wisdoms and the intellectual and Torah morals. The anointings are the thirty ways of personal accounting, which I have mentioned to you.

Matanas Chelko: "the beauty of the upper world whose form and quality is hidden from us" - the intent is knowledge of G-d and grasping the wisdom and ability to know and understand that which is happening in the upper worlds.

"the anointings are the thirty ways of personal accounting" - and according to how much one anoints and polishes and shines the soul, so too, will he increase to see more and more in the upper worlds.

Behold, in truth this is also the levels of prophecy as our sages said (Yevamot 49b): "all the prophets looked at G-d, blessed be He, with a dim "aspelakria" (mirror) while Moshe Rabeinu, who saw G-d "face to face" (Devarim 34:10), saw with a clear "aspelakria". The matter is an analogy to understand the levels of their seeing. The "aspelakria" is a mirror (Keilim 30:2), and the Rambam explains (Shmonei Perakim ch.7) this matter that any bad trait in a man causes a separation barrier between himself and the Holy One, blessed be He. When there are no evil traits, there is no barrier and man clings to Him, blessed be He, and it is possible to see G-d through a clear mirror like the level of Moshe Rabeinu. It is written "the man Moshe was humbler than any other man on the face of the earth" (Bamidbar 12:3). This means Moshe had rectified all his traits until the final one which is the "I" of man, the trait of Humility. Therefore, his soul was pure to such an extent that there were no separation barriers between him and his Maker, and he would speak to the Master of the world, face to face, like a man speaks to his fellow.

Rabeinu writes that this blessing is a situation that every man can reach. Therefore, every polishing and every shining by doing the mitzvot and rectifying the character traits, purifies and illuminates the soul of man more and more, until he merits to reach additional levels from the Creator, blessed be He. Throughout the generations, and even in our generation there were men who reached lofty levels up to Ruach Hakodesh (holy spirit). But it is impossible to come to the level of prophecy since there is no Temple today.

When you put them to your heart, and establish them in your thoughts, your soul will cleanse, and your intellect will illuminate, and all types of hidden matters will picture in your mind, and you will see true forms with open eyes, and the gates of virtue will open, and the separation veil over your eyes which separates between you and between the wisdom of the Creator will be removed from you. And G-d will teach you supernal wisdom and beneficial acts and will grant you Divine powers, as written: "And the spirit of the L-ord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the L-ord" (Yeshaya 11:2), and "But it is a spirit in man and the breath of the Al-mighty that gives them understanding" (Iyov 32:8), and "If you seek her as silver and search for her as for hidden treasures; Then shall you understand the fear of the L-ord, and find the knowledge of G-d" (Mishlei 2:4-5).

*** CHAPTER 5 ***

- whether the spiritual accounting is a constant obligation

Whether this accounting is a constant duty on a man or only at some times but not at others, I say in response to this question as follows:

This accounting is a duty on a man according to his intellectual ability and level of understanding, at all times, with every blink of an eye, and if he can, with every one of his breaths, in order that he not part from awe, fear, and shame-facedness of the Almighty, may He be exalted, who constantly observes him.

Marpe Lenefesh: There is no hour or second that a man is not involved in one of the thirty accountings. Whether he is alone, or with people, or learning, or praying, or engaged in worldly matters, or in talking. Every act one does or thought one thinks, one can put to heart one, two, or more of the accountings that he remembers at that time and place. Examine and you will see.

Pas Lechem: (on the words "awe and fear") Awe refers to something far away, while fear refers to something close by. So too picturing G-d's loftiness, according to how distant it is from our ability to understand Him brings "awe". While picturing the verse "the entire world is full of His glory" and the nearness of His providence on us brings "fear".

Matanas Chelko: "with every one of his breaths" - our sages said (Bereishis Raba 14:9) on the verse "may every neshama (soul) praise G-d" (Tehilim 150:6) - on every breath (neshima) praise G-d". It seems this is Rabeinu's intent, that always, on every breath, one needs to make a cheshbon, and the "I have set G-d before me always" is needed on every breath.

If one asks: "if one needs to do a cheshbon every second, there will be no time left to learn Torah and do mitzvot". But the answer is that certainly when a person is doing a mitzva there is no need to do the cheshbon. For the cheshbons come to rouse a man to toil in Torah and mitzvot. This is the effect that results from them and their purpose... thus that which Rabeinu writes on "every breath". This refers to times when he is not toiling in clinging to G-d, namely, Torah study and fulfilling the mitzvot. Then he needs to make these cheshbons always to return him to clinging to G-d. (see there).

Let one learn from what G-d has commanded a king (of Israel) in saying: "*And it will be, when he sits upon his royal throne, that he shall write for himself this Torah on a scroll...And it shall be with him always, and he shall read it all the days of his life [so that he may learn to fear the L-ord, his G-d, to keep all the words of this Torah and these statutes, to do them]*" (Devarim 17:18), and "*This book of the Torah shall not leave your mouth; you shall meditate therein day and night [in order that you observe to do all that is written in it, for then will you succeed in all your ways and then will you prosper]*" (Yehoshua 1:8). And also (to every Jew in the Shema): "*And these words, which I command you this day, shall be on your heart*" (Devarim 6:6), and "*you shall bind them for a sign upon your hand, and they shall be Totafos between your eyes*" (Devarim 6:8). And He reinforced the matter in the chapter of Tzitzit in saying: "*this shall be Tzitzit for you, and when you see it, you will remember all the commandments of the L-ord to perform them, and you shall not wander after your hearts and after your eyes after which you go astray*" (Bamidbar 15:39), and then "*So that you shall remember and perform all My commandments and you shall be holy to your G-d*" (Bamidbar 15:40).

Matanas Chelko: "from what G-d has commanded a king" - the king specifically, since he is the "heart of all Israel" as the Rambam writes (Hilchot Melachim 3:5). He must conduct himself with a heavy head (not frivolous) - that all his thoughts be clinging to G-d and His Torah every second. Due to this, a sefer Torah must be with him everywhere he goes. In truth, this is so for every man. For it is written "this book of the Torah shall not leave your mouth; you shall meditate therein day and night" (Yehoshua 1:8). From there it seems that one must be clinging to G-d always.

What is there left, on the matter of arousing us on the spiritual accounting of remembering the Creator that He did not arouse us in?!

According to this, my brother, it is proper for you to conduct yourself, in habituating the accounting with yourself before G-d every hour and every moment.

Do not consider small in your eyes any good (any small mitzva - TL) that you do for His Name, even a word, or a gazing of the eye, because a little bit from you is a lot by Him, and likewise, for the matter of sins.

Matanas Chelko: do not say: what worth or value is there in one word of rousing oneself or one looking at the greatness and wisdom of the Creator?.. And in Nefesh HaChaim (Shaar 1:13) on the verse (Amos 4:13) "For lo, He forms the mountains and creates the wind, and declares to man what is his speech" (after man's death, G-d shows him the effects of his words in the mystical worlds). Here is an excerpt:

"he exhorts man here, that due to his being in this lowly world, he does not see or grasp the building and destruction, G-d forbid, that occurs above in the mystical worlds due to each and every word of his. He may even think to himself: 'what importance is there to a word or simple speech that it should affect anything in the world?'. But he should know faithfully that every word and [even] light speech which he utters is never lost and does not go to waste" end quote.

These words were said on a word and light talk. All the more so, that an action or deed makes a vast effect above.. thus there is no concept of "small thing", every second of cheshbon is a big matter.

Marpe Lenefesh: sometimes a man refrains from doing a good deed because the thing seems small in his eyes, such as a mitzva with a word, or looking at something for the sake of G-d. He thinks it is not worth anything in the eyes of G-d, and he says to himself, 'if so, why should I do it?' On this he wrote: 'Do not consider small in your eyes any good'. And here is an excerpt from the Chassid on the chapter "Yesh Nocholim":

"know that the commandments and warnings which appear very small and insignificant, and people are indifferent to them - they stand over the heights of the universe. It is impossible to imagine their measure or examine their effect by (limited) human intellect. It cannot be grasped except by true, holy, supernal sages who the light of G-d shines on. And every mitzva, even the smallest of the smallest, has a power and root in the divine chariot (kabala terms), from which the matter emanates down to the physical world. When one fulfills the mitzva, the corresponding supernal power is aroused in his root above, and there they are illuminated without limit, and he adds power and might to the Pamalya shel Maala (heavenly domain).

And if he does a sin, whether in speech or in deed, thereby strengthening the power of the "Samech-Mem" and his helpers (the forces of evil/impurity), he arouses the power of tuma and klipa of that matter which is aligned to him in the chariot of tuma. Therefore, G-d has commanded us specifically on these commandments and warnings and not on others. And likewise for all the Rabbinical commandments, which are also in this way, etc.... And let one imagine as if he is actually toiling in the corresponding matter on high, because even though he is a small creature, G-d has granted him power to arouse supernal powers on high.

This is what is meant by the verse "the portion of G-d is His people, Yaakov the rope of His inheritance" (Devarim 32:9), which means that G-d has granted of His honor to them, and He blew into their nostrils the soul of living spirit. And the part is attached to the whole, like a rope whose one end is tied to a high place and the second end is down below - one who grasps the end below and pulls it with all of his strength - he moves the other end above. And this is what they said in the mishna (Avot 2:1) "be careful of a light commandment just like for a severe one". End of excerpt.

A familiar analogy for this is the movement of the sun's position in the sky. When it moves one meter (if the sun's rays shine through a small hole to the ground, then when the dot moves one meter on the ground - TL), the astronomical distance covered is many, many kilometers, likewise for the movement of the shadow in the astrology tool.

Do not consider big in your eyes the acts that you do, even if you do them with intent for His Name. Because, if you make an exact accounting, you will see that for even a little bit of the smallest favors He has done for you, all the combined good deeds of all the inhabitants of the world doubled over would not be enough to pay Him back for it.

Pas Lechem: since all of the good deeds do not add any benefit whatsoever to Him. Nevertheless, you should know that in truth, a small act from you, He considers it as a lot. But from your perspective it should be the opposite - that even a big deed should not be big in your eyes, even if it is done for His Name, without any blemish or outside interest.

Matanas Chelko - even though one must consider every small act as big, but a man should not tell himself, if so, I have many good deeds. On this Rabeinu says: "Do not consider big..."

Therefore, do not neglect from doing your accounting between you and your Creator, on the great favors He has done for you, and His great kindnesses with you each and every day. If your heart does not turn to this during the day, let it be at night. If the entire day (and night) has passed, complete it the second day, as our sages said: "repent one day before your death" (Avot 2:10), and "Let your garments be white (clean) always" (Koheles 9:8).

Matanas Chelko - "every day" - at first Rabeinu wrote that in truth, one should do the cheshbon without any

interruption, on every breath. But since in practice, it is impossible to conduct oneself like this always. 59 Therefore, he writes that at least, do not neglect doing the cheshbon every day. And if one did not do it one day, let him do it at night or tomorrow. But to live without cheshbon is to live without clinging and without rousing to fulfill the Torah and mitzvot which G-d commanded us to do... However, this cheshbon is not done at the time one learns Torah or fulfills mitzvot. Only at times one is not involved in these things. For then, one needs to arrange a cheshbon in order to remain clinging to the Creator and His service, blessed be He. On this, he brought what our sages said: "repent one day before your death", which implies one needs to do a cheshbon every day.

*** CHAPTER 6 ***

- which actions should follow the accounting

What actions need to follow the accounting with oneself?

Matanas Chelko - i.e. since the cheshbon is done with one's intellect, therefore one needs to know what is the l'maase (practical action) that comes out of these cheshbons.

I say, this will be from a man according to the purity of the essence his soul, and according to what his soul received of the lights of truth which reach it from G-d, blessed be He.

Matanas Chelko: i.e. it depends on the purity of the man's soul who did the cheshbon and how much light he received from the Creator, blessed be He. Behold, Rabeinu's view has already been clarified (in this gate and gate#4) that everything one attains in Ruchnius (spiritual) and especially in actions is not in his hands. Rather, it comes solely from Heaven. There is nothing in man's hand except the will (and resolve) to do. The resulting act depends only and solely on the will of the Creator. Therefore, there is no room for this question and the answer is obvious.

But Rabeinu added depth to the matter, that even after all the cheshbons a man does, the effect that a man attains from the cheshbon depends on the purity of one's soul, and how much light he already received and attained. According to this, he can beseech G-d to grant him an impression and rousing. For one must understand and believe that the thought of "my strength and the might of my hands" in spiritual matters is mamash (literally) equal to the thought "my strength and the might of my hands" in physical matters. Man's free choice is only regarding the matter of the will, as Rabeinu wrote many times, that one needs to have a strong and powerful will. But after all the cheshbons and his will and rousing to the service of G-d, even the rousing itself depends solely on the will of the Creator. This is Rabeinu's intent in these words.

Because when the intellect of one who reflects on this accounting is pure, and he will understand the intent and desire in it, and he does it for G-d alone - he will attain the favor of the Creator who will help him to do His commandments, teach him by the light of truth which distances the ways of doubt from his heart, and will illuminate him with the light of wisdom so that his intellect will be bright, and his inner and outer being will be purely devoted to G-d, and he will be similar to what Iyov said: *"I put on righteousness and it clothed me; like a coat and a turban was my judgment"* (Iyov 29:14).

And then his soul will quiet, and his thoughts will calm from the worries of the world and its desires, and he will rejoice in the service of the Creator, and will delight in what he gazed of the secrets of wisdom and its lights. He will feel fortunate on what has reached him, of knowledge of the truth of the lower world and the upper world, and the good plan of G-d, and His conduct, and the fulfillment of His decrees on His creations, as David said: *"The righteous rejoice in the L-ord, and shall take refuge in Him"* (Tehilim 64:11), and *"let the heart of them rejoice that seek the L-ord"* (Tehilim 105:3), and *"Thus says the L-ord: Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; But let him that glory be in this - that he understands, and knows Me"* (Yirmiya 9:22-23).

(*Marpe Lenefesh*: (on the words "and he will rejoice in the service of the Creator") this is the main thing in the service of the Creator as written: "because you did not serve the L-ord your G-d with joy..." (Devarim 28:47), and likewise for many verses the author brought down in countless places. And I already wrote that the Arizal merited Ruach Hakodesh, and the rest of his levels because he was [extremely] joyous in doing his mitzvot and service. Thus it is written in the (Assara Maamerot number 3 and 4) Shl"A)

And this is the highest level in the knowledge of G-d, because one who truly knows Him will cling to His service and to fear of Him, according to the knowledge in his heart and mind, and he will fulfill the duties of the heart and limbs without effort and without hassle, but rather with desire and craving (in the mind - *PL*), and zeal (in the limbs - *PL*), as David said: *"I made haste, and delayed not, to observe Your commandments"* (Tehilim 119:60), and on this the wise man said: *"Happy is the man that finds wisdom, and the man that gets understanding"* (Mishlei 3:13), and *"Happy are they that keep justice, that do righteousness at all times"* (Tehilim 106:3).

Pas Lechem: "without effort" refers to the duties of the heart, that it won't be for him an effort and an exertion on the heart, while "without toil" refers to the duties of the limbs, because an act which causes sadness is called "toil" (*amal*), as written: "it is a toil in my eyes" (Tehilim 73:16).

May G-d place us among them, and enter us among their ranks, in His mercy, Amen.

Matanas Chelko: i.e. may G-d include us among those who merit *Siyata d'Shmaya* (divine help) and success in fulfilling the will of G-d. From Rabeinu's ending, it seems that in truth, the primary service of man is in doing the cheshbons that he wrote in this gate. His free choice is only in the will as before, and the explanation of "will" is to do cheshbons and devise strategies which will obligate and rouse him to do the will of G-d. In doing this, he fulfills the mitzvah of "you shall choose life" (Devarim 30:19). And every attainment and effect he merits, whether in knowledge or action, is only what G-d granted to him.

Therefore, Rabeinu stepped out here with special emotion. For in truth, practically speaking, this gate is the primary one of the book. All his other words [in the book], depend on *siyata d'shmaya* (divine help) relative to the things he explained in this gate which depend on rousing oneself, and this is done through Cheshbon HaNefesh (spiritual accounting).