

uted even more to their well-being, because they would be relieved of all exertion for the attainment of their bliss."

Let me, then, say in explanation of this matter that, on the contrary, God's making His creatures' diligent compliance with His commandments the means of attaining permanent bliss is the better course. For according to the judgment of reason the person who achieves some good by means of the effort that he has expended for its attainment obtains double the advantage gained by him who achieves this good without any effort but merely as a result of the kindness shown him by God. In fact, reason recognizes no equality between these two. This being the case, then, the Creator preferred to assign to us the ampler portion in order that our reward might yield us a double benefit, not merely a compensation exactly equivalent to the effort, as Scripture also says: *Behold, the Lord God will come as a Mighty One, and His arm will rule for Him; behold, His reward is with Him, and His recompense before Him* (Isa. 40: 10).

CHAPTER I

Now that I have made this preliminary observation, let me state by way of introduction that our Lord, exalted and magnified be He, has informed us by the speech of His prophets that He has assigned to us a religion whereby we are to serve Him. It embraces laws prescribed for us by Him which we must observe and carry out with sincerity. That is the import of the statement of Scripture: *This day the Lord thy God commandeth thee to do these statutes and ordinances; thou shalt, therefore, observe and do them with all thy heart, and with all thy soul* (Deut. 26: 16).

Moreover, in support of the validity of these laws, His messengers executed certain signs and wondrous miracles, with the result that we observed and carried out these laws immediately. Afterwards we discovered the rational basis for the necessity of their prescription so that we might not be left to roam at large without guidance.

Certain matters and classifications relative to this subject that reason makes imperative must now be explained by me. I say, then, that logic demands that whoever does something good be compensated either by means of a favor shown to him, if ^{Reason, intuition} < 114 > he is in need of it, or by means of thanks, if he does not require any reward. Since, therefore, this is one of the general demands of reason, it would not have been seemly for the Creator, exalted and magnified be He, to neglect it in His own case. It was, on the contrary, necessary for Him to command His creatures to serve Him and thank Him for having created them. Reason also demands that he that is wise do not permit himself to be treated with contempt or to be insulted. It was, therefore, likewise necessary for the Creator to forbid His servants to conduct themselves in such a way toward Him.

Handwritten notes: # 52 a p. 497. This page the term Reason after should be rational intuition. See p. 16 for the def. of the category rational intuition. Also see p. 20

Furthermore, reason demands that the creatures be prevented from wronging each other in all sorts of ways. Hence it was also necessary for the All-Wise not to permit them to do such a thing. Reason also deems it proper for a wise man to give employment to an individual who performs a certain function and to pay him a wage for it, merely in order to confer a benefit upon him, since this is something that redounds to the benefit of the worker without hurting the employer.

If, now, we were to combine these four classes of requirements, their sum-total would make up all the laws prescribed for us by our Lord. For example, He made it obligatory upon us to learn to know Him, to worship Him, and to dedicate ourselves wholeheartedly to Him, as the saint has said: *And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve Him with a whole heart and with a willing mind* (I Chron. 28: 9). Next he forbade us to conduct ourselves in an ugly insulting fashion toward Him, even though it could not hurt Him, because it is not the way of divine Wisdom to permit it, as Scripture says: *Whosoever curseth his God shall bear his sin* (Lev. 24: 15). Nor would He permit one of us to wrong the other or commit violence against him, as Scripture says: *Ye shall not steal; neither shall ye deal falsely, nor lie to*

one another (Lev. 19: 11). These three classes of injunctions and whatever might be included in them constitute, then, the first of the two divisions of the laws of the Torah.

Now in the first of the [three] categories [we have mentioned above] there are to be included such acts as humble submission to God and serving Him and standing before Him and whatever resembles these, all of which are found in the text of Holy Writ. In the second class are to be included such injunctions as the one not to associate anyone else with God, nor to swear falsely in His name, nor < 115 > to describe Him with mundane attributes and whatever resembles these, all of which are [also] found in the text of Holy Writ. To the third division, again, are to be added the practice of justice, truth, fairness, and righteousness, and the avoidance of the killing of human beings, and [the observance of] the prohibition of fornication and theft and deception and usury. [There is to be appended] also the duty devolving upon the believer to love his brother like himself and whatever else is embraced in these paragraphs, all of which is found in the text of Holy Writ.

Now the approval of each of these classes of acts that we have been commanded to carry out is implanted in our minds just as is the disapproval of each of the classes of acts that we are forbidden to commit. Thus has Wisdom, which is identical with reason, said: *For my mouth shall utter truth, and wickedness is an abomination to my lips* (Prov. 8:7).

The second [general] division [of the precepts of the Torah, on the other hand,] consists of things neither the approval nor the disapproval of which is decreed by reason, on account of their own character, but in regard to which our Lord has imposed upon us a profusion of commandments and prohibitions in order thereby to increase our reward and happiness. This is borne out by the remark of Scripture: *The Lord was pleased, for His righteousness' sake, to make the Torah² great and glorious* (Isa. 42: 21).

What is commanded of this group of acts is, consequently, [to

2. "Torah"—the usual translation is "teaching."

be considered as] good, and what is prohibited as reprehensible; because the fulfillment of the former and the avoidance of the latter implies submissiveness to God. From this standpoint they might be attached secondarily to the first [general] division [of the laws of the Torah]. Nevertheless one cannot help noting, upon deeper reflection, that they have some partial uses as well as a certain slight justification from the point of view of reason, just as those belonging to the first [general] division have important uses and great justification from the point of view of reason.

CHAPTER II

Now it is fitting that I proceed first to the discussion of the rational precepts of the Torah. I say, then, that divine Wisdom imposed a restraint upon bloodshed among men, because if license were to prevail in this matter, they would cause each other to disappear. The consequence would be, in addition to the pain experienced by the victims, a frustration of the purpose that the All-Wise had in mind with regard to them. For their murder would cut them off from the fulfillment of the function for which He had created them and in the execution of which He had employed them.

Furthermore [divine] Wisdom forbade fornication in order that men might not become like the beasts with the result that no one would know his father < 116 > so as to show him reverence in return for having raised him. [Another reason for this prohibition was] that the father might bequeath unto his son his possessions just as the son had received from his father the gift of existence. [A further reason was] that a human being might know the rest of his relatives, such as his paternal and maternal uncles, and show them whatever tenderness he was capable of.

Theft was forbidden by [divine] Wisdom because, if it were permitted, some men would rely on stealing the others' wealth, and they would neither till the soil nor engage in any other lucrative occupation. And if all were to rely on this source of livelihood,

even stealing would become impossible, because, with the disappearance of all property, there would be absolutely nothing in existence that might be stolen.

Finally, [divine] Wisdom has made it one of its first injunctions that we speak the truth and desist from lying. For the truth is an assertion about a thing as it really is and in accordance with its actual character, whereas telling a lie is making an assertion about a thing that does not correspond to what it really is or to its actual character. Then when the senses, perceiving it, find it to be constituted in one form whilst the soul, reasoning about it, asserts that it is constituted otherwise, these two contrary views set up in the soul will oppose each other, and, on account of their mutual exclusion, the thing will be regarded by the soul as something grotesque.³

Let me say next that I have seen some people who are of the opinion that these four principal vices that have been listed above are not at all objectionable. Only that is objectionable in their view which causes them pain and worry and grief, whilst the good is what affords them pleasure and rest. This thesis will be refuted by me at considerable length in the fourth treatise of this book, in the chapter on "justice."⁴ I shall, however, cite a portion of that refutation here, and say that whoever entertains such an opinion leaves out of account all the arguments we have produced here, and whoever leaves such matters out of account is an ignoramus about whom we need not trouble ourselves. Nevertheless I shall not be content until I have convinced him of the contradiction and the conflict inherent in his views.

I say, then, that the slaying of an enemy is an act that gives pleasure to the slayer but pain to the slain. Likewise the taking of another man's possessions or his wife gives pleasure to the robber but pain to the robbed. In the opinion of those who hold this view, however, each of these two acts would have to be regarded as wisdom and folly at one and the same time—as wisdom because it affords pleasure to the murderer or the thief or the adulterer, and

3. "grotesque"—cf. the discussion by Guttmann on this (p. 137, n. 1).

4. Cf. below, pp. 184 ff.

as folly because it inflicts pain on his opponent. Now any theory that leads to such internal contradiction and mutual exclusion must be false. In fact, there are instances in which two such contrary things can both befall <117> one and the same person, as when he eats honey into which some poison has fallen. This is something that gives pleasure and also causes death, and would consequently, according to their theory, have to be considered as wisdom and folly at one and the same time.

Let me proceed further now and discourse about the second general division of the laws of the Torah. This division consists of acts which from the standpoint of reason are optional. Yet the Law has made some of them obligatory and others forbidden, and left the rest optional as they had been. They include such matters as the consecration of certain days from among others, like the Sabbath and the festivals, and the consecration of certain human beings from among others, such as the prophet and the priest, and refraining from eating certain foods, and the avoidance of cohabitation with certain persons, and going into isolation immediately upon the occurrence of certain accidents because of defilement.

But even though the chief reason for the fulfillment of these principal precepts and their derivatives and whatever is connected with them is the fact that they represent the command of our Lord and enable us to reap a special advantage, yet I find that most of them have as their basis partially useful purposes. I see fit, therefore, to note some of these motivations and discuss them, although the wisdom of God, blessed and exalted be He, is above all that.

Now among the benefits accruing from the consecration of certain seasons, by desisting from work on them, there is first of all that of obtaining relaxation from much exertion. Furthermore it presents the opportunity for the attainment of a little bit of knowledge and a little additional praying. It also affords men leisure to meet each other at gatherings where they can confer about matters of their religion and make public announcements about them, and perform other functions of the same order.

Some of the benefits accruing from consecrating a particular

person from among others are that it makes it possible to obtain more knowledge from him and to secure his services as an intercessor. [It] also [enables him] to imbue his fellow-men with the desire for righteousness so that they might thereby attain something like his own eminence. Finally [it permits him] to concern himself with the moral improvement of humanity, since he is qualified for such a task, and other things of this nature.

Among the advantages, again, that result from the prohibition against the eating of [only] certain animals⁵ is the prevention of any comparison between them and the Creator. For it is inconceivable that God would permit anything resembling Him to be eaten or, on the other hand, that [the eating of such a being] could cause defilement to man. This precept also serves to keep man from worshipping any of these animals, since it is not seemly for him to worship what has been given to him for food, nor what has been declared unclean for him.

As for the advantages accruing from the avoidance of cohabitation with certain women, <118> those derived from observing this ruling in regard to a *married woman*, are such as we have stated previously. As far as the mother, sister, and daughter are concerned, since the relationship with them is necessarily intimate, the license to marry them would encourage dissoluteness on their part. There exists also the danger, if this were permitted, that men would be fascinated by those of their female relatives who have a beautiful figure, while those possessing homely features would be spurned even by strangers, since the latter would see that the male relatives [of these women] do not desire them.

Some of the benefits accruing from the observance of the laws of uncleanness and cleanliness are that man is thereby led to think humbly of his flesh,⁶ that it enhances for him the value of prayer by virtue of his being cut off therefrom for a while during the period of defilement, that it endears to him the Temple which he was prevented from entering in the state of impurity, and finally that it causes him to dedicate his heart to the fear of God.

5. i.e., while others are permitted. Cf. Guttman, p. 138, n. 2.

6. "of his flesh"—Ibn Tibbon. The reading of the Arabic original is corrupt.

Similarly, if one were to follow up most of these revealed⁷ precepts, one would discover that they are, to a large extent at least, partially justified and possess much utilitarian value, although the wisdom and the view that the Creator had in mind in decreeing them is far above anything that men can grasp, as Scripture says: *For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways* (Isa. 55: 9).

CHAPTER III

Now that I have expressed myself in this summary fashion about the two general divisions of the precepts of the Torah, namely the rational and the revealed, it behooves me to explain why there should have been need for divine messengers and prophets. For I have heard that there are people who say that men have no need for such messengers because their reason is enough of a guide for them to distinguish between good and evil. I therefore went back to the touchstone of truth and I noted that, if the matter were really as they said it was, the Creator would have known it best and He would not have sent any messengers to mankind, since He does nothing that has no purpose. Then I pondered the matter deeply and I found that there was considerable need for the dispatch of messengers to God's creatures, not merely in order that they might be informed by them about the revealed laws, but also on account of the rational precepts. For these latter, too, are carried out practically only when there are messengers to instruct men concerning them.

Thus, for example, <119> reason calls for gratitude to God for His kindness, but does not define how this gratitude is to be expressed or at what time or in what form it is to be shown. There was, therefore, need for messengers who defined it and designated it as prayer and assigned to it certain set times and gave to it a particular formulation and [prescribed] a specific posture and direction.⁸

7. "revealed"—cf. Guttman's rendering.

8. "direction," i.e., the *kiblah*, facing toward the Temple of Jerusalem.