

you. He, Who sees thought, feeling and act as they emerge, and Who sees you sin, He is also Judge of the sin—and a just Judge. See, He has founded His world on justice, He has made right and truth the measuring rod of the universe. Everywhere we see cause and effect, premise and consequence, nothing without effect, everything with its corresponding result, the impact corresponding to the force, the fruit to the seed. And shall only the seed of your thought, your words, your actions, your enjoyments have no fruit, fruit corresponding to the seed? Where you have sown evil do you think to reap good? Where you have sown curses shall blessings blossom forth? The scales and the cup are in God's hand. The scales weigh your life, and according to the balance the cup of life hands you curses or blessings—if not in this place then in the other. And will you rob your life of its value through sin? Will you be so wrong-headed as not to see that, instead of building up your life with the enjoyment, the advantage, the satisfaction which sin offers you, you completely ruin it?

47 Lastly, the eminence and holiness of God: These in themselves, without any thought of retributive punishment, must, if there is a spark of higher feeling left in you, check in you any incipient thought of sin. Have you never felt the impression left by a great, noble, and pure-minded man on your spirit? Have you never heard how even inveterate evildoers, at the mere sight of a man of true inward greatness, have been filled with such respect that their evil intent has died away and the hand which they raised to commit a crime has fallen back? And this was but the nobility of man. If you step before God, His majesty, His holiness will stifle in you every rising thought of sin. It is the purest fear of God, difficult to attain, hardly easier to describe.

48 Early in life, therefore, sons and daughters of Israel, open your minds to the greatness of your God, advance with your fathers to Sinai, and just as they beheld there God's greatness, majesty and omnipotence, beheld how He, and He alone, is in everything, in the greatest as in the smallest, and the whole universe is enclosed in His greatness, so do you everywhere stand at Sinai, let God everywhere reveal Himself to you, in everything great and small. Seek Him everywhere. Everything which has been, which is, which will be—above all, everything which has happened and will happen to you, refer everywhere and always to God, and think of it as being only from God. So will every creature, even the smallest, every change, even the slightest, every fleeting moment, recall 'God' to you. The omnipotent, holy God will be everywhere present to you in His all-embracing greatness, so that you may be servants to Him and not sin. Show that you are the descendants of those who beheld the greatness of God in Egypt, at the Red Sea, at Sinai.

LOVE OF GOD

אהבה

Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and all thy soul, and all thy might. DEUT. VI, 5.

'To love' means to feel one's own being only through and in the being of another. 'To love God,' therefore, means to feel that one's own existence and activity are rendered possible and obtain value and significance only through God and in God. You exist and are something only through God; and therefore in all that you are and do, you have only to strive to reach God—that is, to perform His will. To love God and to love His Torah is the same thing; for to love God means nothing until you begin to love His Torah.

Your being and your doing are only through God. If you wish to understand this properly, fix your eye and your mind on the benefits which you receive from Him. Count them from the cradle to the grave and beyond the grave. Think how, for thousands of years before you came into existence, God was already your Benefactor, since He makes you the heir of what has been done, suffered, practised and learnt through mistakes and failures during thousands of years, and how, through this inheritance, the present moment means to you what it does. Count your physical powers, your material means and resources, the fellow-men whose association is so useful to you both in body and mind. Look at your mind with its capacities and powers, at your heart with all its life-currents. Consider that with all this you have been born to be a man and an Israelite, and that this calling is revealed to you in the Torah. And note that all this has been granted to you and received by you only from the hands of God, that it is received and blessed afresh every day and hour and moment through His love and kindness and grace, how He is everywhere around you, protecting, warning, instructing and improving you. Can you doubt then that all that you are and do comes only from God?

'Your life possesses value and significance, it is something, only through God.' This is what you must feel above all, in all your being. Granted that you have body and mind, wealth and friends, profession and learning—yet if you cast God aside, God, Who turns your time upon earth and the good which you perform into a contribution to the

upbuilding of His world—cast Him aside, the great Architect of the universe, for Whom you, with all your performance, are merely a solitary stone which only His wisdom turns to account in the general structure—cast Him aside, and what would you be with all your possessions and all your activity? With all your wealth so poor, with all your strength so circumscribed, with all your power so impotent! You and your performance—how infinitesimal in the whole! And transient at that! You know the portrait of man—the fleeting vapour, the vanishing shadow, the withering blossom, the dream. And if you have worked successfully all your life, and built something great and fine—the hour calls and you must away, destitute, all your great and fine achievements exposed to annihilation. But you still have God, Who receives the smallest good which you perform according to His will, and adds bit to bit, Who assists even your error to become truth, so that no act, no word, no thought even is lost, if only it was true and right and good. Through God your smallest becomes great, your most transitory eternal. Even if it is unrecognized by men, unknown even to yourself, however small it is, if only it is good, just and noble—in God's hand it all becomes a contribution to the great and eternal structure.

- 52 O, you young men and young women of Israel! Would that you could but grasp the deep happiness enshrined in the proud thought: 'I am an entity in God's world.' Would that from the blade of grass, the flower and the breeze you could learn to become imbued with the sublimeness which permeates all created things, which possesses the angels and which fills one with serenity and blessedness—would that, even for a fleeting moment, you occupied the place which God has allotted to you! But, nay, you struggle and eke out your time in the pursuit of wealth and pleasure—for yourself, and yourself alone—and even the good you do is but for yourself, ignoring that you are the servant of God, God's emissary. With worldly possessions alone, with the enjoyment of pleasures, you are naught. Perhaps as a physical body you may have some meaning; but created matter is subject to change—it wastes, it decays and becomes merely food for creatures who are better than you in that their life is devoted to just such a purpose and who therefore fulfil better than you do their whole object in life. But you, who are that quintessence, man and Jew, you persist in the emptiness of your spiritual outlook, declining to use your free will in the service of God. If only you could be elevated into serenity, into a condition which absorbs your whole self and provides you with serenity only in God and in the Torah which expounds your mission in life—then would you cast aside your idols of silver and your idols of gold and your arch-idol 'pleasure' and all the baubles of your age—to speed to God, so that you may realize yourself. You would then have become one who loves God.

Cast them aside? No! Perhaps you would at last really grasp them, turning the idol into an instrument, the bauble into something useful, by devoting your whole being and energies to God and the fulfilment of His will; you would love God with all your heart and all your soul, and all your might. 53

'To love God with all your heart, with mind and heart'—for such is the meaning of לב. To strive to reach God with your mind, employing all the mental faculties which have been lent to you for recognizing God, for learning to know His will as expressed in His law and also His world, in order that you may know how to fulfil His will in it. 'With your heart'—in order that you may be able to go through the fight to which God calls you between the impulse which leads you upwards and the impulse which drags you downwards; that you may be able to make peace between the brute and the man in yourself; that you may be able to lift up the brute to the human level and make both impulses take one direction—to serve God, to call only that good and honourable which God calls so, and to avoid that which He wishes to be avoided; that your heart should feel only one attraction—to your Father in heaven. 54

'And with all your soul, and with all your might.' This means that in the life which has been lent to you, in your physical powers, your health and bodily fitness, in the resources which you have acquired, in the whole endowment which God has given you in the material world—money, business, honour, influence, friends, family—that in all of these you may see only the means and instruments for accomplishing that which God in His law has meant to be accomplished, which your mind recognizes and your heart strives for. So, just as your mind and your heart will have only one direction—towards God—so your life and your possessions will be dedicated to this one effort, and you will become single-minded and active just as your God in heaven is One and creative. 55

If then your heart, your life, your wealth are only means for loving God, you ought naturally to love Him more than your heart, your life and your wealth. You should never hesitate when it is a question between abandoning the ways of God or the inclination of your heart, to throw away inclination, wealth and life in order to remain true to your God. 56

Shame on him who, turning means into end and end into means, degrades the highest and exalts the lowest; who, in order to increase his wealth, to enlarge his business, to win the respect of men, to buy friends for himself, to build up his fortune, as he imagines, or to satisfy his inclinations and passions, breaks even one commandment of his God. 57

- 58 Double shame on him who, for the sake of any such advantage, not only discards one command of God, one word of his Father in heaven, but turns his back altogether on God and says: 'I have no longer any share in the God of Jacob. I will go to the nations who possess power and prestige, who are not given over to feebleness and restraint and contempt.' Heaven and earth blush for him, he has forfeited his human dignity, his heart has no longer any idea of holiness; the most holy merely amuses him.
- 59 But you, Israelite, listen. You shall love your God more than your heart, your life and your wealth. And were you called upon to abandon your most passionate desire, to sacrifice your life, to give up your fortune, if you had to suffer torture and martyrdom, shame and contempt, poverty and misery, if you had to suffer death for yourself and your dear ones, suffer and remain faithful.
- 60 Cast away everything which has no value without God, which has no value unless you can dedicate it to the service of your God. Cast it away and remain faithful!
- 61 But learn, too, how to deal justly with this self-sacrificing love, as God's law teaches you.
- 62 Your desires and your property and all that you call yours, except your life, weigh less in the scales than the least of the commandments, and were you forced to abandon everything except your life in order to avoid breaking even one of the commandments of your Lord, you dare not hesitate.
- 63 The case is different with your life. If you are told to break any command of the Torah, with the exception of those connected with idolatry (עבודה זרה), immorality (גלוי עריות), and murder (שפיכת דמים), under threat of being put to death, then you should break it, provided that you have first sought, but without success, even with the offer of all your earthly fortune, to buy your release from sin, and preserve your life further to serve your God. If your assailant, however, is not thinking of his own profit and only wants to make you break the law, and if this is done publicly—that is to say, to the knowledge of at least ten Jews, or even secretly but at a time when some tyrannical Power is trying to destroy Israel's Torah by violence, then account your life as nothing in face of the lightest sin, were it even the infringement of a custom which is peculiar to Israel. In this case, God says to you: Sacrifice your life! Sanctify My Name, and show in the congregation of your brethren that you love God more than life, and

spur them on to similar love. Show the madman that his power is unable to force Israel into disloyalty to his God; show him that Israel's sons and daughters mock at his puny strength, that they will expire and still remain true to their God.

Laws, however, against idolatry, immorality and murder, taken in the widest sense,¹ have an importance of their own. If someone tries to force you to transgress one of these laws in secret and not in times of threatened annihilation and only for his own personal advantage, give up your life and do not commit the transgression. Your life does not outweigh them, says the law of God.

If, however, you do not trust your own strength to endure such a trial, then flee from the land where your most valued possession is in jeopardy. Flee! God's eye accompanies you everywhere, and God's earth is everywhere.

If, again, force is used, not to compel you to transgress a commandment, but to make you abstain from performing one, then you should not sacrifice your life, since the performance of your duty is being made impossible for you without your being able to prevent it.

Where the law says: 'Neglect this duty and save your life,' or 'Transgress this commandment and save your life,' you may not sacrifice your life—unless, indeed, such sacrifice is demanded for the sake of the further observance of the Divine law, because through such sacrifice you kindle anew in the souls of your brethren attachment and love to the law of their God. Otherwise, you should save your life, for God values the life which you preserve for further service to Him more highly than abstention from this sin or the performance of that duty; and you may not sacrifice your life when your Father in heaven desires it to be preserved (see also chap. 97).

So, too, in the case of illness. If it is a dangerous illness, you may seek to cure it by any means, except by transgressing the laws against

¹ The question how far exactly the Sages extended the application of these laws requires further investigation; it is settled that even the most distant approach to immorality is on the same level in this context as the actual commission (*Sanhedrin*, 75a). Perhaps, similarly, whether offences against the property, honour, etc., of a fellow-man are on the same level as an offence against his life. For it says: 'To steal even a farthing from a man is like robbing him of life' (*Choshen Mishpat*, chapter 359, and para. 337 of this publication), and the use of the property of others to save one's life is allowed only where there is an intention of repaying it (*ibid.*). So, too, the law places offences against the honour of a fellow-man—*viz.*, slander, לשון הרע, on the same level as the three offences mentioned (*Arachin*, 15b; and also para. 390 of this publication). See on this ציין שרית בנין ציין by R. Jacob Ettlinger, chapters 167-9.

idolatry, immorality and murder. If it is not dangerous, you may seek to cure it by any kind of forbidden food, provided it is consumed not in the usual way—and with anything the use of which is forbidden, provided it is not used in the ordinary way. Only the mixture of meat and milk and the mixed species of the vineyard are forbidden to you as a cure, except in case of danger. Things forbidden *derabbanan* may be used in the ordinary way as remedies even where there is no danger, but if eaten and drunk deliberately in the ordinary way they may be used as remedies only in case of danger. Food, for example, mixed with gall or the like, which would otherwise be uneatable, comes under the heading of 'an unusual form of consumption' (Y.D. 155 and 157; O. Ch. 466; M.A. 2).

IO

TRUST IN GOD

אמונה

Ye shall not try the Lord your God, as ye tried Him in Massah.

DEUT. VI, 16.

Know therefore that the Lord thy God, He is the all-ruling God; the faithful God, who keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love Him and keep His commandments, to a thousand generations; and repayeth them that hate Him to their face, to destroy them; He will not be slack to him that hateth Him, He will repay him in the circle of his desires.

DEUT. VII, 9ff.¹

- 69 *Emunah*, trust in God, means to hold fast to God, to His promise, to His law, to His grace, even though His ruling hand does not show itself in our experience and the fulfilment of His promises seems to lie far away, even though obedience to His law seems to threaten extinction and all claim to His grace seems to have been forfeited through sin.
- 70 'In God'—God tells us that He is the all-powerful, all-wise, all-just and beneficent God. Yet if you were to seek to follow His traces in the ordering of the world and society, you would find everything but not God. You would see the power, the caprice, the cleverness, the mind of man in control; you would see the righteous suffering and the unrighteous bearing themselves proudly; you would see folly succeeding

¹ See Hirsch's *Commentary on the Pentateuch*, ad locum.—Ed. Note.

and wisdom put to shame; you would see chance apparently making sport of the happiness of men; you would see a generation perishing in sickness and need, in war and hunger, and in vice. In astonishment, you ask: Where, then, is the omnipotence that controls the feebleness of man, the wisdom that rules over his folly, the justice that requites each according to his deeds, and the goodness that desires the well-being of its creatures? Then *emunah* comes up to you and makes intelligible to you the purposes of the Divine power, wisdom, justice and goodness. It bids you consider that, if the omnipotence of God suffers violence to flaunt itself unchecked, if His justice distributes suffering here and joy there, if His goodness looks idly on at the distress of the human race, then His wisdom must of necessity recognize the arrogance of violence, the maldistribution of the good things of life and the distress of mankind themselves as just and good, and these things must represent justice and goodness, although you do not comprehend it. For will you with your limited intelligence comprehend the plan of God's wisdom? *Emunah* teaches you to hold fast to God, even if heaven and earth should testify against it.

Look at the hint which the Torah gives you (Deut. vii, 10). Will you criticize God's justice? Do you understand the justice of God? Suppose that what seems to you to be injustice is the product of the highest justice? You are dumbfounded by the prosperity of the wicked. See, says the law, God is just; He rewards for their goodness even those that hate Him and would gladly see Him removed from the scene in order that there may be no bar to their wrongdoing. Even these God rewards for the good they have done, but He rewards them in the sphere of their desires—'in the sphere of their desires He repays them.' If their activity is selfish, if it consists in earthly, external wrongdoing, if it aims only at external, and therefore transitory, prosperity and joy, then their reward also is only in the transitory. Let them enjoy their transitory wrongdoing, wealth and prosperity, and perish like what they have acquired. But for those who seek only God, and choose the fulfilment of His will as their life's task, for those who pursue only the eternal, the reward is also eternal. For a thousand generations they remain as a blessing with their doing and striving, their suffering and sacrifices. Look at the Patriarchs! The whole of humanity was to be their reward here below, and they themselves were without home or country, living in the future. Are you really good? Can you rate so high the transient well-being of the wicked? And see, says the law further; only those that hate Him, only the incorrigible, does God reward within the sphere of their desires. To those who are capable of improvement God gives suffering in order that they may improve themselves, and misfortune is their greatest good fortune, while good fortune was their greatest misfortune. Let silence