

Derekh Hashem by Moses Chaim Luzzatto (Ramchal) (~1740) Translated by Rabbi Francis Nataf (Sefaria Ed) Quotes

However one must consider that the number of details is much too great for the intellect of man to contain, and it is impossible for one to know them all. Yet what is fit is for him to attempt to know the general principles. As the nature of every principle is to contain [knowledge about] many details. So when one grasps one principle, he [also] grasps a great number of details. And even though he has not yet examined them because they are [only] details [subsumed by] the principle; [nevertheless] when one of them comes to him, he is not stunted by knowing it, since [its] general matter - which perforce must exist - is already known to him. And likewise the Sages, may their memory be blessed, said (Sifrei Devarim 306:20), "Matters of Torah should always be in your hands as general principles and not as details."¹

The existence of God: Every person of Israel must believe and know that there is a preexisting, eternal First Being. And He brought into being, and brings into being, everything that exists. And that is God, may He be blessed. **His perfection:** One must also know that the true understanding of this Being, may His name be blessed, is not grasped at all by anyone besides Him. And we only know this about Him: That he is a perfect Being in every type of perfection and there is no deficiency in Him at all. (However we have known these things by tradition from the forefathers and from the prophets. And all of Israel grasped them at the stand at Mount Sinai, clearly understood their truth and taught them to their children - one generation after [another, until] this day. As Moses commanded them from the word of the Almighty [Deuteronomy 4:9], "lest you forget the things that you saw with your own eyes, etc. and you shall make them known to your children and to your children's children." However all of these matters are even validated by way of the investigation of proofs that can be studied. And it is necessary for them to be so based, on what exists and on that which can be comprehended from them - which we see with our [own] eyes - according to the disciplines of science, geometry, astronomy and other disciplines from which you can take true bases from which the clarity of these true matters is derived. Yet we will not write at length about this now. Rather we will present the bases for their truth and arrange the things clearly according to the tradition that is in our hands and well-known to all of our nation.) **The necessity of His existence:** One also must know that the existence of this Being, may His name be blessed, is

¹ Introduction 3

a necessary existence, the absence of which is completely impossible. **His being independent of another:** One must also know that His existence, may He be blessed, is not dependent at all on anything besides Him. Rather His existence is independently necessary. **His simplicity:** And likewise he must know that His existence, may He be blessed, is a simple (undifferentiated) existence without composition or multiplicity at all. And all of the perfections are found within Him in a simple way. The explanation of this is [as follows]: Many different capabilities are found within the soul, each one of which has its own domain: By way of example, memory is one capability, willpower is another capability and imagination is [yet] another capability. And not one of these enters the domain of its fellow at all, as surely the domain of memory is one domain and the domain of willpower is another domain. And willpower does not enter into the domain of memory, nor does memory [enter] into the domain of willpower. And so [too] with all of them. However the Master, may His name be blessed, does not have different capabilities, even though He actually has properties that are differing within us. For surely He is willful and is wise and is powerful and He is perfect in every perfection; however the truth of His existence is one matter that includes within His truth and domain (meaning the truth of His being, as having a domain is not applicable to Him, may He be blessed - rather it is only by way of literary license) everything that is a perfection. And it comes out that He has all of the perfections - not as an addition to His essence and the truth of His being, but rather from the angle of the truth of His being itself, which includes in its truth all of the perfections in its truth; [as it] would be impossible for this [type of] being without all of the perfections, from the angle of itself. And this approach is truly very far from our comprehension and our perception. And it is almost as if we have no way to elucidate it or words to explain it. For our perceptions and imaginations only grasp things limited by [their] nature which is created by Him, may He be blessed - as this perception is what our senses perceive and bring to the mind. And with the creatures, [these capabilities] are surely many and differing matters. However, we have already prefaced that the truth of His existence, may He be blessed, is not grasped and it cannot be compared to what we see with the creatures. For their properties and existences are not at all the same, such that we could learn one from the other. However this is also from the things that are known through the tradition, but they are validated by investigation through nature itself, with its axioms and properties. For it is impossible that there nevertheless not exist a Being removed from all nature, axioms and limits, from all lack and deficiency, from all multiplicity and composition, from all relationship and value and from the contingency of the creatures - to be the Ultimate Cause for all that exists and for all that develops from it. For without this Existence, those things that we see existing and their continuation would be impossible. **His Unity:** And it is also required for one to know that it is necessary for this Being, may His name be blessed, to be one and not more. The explanation of this is that it is impossible for there to exist many beings the existence of which is

independently necessary. Rather this necessary and perfect Existence must be only one. And if there exist other beings, they only exist because He made them exist with His will; so it comes out that they are all dependent on Him, and not existing from themselves.²

The purpose of creation: See that the purpose of creation was to give from His goodness, may He be blessed, to another besides Him. And behold, see that His alone is true perfection, devoid of all deficiencies. And there is no other perfection like it at all. So it comes out that any perfection that resembles [it] - besides His perfection, may He be blessed - is not true perfection. Rather it is called perfection relative to something more deficient than it. But complete perfection is only His perfection, may He be blessed. And therefore since His desire, may He be blessed, was to do good to others, it would not be sufficient for Him to do a little good, but rather [only] in giving the full goodness that is possible for the creatures to receive. And in His alone, may He be blessed, being the true good, His good desire would only be satisfied by giving others that very good that is within Him, may He be blessed, from the angle of Himself - which is the truly perfect good. Yet surely from another angle, this good is impossible to be found anywhere but in Him. Therefore, His wisdom decreed that the nature of this true giving would be that a place be given to the creatures to cleave to Him, may He be blessed, according to the measure of what is possible for them to cleave. And so it comes out that what would be impossible from the angle of themselves - that they would be described by the same perfection as His perfection, may He be blessed - nevertheless surely comes to them according to the measure that it is possible for them to be described by His perfection, may He be blessed, from the angle of their cleaving to Him. And it comes out that they benefit from this true good, relative to that which is possible for them to benefit from it. [Likewise,] it comes out that His intention, may His name be blessed, in the creation that He created was to create someone that can benefit from His goodness, may He be blessed, in the manner that it is possible for him to benefit from it.³

The choice of man: We have already mentioned man's being that creature created to cleave to Him, may He be blessed, that he is put between perfection and deficiencies and that he has the ability to acquire perfection. However this needs to be with his choice and will. For if he were forced in his actions to choose perfection no matter what, he would not truthfully be called the master of his perfection; as since he is forced to acquire [it] by another, he is not its master. [Rather] it is the one who makes him acquire it that is the master of his perfection. So [God's] intention would not have been fulfilled. Therefore it was necessary that the matter be

² Part One, On the Creator

³ Part One, On the Purpose of Creation

left to his choice, such that his inclination to the two sides be equal, and not forced to one of them; so he would have the capability to choose - with intellect and with will - which one of them he would want. And [he must] also have the ability to acquire whichever one of them he wants. Therefore man was created with a good impulse and a bad impulse so that the choice is his, to incline himself to the side that he wants.⁴

The division of repayment into two time periods and two places: However the axiom of free choice that automatically results in the possibility that we mentioned among the parts of the human specie - that they be good or bad, or likewise that some of them be good and some of them be bad - itself also automatically results in this possibility among the actions of each individual within the human specie. Hence it is possible that all of them be good or all of them be bad, but it is [also] possible that some of them be good and some of them be bad. And this is from what impedes the group of [the good] ones that we mentioned. For there are truly good matters and bad matters found in one individual himself. And to pay attention to only some of [their actions] and not to the others - even if the ones that are given attention are the majority - is surely not from righteous judgement. For exact [justice] would require that all actions be repaid - whether they be large or small, many or few. Hence the Supreme Wisdom decreed to divide the repayment - for both reward and punishment - into two times and two places. This means that the sum of [a person's] actions be divided between the majority and the minority; and that the majority be judged by itself in the place and time that is appropriate for it, and the minority be judged by itself in the place and time that is appropriate for it. However, the true and main repayment will be in the world to come, as I have written: That the reward will be for the man who has merited to live on eternally, to cleave to Him, may He be blessed, forever; and the punishment is to be pushed away from the true good and to perish. However the judgement for this matter will only be according to the majority of the actions. However the [repayment] for the good deeds of the evildoer and the bad deeds of the righteous - being that they are the minority - will be found in this world, through his successes and his woes. For though it will the evildoer receive repayment for the little merit that he has, through his successes; and the righteous one will receive the punishment of his iniquities, through [his] afflictions in it - such that, in this manner, judgement be perfect for all. So the makeup of the world to come will remain as it should be in that perfect state. That means that the righteous ones will remain by themselves, without an admixture of evildoers among them. And they will be without impediments, from themselves, for the enjoyment destined for them; whereas the evildoers will be pushed away and perish, without there remaining any claim for them at all.⁵

⁴ Part One, On Mankind

⁵ Part Two, On Mankind in This World

Geihinnom (Purgatory) and other spiritual punishments: However His Kindness, may He be blessed, also decreed, to increase salvation for people, that there be another type of purging for whoever the purging is possible - meaning for one in whom evil was very strong, but not so much so that his verdict be to have him completely perish. And that is a group of punishments, the most noted of which is judgement in *Geihinnom* (Purgatory). And the intent of it is to punish the sinner according to his sins in such a way that - after his punishment - he has no more liability for the evil act that he did, so that he be able to receive the true reward afterwards, according to his remaining good deeds. And according to this, it comes out that those that perish will be scant [and] not abundant. For behold they will only be those in which the measure of evil became so great as to be impossible in any way that a place be found for them to remain [for] true repayment and eternal enjoyment. And see that it comes out that judgement is divided into three parts. As its main [part] is in the world after resurrection, as we have written. However, actions are fit to be repaid before then. Behold there are those of them that will be repaid in this world and those that will be repaid in the world of souls. In truth, the elements of the properties of this judgment are only known to the true Judge alone. For He is the one who knows the true essence of actions and their outgrowths and details; and He knows which one of them is fitting to repay at a [certain] time and in a [certain] way, and which at a different time and in a different way. And that which we do know is only the general ways of [God's] direction - upon what it is based and what it is causing. And [the latter] is that which we explained, that the purpose of the whole matter is to gather an eternal group for cleaving to Him, may He be blessed. And in order for this matter to be perfected as is fit, all of these earlier matters were necessary to prepare and make ready this ultimate goal, as we have written.⁶

The merit of evildoers is completely in this world: But complete evildoers are the ones within whom the evil of their deeds brings about so great a murkiness and darkness that their bodies and souls are truly corrupted. And they are then not fit in any way to cleave to Him, may He be blessed. But note that it is possible that a few good deeds be found in their hands; but these are deeds, such that when they go up on His righteous scales, may He be blessed, do not tip [them] to the side of the true good at all - not from the angle of their quantity and not from the angle of their quality. As behold if they would tip them towards it, they would no longer be considered complete evildoers, but rather from those who undergo purging until they reach a state that is prepared for the good. Nevertheless so that [God's] attribute of [strict] justice not be lacking - such that these deeds not be rewarded - it was designed that their reward be given to them in this world, as we have written. So it comes out that this merit is finished and it does not suffice to actualize any true distinction in them.⁷

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

There are levels in the group of those destined for the world to come: However there is one more very central component to this matter, and that is that in the group of the perfect ones that we mentioned will be in the world to come, the intent is not that they will all be on one level and one status and reach the same success. Rather the thing is that the Supreme Wisdom measured where the last end would reach - meaning the lowest measure of cleaving to Him, may He be blessed, and the [resultant] enjoyment within one's [own] perfection. And corresponding to this, He set up that anyone whose actions reach this small measure may already be counted among the group that we mentioned and be among those remaining to derive enjoyment from [Him]. Nevertheless one who did not even reach this is surely pushed off completely, and perishes. However whoever merits more will surely be greater and higher in that group. And it was from the depth of His counsel, may He be blessed, that man completely be his own benefactor - whether in general or specifically. The explanation of this is that it is not sufficient that he not merit the good until after his toil, but rather that even the specific portion that is given to him be only exactly according to his deeds. And it comes out that a person will only be on the level that he chose and within which he placed himself there on his own. And there are indeed higher ones and lower ones, great ones and little ones in this gathering. Yet there will not be another reason for the high level of a man or its lowness, its greatness or its smallness, besides he himself; such that he not have a grievance with another at all.⁸

Events in this world to help or hinder the acquisition of perfection: However there is another factor that comes into play according to the ways of judgement and reward. And that is that the Supreme Judge decreed that - as a result of man's own actions - He, may He be blessed, will assist to make the achievement of his perfection easier for him and to save him from obstacles, as the matter is stated (I Samuel 2:9), "He guards the footsteps of His faithful." Of course, there are many levels in this: As one will find that the principle of justice will allow, that according to the actions that one person has already done, the Creator, may He be Praised, will help him a little; and someone else who He will help more, such that He will greatly help him achieve perfection; and still someone else that He will help even more. And likewise the opposite: One who already according to [the ways of] justice is fit not to be helped from the Heavens, however perfection is not made more difficult for him; and another whose judgement goes out, such that obstacles are increased for him, so he will require strength and toil in order to achieve it; and there is yet another - who is a complete evildoer - from whom all the ways of improvement are sealed and will be pushed off in his evil. And there are many,

⁸ Ibid.

many fine details in all of these things. And so note that it is possible that a man merit that successes in this world are decreed upon him to help him in his service, so that it be easier for him to accomplish the perfection he seeks, and that no obstacles get in his way. And it is [also] possible that losses and troubles be decreed upon him according to his deeds, to stand like a wall in front of him and intervene between him and perfection - to the point that he will need more toil and discomfort to bore through that burrow and make efforts, regardless of all of his preoccupations, to nevertheless accomplish his perfection. And the opposite with an evildoer: It is possible that successes will be decreed about him to open the gate of perdition in front of him, that he be pushed off through it. But it [also] possible that troubles be decreed about him to prevent him from the evil that he intended to do. And that will happen when the Supreme Director will know that it is not appropriate for that evildoer to do it for whatever reason. And [about] this did David pray (Psalms 140:9), "Do not, O Lord, grant the desires of the wicked; do not let their plan succeed." And behold He, may His name be blessed, does all of these matters in His amazing wisdom; everything according to what is appropriate for the collective of His creatures, as I have written. And He judges creatures in all of their circumstances according to what they truly are - meaning to say, one who is in a state of comfort and is negligent in his service is not the same as one who is in a state of duress and preoccupied by the pressures upon him and, so, does not achieve perfection. Hence their judgement will surely not be the same. Rather each one will be judged according to what he truly is - whether inadvertent or volitional; whether he is forced or does it willingly. And He, may His name be blessed, knows the truth of all words, deeds and thoughts, and judges them accordingly.⁹

The filling of the measure: And you should know that there is a limit given to the evildoer, until what point he be allowed to continue doing evil, according to his choice of evil. But when he reaches that limit, there will not be any delay at all, and he will be destroyed from upon the face of the earth. And that is what the Sages, may their memory be blessed, called "filling the measure"; and what Scripture [refers to when it] states (Job 20:22), "When he has all he wants, trouble will come." But before that time it is surely possible that he continue to succeed for the reason that we mentioned above - that is to open the gate of perdition for him. And that is what they, may their memory be blessed, wrote (Yoma 38b), "[For] one who comes to impurify, they open [the gate] for him." However, when he reaches that limit, he has already reached perdition and will be destroyed. Then the fiery anger of the Lord will be upon him; and devastation, through which he will be destroyed, will come upon him.¹⁰

⁹ Part Two, On Personal Providence

¹⁰ Ibid.

Afflictions to a man from the reincarnation of his soul: There is [yet] another principle found in the direction of the matters of this world. And that is that the Supreme Wisdom arranged to expand salvation more, as we have mentioned, such that one soul comes to this world at various times in different bodies. And behold through this, it may repair at a different time what it corrupted in a [previous] time; or perfect what it did not perfect. However at the end of all the incarnations in the judgement in the future to come, the trial will surely be regarding [the soul], according to all of the incarnations that it experienced and all the states in which it existed. And behold it is possible that matters will occur to a person whose soul was reincarnated according to that which was caused to it from the angle of what it did in a previous incarnation. And the state [of affairs] in the world given to this man is according to this. And according to the condition that he is given will be the load incumbent upon him, as we mentioned earlier. But His judgement, may He be blessed, is exact upon each person according to what he is, in all of his aspects - meaning in all aspects of his [various] states. [This is] such that He will never burden a man in the world to come - which is the true good - with guilt that he does not really have. Rather what comes to him is from the load and assignment in this world which the Supreme Wisdom distributed to him; and his actions are judged according to that. And see that there are many specific details found in this matter of reincarnation - how a man is judged according to what he is in his incarnation and according to what preceded in another incarnation; such that all of it be according to true justice and righteousness. And about this is it stated (Deuteronomy 32:4), "The Rock's act is perfect; all of His ways are justice, etc." And the creations do not have the knowledge that can absorb His thoughts, may His name be blessed, nor the depth of His counsel. We only know this principle like [we know] all of the principles - that one of the causes of people's occurrences in this world is reincarnation - according to the righteous statutes that were legislated in front of Him, may He be blessed - for the perfection of this entire matter.¹¹

Abraham becoming the father of converts: Yet from His great goodness and kindness, may He be blessed, He made room even for the branches of other nations to uproot themselves from their roots, by their choice and their actions, and to include themselves in the branches of our father Abraham, peace be upon him, if they [so] desired. And this is His, may His name be blessed, making Abraham the father of converts. And He said to him (Genesis 12:3), "and all the families of the earth shall bless themselves by you." However, if they do not make efforts about this, they will stay within their root trees, according to their natural situation.¹²

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Part Two, On Israel and the Nations

What is prepared for the nations of the world in the world to come: However nations besides Israel will not be found at all in the world to come. Existence will be given to the pious ones of the nations of the world by way of being an addition and appendage of Israel itself. And they will be secondary to them like clothing is secondary to a person. That which is coming to them from the good will come to them in this way; and it is not in their condition to attain more than this at all.¹³

The difference between all the [other] prophets and our teacher Moses, peace be upon him: More generally, prophecy is divided into two levels: The first is the level of all the prophets besides our teacher Moses, peace be upon him; and the second is the level of our teacher Moses, peace be upon him. And the Holy One, blessed be He, Himself divided them in this [way] and explained their difference in Scripture, (Numbers 12:6-7) "When a prophet of the Lord arises among you, I make Myself known to him in a vision, etc. Not so with My servant Moses, etc."¹⁴

The prophecy of the prophets is through a vision or a dream: The prophecy of the category of all prophets besides Moses is through a vision or dream, as it is stated, "I make Myself known to him in a vision, I speak with him in a dream." And that means that the Holy One, blessed be He, makes use of dreaming, which is already embedded in people's nature, to be a means through which to bring down prophecy to the prophet. And it is not that dreaming and prophecy are of the same kind, but rather that dreams are a fitting thing in front of His Wisdom, may He be blessed, through which to bring down prophecy. And they, may their memory be blessed, only said (Berakhot 57b), "A dream is one sixtieth of prophecy," from the aspect of it conveying greater disclosure and information than the regular information that comes to people according to their [conscious] ways of understanding, as we have mentioned above.¹⁵

The prophecy of Moses: But Moses' prophecy was superior to all this. And that is, first, that he did not need to depart from his senses and his perceptions, nor to dream at all. Rather prophecy came to him while he was in his regular state. And that is that which is stated about him (Numbers 12:8), "Mouth to mouth will I speak to him." And the matter would be revealed to him like one who sees through a single lens alone, and it itself is polished. And the knowledge would come to him clearly and not through riddles; and that is that which is stated, "and plainly and without riddles." Yet even to him, [God's] glory only appeared according to that which he

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Part Three, On Moshe's Unique Status

¹⁵ Ibid.

was able to receive. And it was like the image that is created in a mirror. For in any event, it is impossible for a man to see his Creator. However it was in such a way that he could at least grasp that image fully and clearly, like one who sees through a polished and bright lens that does not hinder one from seeing. And about this it is stated, "and he observes a picture of the Lord" - for he was able to observe that image that was formed very well. This was not the case for other prophets, as they were not able to master even that image well. And behold that from the image that he was able to grasp, he would attain a great and very clear understanding - more than all the other prophets, as we have written.¹⁶

Behold that Torah study is a necessary matter. As without it, it is impossible to arrive at [proper] action. For if one does not know what he is commanded to do, how will he do it?¹⁷

Conditions of the study: Now the necessary conditions to accompany the study are these: Awe during the study itself; and constant refinement of [one's] actions. And that is because the whole power of the Torah is only from that which He, may His name be blessed, bound His precious influence to it, to the point that speaking it and understanding it brings down this great influence. But without that, speaking it would not be different from speaking about other affairs or books of wisdom and learning about all the other understandings of natural existence in all its forms. For they only contain knowledge of that matter; but no precious power or elevation comes from it to the spirit of the one that reads, speaks or understands it at all; nor is there any refinement of creation at all. However the content of this influence is surely divine, as we have written. Moreover, it is the highest and most sublime of the matters that are brought down and come to the creatures from Him, may He be blessed. And since this is so, a man should certainly be in awe and tremble during such an occupation. For it comes out that he is coming forth before his God and occupying himself with the bringing down of the great light from Him towards himself. So he should surely be embarrassed by his mortal lowliness, and shake from His loftiness, may He be blessed. And he should surely rejoice greatly in his goodly portion that he has merited this - yet with trembling, as we have mentioned. And included in this is that he should not sit with light-headedness nor act with any manner of disrespect - neither towards its words nor towards its books. And if he does this, his study will be what it is truly fitting for it to be, he will bring down that influence that we mentioned, he will gather divine strength to himself and will bring down refinement and emanation for all of the creation. But if this condition is lacking in him, the emanation will not be brought down by him. And his words will be like all human words, his speaking will be like one reading a letter and his thoughts will

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Part Four, On Torah Study

be like someone thinking about matters of the world. Just the opposite, it will be considered blameworthy for him. For he approached the holy without awe and was light-headed in front of his Creator, while he was still speaking in front of Him and occupied with His holiness, may He be blessed. Hence, according to the level of his awe and the measure of his honor and his carefulness with it, will be the measure of the preciousness of the study and the level of the influence brought down through him, as we discussed earlier. And the second condition is refinement of [one's] actions. For it is fitting for one who wants to bring down influence to be worthy and readied for the bringing down. Hence if he sullies himself with guiltiness and sins, distances himself from his Creator and is unfaithful to Him [by going] after other powers and evil - it will certainly be said about him (Psalms 50:16), "And to the wicked, God said, 'Who are you to recite My laws, etc.'" And likewise did they, may their memory be blessed, say, "Anyone who teaches Torah to an unworthy student is like one who throws a stone to Markulis (an idol)." And it is certain that the Torah of such a man will not bring down the influence that we mentioned on any level at all. And nevertheless, the Sages, may their memory be blessed, revealed a great mystery to us: If the evildoers would not abandon Torah study, in the end they would return to the good. For even if they do not have it in their power to bring down anything from in front of Him, may He be blessed - as we have written - [nevertheless,] the words of the Torah are already sanctified on their own. So they stand on their own, such that from continual occupation with them - one time after another - there will eventually be some arousal and the semblance of the tiniest emanation to the one who is occupied with them. And this is what they, may their memory be blessed, said (Eichah Rabbah, Petichta 2), "If only they had left Me and kept My Torah; for the light in it brings them back to the good." However it is obvious that these words do not apply to one who is occupied with it in a manner of frivolity and joking or to reveal understandings against the law (halakha). Rather he must at least be occupied with it like one who is occupied with other wisdoms.¹⁸

Two [acts of] daily worship were imposed upon us, in order to worship in front of Him, may He be blessed. And they are the recitation of Shema and prayer; and at the time of the Temple, [also] the daily and additional sacrifices. And now we will explain their content: **Regarding the Unity of His existence, may He be blessed, and the Unity of His control:** Behold the first is the recitation of Shema - and its content is His unification and the acceptance of the yoke of His Kingship. And the matter is that the Creator, may His name be blessed, brought all the different entities into existence - the higher and the lower, the spiritual and the physical - and placed them in different arrangements and put into the properties of each of them to act and do deeds, to move in patterns and to move many other things in various ways, according to

¹⁸ Ibid.

what His Wisdom, may be blessed, distributed to each and every one. Nevertheless, note that He, may His name be blessed, is the only Root and Cause for all of them. And this matter is understood from two angles - from the angle of existence and from the angle of action. Regarding the angle of existence, we have already explained in Part I (On the Creator 6) how all entities are all dependent upon Him, may He be blessed, and extend from His Will; whereas His existence is a necessary existence from Himself, and is not dependent on anything else besides Him. But all other entities only exist from the angle that He, may His name be blessed, wants them and sustains them with His will. Regarding the angle of action, even though He gave into the properties of the creatures to have control over certain things, according to the scope of their capabilities, and to preform great acts - every one according to its properties - in truth, they surely have no power and control besides that which the Creator, may He be blessed, gave to them. For He is the true Master, Controller and omnipotent One. And all that they do is only that which He, may His name be blessed, gave and gives power to them in order that they should act. But He is the Master over them, to add or take away as He wishes at any minute and at any time. And the depth of the matter is that truly according to the arrangements ordered by His Wisdom, may He be blessed, for the refinement of His creatures - as we wrote in Part I (On the Spiritual Realm 8) - see that there are many matters of evil that move in patterns and move other things in the world; whether from the angle of the free choice of people that sin, or whether from that which is decreed about them to punish them. And at first glance, the matter appears as if it is surely the opposite of His will, may He be blessed. For He, may His name be blessed, surely only wants the good; and all of His desire is to do good. And His name is [even] profaned by the domination of evildoers and the increase of evil things and breakdowns. However one who knows His ways, may He be blessed and has a deeper understanding of [these] things, knows that all of this nevertheless only causes that - in a deep way - everything brings about the perfection of the creation and will then end with it, as I wrote in Part I (On Mankind 4). So it comes out that the Holy One, blessed be He, is the One that truly directs everything. And it is only His counsel that stands, such that it will bring His good and His perfection to His creatures, as we wrote there. However according to the truth of the matter, the things must move in these processes according to the foundations of the amazing Wisdom and the true good. And in the end of all the processes, it will be made known that He, may His name be blessed, is one, a Unity, unique and that He caused all of these causes - in their [various] ways - to come to the true goal, which is the true good that we mentioned. And that which is included in the depth of this thing is the matter of the revelation of the truth of His Unity, may He be blessed. And that is because we have already explained that the aggregate of all the causes in the world are such that, behold, the Creator, may He be blessed, created evil in order for people to remove it and to establish good in themselves and in the creation. And note that there are many axioms and great roots that were planted in this matter, so that it

will be perfected in all of its parts and aspects. For there are truly many details that will be found about the existence of evil in the creation, its actions and its control. And many details will likewise be found regarding the matter of man's relating to it, and that he is put beneath it and placed among it and in the matter of his overpowering it, opening up his prison and conquering it; and the existence of good and its spreading and its becoming strengthened according to the submission of evil and its being conquered. However the root of the existence of all evil, its actions and its control is the Creator's hiding His Unity, may He be blessed, such that He not reveal His truth in the world to all. And according to the measure of the hiding is the measure of the power of evil, as we wrote in Part I (On the Spiritual Realm 8). And the root of all the nullification and its removal and the establishment of all the creation with good is the revelation of the truth of His Unity, may He be blessed. And that is what the verse states (Deuteronomy 32:39), "See, then, that I, I am He, etc." and it is [also] written (Isaiah 43:10), "in order that you will know and you will have faith in Me and you will understand that I am He; before Me no god was formed, and after Me, none will be, etc." So it comes out that the end of the refinement of all the creation is dependent upon the revelation of His Unity, may He be blessed. But surely He was, is and always will be one, a Unity and unique. However now He is not revealed to all as is appropriate. But in the future to come, He will be completely revealed to all the creatures, as it is written (Zechariah 14:9), "on that day, He will be one and His name will be one." Yet the Israelites who merited to [receive] His true Torah know this truth and testify to it also now. And this is that which is written (Isaiah 43:12), "'and you are My witnesses,' says the Lord." And this is a great merit for us. And note that the general direction of this world is divided into the direction of the day and the direction of the night, as we wrote in Part 3, Chapter 1 (On the Soul and its Activities 6). And every morning and every evening, the arrangements and watches of the angels for their assignments are renewed according to the arrangement of [God's] direction. And [accordingly] we - the Children of Israel - are obligated to testify about the truth of His Unity, may He be blessed, from all of the angles. This means whether from the angle of His existence, that He alone necessarily exists, and all of the other entities exist from Him and are dependent upon Him; or whether from the angle of control, that He alone, may His name be blessed, is the unique Controller, and there is no action that is done without the power and authority that He gives to it; whether from the angle of direction, meaning that although there are many great and deep actors, there is no Source besides the One, and there is no Determinant besides the One. This means that He, may His name be blessed, is the cause of everything [coming] to its perfect true purpose. And even though this is not truly revealed now, this is the truth of the matter; and it will be revealed and known at the end of everything.¹⁹

¹⁹ Part Four, On the Sh'ma and Its Blessings

Regarding His Kingship: And among what still needs to be discerned is that the Creator, may His name be blessed, is surely the King over all of His creatures. And the explanation of this matter is that it is true that His actual existence, may He be blessed, is something that is not dependent on anything besides Him at all and not relative to anything besides Him. For He is surely a necessary and perfect entity on His own. So He has no relationship with another at all - not above Him and not below Him. This means that He has no cause upon which He is dependent at all - not like something caused with its cause, nor like a component with its complement. And from this aspect, He is called God, blessed be He - meaning the Entity Necessary from Himself, as we have written. However, since He wanted, and created, creatures; and they are all dependent upon Him for their existence, and from all angles, as we have written - from this aspect, He is called the Master of all. For everything is from Him, everything is His; and He controls everything according to His will. Yet in His goodness and His kindness and from His humility, He also wanted to - as it were - lower His lofty glory to relate to His creatures, even though they do not have a relation to Him at all. And He wanted to be on the level of a king to his people to them; that He be considered like the head and leader and be honored by them - as it were - like a king is honored by his people. [This is] like the matter that is stated (Proverbs 14:28), "With many people is the glory of a king." And from this aspect, we call Him the King of the world. And from this angle, He is certainly considered the Head for us and is honored by us. And we are also obligated to serve Him and to obey Him in all that He commands - like a king with his people. So also from this aspect are we truly obligated to serve Him and to subjugate ourselves to Him and His decrees, like servants to their king. And this is called accepting the yoke of the Kingship of Heaven, and this matter is included in this verse of Shema Yisrael (Deuteronomy 6:4). That is acknowledgment of this thing, that He is the King of kings of kings, ruling over all of His creatures - the higher ones and the lower ones - and to accept the yoke of His Kingship and be subjugated to Him.²⁰

Regarding prayer: The matter of prayer is surely from the arrangements that were set up by the Supreme Wisdom for this reason: Since the creatures receive bounty from Him, may He be blessed, there is a need for them to arouse themselves towards Him and seek His presence. So the bounty comes down to them according to the arousal towards Him. But if they do not arouse themselves, it does not come down to them. And behold the Master, blessed be He, desires and wants that the good of His creatures be increased at all times; so He prepared this worship for them on a daily basis. For through it, bounty, success and

²⁰ Ibid.

blessing will come down to them according to their needs [and] according to their situation in this world.²¹

However there is greater depth to the matter. And that is that the Master, blessed be He, surely gave man the intellect to manage himself in this world with his intelligence and his understanding. So He placed the task upon him to oversee all of his [own] needs. And this matter is based on two foundations: The first one is that because of man's preciousness and importance, he was given this intelligence and intellect to administer himself properly. The second is that he should have an occupation in the world and be bound to his affairs. And this is what sustains him in the human condition, which we mentioned above - such that it is the worldly approach and not the holy approach. But it is what he needs at this time, according to the arrangements of [God's] direction. Of course, from one angle, this diminishes him and his status. But it is a necessary diminution for him, that brings about an elevation for him afterwards, as was explained in Part I (On Human Responsibility 4). However even as this diminution is necessary according to his situation in this world; from another angle, he needs not to go beyond what is appropriate. For note that the more he gets embroiled in the matters of the world, the more he will distance himself from the Supreme light and become more darkened. But see that the Creator, may He be blessed, prepared a rectification for this. And that is that a man first come close, stand in front of Him, may He be blessed, request all of his needs and 'cast his burden upon' Him. And this is a central and essential beginning for all of his efforts, such that when he is later pulled into the other ways of effort - which are the ways of human effort - it will not happen that he will get embroiled and stuck in physicality and materialism. For he will already have begun with, and made everything dependent upon, Him, may He be blessed. So his diminution will not be a major diminution, but will rather be held up by this rectification that comes before it.²²

Regarding the control of the forces of impurity at night: The Supreme Wisdom set up that at night, the forces of impurity be given the authority to spread through all of its channels, and for its branches to wander throughout the world. And He intended that at that time, people would gather into their houses, lay down in their beds, sleep and rest until the morning. For [in the morning] the spreading and authority of these forces and all of their branches would be taken away; and people would once again leave to 'their work, until the evening.' And this is what King David, peace be upon him, explained (Psalms 104:20-23), "You bring on darkness and it is night, etc. When the sun shines, etc. Man goes out to his work, etc." However all of

²¹ Part Four, On Prayer

²² Ibid.

these matters - in all of their demarcations and measures - are rooted in the roots of the foundations of [God's] direction, according to all of its influences that come to the creatures at all of their levels, as it is written in Part I (On the Spiritual Realm 3), see there. But you should know that even though it is said by way of generalization, that the night is the time that these forces are given authority, note that it is actually only given during the first half of the night. But from midnight, an influence of emanation and will flows from in front of Him, may He be blessed, to all of the worlds. And authority is [then] taken from the forces of evil; and their branches are driven away from the place of civilization. So the emanation of the day begins to be aroused until the day is brightened by [the sun's rise]. And then the proper influence is brought down and all of existence is renewed. However the matter of this authority of these forces at night and their being driven away is a thing that is embedded into the nature of the world and its arrangements. [It is] beyond the authority and submission that comes to them from the actions of man. And that is that the Supreme Wisdom determined that since the existence of true good and evil is something that follows from the actions of the ones with free choice, it was necessary that there be an avenue within the natural axioms of the world for evil to have authority in it in such a way that it would be possible for this evil to spread in parts of it, as well as its being prevented from spreading [in other parts of it]. And truly since this is so, the Supreme Wisdom decreed that it be appropriate that there be one part in time itself, in which He would give it authority and [the possibility] to spread on its own. And see that it is the schema upon which it is possible to add from the actions of man. And [It likewise decreed] that there be another part in which authority would be taken away from it, such that there be a basis in which it be possible for [man's] actions to be the [sole] cause. And behold that the two powerful entities of light and darkness follow from the angle of [God's] emanation and its absence, as we explained in Part I (On the Purpose of Creation 3); and He gave them [each] a portion in time, meaning day and night. And the authority of the powers of impurity - that we mentioned - and their being driven out follow [these times]. But it is all [only] the substructure for the effects of the actions [of man], as we have mentioned.²³

Washing of the hands (*netilat yadayim*): Behold the first act is the purification of the hands, because they are that which became impure and upon which evil spirit rested; so one must drive it away from them and purify them. And behold the Creator, may He be blessed, embedded that they be driven away through the appropriate washing, as they, may their memory be blessed, taught us. And it comes out that his whole body is purified by this, just as all of it had been impure from the resting of evil spirit on [the hands]. And there is also a refinement of the whole entire creation with this matter, to be purified from the impurity of the

²³ Part Four, On the Daily Order of Prayer

night and to exit from its darkness. And behold they also connected a man's cleaning his body after relieving himself to this [action]. And it comes out that he is [then] totally purified and prepared to come close in front of his Creator.²⁴

Tefillin: However the content of tefillin is much greater than *tsitsit*. And that is that the Creator, may He be blessed, granted that Israel truly bring down His holiness, may He be blessed; and that they be crowned by it in such a way that all of their spiritual and physical characteristics be sheltered under this great light; and that they [also] create a great refinement through it. And this is what the verse states (Deuteronomy 28:10), "And all the nations of the world will see that the name of the Lord is called upon you." And this matter is dependent upon this commandment, in all of its laws and details. Moreover, there are two main organs in a person from which the soul derives great strength. And they are the brain and the heart. And the Creator, may He be blessed, commanded that this light first be brought down into the brain through the head tefillin and that the brain, and the soul in it, be refined through it. Then it expands afterwards to the heart through the arm tefillin that is across from it, so that it too is refined by it. And through this, it comes out that man is completely included in the drawing down of this holiness to all of his characteristics; he is crowned by it and attains a great holiness. Notwithstanding, there are various details found in the conditions of the commandment: Matters are found in all of their parts that are needed for the desired refinement of all of his parts, according to the division of the characteristics of man.²⁵

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²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.