



BAHYE'S INTRODUCTION TO HIDAYA: SELECTIONS

Gavriel Z. Bellino – November 30, 2016

Praised be God, the Lord of Israel, the true one, for He is of unique truth, eternal existence, and perpetual goodness. He created the beings as a demonstration of His oneness, made the creatures to be witnesses of His omnipotence, and formed nothingness into being to declare His wisdom and all-embracing graces...

Having created men and endowed them with speech and the qualities which distinguish them and perfect their understanding, God gave them the most noble of his graces—Wisdom. Wisdom is the life of their soul, the light of their mind, their way to the favor of God (glory and praise be unto Him), and their guardian from His anger in this world and the next, as the sage said (Prov. 2:6): For the Lord giveth wisdom, Out of His mouth cometh knowledge and discernment; (Job. 32:8): But it is a spirit in man, And the breath of the Almighty, that giveth them understanding; (Dan. 2:21): He giveth wisdom unto the wise, And knowledge to them that know understanding; (Isa. 48: 17): I am the Lord thy God, Who teacheth thee for thy profit, Who leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go.

Wisdom is divided into three parts. The first part is Physics, which is the science of the nature and accidents of bodies. The second part is Mathematics, which includes the sciences of arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music, or the composition of melodies. The third part is Metaphysics, the Knowledge of God—glory and praise be unto Him—and the Scriptures, as well as those other subjects that can be understood by the intellect, like the soul, the mind, and the spiritual persons.

All the parts of wisdom and their various branches are gates opened by God for the benefit of men, through which they may perceive religion and the world. But while some of these gates are specially concerned with religion, others are more proper for the uses of the world. The part of wisdom appropriate to this world is the lower wisdom, or the science of the nature and accidents of bodies—Physics, along with the middle wisdom, or the science of Mathematics. These two sciences concern not only all the secrets of this world, its benefits and uses to us, but they also introduce us to all the arts and all the ways of satisfying the needs of the body.

But the part of wisdom specially devoted to religion and its advantages is the supreme wisdom, the science of Metaphysics. It is our duty to seek this wisdom, in order that we may understand our religion.

Our sages have said we must not look to it for worldly gains (Tractate Nedarim 62a, citing Deut. 30:20): 'To love the Lord, thy God, to listen to His voice, and to cleave to Him,' has been thus expounded by our teachers: Let not a man say, 'I shall read the Scripture, in order that they may call me scholar. I shall study Mishnah, that they may call me rabbi. I shall study Mishnah, that I may be a senior, entitled to a seat at the college.' Learn from love, and honor will follow. Our wise men have further exhorted us, 'Do good deeds for the sake of Him who ordained their performance. Speak of them for their own sake. Make not of them a crown for self-aggrandizement, nor an axe wherewith to hew (a path to success).' R. Eleazar has thus expounded this text (Avodah Zarah 19a, citing Ps. 112:1): Happy is he who delighteth in His commandments, not in their reward, even as we read in the Mishnah (Ethics of the Fathers 1:3) 'Be not like servants who minister to their Master for the sake of receiving a reward; but be like servants who minister to their Master not for the sake of receiving a reward. And let the fear of Heaven be upon you.'

The gates opened by God for the knowledge of His religion and law are three in number, namely—the sane and sound mind, the true book of God as revealed to His messenger, and the traditions of our blessed prophets, which have been passed on orally by our pious sages. These have already been commented upon sufficiently by our Rabbi Saadia.

Religion itself is divided into two parts. One is the knowledge of the external duties of the body and its members; the other is the internal knowledge of the secret duties of the heart.

The duties of the members are also divided into two parts. The first part contains the duties imposed by the mind even if they had not been imposed by the Scriptures. The second part consists of duties imposed by revelation only, duties neither imposed nor forbidden by the mind, as, for instance, the ban on eating meat with milk, the ban on wearing a garment of mingled linen and wool, or the ban on sowing with mingled seeds. These are precepts the causes of whose prescription is concealed from us...

Among the positive commandments included in the duties of the heart are: to believe in the Creator of the world, who brought the world into existence from nothingness; to believe in pure monotheism, free from a belief in any other gods; to assent to obeying God in our hearts; to meditate upon the wonders of creation in order to arrive at the knowledge of Him; to rely completely upon Him; to be humble and submissive before Him; to exhibit a constant care and attention to our deeds lest we be ashamed before His constant scrutiny of all our acts and secrets; to feel a desire to please Him and consecrate all our work for His sake; to love those who love Him and hate those who hate Him. All of these duties and others like them have no effect on the members.

The negative commandments included in the duties of the heart are the opposites of those mentioned above, and, along with these, the feelings of envy, rancor, and vengeance against people of our own creed, as is written in the Scripture (Lev. 19:18): 'Thou shalt not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people.' Nor may man use the mind and heart for the purpose of sinning against God either by desiring to sin or by resolving to sin, although these thoughts occur to the human conscience, unknown to all but the holy Creator, as it is said (Jer. 17: 10): 'I the Lord search the mind and test the heart'; (Prov. 20:27): 'The spirit of man is the lamp of the Lord, Searching all the inward parts.'

As the religious commandments have an exterior part and an interior, or secret, part, I studied the books of our ancients who composed many books on the religious commandments after the time of the Talmudic sages, so that I might learn from them esoteric wisdom. I found that all their explanations and commentaries fall under one of the three following headings:

The first sort of writers gave the textual explanation of the book of God and the works of the prophets. One way was to explain the words and their meaning, as did Rabbi Saadia (GZB: Egypt/Baghdad, c. 882-942) in his commentaries to most of the Scriptures written in Hebrew. The other way was to discuss grammatically the phrases, their metaphorical sense, their declension and conjugation and correction. This is what Ibn Janah (GZB: Spain, c. 990 – c. 1050) did quite satisfactorily in his books and so did the authors of the Tradition and their followers.

The second gave a summary of the principle commandments, either all of them, like Rabbi Hefez ben Yazliah (GZB: Cairo 1000-1050, author of a *Sefer Hamitzvot*), or only the ones which are still valid in our times, as for instance the book *Halakhot Pesukot* (GZB: Yehudai Gaon – Sura, 8th century), *Halakhot Gedolot* (GZB: Yehudai Gaon and/or Simeon Kayyara, 8th century), and similar ones. Others gave just one part of them, like the books of the other Geonim, with their responsa concerning the duties of the body and matters of judgment.

The third way was to assert the spiritual matters included in the Law, by demonstration and by refutation of those who disagreed, as in the book *Faiths and Beliefs*, the book *The Essence of Religion*, and the books

written by al-Mukammatz and his followers. Having studied these books, I could not find among them even one dealing exclusively with the esoteric knowledge. When I found that this knowledge, the knowledge of the duties of the heart, was neglected, not contained in any book comprising all its origins, forsaken, with none of its chapters collected in one work, I was deeply astonished. I said to myself, 'It may be that this kind of duty is not obligatory upon us, but is commanded rather by way of morality, in order to show us the right way and the straight path. Perhaps it is to be considered supererogatory, for whose neglect we are neither questioned nor punished. This may be the reason why the ancients have left it unnoted.'

Then I examined the duties of the heart as they are commanded by the mind, the Scriptures, and tradition, so that I might see whether they were obligatory or not. And I found them to be the basis of all duties. Were they not, all the duties of the members would be of no avail. As I have said, the duties of the heart are commanded by the mind, for we have already shown that man is composed of a soul and a body—both are God's graces given to us, one exterior, one interior. Accordingly, we are obliged to obey God both outwardly and inwardly.

Outward obedience is expressed in the duties of the members, like prayer, fasting, almsgiving, learning His book and spreading the knowledge of it, fulfilling the commandments concerning the tabernacle, the palm branch, the fringes, the doorpost, the railing on the roof, and the like, all of which can be wholly performed by man's physical body.

Inward obedience, however, is expressed in the duties of the heart, in the heart's assertion of the unity of God and in the belief in Him and His book, in constant obedience to Him and fear of Him, in humility before Him, love for Him and complete reliance upon Him, submission to Him and abstinence from the things hateful to Him. Inward obedience is expressed in the consecration of all our work for His sake, in meditation upon His graces, in all the duties performed by faith and conscience without the activity of the external body-members.

Thus I have come to know for certain that the duties of the members are of no avail to us unless our hearts choose to do them and our souls desire their performance. Since, then, our members cannot perform an act unless our souls have chosen it first, our members could free themselves from all duties and obligations if it should occur to us that our hearts were not obliged to choose obedience to God. Since it is clear that our Creator commanded the members to perform their duties, it is improbable that He overlooked our hearts and souls, our noblest parts, and did not command them to share in His worship, for they constitute the crown of obedience and the very perfection of worship.

For this reason, we were commanded both outward and inward duties, so that our obedience to our glorious Creator might be complete, perfect, and all-embracing, comprising both our outer and inner parts, both mind and body. When this necessity became clear to me through logic, I said to myself, 'Perhaps the Scriptures are devoid of this matter, and this is why it has not been treated in any work that could direct us and show us the way.' Then I looked for its traces in the book of God and I found it repeated there many times (Deut. 6:5 ff.; 30:20; 11:13; 13:5):

And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be upon thy heart; to love the Lord thy God, to hearken to His voice, and to cleave unto Him; to love the Lord your God, and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul; After the Lord your God shall ye walk, and Him shall ye fear; (Lev. 19: 18): But thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself; (Deut. 10:12; 10: 19): And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God; Love ye therefore the stranger; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt. Fear and love are among the duties of the heart.

As for the negative commandments of the heart, I found many references to them (Deut. 5:21): Neither shalt thou covet thy neighbor's wife; neither shalt thou desire thy neighbor's house, his field, or his manservant, or his maid-servant, his ox, or his ass, or anything that is thy neighbor's; (Lev. 19:18; 19:17): Thou shalt not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people; Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart; (Num. 15:39): And that ye go not about after your own heart and your own eyes; (Deut. 15:7): thou shalt not harden thy heart, nor shut thy hand from thy needy brother. And the whole of obedience is reduced to the heart and the tongue in the saying (Deut. 30:11 f.): 'For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not too hard for thee, neither is it far of. It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say: "Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, and make us to hear it, that we may do it?" ' So do the other books of the prophets abound in this, but I shall not cite them here, for the sayings are many and well known.

Having verified the need for the duties of the heart in the book of God, as well as by logic, I turned aside to examine the matter in the tradition of our ancient sages. In their sayings, I found it to be even more obvious and distinct than in the Scriptures, or through the use of logic. Some of their sayings are general (Sanhedrin 106b; Jerus. Berakh. 1). 'God requireth the heart'; and 'The heart and the eye are the two agents of sin.' Some are particular, like those in the Sayings of the Fathers which are too long to cite here. Then I found many references to this matter in the stories of the lives of the sages, which have been transmitted to us, when they were asked (Megillah 27b), 'How have you reached this old age?' Again in the Scriptures, in connection with him who kills unintentionally (Num. 35:11): 'That the manslayer that killeth any person through error may flee thither,' I have found that he is not worthy of death. This is true also of him who inadvertently violates one of the negative commandments for whose violation we are usually punished with one of the four deaths, or extirpation. When the act is done unintentionally the sinner is deemed guilty only of sin-offering or guilt-offering. This leads us to the conclusion that what determines the punishment is the participation of both heart and body in the act —the heart in the intention and the body in carrying out the heart's intention. The same is said of him who does good, but not for the sake of God. He gets no reward for it. Since, now, the foundation and the pillar of action is the intention of the heart and conscience, the knowledge of the duties of the heart should come before and stand above the knowledge of the duties of the members.

Although I was now convinced of the necessity of esoteric knowledge, through logic, still I hesitated: 'Maybe this kind of duty is not obligatory upon us everywhere and at all times, like the commandments concerning cancellation of debts and the fallowness of the soil in the Sabbatical year, jubilee, and sacrifices.' Considering this carefully, I found, however, that these duties are always obligatory upon us, as long as we live, without a break or possibility of excuse, exactly like the duty of the heart to assert the unity of God, and the duty of the conscience to obey and fear and love Him and perform His commandments, as the sage said (Ps. 119:5): 'Oh that my ways were directed to observe Thy statutes!' It is obligatory exactly like the duty of reliance upon and submission to Him, as it is said (Ps. 62:9): 'Trust in Him at all times, ye people,' and the duty to expel hate and jealousy from our hearts and abstain from those vestiges of this world which interfere with our devotion to God.

These obligations are upon us constantly, everywhere and at all times, accompanying every hour, every minute, every situation, as long as our minds and souls are yet with us. This is like the case of a servant ordered by his master to do two kinds of work. Indoors he must tend to the house, outdoors he must cultivate the soil at certain fixed times. If he misses the right time or is unable to do his work in the field, the obligation to work outdoors is cancelled. But he cannot be freed of his responsibilities indoors as long as he remains in the house and is serving his master. When he is undisturbed, the obligation to work indoors binds him constantly. In the same way, O my brother, the 'duties of the heart are binding upon us without any excuse, and nothing really prevents us from performing them except the love of this world and our ignorance of God, as it is said (Isa. 5:12): 'And the harp and the psaltery, the tabret and the pipe, And wine, are in their feasts; But they regard not the work of the Lord, Neither have they considered the operation of His hands.'

I said to myself further, 'Perhaps this kind of obligation is not divided into numerous duties, and this is the reason why it has never been explained at length or written down in a special book.' When I counted them, I found that their details were very numerous, and I understood that the sayings (Ps. 119:96): 'I have seen an end to every purpose; But Thy Commandment is exceeding broad' was indeed meant for the duties of the heart. For the duties of the members are limited in number, about 613 commandments in all, while the duties of the heart are many and their details innumerable.

'Perhaps they are so clear and so simple, and people's devotion to them so strong, that they do not need any further enlightenment,' I said to myself, and I went on to observe people's behavior through the ages, as it is described in books. Except for the few, I found that men were far from fulfilling these duties, in accordance with the traditions about them. The common folk have always needed urging and teaching, and this is especially true of those of our own times, who neglect even the knowledge and practise of the duties of the members, not to mention the duties of the heart. I saw that even he who did interest himself in the study of the Law applied himself only to those things which would make him wise in the eyes of fools, or would make him seem learned to those who pretend to be scholars. On the whole, he has wandered away from the study of the Law to things which neither benefit him nor elevate him spiritually, things the ignorance of which would not even be noticed. Thus he neglects the study of the roots of his religion and the foundations of his Law, which he cannot afford to ignore or neglect because the commandments cannot be fulfilled without both knowledge and practise.

There is, for instance, the matter of the assertion of the unity of God. Must we examine it with our minds, or is it enough to assert it by tradition only, saying, 'Our Lord is One,' as the fools do, with neither proof nor demonstration? Must we inquire after the meaning of 'the true one' and 'the admissible one?' Must we differentiate between this meaning and the meaning of other existing entities? These are questions the believer cannot afford to ignore, and the Scriptures insist on that, saying (Deut. 4:39): 'Know this day, and lay it to thy heart, that the Lord, He is God in heaven above and upon the earth beneath; there is none else.' The same is true for the rest of the duties of the heart, those which we have already mentioned as well as those which will be described later. The believer's faith is not perfect unless he both knows and practises the duties of the heart. This is the inward knowledge, the light of the heart, the fire of the soul. This is meant by the sage when he says (Ps. 51 :8): 'Behold, Thou desirest truth in the inward parts: Make me, therefore, to know wisdom in mine inmost heart.'

It is told about one of the sages that he used to sit in audience till noontime. Then, being left alone with his companions, he used to say, 'Now let us have the secret light,' meaning the knowledge of the duties of the heart.

Another sage was once asked about a difficult divorce problem. His answer was, 'O you who ask me about some- thing the ignorance of which cannot harm you at all. Have you already completed the study of those duties which you cannot afford to ignore and must not neglect, that you find leisure to turn to these difficult and complicated problems, the knowledge of which would not add anything to your faith and religion, nor correct any of your soul's vices? As for me, I swear I have devoted thirty-five years to the study of the obligations my religion imposes upon me. You know the scope of my endeavors and the number of books I have read, and still I have no time to spare for the kind of thing you have just questioned me about.' He then continued to blame and reprove that man strongly.

Another sage is quoted as saying, 'I have spent twenty-five years learning the true meaning of my acts of worship.' Still another said, 'There are certain parts of knowledge which are buried in the hearts of the sages like hidden treasures; as long as they stay hidden nobody knows about them. But the moment they are uncovered, their truth becomes manifest to all.' This is analogous to the saying (Prov. 20:5): 'Counsel in the heart of man is like deep water; but a man of understanding will draw it out,' and its meaning is as follows: True knowledge is hidden and buried in the nature of each man and within his discriminative faculty, like the water that is buried in the depths of the earth. A man endowed with a sound mind and a

sound understanding directs his efforts to detecting and uncovering that which is hidden within him, in order to draw it out of his soul, in the same way as men seek after the water which is buried in the depths of the earth. I asked one of those who claim to know the Law about the esoteric knowledge I have mentioned, and he answered, 'In this and, similar things, tradition can serve in the place of speculation.' I said, 'What you have said may be true for those whose little discrimination and small understanding disqualify them from speculation, like women or children, or the fools among men, but those whose reasoning faculties and discrimination qualify them for speculation on the truth of their traditions, and fail to do so through laziness and contempt for the word of God and His Law--these people cannot be excused and should be blamed for their neglect.'

This is like the case of the servant who was appointed by the king to confiscate money from his subjects and then to count it and weigh it. The servant was a clever man, an expert in the job of counting and weighing that which had been given to him. The subjects, however, approached him gently and he put his faith in them. Then they brought the money, pretending that its sum and its weight and its quality were all perfect. The servant believed everything they said about the money because he was too lazy to check the truth of their claims, and thus he failed to obey the king's orders. The king heard of this. He sent for the money and asked his servant about its true weight, its general sum and quality. The servant had no answer, and even if the money had been found to be as the subjects claimed, he would have had to suffer the king's punishment, because he had neglected his master's orders and relied on the claim of others when it was in his power to verify it for himself. Were he ignorant, how-ever, in matters of counting and weighing money, he would not have deserved punishment for believing the subjects. The same with you, O my brother! If the thing you are required to verify logically is impossible for you to understand, as, for instance, the reasons for the commandments accepted by revelation, then your excuse is valid and your reluctance to speculate about it is permissible. Or, if you are a man of weak mind and little discrimination, so that you cannot make the effort to understand, then your neglect of speculation is excused, since your way of worship is like that of women and children, who accept things by tradition. On the other hand, if you are a man of sound mind and understanding, which qualify you to verify the traditions passed down to you from the prophets concerning the roots of religion and the origins of the acts of worship—then you are obliged to use your faculties in order to verify things both logically and by tradition. Your neglect will then be considered a shortcoming in carrying out the duties imposed upon you by God.

This matter is made clear in two ways. One of them is found in the saying of the Scriptures (Deut. 17:8): 'If there arise a matter too hard for thee in judgment between blood and blood, between plea and plea, and between stroke and stroke, even matters of controversy within thy gates; then shalt thou arise, and get thee up unto the place which the Lord thy God shall choose.'... It did not say that in these matters you should be satisfied with following the tradition of the elder masters in religion and go in their footsteps only, but rather it said that you should employ your understanding and use your mind in these matters. In other words, after having accepted these things by way of tradition, which means all the religious commandments, both roots and branches, you must continue to speculate upon them with your mind...

The second argument is in another saying of the Scriptures (Isa. 40:28): 'Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard that the ever-lasting God, the Lord, The Creator of the ends of the earth, Fainteth not, neither is weary? His discernment is past searching out.' The words 'Hast thou not known' stand for knowledge by demonstration, while the words 'Hast thou not heard' stand for the way of tradition and imitation. In the same fashion, the verse (ibid. 40:21) gives the priority to knowledge by demonstration over that which comes by tradition and imitation...

Since I have realized the importance of the duties of the heart and our obligation to perform them, as I have described above, and since I have found them neglected and not gathered in a special book, and since I have observed the way our contemporaries overlook them in both theory and practice, it has become one of God's finest favors done unto me to draw my notice to the encouragement of this inner knowledge.

As a result, I turned to the traditions of our ancient righteous forefathers, and I found that their devotion to the duties involving their own souls was much stronger and deeper than was their interest in the various branches of jurisprudence or in the usually complicated problems of theology....

Thus it became clear to me that acts intended for the sake of God are based on a pure heart and an innocent conscience, and that when intentions are defective, deeds are not acceptable to God, numerous and insistent as they may be...

... You must know also that the purpose and advantage of the duties of the heart is to make our outer and inner worship of God equal and balanced, so that the heart, the tongue, and the other members are all witnesses to our obedience, each one confirming the other and giving testimony in its favor, not opposing the other by disagreement. This is what the Scriptures call 'just' and 'whole-hearted': (Deut. 18:13): Thou shalt be whole-hearted with the Lord thy God; (Gen. 6:9): Noah was in his generations a man righteous and wholehearted; Noah walked with God; (Pss. 15:2; 101:2): He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, And speaketh truth in his heart; I will give heed unto the way of integrity; Oh when wilt Thou come unto me? I will walk within my house in the integrity of my heart.

About the one whose exterior and interior are not in harmony, they say (1 Kgs. 11:4): 'For it came to pass when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods; and his heart was not whole with the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father'; (Ps. 78:36): 'But they beguiled Him with their mouth, And lied unto Him with their tongue.'

It is well known that a man who is in disagreement with himself, whose right hand belies his left, is never thought to be truthful, is never considered perfect. In the same way, when our exterior opposes our interior, when our intention contradicts our words, when our conscience is not at one with the actions of our body, then is our worship of our Creator imperfect, for He does not accept an obedience that is false and counterfeit. This is stressed in the Scriptures (Isa. 1 :13; 61 :8): Bring no more vain oblations; It is an offering of abomination unto Me; New moon and sabbath, the holding of convocations —I cannot endure iniquity along with the solemn assembly; For I the Lord love justice, I hate robbery with iniquity; And I will give them their recompense in truth, And I will make an everlasting covenant with them; (Mal. 1 :8): And when ye offer the blind for sacrifice, it is no evil! And when ye offer the lame and sick, it is no evil! Present it now unto thy governor; Will he be pleased with thee? Or will he accept thy person? Saith the Lord of hosts; (1 Sam. 15:22): And Samuel said: Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, As in hearkening to the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For the same reason, a man's one good deed can outweigh many good deeds performed by himself or another, and the same is true of an evil act. All is according to intention and purpose. The thought of a good deed by a true worshipper and his desire to carry it out, even if he prove unable to do so, may be balanced against many a good deed carried out by others, as it is said (2 Chr. 6:8): But the Lord said to David my father: Whereas it was in thy heart to build a house for My name, thou didst well that it was in thy heart; (Mal. 3: 16): Then they that feared the Lord spoke one with another; And the Lord hearkened, and heard, And a book of remembrance was written before Him, For them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name. The last verse was commented upon by our sages (Shabbat 63a): 'That thought upon His name' the Rabbis explain thus, 'If one intended to fulfil a duty but was prevented from realizing his intention, it is accounted to him as if he had done it.'

When I had learned the great stress that reason, Scriptures, and tradition put on the duties of the heart, I began to train my soul in them, urging my soul to embrace both the theory and the practice. Whenever I discovered one aspect of these duties, it led me to another, and that one to still another, until their magnitude became wide and too difficult to remember with precision. Fearing the oblivion of what I had retained in my heart, fearful that I might forget what I had accumulated in my mind, remembering the little help I could get in this matter from my contemporaries, I decided to put it down in a book in a Diwan form, in a book which would contain all the roots as well as some of the branches. This way I could always

urge my soul to know these duties and fire it to fulfill them. Whenever my work lives up to my intention, I am grateful to God, who helps me in this undertaking. Whenever it conflicts or falls short, I blame only myself, reproving my soul and confronting it with my intention until truth makes clear my soul's corruption and its deviation is corrected by certainty, its confusion by uprightness and its defect by perfection. Furthermore, I have decided to give it a permanent form, so as to make of it an eternal treasure and a perpetual light, that people may be guided by its fire and directed in its way. Thus others may benefit by it more than myself. This would be more than my full share. With this purpose in mind, I decided to write a book, and to divide it according to the rules of the duties of the heart and the obligations of conscience.

I was determined to include in it enough of the different aspects of this knowledge to point out to men the paths of righteousness, to direct them in the way of the just, guide them back to the laudable customs of the ancients, lead them to emulate the pious ones, warn them against heedlessness and wake them from sloth. I wanted to point out to men the finest details of this science. I wanted to inspire them with the knowledge of God and His Law and to urge upon them the search for deliverance. I wanted to arouse the worshipper, raise up him who is reluctant, lead aright him who is eager but hasty, encourage the slow and the tardy, manage the novice and set aright him who is perplexed.

When I had decided to carry out my determination to write this book, I did not seem to myself worthy of undertaking such a work, and I felt that I would not be able to accomplish it as fully as it deserved. For I am full of shortcomings, my knowledge is insufficient, my understanding of the full import of things is inadequate, and I am not fluent enough in the Arabic language and grammar, in which I meant to express myself so that my book would be more easily understood by the people of my generation. Fearing the excessive efforts it would involve, fearing the possibility of missing the mark and failing to accomplish my purpose, I was persuaded to give it up and retreat from my enterprise.

But when I had made up my mind to throw off this burden and I had reconciled myself to abandoning the work, I was struck with self-reproach for having preferred the peace of mind and tranquility of idleness. I suspected that it was my evil instinct that seduced me into giving up my undertaking and that drove me to seek rest and ease by tempting me to admit my failure and be satisfied with indolence. Knowing that many a disappointment is caused by needless fear and many a privation by over-cautiousness, and remembering the ancient saying, 'Cautiousness consists of not being too cautious.' I said to myself, 'If everyone who intended to do something good, to demonstrate the right way or to proclaim justice, kept silent until he felt himself perfectly qualified, there would have been no word uttered since the days of the prophets whom God purified for the sake of His mission and then crowned with success. If every man who desired the perfect attainment of all good qualities and found himself unable to achieve them wholly, thereupon gave up even those which by God's favor he could reach, all men would have been remiss in doing the good, void of all virtues, wandering in the desert of frustration, while the paths of goodness were abandoned and the dwellings of virtue uninhabited.' I came to understand that the human soul leans greedily toward the essence of evil, that it is reluctant to do good and idle in the search for virtue, playing always in the field of light amusement. Whenever it is aroused by the fire of lust, it seeks false excuses in order to respond, alters the argument to follow the lead of lust, strengthens the reasons in its favor, disregards arguments against it. On the other hand, when it is called by the light of truth, it invents vain excuses to avoid it, twists the argument to escape it, contradicts it fearfully. Every man's foe is within him, unless God provides him with immunity, and his soul with an ever-present guardian endowed with the overwhelming power to restrain it with the reins of discipline, bind it with the bridle of justice and give it a taste of the bitterness of the moralizing whip. When this kind of man intends to do good, he achieves it immediately, for when his soul entices him to something else, he reproves it and overcomes it.

As a result, I decided to force my soul to undertake the burden of the composition of this book, expressing its import in whatever phrase I could find, using any utterance that occurred to me, no long as it conveyed the meaning. I shall mention only those details of the duties of the heart which will come to my attention, without trying to achieve any exhaustive perfection, for this would make my book too long. I shall rather

mention the principles of each of the rudiments in its appropriate chapter. In this task I hope for the help of God, the One and Real, who is my only support and whom I ask to succor me and lead me by His grace to the knowledge and the practise, both outward and inward, which are acceptable and satisfactory to Him.

Having made up my mind and sealed my decision concerning the composition, having constructed its foundations, prepared its bases, and built it on ten pillars which include all the duties of the heart, I divided it into ten chapters, each one devoted to one of the roots and discussing its parts and limits, its consequences and obstacles. I adopted the course of warning people, directing and guiding them by using the most common and the clearest expressions to make it easy for them to understand my meaning...

Since I was determined to establish in this book the roots of the duties of the heart, I used my own judgment in choosing those roots which include the others.

(1) Declaring the pure assertion of the unity of God the supreme root and the highest principle, I went on to examine the well-known duties which stem from this assertion, those which must follow from it. Knowing for certain that the Creator is the only one who is real, indescribable either by substance or by accident, I recognized the limitations of the mind, which cannot conceive of anything indescribable either by substance or by accident. I realized then that it would be impossible for us to conceive of Him by way of His essence and I saw that (2) we must know Him and conceive of His existence by way of His creatures. This is the chapter dealing with meditation upon creation. This I established as the second root of the whole of the duties of the heart. Observing the sovereignty of the only real One and the obedience due Him by His creatures, I established (3) obedience to God as the third root of the whole of the duties of the heart. Observing the unique role of the only real One in the management of everything, seeing that both reward and punishment come solely from His hands, He having no peer to share this power with Him, I found (4) that we should rely wholly on Him and surrender ourselves to Him. So I established reliance as the fourth root of the whole of the duties of the heart. Thinking of the meaning of the only real One, whose unique essence has neither peer nor equal, I concluded (5) that we should also give Him our undivided obedience and worship, devoting all our acts purely to His name, for an act done also for the sake of some- thing else is unacceptable to Him. So I established the pure worship of God as the fifth root of the whole of the duties of the heart. Turning my mind to the praise and glorification we owe to the only real One because of His uniqueness, and to the resulting humbleness He therefore deserves from us, I established (6) humility as the sixth root of the whole of the duties of the heart. Considering the manner in which people are accustomed to neglect the obligation of obedience to God and their failure to offer it, and knowing that the way to correct these errors and failures is through repentance and atonement, I established (7) repentance as the seventh root of the whole of the duties of the heart. Searching for the way in which we may achieve perfect realization of our obligations to God, our duties both external and internal, I found that we can achieve it only by (8) reckoning with our souls for the sake of God and by urging them to their duties. So I established self-reckoning as the eighth root of the whole of the duties of the heart. Returning my thought to the meaning of the only real One, I found that the pure assertion of the unity of God cannot be truly accom- plished in the believer's soul so long as his heart is drunk with the wine of love for this world and inclined to its beastly lusts. Only if he endeavors to (9) empty his heart and purify his mind of the vestiges of this world, only if he abstains from all its pleasures, is the perfect assertion of the unity of God achieved in his heart and only then can the virtue of his soul be saved. So I established asceticism as the ninth root of the whole of the duties of the heart. Finally (10) I examined our obligation to love and to please the Lord and to fear his anger. This is the essence of happiness and of misfortune, as it is said (Ps. 30:6): 'For His anger is but for a moment, His favour is for a life-time; weeping may tarry for the night, but joy cometh in the morning,' for the Creator is the goal of all hope and the purpose of every wish, He is the beginning and the end. So I established the love of God as the tenth root of the whole of the duties of the heart.

When I reached these conclusions through the use of my own judgment, I examined them in the light of the Scriptures and tradition, and I found that they were often repeated there too. I shall expound it later, with the help of God. Everything is in its proper place. Then I gave my book the title which suited my purpose, namely— The Book of Direction to the Duties of the Heart. My intention has been to attract, gently, the attention of our co-religionists and the followers of our Law who have neglected their duties. I have used persuasive arguments whose truth and justice may be easily accepted by anyone's mind, except for those quarrelsome and vain people who deny them because the truth is too heavy a burden for them. These seek only to make things easy for themselves. I shall not even bother to answer them, for my purpose in this book is not to refute those who contradict the basis of our faith, but rather to uncover the roots of our religion and the principles of our Law hidden in pure minds and buried in our souls. Whenever we employ our thoughts to find them, their truth leaps clearly to our conscience and their light is demonstrated by our members.

This is like the case of the expert astrologer, who, when he entered his friend's house, sensed a treasure hidden therein. When he found the treasure, he saw that it consisted of blackened silver, its form altered by rust and dirt. He took some of it, treated it with salt and vinegar and washed it until it was restored to its original beauty and splendor. He told his friend to do the same with the rest of the treasure. As for me, I have longed to do the same with the treasures of the heart, namely, to uncover them and reveal the brightness of their virtues, so that he who desires to draw nearer to God may imitate this example. When you read this book, O my brother, and understand its import, take it as a talisman so that you may judge your soul. Repeat it often, drawing your own conclusions and keeping it close to your heart and soul. Correct every error you may find in it and amend each failure. Your purpose in it is to do as it directs, not to acquire knowledge which may bring you praise and glory. Be generous in forgiving me the faults and errors you may discern, as well as what may seem to you my shortcomings either in thought or in expression, for I was in a hurry and did not delay in the writing because I feared death would overtake me and cut short my work...

Therefore, keep it close to your heart and repeat it constantly in your mind. When your intention and desire to follow them become evident, all the details will appear to you clearly, with the help of God, as it is said (Ps. 25: 12 ff.): 'What man is he that feareth the Lord? Him will He instruct in the way that He shall choose. His soul shall abide in prosperity; And his seed shall inherit the land. The counsel of the Lord is with them that fear Him; and His covenant, to make them know it.'

I found it worth my while to end the introduction to my book with a fine parable which will stimulate you to apprehend the purpose of this book and help you to appreciate the place of this kind of duty among the rest, as well as the place of the whole of this knowledge of the Law among the other sciences—physics, mathematics, and logic. Try to understand while you read and while you repeat it in your mind, and you will reach the truth, if God so wishes. This then is the parable: A king divided some silk material among his servants in order to examine their skills. The clever servant, gifted with a sound judgment, chose the best part in his lot, then the best of what was left, thus dividing his material into three kinds, good, medium, and worthless. He used each kind separately and made of it the best garment possible, employing various artisans to sew for him silken garments, each different in color and style. These he wore while serving the king, each according to the time and place appropriate to it. But the foolish servant went out and made his whole lot of silk into worthless garments. Then he sold them for the little money he could get for them and hastened to spend it on good food and delicious drink. The king heard of this and he was satisfied with what his clever servant had done. He drew him nearer, made him his favorite and gave him a rank equal to that of his special officers. As for the foolish servant, the king found his deed abominable and exiled him to the most deserted place in his kingdom, where he stayed with others who had aroused the anger of the king. In the same way, O my brother, God has revealed to His creatures His perfect Scripture, in order to test us.

The wise and sagacious man, gifted with sound judgment, when he reads the book of God and understands it thoroughly, divides it into three parts. First comes the knowledge of the subtle spiritual meanings which constitute the inner knowledge to whose practise he should devote himself constantly—the duties of the heart and the obligations of the soul. Secondly, he should extract from it another part, the knowledge of the duties of the members, all in their appropriate time and place. Finally, he should apply the third part to the study of history, so that he may know the classes of people and their succession in past generations, as well as the stories and anecdotes passed down from ancient times. He should fit every detail into its proper place as is necessary, using for this purpose the help of the various sciences, like mathematics, demonstration and logical argumentation. All of these are but introductions to the supreme science of metaphysics. Whoever ignores these duties cannot discern the marks of the Creator's wisdom in His world and is a boor in what relates to his own body, not to speak of the bodies of others. The clever servant used the tools of the various artisans to make what he wanted to out of the king's silk, but the foolish boor, having been given the book of God, uses it to learn the history and anecdotes of past generations. He hastens only to enjoy through it the pleasures of this world and he uses it to forward his false ways – the pursuit of his lust, the neglect of asceticism. And he imitates the different classes of people and their various natures and habits. This is meant by the saying (Prov. 5:23): 'He shall die for lack of instruction; And in the greatness of his folly he shall reel.'

Consider this parable, O my brother; ponder upon it and think it over. Try to understand my warnings by considering the book of your Lord. Help yourself in this task by reading the books of our Rabbi Saadia, for they bring light to the heart, sharpen the mind, direct the careless, and arouse the idle. May God help you and me to obey Him and may He direct us by His mercy to the path of His worship, as He was entreated by the sage (Ps. 16:10):

For Thou wilt not abandon my soul to the nether-world; Neither wilt Thou suffer Thy godly one to see the pit.

Gate One – On the Unity of God: The Explanation of the aspects of the Pure Assertion of the Unity of God, the Glorious and Omnipotent

Gate Two – On the Explanation of the Aspects of Meditation upon Creation and God's Abundant Grace Shown in It

Gate Three – On the Explanation of the Aspects of our Obligation to Obey God

Gate Four – On the Explanation of the Aspects of our Obligation to Rely on God

Gate Five – On the Explanation of the Aspects of our Obligation to Do everything Purely for the Sake of God and to Avoid Hypocrisy

Gate Six – On the Explanation of the Aspects of our Obligation to be Humble and Lowly Before God

Gate Seven – On the Explanation of the Aspects of our Obligation of Repentance, its limitations and Consequences

Gate Eight – On the Explanation of the Aspects of our Obligation to Reckon with the Soul for the Sake of God

Gate Nine – On the Explanation of the Aspects of our Obligation of Asceticism and its Advantages

Gate Ten – On the Explanation of the Aspects of our Obligation of the Love of God and its Stages