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English translation by Claude of Herz Homberg, Ben Jakir: Ueber Glaubenswahrheiten und Sittenlehren für die israelitische Jugend, in Fragen und Antworten eingerichtet; nebst einem Anhange, second edition, revised and enlarged. The title page has no imprint. The foreword to this edition is dated Prague, September 1825, and the edition is usually dated 1826. The catechism is a dialogue between teacher and pupil in 97 numbered sections. In each section the first teacher question is set as a heading and later exchanges are labelled Teacher and Pupil. An Appendix follows, "A Word on Religious Instruction and School Institution." The front pages are unnumbered and marked [p. —]. Notes beginning "Translator:" are the translator's; the others are Homberg's.

[p. —]

BEN JAKIR.

On Truths of Faith and Moral Teachings for Israelite Youth,
arranged in questions and answers;
together with an Appendix.
By
Herz Homberg,
Imperial-Royal School Councillor.[1]
Second edition, revised and enlarged by the author himself.

[p. —] Preliminary Report

The approval with which the works *Imre schefer* and *Bne-Zion*[2] have been received could not, indeed, increase my zeal to be of use to my brethren in faith, but it has raised my courage to undertake a new work, whose purpose is to simplify religious and moral instruction in such a way that, without any philosophical explanations and without interpretation of biblical passages, which are too lofty for tender years, only the fundamental truths are set forth in an easy language suited to the circle of children, and so briefly and intelligibly that every child, with little help from a teacher, shall be able not only to understand them, but also thereby to learn the *Bne-Zion* more easily. For grown persons who lack the time and composure to grasp the whole content of the textbook just named, it will be of particular use.

[p. —] In order to impress these salutary teachings more deeply upon the memory, I also took care to clothe them in questions and answers, and at the same time to put into the hands of the examiners a guiding thread that prevents every digression.

May this scattered seed bear fruits full of blessing, and may the well-meant exhortation in the Appendix have the desired effect! For this I implore the Father of all with the Psalmist:

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[1] Translator: *k. k. Schulrath*, i.e. *kaiserlich-königlicher Schulrat*, an official of the Austrian school administration; Homberg was superintendent of the German-Jewish schools of Galicia and later school councillor in Prague. The title page of this copy bears no imprint; the place and date of the second edition are given by the foreword (Prague, September 1825).

[2] Translator: Homberg's *Imre Shefer* ("Goodly Words," Vienna 1808), a Hebrew-German religious and moral textbook, and *Bne Zion* ("Sons of Zion," Vienna 1812), the religious-moral textbook that Austrian Jews were required to study before marriage. *Ben Jakir* ("Dear Son," cf. Jer. 31:20 [Heb. 31:19]) first appeared in 1814.

"May our God's graciousness
Be granted unto us!
So shall the work of our hands prosper;
All our doing
Prospers only through Him." (Ps. 90:16)[3]

[p. —] Foreword to the Second Edition

It is eleven years since I ventured the attempt to set forth for Israelite youth the chief teachings of salvation and of morals in catechetical form; and, if one may believe the highly esteemed reviewer, it did not fail. He expresses himself on it as follows: "The reviewer, who several years ago announced in detail in these pages the larger religious book by the same author, which he published under the [p. —] title *Imre schefer*, in Hebrew and German, gladly seizes the opportunity to recommend this smaller but substantial work as well to the young and to teachers of the young, as also to all fathers and mothers."

And after the same reviewer, in confirmation of his recommendation, has quoted several passages from it, he says at the end: "The book closes with some further teachings drawn from the Talmud: that we are, for example, bound to render obedience to the laws of the sovereign just as strictly as the other subjects; and that it is a crime to withdraw oneself from the duties of a subject, etc. In short, the author has in 78 pages (the little book is not longer, the Appendix not counted, which we shall perhaps also announce in this journal [p. —]) concentrated *as much that is good and worth taking to heart as many a writer does not say in folios*."[4]

The rapid sale of the first edition of this work proves how rightly the reviewer judged, and how keenly the need for such early instruction is felt. Hence, then, the growing demand of many parents and teachers of the young, which for many years has urged me to a new edition. At a time when religious sentiments and moral feeling are growing ever more lukewarm, I could all the less resist that *holy* demand; and so I have resolved to [p. —] give it to the press once again; but first to improve it, to enrich it with additions, and to adapt it still more fittingly to its purpose.

If the success corresponds to my good intention, I shall be richly rewarded.

Prague, September 1825.
The Author.

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[3] Translator: Printed "Ps. C. 90, 16" (C. = chapter). The verse paraphrased ("May the favor of the Lord our God be upon us; establish the work of our hands…") is Ps. 90:17.

[4] *Sulamith*, a journal for the promotion of culture and humanity among the Israelites. Fifth year, fifth issue, p. 320 ff.

[p. 9] # Chapter One. On the Existence of God and His Attributes

1. ***Teacher: How many articles of faith does the Israelite have?***

Pupil. The Israelite has thirteen articles of faith.[5]

Teacher. Are you able to recite them and explain them?

Pupil. I believe I can explain them well.

Teacher. Then begin.

2. *Pupil.* The first article of faith is: we hold it as true and certain that there is a God.

Teacher. What do you understand by the name God?

Pupil. A Being that was not created, but has been from eternity, and will be to all eternity.

Teacher. What more do we know of this holy Being?

Pupil. We know that God is all-wise, all-good and almighty.

3. ***Teacher: What does all-wise mean?***

Pupil. All-wisdom means the highest reason, which, every time it undertakes to do something, chooses the best and most effective means, which certainly lead to the end.

[p. 10] *Teacher.* Prudence, too, chooses the most reasonable and fitting means to reach its goal. In what, then, does wisdom differ from prudence?

Pupil. The prudent man, too, certainly seeks out the best means, but only in order to gain advantages for himself alone; the wise man, however, is intent on procuring benefit for others as well.

Teacher. Since God possesses the highest wisdom, what follows from this?

Pupil. That He is also all-good; that He cares with infinite love for all living creatures, and especially for human beings, and continually does them good, without having the least benefit from it for Himself.

Teacher. In what, finally, does omnipotence consist?

Pupil. It consists in the highest and boundless power to create and bring forth everything that is in any way possible; and in the equally great might to preserve all created things, namely the whole world.

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[5]Translator: The thirteen articles of faith of Maimonides (Commentary on the Mishnah, Sanhedrin ch. 10), here restated in Homberg's own rationalizing wording.

4. ***Teacher: From what do we know that God has these attributes, namely that He is all-wise, all-good and almighty?***

Pupil. This we know already from the world that He has created. In it we see how reasonably and wisely He has ordered everything; with what great power He has brought forth so many kinds of creatures; and how through His unceasing goodness these creatures, and human beings in particular, subsist and are happy. Without these attributes the world could not have come into being, and could not continue to exist.

Teacher. You have said, my child, that we know these attributes of God already from the contemplation of the world. From this I now understand that we can also learn all this by another way: by what way, then, can we further arrive at this knowledge?

[p. 11] *Pupil.* By the way of revelation; that is, through Holy Scripture, which makes known these divine attributes, and others besides, with the greatest clarity and distinctness.

Chapter Two. Continuation; and on the Destiny of Man

5. *Pupil.* The second article of faith is that God is one and simple.

Teacher. What does it mean: He is one?

Pupil. He is a Being that has not His like, neither on earth nor in heaven; and that besides Him there is no God.

Teacher. What do you understand by the word "simple"?

Pupil. That God has no body, no limbs, is not, like the creatures, composed of parts, but is a purely spiritual Being which we cannot apprehend by any of the five senses, namely sight, hearing, smell, touch and taste.

Teacher. But we do find God represented in Holy Scripture as though He had eyes, ears, hands and feet?

Pupil. He is represented so only for our sake; because we cannot comprehend how one can see without eyes, hear without ears, do something without hands, and walk without feet. With God, however, everything happens without these and other members.

6. ***Teacher: What follows from this?***

Pupil. The third article of faith: namely, that one may not think of God under any bodily form, quality or [p. 12] condition, nor believe that He could be limited or enclosed in one place.

Teacher. Where, then, is the divine Being to be found?

Pupil. Everywhere! God is everywhere; He is omnipresent.

Teacher. If God is omnipresent, what must one therefore guard against?

Pupil. Against doing anything evil, or thinking anything evil; for He sees all our actions, hears all our words, and knows all our thoughts.

7. *Teacher: How does the fourth article of faith run?*

Pupil. It runs: we hold it as true and certain that God created the world out of nothing, gave each creature its form and nature, and destined it for a certain purpose.

Teacher. Do we know the purpose of every creature?

Pupil. Only of very few created beings do we know what they are destined for.

Teacher. Since God has bestowed on man reason and the ability to communicate his thoughts to other men through speech, what must his destiny be?

Pupil. Noble and exalted! He is namely destined to use his reason in all his doing and not-doing, and, if he has applied it well, to become eternally happy in the life after death.

8. *Teacher: In what does the good use of reason chiefly consist?*

Pupil. In the endeavor to be virtuous; namely, when one avoids evil, however much it may tempt one, and when one does good, even if it sometimes costs great self-mastery, and at times even brings harm.

[p. 13] *Teacher.* By what means can we always, and on every occasion, distinguish good from evil?

Pupil. In order to be able to distinguish good from evil, we must diligently consult reason, that is, reflect often, and above all pay attention to the divine sayings in Holy Scripture.

Teacher. Can one not state on this a short teaching that could serve as a rule of conduct in human actions?

Pupil. Yes indeed; the teaching can serve as a rule for all our doing and not-doing: "What is hateful to you, do not do to another either; what you desire and what pleases you, perform also for your fellow man if you can."[6]

Teacher. Is it then always in our power to do good and to abhor evil?

Pupil. For this God has given man a free will; he can incline toward virtue or toward vice. Not every man can become a scholar or an artist; but everyone can be upright and virtuous.

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[6]Translator: The negative form goes back to Hillel's saying in BT Shabbat 31a ("What is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow"); the positive complement echoes Lev. 19:18.

Chapter Three. On Divine Providence

9. ***Teacher: In what does the fifth article of faith consist?***

Pupil. It consists in the conviction that God, with His wisdom, goodness and power, preserves and governs the whole world; that all ordinary and extraordinary changes in the whole of nature take place through the will of God, and that without His will not the slightest movement would be possible, nor could a leaf fall from the tree.

[p. 14] *Teacher.* What follows from this conviction?

Pupil. That all the good that we human beings enjoy in this life comes from the goodness of God alone, who provides us with everything necessary for our preservation, and with many other things that give us pleasure.

10. ***Teacher: If God shows Himself so loving toward human beings, what, accordingly, is our duty?***

Pupil. To be grateful for this love, to give Him our whole trust, and, when things go ill with us, to call upon Him devoutly for help.

Teacher. Could we not also place our trust in other beings, for example in angels?

Pupil. That would be of no use to us; for everything depends on the will of God alone. The most exalted angels themselves are only creatures, and depend on Him as the Creator and Ruler of all beings.

Teacher. What, then, follows from this?

Pupil. That we must highly revere and worship God alone, as the eternal Being who alone governs.

Chapter Four. On the Revelation of God

11. ***Teacher: To what does the sixth article of faith direct us?***

Pupil. To be firmly convinced that in earlier times God revealed, that is, made known, His will to various human beings.

Teacher. What kind of people were those to whom God had revealed Himself?

[p. 15] *Pupil.* They were very virtuous, filled with love of mankind, and had quite rare knowledge and insight.

Teacher. What are the persons called who were favored with such a revelation?

Pupil. They are called prophets, seers.

Teacher. What was the purpose of the revelations?

Pupil. In every revelation God had the intention of instructing either one or several human beings, and often a whole people when it was in error, how one ought to live, that is, conduct oneself, according to His will.

Teacher. Since God has endowed human beings with reason in order to reflect, why was it necessary that He should reveal Himself?

Pupil. Very few people know how to use reason in such a way that through it they attain a pure, true knowledge of God, and perceive the will of the unsearchable Being.

12. ***Teacher: Did these prophets have equal or differing qualities?***

Pupil. All were exceedingly virtuous and endowed with a great spirit; yet one had more excellences and merits than another.

Teacher. Who was the most excellent among them all?

Pupil. According to our seventh article of faith we hold Moses to be the greatest and foremost prophet among all who have ever been, and who might appear in the future.

Teacher. In what does his preeminence over all the other prophets consist?

Pupil. In this: that he understood the guidance and preservation of the world better than all others, and that his conceptions of the destiny of man and of [p. 16] true happiness were the clearest and purest. He was free of passions and had the noblest dispositions.

Chapter Five. Continuation, on the Preeminence of the Divine Teacher Moses over All Other Prophets

13. ***Teacher: How do we know that God especially loved this Moses?***

Pupil. He must have loved him quite especially, because He chose him, first, to lead the people of Israel out of Egypt and to free them from the slavery in which they had been held by the Egyptian kings for several centuries; and then also to lead the Israelites to Mount Sinai, on which God revealed Himself to the whole nation.

Teacher. What was made known through this revelation?

Pupil. The divine voice which made itself heard at this revelation gave the nation ten teachings or commands, among which some are commandments and some prohibitions. Nothing but instructions to lead the Israelites to good and to keep them from evil.

14. ***Teacher: With the completion of the great revelation, did the leadership, office and dignity of Moses also come to an end?***

Pupil. It was then that his leadership, his teaching office and his great authority really began.

Teacher. Through what?

[p. 17] *Pupil.* Through this: that he led the nation with wisdom for forty years in a wilderness, and worked such wonders that in this long time it nevertheless lacked neither food and drink nor clothing; that he admonished them diligently and in fatherly fashion about their faults and sought to improve them; and that, finally, up to the end of his life he made known to the Israelites from time to time good and wise laws which he had received from God; in a word, that he formed them into a rational and civilized society.

15. ***Teacher: Where does one find those Ten Commandments, and the good and wise laws subsequently made known through Moses?***

Pupil. All these, together with the history of the creation of the world, along with the history of the forefathers of the Israelite nation, namely of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, etc., as also, finally, the admonitions and assurances which God conveyed to the nation, are found in the five books of Moses.

Teacher. Have we nothing to show of the revelations of the other prophets?

Pupil. Of these we still possess many writings, in which are found many good teachings, admonitions and promises concerning the destiny of our nation.

Teacher. What are those five books of Moses, together with the writings of the prophets, called?

Pupil. All together are called: Holy Scripture.

Chapter Six. On the Truthfulness of Holy Scripture

16. ***Teacher: What are we to believe concerning this Holy Scripture?***

[p. 18] *Pupil.* According to the eighth article of faith we hold, first, that it has come down to us from Moses and the prophets, just as we possess it in the Hebrew language, unfalsified, that is, without addition and without omission of even a single word; and further, that everything these holy books contain in commandments, prohibitions and other teachings, admonitions and comforting assurances derives not from human inventions, but from the divine holy will.

Teacher. Have those comforting assurances already come to fulfillment?

Pupil. Not all. Many promises which are found in the books of Moses and of the prophets God has already brought to fulfillment, and we hope and await with confidence that the rest, too, will yet be carried out.

Teacher. Can you give me an example of this?

Pupil. God spoke to *Abraham*: "Through your seed a blessing shall come upon the nations of the earth."[7] Now already more than two-thirds of the human race have, through revelation, better conceptions of God and His holy will.

17. ***Teacher: Since these promises have not yet come true, may one not suppose that God has perhaps thought otherwise, and means to leave them unfulfilled?***

Pupil. "*God is no son of man, that He should think otherwise*," it says in Holy Scripture.[8] What He once resolves and promises, that He surely keeps.

Teacher. Could not new circumstances arise that might move God to alter His resolution?

Pupil. Then He would not be the exalted, all-knowing, all-wise Being. In His deep wisdom He has not only [p. 19] looked upon all the circumstances that actually come about in the world, but also upon all those that could arise; consequently no changes in the world are new to Him that He would not have known beforehand; therefore there is also no reason for whose sake He should depart from His first resolution.

Teacher. In this way, then, all the laws that God gave the Israelites through Moses would likewise be unchangeable?

Pupil. So they are! According to the ninth article of faith we hold that all laws and precepts aimed at our temporal welfare and our eternal happiness will remain unchangeable.

18. ***Teacher: According to your idea that God already knows in advance all actual and possible changes in the whole of nature, He must then be all-knowing?***

Pupil. According to our tenth article of faith we hold it as true and certain that He is all-knowing. We believe, namely, that all effects and changes that have taken place since the creation of the world, are taking place at present, and will arise in the future, are known to God and remain unforgotten.

Teacher. The human mind, too, is changeable: now it wishes this, now it wishes that; almost every moment it has other thoughts; some thoughts a man carries out, some he leaves unexecuted. Should God also have knowledge of all these thoughts and stirrings of the mind?

Pupil. Certainly! He knows what goes on in every human heart. He knows the most secret thoughts, the evil as well as the good; both those that are carried out and pass into actions, and those that do not express themselves and remain unknown to men.

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[7] Translator: Paraphrasing Gen. 22:18 (cf. Gen. 12:3; 26:4; 28:14); no reference is printed.

[8] Translator: Num. 23:19; no reference is printed.

[p. 20] Chapter Seven. On the Reward of the Good and the Punishment of the Evil Actions of Men

19. ***Teacher: Are the actions of men and their dispositions indifferent to the most high and holy Being, whether they are good or evil?***

Pupil. By no means. The eleventh article of faith runs that we believe as certain and true that God rewards good actions and punishes vicious deeds.

Teacher. How does it stand with the thoughts and dispositions of men that do not pass into actions?

Pupil. We believe of the goodness of God that virtuous *intentions*, too, when circumstances prevent their being carried out, are regarded as virtuous actions and find their reward.

20. Likewise we believe of the justice of God that evil intentions, even if they are not carried out, deserve punishment; since, properly speaking, to will evil is sinful.

Evil thoughts and desires, on the other hand, which arise involuntarily in our mind and which we immediately endeavor to cast off, are not counted against us as guilt.

It is not enough to conform outwardly to the law; rather, one should earnestly strive always to refine, purify and ennoble one's dispositions.

Teacher. Where does the reward of virtue and the punishment of vice take place?

Pupil. Many a good action is rewarded in this life, and many an evil one is already punished here.

Teacher. There is, then, another place where the requital [p. 21] of good and evil is completed. What is this place called, and what is the state in which the completion takes place?

Pupil. The place is called the world of spirits, and the state is that in which man finds himself after death.

21. ***Teacher: The state of man after death, I had thought, was rot and decay?***

Pupil. That of the body, certainly, but not of the soul.

Teacher. What do you understand by the name soul?

Pupil. All the spiritual powers of man, such as understanding, reason, and the faculties by which man is distinguished from all creatures living in the world.

Teacher. How do we know that the soul is immortal?

Pupil. From this: that God Himself breathed the soul into the first man, *Adam*; and the breath that goes forth from God must be just as imperishable and immortal as He Himself is.

Teacher. Why is the good man not rewarded at once in this life, and the wicked punished here?

Pupil. If reward followed immediately upon every good deed performed, one would no longer act freely, because the reward might entice one to good. Likewise, if evil were to be punished on the spot, one would refrain from the vicious deed not out of abhorrence and free will, but out of fear of punishment.

22. ***Teacher: Is there not yet another reason why reward and punishment are carried out only after death?***

Pupil. If God were to reward men here at once, they could misuse the reward and stray from the [p. 22] path of virtue. There are examples of people who were pious and happy in their middling circumstances, but when they attained riches became dissolute and unhappy.

Teacher. But this is still no reason why God does not punish evil at once.

Pupil. He does not like to punish; He is long-suffering; He gives the sinner time to amend, so that He need not punish.

Teacher. How long does God give the sinner time for amendment?

Pupil. Until the hour of death.

Teacher. In this way he will keep on sinning, and think: I have time enough to amend on the day of my death?

Pupil. Does he then know when the day of his death will be? He is not sure for a single moment that death will not overtake him.

23. ***Teacher: If the perfect reward of the righteous and the punishment of the godless take place only after death, when the body has already decayed, and can therefore be carried out only upon the soul, what must the soul then be like?***

Pupil. As I have already said: it is imperishable and immortal. God lets it endure for eternity, in order to let it enjoy an uninterrupted happiness, a never-ending delight, if it has lived in this world according to His holy will.

Teacher. How does the most gracious Being deal with those unhappy souls that have led a sinful life?

Pupil. Since the most gracious Being is also most just, the souls of the godless will not escape their deserved punishment in the other world, and will ceaselessly and bitterly repent their sinful life.

[p. 23] Chapter Eight. On the Messiah, and on the Resurrection of the Dead

24. ***Teacher: The hope that a virtuous life has of reward after death relates only to each individual person; but what hope has our nation as a whole?***

Pupil. According to the twelfth article of faith we expect that our nation will not always live scattered like sheep without a shepherd, and remain without a visible leadership.

Teacher. What do you understand by visible leadership?

Pupil. By this I understand a head. We believe, namely, that God will one day send an anointed head, to instruct the Israelite nation, to enlighten it in the word of God, to give it strength and steadfastness easily to resist all evil desires, to spur it on to brotherly unity and universal love of mankind, and to erect a Temple in which all the peoples of the earth will worship God.

25. ***Teacher: Only that generation to which the Anointed One appears will enjoy this beneficent transformation, this glorious rebirth: what advantage, then, do the generations long dead have from it?***

Pupil. Those long dead, too, will have a share in this benefit. For according to our thirteenth article of faith, at the end of all days God will awaken the dead from their graves and let them rise again.

Teacher. Will all who are resurrected, without distinction, share in the enjoyment of so many joys?

Pupil. No! God will first hold a general judgment over [p. 24] all the generations of men: in this judgment the peoples will be refined like silver; the righteous and those who are of pure, guiltless heart will be chosen; but the dross, namely the evildoers, will be excluded and banished from that heavenly, joyful state.

Chapter Nine. On the Fundamental Law of Holy Scripture, and on the Love of God

26. ***Teacher: Could you tell me briefly the content of the revelations that Moses and the prophets recorded?***

Pupil. Yes indeed! The sum of the whole of Holy Scripture can be stated in a single word.

Teacher. And this word is?

Pupil. Love. Love God, love yourself, love your parents, love your children, love the fatherland, love all men and even your enemies.

Teacher. With this one word you have said a great deal. But you must prepare yourself to explain all these kinds of love.

Pupil. I am prepared, and hope to be able to give satisfaction in this.

27. ***Teacher: In what, then, does love of God consist?***

Pupil. It consists in this: that we should do and practice everything that is pleasing to Him.

Teacher. How do we know what is pleasing or displeasing to God?

Pupil. This we know in part from reason, which God has given us, but still more through the holy laws which He has caused to be made known through Moses.

[p. 25] *Teacher.* What, on the whole, is the aim of these laws?

Pupil. Their purpose is to teach us what virtue is and what vice is; how we are to love and follow virtue, and how we are to abhor and flee vice. They teach us further that man is destined to become happy, and that he should therefore live in accordance with this destiny.

Teacher. What is the life of a virtuous man like, and what the life of a vicious one?

Pupil. The former is like a gently rippling spring, contented and cheerful; the latter, by contrast, like a stormy sea, because the sinner's conscience is tormented and made anxious by reproaches.

Teacher. In which life does God take pleasure, and in which displeasure?

Pupil. Since God is the most loving Being and wishes to make men happy, He must also take high pleasure in virtue and great displeasure in vice, and must wish that, if we love Him sincerely, we follow the former exactly and carefully avoid the latter.

Chapter Ten: Of Trust in God, and of Divine Worship

28. ***Teacher: Of what else are we certain that it is pleasing to God?***

Pupil. We are certain that it is pleasing to God when we trust in Him.

Teacher. In what does trust in God consist?

Pupil. In the conviction that He is good toward us in the highest degree, and is willing to help us in adversity.

Teacher. Is goodness alone sufficient to help us?

[p. 26] *Pupil.* No! But we trust in the all-good Being that it is also almighty and able to help: love and power are united in Him.

Teacher. Yet we have examples of people devoutly calling on God for help, and the help not coming: how can this be reconciled with His all-goodness?

Pupil. Through His all-wisdom. No sensible physician, in order to relieve a small and brief pain, will apply remedies that could cause a violent and lingering illness.

Teacher. How can this example be applied to God?

Pupil. In the most natural way. We are convinced, namely, that God could indeed remedy every misfortune and every evil on the spot; but that His supreme wisdom perceives how it is often better for us to endure a small hardship than to be exposed to greater dangers by a swift rescue; or that our brief suffering in this world is necessary in order to test us, whether we remain steadfastly true to virtue.

Teacher. What might be the purpose of such a test?

Pupil. To let us become happier in the life to come than we would have become without this test.

29. ***Teacher: What else does the love of God require of us?***

Pupil. It also requires that we publicly honour and praise His holy name, reflect often on His goodness, wisdom and power, and instruct our fellow men in the will of God, as far as we know it.

Teacher. Is it not enough if each person is pious for himself? Why should one concern oneself with others?

Pupil. It is the will of God that we contribute to making our fellow men happy as well. When we impart good teachings and useful truths to them, [p. 27] we give them a great deal, and yet lose nothing by it.

Teacher. What times should we choose for celebrating divine worship solemnly?

Pupil. We ought indeed to praise God's holy name every day and at all times, and to thank Him continually for His benefits; yet on Sabbaths and festivals, when we rest from all labours and business, we are best disposed for it.

Teacher. In what place can the prayer of thanksgiving and devotion be performed most fittingly?

Pupil. The most fitting place for devotion is the synagogue. One can indeed worship God in any place, for He is present everywhere. But in the synagogue, where the whole congregation assembles for this holy occupation, prayer is more moving and more solemn; through the communal singing the mind is lifted higher.

30. ***Teacher: By what is the love of God shown most powerfully?***

Pupil. When in all our actions we strive to imitate Him.

Teacher. How would it be possible for weak man to imitate God?

Pupil. With some effort and habituation it can happen quite easily.

Teacher. For example?

Pupil. God is all-wise: so we too should strive, as far as we can, to acquire knowledge and insight, in order to conduct ourselves reasonably and never to act thoughtlessly and frivolously.

Teacher. In what else can we imitate God?

Pupil. Just as God seeks to make His creatures happy, so we too should endeavour to help our fellow men to their happiness and to a good livelihood.

[p. 28] *Teacher.* Which divine attributes can further be imitated?

Pupil. His goodness, love and readiness to be reconciled. God is loving and beneficent toward men; we too should love men, support those in need, and have compassion on the unfortunate, the poor, the widows and orphans.

Teacher. What do you understand by readiness to be reconciled?

Pupil. All men, some more, others less, sin against God. But He forgives them if they repent of their sins and amend, and grants them His love again. We imitate Him when we too forgive from our whole heart our enemies who have offended us, and are reconciled with them.

Chapter Eleven: Of the Ten Commandments

The First Three Commandments

31. ***Teacher: How does Holy Scripture express itself concerning the love of God?***

Pupil. It says: Love the Eternal, thy God, with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy might.[9]

Teacher. Can you explain this commandment more clearly?

Pupil. Its meaning is: one should value God more highly than anything in the world, and therefore, when His will demands it, sacrifice to Him our inclinations, our property, yes, even our life.

Teacher. That seems to demand far too much of man!

Pupil. Not at all. Does not many a man sacrifice his rest, his comfort, his goods and possessions, and often his very life, for his friend? How many expose themselves voluntarily to the dangers of death out of love for the [p. 29] fatherland! Now God is our highest Friend, who daily lets so many benefits flow to us, and from whom we shall receive a blissful happiness in that life; consequently we are all the more bound to give up our life for the honour of God.

32. ***Teacher: Could you acquaint me with the whole will of God?***

Pupil. For that I must still learn a great deal, before I shall know it in its whole compass. What I now know of it are the Ten Commandments, which God made known to our forefathers on Mount Sinai.

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[9] Translator: Deut. 6:5, quoted without reference.

Teacher. For the present I am satisfied if you know how to explain these well.

Pupil. The first commandment, which is to be regarded as an introduction, as it were, to the others that follow, reads: I am the Eternal, thy God, who brought thee (people of Israel) out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slaves.

Teacher. What follows from this address of God to the Israelite nation?

Pupil. It follows from it that God has a greater claim on the gratitude, the worship and the obedience of the Israelites than on that of other men; that because of this extraordinary benefit, namely deliverance from that long slavery, we are bound more than all other nations to follow His commandments, however much self-conquest they may cost us.

33. ***Teacher: How does the second commandment run?***

Pupil. It is properly a prohibition, and runs: Thou shalt have no other gods before my face. Thou [p. 30] shalt not make thyself any idol, nor any imitation of a form of that which is in heaven above, on the earth beneath, or in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down to them, nor worship them; for I, the Eternal, thy God, am a jealous God (who can suffer no other beside Him), who visits the transgression of the fathers upon children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, namely upon those who hate me, but who shows mercy unto the thousandth generation to those who love me and keep my commandments.

Teacher. How can the content of this commandment be expressed in a few words?

Pupil. One shall practise no idolatry.

Teacher. Is idolatry then so very harmful?

Pupil. Every kind of idolatry, and above all the worship of idols, has the worst consequences for men; for it leads to the most abominable vices and to the greatest ruin.

Teacher. How do you know that, my child?

Pupil. From the history of those peoples who denied the one true God and worshipped either the sun or other creatures, or even things that had been invented and represented as deities. These false notions led them to the most inhuman cruelties.

34. ***Teacher: You said: every kind of idolatry has evil consequences; so there must be another kind of idolatry besides the worship of idols. What is it called?***

Pupil. Superstition.

Teacher. What do you call superstition?

Pupil. Superstition is the name given to that false belief that miracles could happen even without the will of God.

[p. 31] *Teacher.* What is comprehended under the word miracle?

Pupil. All changes and effects in the world without a natural force, and such as conflict with nature.

Teacher. Can such things never happen?

Pupil. They can indeed occur, but solely and only through the will of God, and then they are called supernatural effects.

Teacher. When someone seeks help and assistance from sorcerers, who lead the people astray and make them believe that they too can produce supernatural effects, what does the man who takes refuge with them in his distress betray?

Pupil. He betrays that he has no proper trust in God. He is like a sick man who has no real confidence in his physician and therefore sends for another. But distrust of the divine goodness or omnipotence is highly culpable.

35. ***Teacher: Let us now proceed to the third commandment.***

Pupil. It reads: Thou shalt not pronounce the name of the Eternal, thy God, in vain; for the Eternal will not leave him unpunished who shall pronounce His name in vain.

Teacher. What is the intent of this commandment?

Pupil. One shall hold the divine commands and ordinances in high esteem and follow them with reverence.

Teacher. Could this not be done even if one pronounced His name in vain?

Pupil. If one pronounces the name of God without its being necessary, as ignorant people are wont to do, the holy name becomes quite common, and one gradually loses reverence for God, for His ordinances and commands.

[p. 32] *Teacher.* When and where may the name of God be pronounced?

Pupil. In prayer, in instruction, and before a court, when the judge requires that one swear by the name of God.

Chapter Twelve: Continuation; the Next Five Commandments

36. ***Teacher: What does the fourth commandment command?***

Pupil. It commands: Remember the day of rest always, to keep it holy. Six days mayest thou labour and do all thy business; but the seventh day is a day of rest of the Eternal, in honour of thy God; thou shalt do no work of craft, neither thou thyself, nor thy son or thy daughter, thy manservant, thy maidservant, nor through thy cattle, or through thy stranger who sojourns within thy gates. For

in six days the Eternal created heaven, earth and sea, together with all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the Eternal blessed the day of rest and declared it holy.

Teacher. What does it mean: God blessed the day of rest?

Pupil. He gave this day important advantages over other days.

Teacher. Since idleness is harmful, how then should one spend this day of rest?

Pupil. One should spend the weekly day of rest, or Sabbath, with prayers of thanksgiving, hymns of praise, and devout and holy meditations.

Teacher. What in particular leads us to edifying meditations on this day?

Pupil. The fact that on it the wondrous creation [p. 33] was completed, in which we cannot sufficiently admire the omnipotence and all-wisdom of God, nor sufficiently thank Him for His all-goodness, and especially for having destined men for happiness.

37. ***Teacher: Must we then occupy ourselves with prayer the whole day?***

Pupil. No. It belongs in a certain sense to divine worship also to be joyful, and to give joy to our fellow men as well. Therefore we are permitted, indeed even commanded, on Sabbaths and festivals, after divine service is completed, to give ourselves over to innocent amusements and to enjoy them reasonably, that is, with moderation.

Teacher. In what way do we bring it about that our fellow men too rejoice with us?

Pupil. When one invites the poor to one's table and lets them take part in one's amusements.

Teacher. When one feeds the needy and seeks to cheer their spirits, what do we gain by it?

Pupil. Our own spirit thereby becomes more cheerful and happier. For there is no pleasure equal to that which doing good gives us.

38. ***Teacher: To what does the fifth commandment direct us?***

Pupil. It commands: Honour thy father and thy mother, that thou mayest live long on the land which the Eternal, thy God, will give thee.

Teacher. If God had not commanded the honouring of parents and had promised no long life, how would you have behaved toward father and mother?

Pupil. My heart already tells me that I should love them, hold them in high honour, and care for them lovingly in their old age.

[p. 34] *Teacher.* Why then does God command something to which we are already inclined by nature?

Pupil. Because there are degenerate souls who are ungrateful, forget the benefits received from their parents, and do not accept their good teachings.

Teacher. But with such ungrateful people God's commandment would be of no use either.

Pupil. The commandment is properly addressed to the whole nation. The nation is to hold strictly to the upbringing of children, as a matter that concerns the whole state. That is why a long life was also promised to it, the nation, that is, a long-enduring happy condition in the promised land.

Teacher. How is the upbringing of children a matter for the whole state?

Pupil. It is established that children who feel no love for their parents, and can abandon them in need or grieve and wound them, become very wicked men, capable of committing every act of violence and cruelty and of sacrificing the security of the state to their evil desires.

39. ***Teacher: What is the sixth commandment?***

Pupil. Thou shalt not murder; that is, we shall take the life neither of ourselves nor of others.

Teacher. Is murder alone forbidden?

Pupil. Under murder is also comprehended every shortening of life. We may not indulge in any kind of excess, or attempt any hazardous venture in which there is danger to life, nor lead others into it either.

Teacher. Yet we see that people are sometimes executed.

Pupil. Executed, yes, when they have committed such crimes as must be punished with death according to the laws. But that is not called murder.

[p. 35] **40.** ***Teacher: What follows this commandment?***

Pupil. The seventh, which runs: Thou shalt not commit unchastity.

Teacher. What do you understand by this?

Pupil. One shall make no wife unfaithful to her husband and no husband unfaithful to his wife, so that the husband ceases to love the wife, or she him, and keeps intimate company with another person.

Teacher. Is unfaithfulness between married people then so harmful?

Pupil. It certainly is. Where love and fidelity are lacking between husband and wife, in such a house there is neither peace, nor happiness, nor blessing. There is nothing there but quarrelling and strife.

Teacher. When married people are unfaithful to one another, who else suffers from it?

Pupil. Their children. He who has ceased to love his wife is also not so kind as before to the children he has with her; hence the children of unfaithful and embittered spouses are usually very badly brought up.

41. ***Teacher: What does the eighth commandment forbid?***

Pupil. The eighth commandment says: Thou shalt not steal.

Teacher. What is comprehended under the word stealing?

Pupil. Every kind of fraud as well. When one uses false measure and weight in selling goods, or passes false money among people, or takes advantage of someone, that is, makes him pay much more for goods than is fair, and the like, this is just as punishable an offence as stealing.

Teacher. In stealing, something is taken away without the owner to whom it belongs knowing of it and permitting it; fraud, on the other hand, takes place, as it were, with [p. 36] the knowledge and before the eyes of the owner: should this make no difference?

Pupil. Not in the least! For in the one case as in the other the owner is always either deprived of what is his entirely or shortchanged in it; indeed, cheating is almost worse than stealing, because one can guard oneself more easily against thieves than against cheats. For the thief, when he is caught, receives his punishment and stops stealing; but the cheat carries on his wicked ways continually.

Chapter Thirteen: Continuation; the Last Two Commandments

42. ***Teacher: What kind of prohibition does the ninth commandment contain?***

Pupil. In the ninth commandment it says: Thou shalt not testify against thy neighbour as a false witness.

Teacher. Why does it not say simply: Thou shalt not lie?

Pupil. Holy Scripture has already forbidden lying in another place. But false testimony is far worse than a mere lie.

Teacher. How so?

Pupil. Because through false testimony the judge can be misled into depriving an innocent man of his property, his honour, and often even of his life.

Teacher. How then is a false witness to be regarded?

Pupil. Since through him many a man loses his goods and possessions or his life, he is in a certain sense a thief, a highway robber, a murderer.

43. ***Teacher: These prohibitions presumably refer only to*** [p. 37] ***Israelites in relation to Israelites: but how are we to conduct ourselves toward Christians and other people who are not Israelites?***

Pupil. We have not the slightest ground for this supposition. In this respect we must conduct ourselves toward Christians exactly as toward our fellow believers. Whoever murders, robs, outwits or cheats a Christian or other non-Israelite, be it in measure and weight, with bad goods, with false money, or in whatever way it may happen, sins against God just as much, and will be punished by Him just as severely, as if he had murdered, robbed, outwitted or cheated an Israelite.

Teacher. But in the ninth commandment it says expressly: Thou shalt not testify against thy neighbour as a false witness; should one suppose that this concerns only an Israelite, but that against non-Israelites one might give false testimony?

Pupil. One would then have to be bent on interpreting Holy Scripture falsely. For Scripture calls all men brothers, because they are all created in the image of God and descend from one ancestor, namely Adam: every man, therefore, is my neighbour. Besides, the witness must swear by the name of God that he will testify the truth. If he then does not tell the truth, he is already culpable because he has misused and profaned the name of God.

Teacher. What general teaching can be given on this?

Pupil. This: that we must observe sacredly toward everyone all the commandments and prohibitions of Holy Scripture that concern not merely the Israelites but all men, without distinction as to whether he professes this faith or that.

Teacher. From what can this teaching be derived?

Pupil. From Holy Scripture itself, which expressly [p. 38] says: Thou shalt not oppress the heathen (who is neither Israelite nor Christian), nor cheat him; *thou shalt love him as thyself.*[10]

Teacher. Is there any other reason why we should make no distinction in this?

Pupil. Justice too requires it of us. For just as I can demand of every man without distinction that he not offend me, not rob me, not cheat me, and so on, so every man, whoever he may be, has the same right to demand all this of me.

44. ***Teacher: We come at last to the tenth commandment: what does it command?***

Pupil. This commandment runs thus: Thou shalt have no desire for thy neighbour's house; thou shalt have no desire for thy neighbour's wife, for his manservant, for his maidservant, for his ox, for his ass, or for anything that thy neighbour possesses.[11]

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[10] Translator: A paraphrase, without reference, of the laws concerning the *ger* ("stranger, sojourner"), e.g. Exod. 22:20 and Lev. 19:33–34 ("thou shalt love him as thyself"), here rendered by Homberg as "der Heide" (the heathen, i.e. the gentile).

[11] Translator: The original has a stray asterisk before "nach seinem Ochsen" ("for his ox"); no corresponding footnote is printed.

Teacher. How can desire be forbidden? It often arises in a person, he himself knows not how.

Pupil. Desire itself, of course, does not depend on our free will. Scripture means only that when such a desire arises in us, we should suppress it at once and not seek to satisfy it.

Teacher. By what can such desires be suppressed?

Pupil. If, for example, one covets one's neighbour's beautiful garden or splendid house, let one only say to oneself: this is surely not necessary for my sustenance; I can very well be content in this life without this garden and without this house, and be happy after my death.

Teacher. What else can one consider to calm the mind?

[p. 39] *Pupil.* Let one only reflect that it is the will of God, and serves the good of mankind, that not all have everything, that some people possess much and others little.

Chapter Fourteen: Of the Fall into Sin, and of the Forgiveness of Sin

45. ***Teacher: If one does not suppress such a desire at once, to what can it lead us?***

Pupil. To envy: one would like to have everything one sees with others, and begrudges everyone any good thing. If one wants to have everything one craves, one commits in the end the greatest crimes and makes oneself and others unhappy.

Teacher. Could an evil lust that one does not suppress at once really cause so much mischief?

Pupil. Indeed it could. Adam and Eve, the first human beings, who were surely better and more perfect than we, nevertheless allowed themselves to be seduced by evil lust, through a serpent, into transgressing a commandment of God.

Teacher. What, then, had God forbidden them?

Pupil. They were not to eat of a certain fruit in the Garden of Eden. But they let themselves be so carried away by the craving for this fruit, which they did not suppress at once, that they were no longer strong enough to observe God's command, and ate of the forbidden fruit.

Teacher. What is the transgression of a divine commandment or prohibition called?

Pupil. Sin.

Teacher. What does a man lose through a sin committed?

[p. 40] *Pupil.* The good pleasure of God, and, if the sin is great, often His whole love.

46. ***Teacher: Has the sinner lost this good pleasure and this love forever; can he never obtain them again?***

Pupil. In justice he ought not to be able to obtain them again; indeed, since he has acted against the will of the eternal Being, he would also have to suffer eternal punishments.

Teacher. So there is, after all, a means of escaping the eternal punishments and regaining the love of God.

Pupil. There certainly remains to man a means of being cleansed of his sins and of being received again by God with favour.

Teacher. What is this means called?

Pupil. The grace of God.

Teacher. I would like a clear explanation of this.

Pupil. The all-good Being, who knows how weak men are and how inclined they are to sin, has perceived that if He wished to judge them strictly and as they deserved, no man, not even the most pious, could stand in His judgment.

Teacher. How then does God deal with sinful, fallen man?

Pupil. In His grace He shows the human race the way in which one may be reconciled with Him and attain His love again.

47. ***Teacher: By what can this come about?***

Pupil. One must first sincerely repent of the crimes one has committed, make good as far as possible the harm one has caused through one's sins, practise good works, and finally resolve never [p. 41] again to transgress against God and men.

Teacher. Are sincere remorse for the vice committed and the firm resolve never to repeat it sufficient by themselves?

Pupil. Not in all cases.

Teacher. In which cases would these two conditions be sufficient to reconcile God again?

Pupil. God lets Himself be willingly reconciled through sincere remorse, through fasting, prayer and pious resolutions for one's future conduct, when the sin is of such a kind that it harms no human being.

Teacher. For example?

Pupil. When someone doubts the goodness of God, murmurs against His providence, profanes the festivals He instituted, or weakens his body through lust, and the like; since no one but the sinner suffers by it.

48. ***Teacher: Is the sinner then freed from all punishment?***

Pupil. Not always. Divine wisdom sometimes finds it necessary to chastise him even for these transgressions of the divine will.

Teacher. How does God proceed in this chastisement?

Pupil. Like a tender father with his son.

Teacher. Meaning?

Pupil. He does not punish him for the sin committed; rather, by a slight chastisement He merely encourages weak man, in order to make him steadfast and persevering in his pious resolution for the future.

Teacher. Who gives us this comforting certainty of regaining the love of God after one has acted contrary to His commands?

Pupil. God Himself. Moses and the prophets received from Him the assurance that He is gracious and [p. 42] forgiving; that He takes pleasure not in punishing but in pardoning, and that He is therefore also long-suffering.

Teacher. Which sinner is severely punished, even though he has completely amended?

Pupil. He who has led other people into evil. His own sins he can repent of, he can make good any damage he has caused, and he can form the best resolutions for the future; but how is it possible for him to improve again all those people whom he has led into vicious deeds, and to lead them back to the good? He must therefore also atone for their sins.

Chapter Fifteen: Of the Forgiveness of Such Sins by Which One's Neighbour Suffers

49. ***Teacher: Are there then such crimes by which other people also suffer?***

Pupil. Very many.

Teacher. For example?

Pupil. When one steals, cheats, takes usurious interest, and the like.

Teacher. What is interest, and what is usurious interest?

Pupil. If someone lends another, say, a hundred gulden for one year, the laws permit that, when the year is up, the creditor, who has had his money out for a whole year without profit, may take from the debtor six gulden over and above the hundred gulden owed. These six gulden are called interest. But whoever takes more than the laws permit is a usurer.

Teacher. Can offences by which people come to [p. 43] harm or are wronged also obtain forgiveness from God if one merely repents of them, fasts besides, and prays diligently?

Pupil. In this case remorse, fasting and prayer alone cannot win back the love of God, so long as the neighbour who was wronged or suffered damage has not been made whole again.

Teacher. But God is surely gracious and good.

Pupil. But He is also supremely just, and wills that we too should be so, and that when someone has done a wrong, he should make it good again as far as he can.

50. ***Teacher: Are there not cases in which the wrong committed cannot be made good again?***

Pupil. Oh yes!

Teacher. Can you give an example of this?

Pupil. If, for example, someone has for many years served his wine with a false measure and cheated many people whom he does not even know, nor can he know by how much he has shortchanged his known customers over so long a time. It is therefore impossible for him to make restitution for the fraud he has committed.

Teacher. What is to be done in such circumstances?

Pupil. The cheat, if he wishes to rid himself of the burden that oppresses his conscience, must establish some institution for the common benefit, by which he can make good his crime, if not wholly, then at least in part. If he has harmed the community, he must in return provide it with a common good.

Teacher. What is called a common good?

Pupil. An institution useful to many people; for example, a hospital, public wells from which anyone may draw, a school of instruction or of work for poor children, and the like.

[p. 44] **51.** ***Teacher: I am very satisfied with what you know of the will of God, considering your age. But all that you have just explained concerns, for the most part, all nations, all men: what, then, has He prescribed for the Israelite nation in particular?***

Pupil. Of the commandments and laws prescribed for the Israelite nation in particular there are many kinds, most of which relate to the exodus from Egypt and the deliverance from slavery.

Teacher. And the rest?

Pupil. They concern the former divine worship, the sacrifices, the functions of the priests, and regulations as to how they were to conduct themselves.

Teacher. And when the Israelites took possession of the promised land, did they not receive laws there prescribing the organization of the land?

Pupil. Certainly. Holy Scripture also contains many laws on how to proceed in disputes that might arise between one Israelite and another.

Teacher. Are all these precepts still carried out?

Pupil. Neither does the former divine worship still exist, since we no longer possess a Temple for sacrifice, nor can the laws relating to the organization and order of the promised land be followed, now that we live dispersed among other nations.

Teacher. How did it come about that the Israelite nation lost its state and its Temple and must now live dispersed among other nations?

Pupil. It fared as Adam and Eve did. Just as they, after transgressing God's commandment, were driven out of Paradise, so the Israelite nation was driven out of its land because it committed sin upon sin and drew upon itself the wrath of God.

[p. 45] Chapter Sixteen: Of the Love of Oneself

52. ***Teacher: What does it mean that man should love himself?***

Pupil. He should strive to make himself perfect.

Teacher. When is man perfect?

Pupil. Man consists of a body and a soul. When the body is healthy and lacks nothing, the body is perfect.

Teacher. And the soul?

Pupil. Is perfect when it has acquired knowledge, as far as is possible for it, especially of the will of God; lives at all times so that it has no reproaches to make itself over sins committed; and is glad to have fulfilled its duties.

Teacher. What are we bound to do with regard to the body?

Pupil. It is our duty to preserve and maintain carefully our body, its health, strength, limbs and senses.

Teacher. And when health is weakened, or when one is attacked by an illness?

Pupil. Then one must consult a skilful physician, willingly use the medicine he prescribes, and observe the regimen just as he has prescribed it.

Teacher. How can one know whether the physician is skilful or not?

Pupil. A physician who has received permission from the authorities to practise healing must already have been strictly examined beforehand.

Teacher. What about those who, especially in the countryside, in small towns and villages, take the sick into treatment without permission?

[p. 46] *Pupil.* Since these neither know the illness accurately nor know how to use remedies properly, they bring people into danger of their lives and commit a kind of murder; and whoever lets himself be treated by them commits a kind of suicide.

53. ***Teacher: What else must one observe for the preservation of health?***

Pupil. One must guard against strong passions that affect the mind too violently, such as anger, grief, anxious cares, lust, drunkenness, gambling, running up debts, and the like.

Teacher. What is to be feared from the passions?

Pupil. They can bring a man to despair, to take his own life, or at least to sigh away his life in a very wretched condition.

Teacher. What means are there to guard oneself against such violent emotions?

Pupil. Let one accustom oneself early to moderation and to temperance.

Teacher. What is understood by moderation?

Pupil. By moderation is understood not striving overmuch after wealth and splendour, nor after high offices of honour, or after costly amusements; we must be content with what our trade or craft yields.

Teacher. After what, then, should a contented man strive?

Pupil. To earn as much as is necessary to support himself and his family decently, to assist some who are in need, and to save some money besides.

Teacher. Is it not enough to get by exactly on what one has earned? Why save besides?

Pupil. In days of health, and while one has one's strength, one must take care to put by a sum for emergencies, so as to have means in sickness to [p. 47] restore one's health, and in old age, when one cannot work, not to suffer want.

54. ***Teacher: But if one cannot earn even that much, because dearth, war and similar national calamities set in, when trade goes badly: how is one to behave then?***

Pupil. Even in the saddest circumstances one must not give oneself over to deep sorrow and grief; otherwise one loses all desire for work and business and makes one's condition still worse.

Teacher. What, then, is to be done?

Pupil. One must carry on one's business with patience, redouble one's zeal, and trust in God, from whom help comes when we least expect it.

Teacher. Could one not also reduce one's expenses in such circumstances?

Pupil. If it can be done without too great constraint, it is of course well done to restrict oneself in food and drink, clothing and comforts, and to do without many things one was accustomed to enjoy in better times.

Teacher. Will such privation not become too hard?

Pupil. It is certainly not pleasant; yet it will not be burdensome to him who, in good times when he lived in abundance, has accustomed himself to deny himself many a pleasure voluntarily. He could, for example, have enjoyed one more dainty dish, and yet did not touch it, in order to overcome his appetite.

55. ***Teacher: One should not give oneself over to grief and deep sorrow, you say; but what if great*** [p. 48] ***misfortunes occur; if someone loses his entire property through a flood or a fire, or loses his good father, his tender mother, his beloved bride, his only son so full of promise, should he not then mourn and lose his composure?***

Pupil. Mourn, yes, but not lose his composure entirely. Even in these hard cases he must moderate his grief; nature demands lamentation and the shedding of tears of us, and God Himself approves it; but one must not let it come to despair.

Teacher. Why not?

Pupil. First, because it would look as though one held God to be unjust, if one murmurs against His dispensation; and then, despair will only worsen our condition, whereas by composure one can certainly improve it.

Teacher. But how does one attain composure?

Pupil. When one thinks more of what God has left us than of what He has taken from us.

Teacher. The fire that has deprived us of all our goods and possessions, what then has it left us?

Pupil. Our bodily strength, our understanding, our friends, through whose support or good counsel we can, with the help of God, come into a better condition again.

56. ***Teacher: In what does temperance consist?***

Pupil. One should keep measure in eating, drinking, and the enjoyment of pleasures and amusements.

Teacher. What does it mean to keep measure?

Pupil. To take only as much food and drink as is necessary for the preservation of the body and the strengthening of one's powers.

[p. 49] *Teacher.* What could result, then, if one partook of them to excess?

Pupil. If one overloads the stomach with food, it cannot be digested well; and from poor digestion all kinds of illnesses arise.

Teacher. What must one observe with regard to the foods themselves?

Pupil. One must carefully guard against unripe fruit and such foods as are beginning to go bad.

Teacher. And what further with regard to drink?

Pupil. In partaking of wine and other intoxicating drinks one must be especially careful to take only a little of them; otherwise one easily grows accustomed to them and finally gives oneself over to drunkenness.

57. ***Teacher: Children like to sleep long; do they do well in this?***

Pupil. Sleep refreshes a person; but if one sleeps too long, one becomes sluggish and goes reluctantly to one's work. It is therefore good to rise early.

Teacher. What else must one attend to for the preservation of health?

Pupil. That one take no cold drink while one is in a sweat. Whoever does not heed this is in danger of falling ill, or even of losing his life. Nor should one stay in a damp place, and still less sleep in a damp room.

Teacher. What else, besides food and drink, is needed to strengthen the body?

Pupil. One must at all times keep oneself clean, now and then bathe the body in fresh, cold water, and also diligently put on fresh, white linen.

Teacher. What other good effect does white linen have?

[p. 50] *Pupil.* It presents a pleasing appearance; people then look upon us with favour.

Chapter Seventeen. On Earning the Means of Self-Preservation

58. ***Teacher: By what means can we earn the means for maintaining and caring for the body?***

Pupil. By work and useful occupation. People pay for these with money or with provisions.

Teacher. If we are pious, can we not expect God to provide us with everything we need, without our having to work?

Pupil. Then God would have to perform miracles every moment.

Teacher. Yet God has often worked great miracles for our nation.

Pupil. Only ever, as I have already said, when what was to happen could not be brought about by any natural means.

Teacher. What natural means of self-preservation do we have?

Pupil. Bodily strength; limbs that can be used for all kinds of work; and understanding, to apply our bodily strength and limbs skilfully. If we use our powers of body and soul and work diligently, we are provided for, without God's needing to work miracles for us.

Teacher. Since God has furnished us with all this, what follows from it?

Pupil. The duty to help ourselves, that is, that we are to work.

[p. 51] *Teacher.* In what, then, does our trust in God consist?

Pupil. In this: that when we are diligent in our work or occupation, we should not be anxiously concerned about the outcome of our efforts, but should commend it to our dear God, and meanwhile hope that he will bless our diligence.

Teacher. But if the outcome is nevertheless not always as we wish?

Pupil. Then we must think that God has his good and wise purposes for ordering things otherwise than we had expected.

59. ***Teacher: Can we, then, undertake any kind of work without any preparation?***

Pupil. Hardly a single kind of manual work. Each must first be learned; and if it is to be so executed that it can be put to good use, the craftsman must practise diligently in it.

Teacher. When is the best time to begin learning a handicraft?

Pupil. The best time to learn anything, whatever it may be, is earliest youth, when the limbs are still very supple, the mind has no cares, and the spirit is cheerful.

Teacher. What, then, is the child's duty?

Pupil. It must be attentive at school, and at home diligently review what it has learned.

Teacher. And when it is being trained in an art or a craft?

Pupil. To practise in it daily, except on Sabbaths and festivals, so that it may gradually acquire proficiency in it, in order that by the time it ceases to be a child it can earn its own bread and support itself honestly throughout its whole life.

[p. 52] **60.** ***Teacher: Besides providing us with an honest living, what other advantages does industriousness bring?***

Pupil. The movement of the body and limbs in working is healthy; it makes us digest well, have more appetite for eating, and sleep better.

Teacher. What is its chief benefit?

Pupil. That we need not beg or in any other way become a burden to people.

Teacher. But what if one were compelled to do some common, lowly work: would this not lower us in the eyes of our acquaintances and bring us dishonour?

Pupil. By no means. No work, however lowly it may be, if it is permitted and supports a person, brings dishonour. For industrious farmers and the like are also esteemed by reasonable people. Only the beggar who can work and will not is contemptible.

Teacher. In our times, however, people think it unseemly that someone descended from a good family should occupy himself with a common trade.

Pupil. Only fools can think so. For one finds in the Talmud that very distinguished scholars of that time were not ashamed to practise the commonest trades: one was a shoemaker, another a blacksmith; indeed, a very great rabbi preferred to earn his meagre bread by chopping wood rather than become a burden to others and let himself be supported by the diligence and sweat of his acquaintances.[12]

61. ***Teacher: What are the consequences of idleness?***

Pupil. Want and disgrace. Want of everything, because one does no work and earns nothing; and disgrace, because one makes no use of the bodily strength and abilities that God has given us.

Teacher. Explain it to me by an example.

[p. 53] *Pupil.* Let us suppose the sovereign of the land makes me a present of a fine, profitable estate: would it not be disgraceful if I let the estate become waste and desolate and, instead of living amply from it, went about asking good people for alms?

Teacher. How, then, is the idler treated when he begs for alms?

Pupil. He is turned away from every door with disgrace and mockery. Everyone reproaches him that he should not have loafed and spent his youth in idleness. No one has pity on him. If here and there he nevertheless receives a gift, he thereby commits a theft against poor, infirm and sick people who would gladly work and cannot; every gift that he snatches up was rightly theirs.

62. ***Teacher: But what if the idler is rich and can never come to be a burden to his fellow men?***

Pupil. First, no one can be entirely certain, as long as he lives, of remaining rich. Misfortunes can occur that make the richest man poor and needy. But even if this did not happen, he still ought not to be wholly inactive and unoccupied.

Teacher. Why?

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[12] Translator: Homberg evidently has in mind such figures as R. Yoḥanan ha-Sandlar ("the shoemaker," Mishnah Avot 4:11) and R. Isaac Nappaḥa ("the smith"); the rabbi who split wood is probably Hillel, who in his poverty worked as a woodcutter (cf. BT Yoma 35b).

Pupil. The rich, who otherwise lack nothing, usually lack appetite and sleep, which only activity gives us.

Teacher. To what is the rich idler exposed?

Pupil. A rich but unoccupied person, being bored, takes up all sorts of follies to pass the time, and makes himself a laughing-stock to people. With many it goes worse still: not knowing what to do with himself, he gives himself over to a passion for gambling, to drink, or to other excesses and vices.

[p. 54] **63.** ***Teacher: Against what must the craftsman be on his guard?***

Pupil. Against sloth and botching.

Teacher. How does a slothful person behave at his work?

Pupil. A slothful person works very slowly and with reluctance; and for a piece of work that an industrious craftsman completes in one week he needs, for example, two, three or more weeks.

Teacher. What is the consequence of sloth?

Pupil. Almost the same as that of idleness.

Teacher. How so?

Pupil. Since the customers do not receive the work they ordered at the time when they need it, they give him no more work, and he is forced to go idle. Now I have shown that idleness brings want in its train; so the slothful worker, too, must in time fall into need and distress.

64. ***Teacher: Sloth and botching are surely one and the same?***

Pupil. In themselves they are very different, but their consequences are the same.

Teacher. If they differ from each other, how is it that they nevertheless have the same consequences?

Pupil. The botcher can be very industrious, and so quite unlike the slothful man, and yet he too gradually loses his customers and is left without bread.

Teacher. By what means?

Pupil. His work is indeed finished at the right time, but it is so made that one cannot use it, or at least is not satisfied with it.

Teacher. For example?

Pupil. The coat the tailor has made is longer on one side than on the other, or one sleeve is too wide and the other too narrow.

[p. 55] *Teacher.* What gives rise to botching?

Pupil. Either one has not learned the trade thoroughly, as happens with many who strive only to become masters quickly, or one is not attentive enough to the work and overlooks now this, now that.

Teacher. How, then, must the worker conduct himself?

Pupil. He must take up what he has to make briskly and willingly, not interrupt himself in his work unnecessarily; he must attend carefully and precisely to what he has to do, so that he does his work well and finishes it at the proper time. If his customers are satisfied with him, they will recommend him further, and then he can never lack work.

Chapter Eighteen. On Trade and Usury

65. ***Teacher: Must everyone, then, learn precisely a craft and nothing else?***

Pupil. No. Some may also devote themselves to trade.

Teacher. Why only some?

Pupil. If many young men took up trade, it would be good neither for the state nor for our nation.

Teacher. How would it be harmful to the state?

Pupil. Merchants, brokers and pedlars do not, strictly speaking, produce anything, as do farmers, gardeners, fishermen and those who occupy themselves with raising cattle and horses.

Teacher. True.

Pupil. Nor do they themselves make anything, as do brickmakers, masons, tanners, spinners, weavers and a hundred other craftsmen; and yet they want to be fed and maintained. Their maintenance must therefore be provided by those who [p. 56] generate and produce something useful, and by those who work up what is produced and make it serviceable.

Teacher. In that case merchants, brokers and pedlars would be useless people, a burden on the industrious?

Pupil. By no means; on the contrary, they are very useful. They bring the worker the material, which they buy from the producer, so that he need not first seek it out everywhere and lose much time and incur great expense in doing so.

66. ***Teacher: What harm would the time and the expense that they might lose bring?***

Pupil. The workers would be forced to add to the price of their wares what they would lose in earnings during the time they could not work, together with the loss of expenses, and to sell them very dear, so that for what now costs, for example, one gulden one would have to give five; and this would be no small harm to all who need provisions or wares.

Teacher. If merchants are useful, then, as you say, because through their efforts goods obtain a good, reasonable price, why should they be only few in number? The state can never have enough useful people.

Pupil. They are useful only so long as they are few in number. But if they multiply, then those who are not needed and who nonetheless crowd into these occupations must, like the former, likewise be fed by the country people and the craftsmen, whereby food and other wares would become very dear.

Teacher. I now see clearly that an excess of [p. 57] merchants, brokers and pedlars has no good consequences for the state; but how it should be harmful for our nation in particular, this I do not understand.

Pupil. If most young people of our nation devote themselves solely to trade, then, although it is in and of itself a useful occupation, the Christian nation is confirmed in the opinion that we shun such work as requires exertion of bodily strength, and are more greedy for gain than other people.

Teacher. How can this opinion best be refuted?

Pupil. If many children of our coreligionists were trained in various light and heavy crafts, others in agriculture, cattle-raising and gardening, and then also some in the learning and practice of various arts and sciences.

67. ***Teacher: What do you think of those people who live by lending their money on pledges and drawing interest from it?***

Pupil. This means of livelihood could be permitted only if one takes no higher interest than the laws allow.

Teacher. Now whoever is less conscientious and has himself paid more interest than he may take according to the law: what is he?

Pupil. A usurer.

Teacher. How is usury regarded according to our religion?

Pupil. As a dishonest, shameful trade.

Teacher. Why?

Pupil. Because he who borrows the money to help himself out of need or out of a difficulty, through the high interest he must give the creditor, [p. 58] comes into far greater need than the first was, and is forced to incur new debts in order to be able to pay the interest.

68. ***Teacher: If the debtor is in no need at all, but seeks money in order to arrange some amusement, or to lay out a new garden which he does not need at all, and the like: from such a one, I should think, one might well take heavy interest.***

Pupil. According to Holy Scripture all usury is forbidden, without regard to what anyone wants to use the money for. Besides, if one permits oneself a vicious act against one person, one afterwards commits it against all.

Teacher. Yet Scripture has permitted taking interest from idolaters.[13]

Pupil. Interest, yes, but not usurious interest.

Teacher. What lesson can we draw from this?

Pupil. That if we were not permitted to take usurious interest even from heathens and idolaters, who failed to recognise or denied the true God, then all the less can we accept higher interest than the laws of the land allow from Christians, who acknowledge and worship the Supreme Being, without acting in open contradiction to Holy Scripture.

Chapter Nineteen. On the Good Use of the Means of Livelihood

69. ***Teacher: How should one deal with the means one has acquired?***

Pupil. Economically and thriftily.

Teacher. When is one thrifty?

Pupil. When one regulates one's expenses [p. 59] according to one's income, also avoids all needless superfluity in spending, takes care of household furnishings and clothing, and refrains from everything that can lead to extravagance.

Teacher. What does extravagance mean?

Pupil. Incurring needless expense, often giving large and costly banquets, and not taking care of one's own.

Teacher. What has a spendthrift to expect?

Pupil. Poverty, want and need.

Teacher. Since he has given so many banquets, he will surely find among his table-companions some who would help him in his need.

Pupil. These are usually only table-friends. As soon as the spendthrift can no longer set a table, they abandon him and do not even pity him.

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[13] Translator: Cf. Deut. 23:21, "Unto a foreigner thou mayest lend upon interest."

Teacher. Would not someone nevertheless, out of gratitude, try to help him back on his feet with an advance of money?

Pupil. Whoever might have such good will fears that he would squander this money too, and soon come back into his former wretched state.

70. ***Teacher: In that case it would be best not only to give no one a morsel to eat, but also to stint oneself as much as one possibly can?***

Pupil. When thrift is carried so far that one stints even what belongs to decency, to good manners, or even to one's own needs, then this thrift becomes ugly avarice.

Teacher. How is avarice to be regarded?

Pupil. As a sordid passion that makes a person contemptible. He is thought capable of committing the most unjust acts if he can gain something by them.

Teacher. What does it matter what other people think of him?

[p. 60] *Pupil.* Whoever does not care whether others think well or ill of his conduct, who is indifferent whether he is respected or despised, is base and without honour. A person without love of honour is hated by everyone.

71. ***Teacher: What does love of honour mean, and what does it demand?***

Pupil. Out of love of honour we should act so as to win the approval and esteem of reasonable people.

Teacher. I know some people whose conduct is not exactly the best, and who are nevertheless honoured.

Pupil. They can be honoured only by such as think and act as they do, or by such as fear them or draw profit from them. This is a false honour.

Teacher. In what, then, does true honour consist?

Pupil. In our actions themselves, in uprightness, and in our conscience, when it is satisfied with us and tells us that we have done everything that God's word and virtue require of us.

Teacher. What if, despite the best conduct, we nevertheless, as sometimes happens, receive no marks of honour?

Pupil. We must not let that concern us. We should act not in order to receive marks of honour but in order to deserve them. Besides, they can be withheld only for a short time; in the end people do recognise our merit and hold us in honour.

Teacher. By the same token you too would be obliged to honour upright people?

Pupil. So I am; but I owe my fellow men still more than mere honour.

[p. 61] Chapter Twenty. On Love of One's Neighbour

72. ***Teacher: What more, then, do we owe our fellow men?***

Pupil. We must also love them, for God commanded the Israelites: Love thy neighbour as thyself.[14]

Teacher. What do you understand by the word "neighbour"?

Pupil. I understand by it every human being.

Teacher. Not only the Israelite who is your brother in faith?

Pupil. Not only him, but all human beings without distinction, whatever faith they may hold. But we should be especially well disposed toward the Christians among whom we live.

Teacher. For what reason?

Pupil. Because we form one civil society with them, are protected by the same laws, and share in all good and useful institutions.

73. ***Teacher: What does love of mankind require of us?***

Pupil. First, that we should be just and equitable toward our neighbour.

Teacher. What does justice demand?

Pupil. To leave to each person what is due to him, and to render and give him what he can rightfully demand of us.

Teacher. But justice is not yet love?

Pupil. Justice is only the foundation. Upon it follows equity.

Teacher. In what does this consist?

Pupil. In not insisting strictly, according to circumstances, even on what I could rightfully demand of him.

Teacher. This cannot well be understood without an example.

Pupil. For example, I lend my neighbour money on [p. 62] a piece of land, on the condition that if he does not pay me the whole sum by a certain time, I shall have the right to sell the land and pay myself from it. Now the time comes, but he is not able to pay the whole sum at once, only little by little in instalments. It would be inequitable if I proceeded strictly according to my right and, to obtain the full amount, insisted on selling the land at once, whereby the other might be ruined.

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[14] Translator: Lev. 19:18.

74. ***Teacher: What you have cited concerns only a single and rare case. I should think love of mankind comprises still more duties?***

Pupil. Certainly. We should take sincere part in the fortune and misfortune of our neighbour.

Teacher. That is to say?

Pupil. If things go well with him, to rejoice with him; and if he is unfortunate, to pity him from the heart.

Teacher. Is it enough if we pity him and wish him all good?

Pupil. No! One must not only comfort him, but also support him as much as one can, and prove by deed that one truly loves him.

Teacher. Might one not help him in such a way that he would thereby be obliged to do us a service or a favour in return?

Pupil. Then our help would be no proof of love of mankind, but a work of self-interest. Whoever helps his fellow man out of pure love of his neighbour expects no service in return for it; the consciousness of having fulfilled the sacred duty is already a rich reward.

75. ***Teacher: What does the justice due to all human beings forbid?***

[p. 63] *Pupil.* To take into one's possession, whether by force or by cunning, anything that another rightfully possesses by purchase, acquisition, gift or inheritance.

Teacher. Now if I myself have done no wrong, but another has, for example, stolen or robbed, may I acquire by purchase the things that were not stolen or robbed by me, or at least keep them in my house?

Pupil. To buy stolen or robbed goods, or even only to conceal them, is just as great a crime as stealing or robbing itself.

Teacher. How so?

Pupil. "Were there no receiver, there would be no thief," says the proverb. For if no one bought stolen goods from thieves and robbers, nor took them into safekeeping from them, they would not know where to go with the stolen things, and would thereby be forced to support themselves honestly.

76. ***Teacher: What else can be regarded as a good of which one must not deprive one's neighbour?***

Pupil. Honour. The good opinion and respect of people is very valuable and necessary, either to preserve one's fortune or to improve it. If someone deprives me of it, he can do me great harm.

Teacher. How can one be deprived of one's honour?

Pupil. When one tells of someone base actions that he has not done, or in other words, when one slanders him. Slander is a great vice and can have terrible consequences.

Teacher. What is to be done when we hear that the honour of one of our acquaintances is being attacked?

Pupil. One must defend him against false accusations, [p. 64] refute the slander, and praise his good qualities.

Teacher. But if he had really committed actions that look suspicious?

Pupil. Even in this case one must judge him gently and, as far as one can, also excuse him.

77. *Teacher: What else must one observe in dealings with people?*

Pupil. In our dealings with people we should be sincere, modest, peaceable, obliging and polite.

Teacher. In what does modesty consist?

Pupil. The modest person does nothing in the presence of other people that is unseemly or indecent. In his speech, too, he avoids all vulgar expressions and such as are disgusting.

Teacher. What do you understand by peaceableness?

Pupil. I understand by it the fine quality of carefully avoiding all quarrels and disputes, of not stubbornly insisting on one's own opinion, and, if a dispute nevertheless arises, of readily offering one's hand for peace and reconciliation.

Teacher. Are there not cases in which it is a duty to maintain one's opinion without regard to others?

Pupil. Certainly: when religion or moral teaching is attacked, one must defend them steadfastly, yet always in a gentle manner and with modesty.

Teacher. What do obligingness and politeness demand of us?

Pupil. One should do what we are asked and are able to do, not with reluctance but with a friendly face, and thereby make known that it gives us joy to serve others.

Teacher. If we cannot do what is asked?

[p. 65] *Pupil.* Then we must decline the request all the more kindly, since we are not able to fulfil it. Our friend or acquaintance must at least perceive from our behaviour the wish to be able to serve him.

Teacher. Finally, what does politeness command?

Pupil. To show each person as much attention and respect as is due to him. To take off one's hat to acquaintances, to bow deeply to persons of rank, to let older or skilled people go first, to walk

on their left, to let them speak first, never to interrupt them, and a hundred other things by which our modesty can be recognised, belong to politeness.

Chapter Twenty-One. On the Conjugal Union and on Love toward Parents and Children

78. ***Teacher: Until now you have spoken of love in general, which we must show to all people. Should there not be persons more closely related to us, toward whom we would accordingly have greater duties of gratitude and goodwill to fulfil?***

Pupil. Certainly there are such persons.

Teacher. Who are they?

Pupil. First, married couples.

Teacher. When are man and woman a married couple?

Pupil. They are a married couple when, having won each other's love, they bind themselves closely to one another according to the customs prescribed by religion, for the preservation and propagation of the human race.

Teacher. What do married people owe each other?

[p. 66] *Pupil.* They must be faithful to each other, live in love and harmony, and show each other help, friendship and kind services.

Teacher. To what is the husband in particular obligated?

Pupil. The husband must provide for the decent maintenance of his wife and family by attending properly to his business, keep his wife in respect before everyone, and protect her from insult.

Teacher. The wife's obligation is?

Pupil. Not to let herself be seduced by anyone into unfaithfulness toward her husband; to see diligently to order, cleanliness, thrift and decency in the house; and to show herself at all times compliant and gentle toward her husband.

Teacher. Why must married people love each other above all?

Pupil. Because each shows the other special kindness, love and fidelity, and they give each other much pleasure.

Teacher. Now if one of the married pair lets himself be led into unfaithfulness toward the other, what is this transgression of the marriage promise called?

Pupil. Such unfaithfulness is called adultery, and is a great vice that often has terrible consequences.

79. ***Teacher: Have married people no other duties to observe?***

Pupil. They have still more duties to fulfil as soon as they have children and thus become parents.

Teacher. In what do these new duties consist?

Pupil. In bringing up their children to be healthy people.

Teacher. What, then, must they do?

Pupil. They must take care of the nursing and cleanliness of the children, and of the preservation of their limbs and senses.

Teacher. Should they not also be obliged to prevent every illness, mutilation, or even mere disfigurement that may befall a child?

[p. 67] *Pupil.* Certainly; all this is already included in the care for the health and soundness of the body.

Teacher. What follows from this?

Pupil. It follows that parents are most sacredly obligated to have their children vaccinated early by a competent physician,[15] so as to preserve their life, their sound limbs, their senses and their beauty.

Teacher. But if parents, out of prejudice, do not use vaccination for their children?

Pupil. Then they make themselves gravely answerable before God, because they are plainly to blame for the death, or for the mutilation and disfigurement, of the children by the natural smallpox.

80. ***Teacher: Have parents already done everything when they have provided for the health and care of their children's bodies?***

Pupil. Oh no! Then comes the chief duty.

Teacher. What, then, constitutes the chief duty of parents?

Pupil. To form the souls of the children, and to bring them up to be sensible and virtuous people and useful members of civil society.

Teacher. How can they become sensible, skilled and serviceable people?

Pupil. If they are diligently instructed in religion, in Holy Scripture and in sound moral teaching, accustomed to the good, and kept from evil, from vices and bad habits.

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[15] Translator: "Schutzpocken" (literally "protective pox") is the contemporary term for Jennerian cowpox vaccination against smallpox ("die natürlichen Blattern"), which the Austrian authorities actively promoted in this period.

81. ***Teacher: When the children grow older, what have the parents to do then?***

Pupil. The parents must accustom the children to industriousness, order, cleanliness, domesticity and honesty.

[p. 68] *Teacher.* To what must they pay particular attention?

Pupil. To the fortune and advancement of the children, so that they may earn their living and be a burden to no one.

Teacher. What is to be observed with regard to young girls?

Pupil. Mothers must instruct their daughters in cookery and in handiwork such as sewing, knitting, etc., and in general in the management of the household.

Teacher. Must it not also be the mothers' duty to train their daughters in morality?

Pupil. It is certainly the mother's duty, by teaching, by admonition, and still more by good example, to lead her daughters to womanly propriety, retiring conduct and modesty, and to moderate in them the love of finery and the craze for fashion.

Teacher. If parents do not fulfil these duties, what evils can arise from that?

Pupil. Many are the evils that arise from a bad upbringing or from lack of discipline, for civil society and for the children themselves. The children then degenerate so far that they thereby forfeit their temporal fortune and their eternal happiness. The parents have to expect a heavy punishment from God for neglecting their children.

Teacher. Since the married state entails so many duties, what must one consider when one wishes to enter this state?

Pupil. Both, young man and young woman, must be of an age at which they are capable of fulfilling the duties; consequently they must not be too young when they wish to join in marriage. They should also first get to know each other well, examine each other's temperament, inclinations, convictions and abilities, and look more to good qualities [p. 69] than to wealth, beauty or a distinguished family. The young man must moreover be in a position to support a wife and family honestly.

82. ***Teacher: What do children owe their parents for this unceasing care and tender love?***

Pupil. Of what children are bound to render their parents I have already summed up everything briefly in citing the Fifth Commandment (ch. 12), and I trust to the natural feeling of every grateful child, which needs no further instruction about this sacred duty.

Teacher. How should one behave toward one's relatives?

Pupil. These too, especially brothers and sisters, since they are more closely bound to us by nature, we should love especially, be friendly and obliging toward them, and stand by them as brothers.

Chapter Twenty-Two. On Love toward Our Benefactors

83. ***Teacher: Are there perhaps people to whom we are not more closely bound by nature, and whom we should nevertheless esteem and love more than others and whose welfare we should promote?***

Pupil. Certainly there are people who, through the benefits they show us, have a greater claim on our love and gratitude.

Teacher. What are these persons called?

Pupil. Foster parents, schoolteachers, tutors and rabbis.

[p. 70] *Teacher.* Why do these have a greater claim on our gratitude and love?

Pupil. The first, because they care for us in a fatherly and motherly way; and the latter, because they give us good teachings and lead us to virtue and uprightness by their example.

84. ***Teacher: What other relationships exist among people?***

Pupil. Many kinds: the relationship of service, the relationship of age, the relationship of wealth, and the relationship of skill.

Teacher. What is the relationship of service?

Pupil. That of masters and servants or domestics.

Teacher. What duties have these to observe toward each other?

Pupil. Masters should not be harsh toward their servants, should give them sufficient good food and the promised wages without deduction. If they fall ill in their service, the masters must provide for the restoration of their health. If they have grown old and weak in service, one must take care of them and not let them suffer want.

Teacher. What do servants owe them in return?

Pupil. They must be loyal to their masters, and perform their service honestly and in such a way that their masters are entirely satisfied with it. Besides this, they should also be discreet and uphold the honour of their masters.

85. ***Teacher: If an Israelite is in service with a Christian master, how must he conduct himself?***

Pupil. Exactly as if he were serving an Israelite. Just as in love of mankind we may make no distinction between Israelites and Christians (ch. 20), just [p. 71] so, and still much less, are we permitted to be more negligent or more careless in what we owe to do or render to a Christian than if we had the same duty to fulfil toward an Israelite.

Teacher. What follows from this?

Pupil. That Israelite journeymen, when they work for a Christian master, must look to the master's profit, work willingly and honestly earn their wages just as if they were employed by an Israelite master.

Teacher. What, on the other hand, must the master observe?

Pupil. He must give his journeymen, whether they are Israelites or Christians, their wages at the right time and without deduction, and in general satisfy them in everything he has promised them.

86. ***Teacher: What is to be noted concerning the other relationships in which people stand toward one another?***

Pupil. First, concerning the relationship of age. There are young and old people. Young people must honour old age, have patience with the weaknesses and faults of old persons, and contribute everything to their comfort.

Teacher. How should the aged conduct themselves?

Pupil. They should win respect for their age by virtue and piety, and not become troublesome through peevish moods and constant complaints.

Teacher. What does the relationship of wealth command?

Pupil. The rich should not be proud of their riches, and should not slight honest and capable persons because they have no fortune, as so often happens.

Teacher. And the poor?

Pupil. They should not envy the rich, but be industrious, [p. 72] honest and pious, and highly esteem those rich people who do not spend their money merely on splendour and amusements, but do good with it to the unfortunate.

Teacher. Tell me finally what is to be observed in the relationship of skill.

Pupil. People of great skills and talents must not look down with contempt on others to whom nature has denied these rare gifts. They should consider that God has given them courage, spirit and acumen to defend, instruct and teach their fellow men, but not to treat them contemptuously as slaves.

Teacher. But if they apply their great courage and their strong powers of mind to the good of mankind without being arrogant?

Pupil. Then they deserve our grateful love and the deepest veneration.

87. ***Teacher: Might there be yet another relationship with regard to the general love of mankind? Just think.***

Pupil. I have it! You mean our conduct toward our enemies, which I had quite forgotten.

Teacher. Presumably because you have none. But if one day, through no fault of your own, you should come to have enemies, how would you conduct yourself toward them?

Pupil. I shall never avenge the injuries they do me. I shall consider that, just as we ask God for forgiveness of our sins, we must also forgive our enemies.

Teacher. Is it enough if we stop at forgiving the offences we have received?

Pupil. No! It is not enough merely to forgive and forget the offences; we must also love our enemies.

[p. 73] *Teacher.* To love my enemy, who has bitterly wounded me, attacked my honour, robbed me of what is mine, or even sought my life — how is that possible?

Pupil. By loving I mean not letting even my worst enemy perish in his distress, but helping him and rescuing him from his misery. This love is certainly possible, though admittedly not very easy to practise; but it is also the finest and the only revenge that we may and should take upon our enemies.

Twenty-Third Chapter. On Love of the Fatherland.

88. ***Teacher: Which is our fatherland?***

Pupil. The country in which we were born and brought up.

Teacher. How is the fatherland to be regarded?

Pupil. As our greatest benefactor.

Teacher. Why?

Pupil. Because through its wise laws and good institutions we have peace and security, and can easily acquire, and possess and enjoy undisturbed, everything that serves to sustain our life and whatever else we need. We also draw many kinds of advantages, and enjoy a number of pleasures, through the useful and fine institutions of the government.

Teacher. If, then, a foreigner settles in our country with the intention of spending his whole life here, how would he have to conduct himself towards this country?

Pupil. Just as though he had been born and brought up in it, since he enjoys all those benefits and advantages just like the natives.

[p. 74] *Teacher.* What does it mean: one should love the fatherland?

Pupil. To esteem, value and exactly obey the laws that it prescribes, and to which we owe our peace and security; and to support to the best of our ability the institutions it has established, and sometimes still establishes, which procure for us comfort, refined enjoyment of life, assistance in

need and in great calamities, and also instruction, the fine arts, and propriety in manners and customs. All this is comprehended under love of the fatherland.

89. ***Teacher: Of what use are the laws to us?***

Pupil. If there were no laws to determine what is due and belongs to each person, what he can rightfully demand, and in turn to lay down what he must refrain from — in general, what is right or wrong — there would be neither peace nor security in the land.

Teacher. Why?

Pupil. Everyone would seize by force whatever he had a mind to. The strong would oppress the weak and rob him of his goods and chattels, of his wife, and indeed even of his life.

Teacher. How is this disorder and this violence remedied? A villain transgresses even the holiest laws.

Pupil. To every law is also attached the punishment that falls on whoever acts against the laws out of malice or out of passion.

Teacher. From whom do the laws come?

Pupil. The wisest and most learned men in the state draft the laws, and when the head of the nation, of whom I shall speak further below, finds them good and just, everyone must conform to them.

Teacher. If someone is suspected of having transgressed a law, who has to examine him?

[p. 75] *Pupil.* The judge. After the examination he declares whether the suspect is guilty or innocent.

Teacher. Who punishes the guilty and the criminals?

Pupil. Court officers, constables and executioners.

90. ***Teacher: What are those institutions that do us so much good and procure us so many advantages and comforts?***

Pupil. There are many kinds of such institutions.

Teacher. Acquaint me with some of the more important ones.

Pupil. Among the more important are: the building and maintenance of bridges; the establishment of schools; the institution of hospitals; the fixing of the value of coins; the regulation of measures and weights; granaries and fire services in large cities; and more of the kind.

Teacher. The institutions, as you quite rightly observe, procure us all kinds of comforts and advantages, and the laws ensure that we can carry on our trades and business in peace, and possess and enjoy undisturbed what we earn. But what use are the best laws and institutions when an enemy invades the country and lays everything waste and destroys it?

Pupil. For this, too, the state has provided, by maintaining an army, that is, by keeping in readiness a great number of men fit for battle, who, as soon as there is any sign of an enemy's approach, or even of his arming, at once take the field, defeat the enemy or take him prisoner, so that he loses all desire to trouble the country a second time.

91. ***Teacher: What else is needed for the good institutions in the land to endure?***

Pupil. To preserve them and, should it be necessary, to improve them further, men possessing insight and integrity must be chosen, who may occupy themselves with nothing [p. 76] else than the supervision of the institutions, so that these are kept in good order and accomplish what they were set up for.

Teacher. What are these men called?

Pupil. Officials, inspectors, chief inspectors, administrators, etc.

Teacher. An army, which consists of so many people who must have only One mind, One endeavour and One purpose, namely to defend the country — by whom is it kept in discipline and order?

Pupil. By junior and senior commanders, generals, etc., whom the warriors or soldiers must obey blindly.

Teacher. What does "blindly" mean?

Pupil. No one may presume to wish to examine whether the order given is necessary, useful and appropriate.

Teacher. What harm could such an examination do?

Pupil. As soon as one allows oneself to examine the orders of one's superiors, many a man who thinks he understands the matter better might hit upon the idea of wanting to improve something in it, from which the greatest harm would then arise.

92. ***Teacher: If the officials are to occupy themselves with nothing but the supervision of the institutions, if the teachers, for example, may concern themselves with nothing but instruction, and the soldiers and their commanders must always be ready to secure the country against an enemy invasion — who provides for their maintenance?***

Pupil. The state.

Teacher. That is not yet clear enough to me.

Pupil. All the inhabitants of the country must contribute, one more, another less, according to their means, in order to support the whole army together with its officers, and all [p. 77] teachers, judges, officials, etc. — in a word, to defray all the expenses of the state.

Teacher. What is that called which each has to contribute?

Pupil. Taxes and levies.

Teacher. Are there not certain dues that not everyone has to pay?

Pupil. Oh yes! For example, the bridge and road toll, which is meant to keep roads and bridges in good repair, and which only those pay who travel and enjoy the convenience of the bridges and passable roads. Likewise only he contributes to the upkeep of the postal service who sends letters by post, or receives them from it, or uses the post horses for travelling.

93. ***Teacher: Who has the laws drawn up and sees to it that they are also obeyed?***

Pupil. The highest person in the state.

Teacher. What is this person called?

Pupil. With us it is the Emperor, who possesses the supreme might and power. In other countries, however, it is here a king, there a duke, who governs the state.

Teacher. By whom is this highest person installed as head or ruler?

Pupil. By God himself. He installs him in order that, according to His will, he may make the people happy with love and justice.

Teacher. What, then, belongs to the administration of the state, and what has it to attend to?

Pupil. It sees to it that the taxes and levies come in, in order to defray the expenses of the state from them; it sees to it that the nation increases in prosperity, wisdom and good morals; it has the supreme supervision of all institutions and improves them when it sees fit; it appoints the priests for divine service, the ministers, councillors, judges, teachers, generals, etc.; it prescribes to them their [p. 78] functions and duties, and from it they also receive their salaries; it resolves on war and makes peace again; it concludes alliances with other nations, etc.

94. ***Teacher: What duties have the subjects? What have they to observe towards the state?***

Pupil. They must faithfully obey the laws, pay the taxes and levies correctly and at the proper time, and, when need arises, defend the fatherland.

Teacher. But if we do not know what this or that law is necessary or useful for?

Pupil. Like the soldiers, we must obey the order and every law blindly, even though we do not perceive its purpose.

Teacher. We must, then, rely entirely on the insight of the lawgiver?

Pupil. Certainly. And we can do so with confidence: confidence in his knowledge, for he alone knows the needs of the nation in their interconnection; and confidence in his goodness and wisdom, that he surely chooses the best means and has no other aim than to preserve the happiness of the nation permanently.

Teacher. Why must the subjects pay the taxes and levies correctly?

Pupil. Because without them the expenses of the state cannot be defrayed, peace and security cannot be maintained, and hostile peoples cannot be held in check.

Teacher. What further follows from the last point?

Pupil. That when the subjects are called upon to defend the fatherland, they must at once hasten to offer the enemy brave resistance.

95. ***Teacher: Are we, as Israelites, bound just like the other subjects to fulfil these duties?***

[p. 79] *Pupil.* Certainly, without any exception.

Teacher. Presumably because we fear the punishment that follows upon transgression of the law when it becomes known.

Pupil. No! Not out of fear of punishment, but because we are bound to it in conscience.

Teacher. Bound in conscience! You must not forget that the laws come from a ruler who is not an Israelite.

Pupil. That I know very well. But I also know what the Talmud teaches.

Teacher. And what does it teach?

Pupil. That the law which the ruler prescribes must be held just as sacred as though a king in Israel had ordained it.[16]

Teacher. Should this teaching apply to every law?

Pupil. To every law that does not hinder or abolish the observance of the commandments, prohibitions and duties of our religion.

Teacher. Take good care not to contradict yourself. You maintain that we are bound to defend the country, and hence to take the field and serve in war; but in war it is almost impossible to fulfil all the duties of our religion.

Pupil. I am by no means contradicting myself. It is true that in the field one is not able always to live exactly according to all the duties of religion. But in war, where there is great danger, where the lives of many thousands of people are at stake, one may certainly relax somewhat the strict observance of the religious precepts. Does not the Talmud itself permit setting aside the sanctity of the Sabbath in order to save the life of even a single human being?

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[16]Translator: The rabbinic principle *dina de-malkhuta dina*, "the law of the kingdom is the law" (BT Nedarim 28a, Gittin 10b, Bava Kamma 113a, Bava Batra 54b).

96. ***Teacher: What further follows from the Talmudic principle you cited just now?***

[p. 80] *Pupil.* It follows that we are obliged to render the laws of the Christian sovereign obedience just as strict as the other subjects do; to pay the imposed taxes without curtailment; to hold in high esteem the constitution under which we live; to honour the Christian authorities; to love the head of state wholeheartedly; and to implore Heaven for his long life, his welfare, and the welfare of his exalted family.

Teacher. Where and when is prayer offered for his well-being?

Pupil. In the synagogues on every Sabbath and festival, and that immediately after the reading from the Torah (the scroll of the Law).

Teacher. What else does the Talmud teach?

Pupil. That it is a crime to evade the duties of a subject, to allow oneself fraud in paying taxes, or to embezzle the toll that is owed, and finally to induce judges or officials by bribery to depart from justice and the laws.

97. ***Teacher: Now sum everything up and tell me briefly: how has the pious and upright man to order his life?***

Pupil. He has to hold sacred and observe the divine commandments; to do nothing and omit nothing for which his conscience could reproach him; to fulfil exactly his duties towards his parents and relatives, towards his wife and children, towards teachers and benefactors, etc.; to love his neighbour, and especially his fellow citizens, as himself; and to be loyally devoted to the sovereign of his country.

Teacher. What reward has such virtuous conduct to expect?

Pupil. The greatest, most inestimable good — a quiet conscience, contentment and God's blessing in this life, and after death an uninterrupted, pure happiness.

[p. —] Appendix.

A Word on Religious Instruction
and
School Institution.
But all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings.
(Exod. 10:23)

[p. —] Nothing is constant but inconstancy; no condition is lasting and permanent. In the moral as in the physical world everything is subject to change and transience; only truth stands eternally firm and is unchangeable. If, therefore, in any matter important to mankind — and what is more important than religion and morality? — an improvement has become absolutely necessary, would it not be utterly foolish to reject it merely because it is new? What the change of times and

circumstances commands, no power can resist; if a building threatens to collapse, who will want to let himself be buried alive beneath it? — "Should it then be torn down entirely at once?" No! But propped up, repaired and made firm anew. I love what is old and do not wish it to be shaken; but if it begins to grow rotten — well then! —

No one denies that our religious constitution in general has departed very greatly from its original state, and that our cult, good as it still is in our days, is far from equal to that which was observed in that happy age of the judges and the first kings in Israel; and that, the further and further we are removed from that standpoint, the more attentive we must be to uphold what still remains to us and to hand it down, as well as we can, to our descendants. This is the duty of every father, and since we have no high priest, no *Nasi* — in a word, no religious head — it is a *national obligation*. Especially in the present times, in which sensuality is so greatly indulged, in which the snares for the tender, unguarded mind of youth are so many, and in which the holy and the most holy is not seldom an object of frivolity and mockery and is degraded — in these times one cannot do enough to set up a bulwark against the poisoned arrows of seduction, to steel the breast of still uncorrupted youth with all the strength that religion and morality offer us; and for this very reason it is now more important than ever to direct attention to the manner [p. 84] in which our children are instructed in these subjects, in religion and morality, and what fruits it bears.

Some years ago I expressed myself on this as follows: "The books of Holy Scripture and of the Talmud," I said, "do indeed contain all the duties of the Israelite towards God, towards himself, towards all his fellow men, towards the authorities, the fatherland, etc. But these books are very extensive; the teachings for the observance of those obligations are interwoven with so many other precepts, most of which cannot be put into practice in the present condition of the Hebrew nation. It is therefore exceedingly difficult, and for youth almost impossible, to form for oneself a complete system of present-day Judaism, to seek out those scattered precepts, to string them together and bring them into an orderly system of faith; their knowledge therefore consists of nothing but fragments."

"The same is the case with moral instruction. Those whose circumstances do not permit them to devote themselves to the study of the Talmud must remain behind in every respect, and their ideas lack proper connection as much as the requisite clarity."

"The female part of youth, which cannot be led to Hebrew and rabbinic study, has only very obscure ideas of its destiny, and in practical life must make do with mere imitation."[17]

No one has disputed the truth of this statement; the necessity of improved religious instruction, of an appropriate method and of a well-ordered school institution is almost universally

[17] Announcement of the book: אמרי שפר כוללים עניני תורה ומוסר וכו' מאת הירץ הומבורג. שנת תקס"ח לפ"ק [*Imre Shefer*, comprising matters of Torah and morals, etc., by Herz Homberg; the year (5)568 by the minor reckoning]. [Translator: Homberg's *Imre Shefer* ("Goodly Words"), a Hebrew religious and moral textbook, Vienna 1808; the Hebrew year 5568 = 1807/08.]

acknowledged, and yet people cannot bring themselves to set out on a new path, however much it leads to the finest goal. Meanwhile people wish and demand to know: "How has it come about that, without an organized school institution and without systematically arranged courses of instruction, so many distinguished rabbis have nevertheless arisen among our nation, that holy and edifying devotion has prevailed in the synagogues, and in life purity of morals, strict discipline in marriage and the rearing of children, brotherly sympathy with the weal and woe of fellow believers, etc.? And how does it happen that precisely since not so very long ago all these bonds of religious and brotherly fellowship seem to be slackening? To what change [p. 85] is this slackening to be attributed? And, on the other hand: if a well-ordered textbook written in an easy, popular style were so powerful a remedy against unbelief and immorality, why did no one, neither in the times of Moses and the prophets nor in later centuries, hit upon the idea of producing such a textbook for the benefit and edification of the common people and of youth? Can the instruction of the people and of youth have been so insignificant, so indifferent a matter to those holy men?"

By no means! But to answer these questions one must go back to the original Mosaic constitution and follow the religious condition of the nation through its various periods; first, however, one must come to know the essence of our religion.

"Judaism," says Mendelssohn, "consisted — or, according to the intention of its founder, was to consist — of

"1) Religious doctrines and propositions, or eternal truths about God and His government and providence, without which man cannot be enlightened and happy. These are not forced upon the belief of the nation under threat of eternal or temporal punishments, but, in accordance with the nature and evidence of eternal truths, recommended to rational knowledge. The Supreme Being has revealed them to all rational beings through things and concepts. These truths are written in the soul in a script that is legible and intelligible at all times and in all places. Hence, etc."

"2) Historical truths, or records of the fortunes of former ages, chiefly of the lives of the patriarchs of the nation; of their knowledge of the true God, their walk before God; even of their transgressions and the fatherly chastisement that followed them; of the covenant that God made with them, and of the promise He so often repeated to them, to make of their descendants one day a nation consecrated to Him. These historical records contained the foundation of the national bond, and as historical truths they cannot, by their nature, be accepted otherwise than on (historical) faith. Authority alone gives them the requisite evidence; these records were also confirmed to the nation by miracles, and supported by an authority sufficient to set belief beyond all doubts and hesitations."[18]

[18]Ordinances and institutions, too, were accompanied and confirmed by miracles when there was doubt whether they had been arranged by God himself or only by Moses in God's name. The rebels, Korah and his band, when they contested Aaron's high priesthood, were swept away by a miracle, and a second one, which confirmed Aaron's appointment, fully restored the trust in Moses' words, which had already begun to waver.

[p. 86] "3) Laws, precepts, commandments, rules of life, which are peculiar to this nation, and by observing which it was to attain national happiness, and each of its members personal happiness. The lawgiver was God — not in His relation as Creator and Preserver of the universe, but God as *the protector and covenant-friend of their forefathers*, as *liberator, founder and leader*, as *king and head of this people*; and He gave His laws their solemn sanction publicly and in an unheard-of, miraculous manner, whereby they were laid upon the nation and all its descendants as an unalterable duty and obligation."

"These laws," the penetrating seeker after truth continues, "are, however, for the most part also to be regarded as a kind of script, and have meaning and significance as ceremonial laws. They lead the inquiring mind to divine truths — partly to eternal truths, partly to the historical truths on which the religion of this people is founded.[19] The ceremonial law was to occasion personal intercourse and social connection between pupil and teacher, inquirer and instructor, [p. 87] to stimulate and encourage emulation and imitation; and this purpose it actually fulfilled in the earliest times, before the constitution degenerated and the folly of men once again took a hand, turning good into evil and the useful into the harmful through misunderstanding and misdirection."[20]

The nation therefore had no creeds, no doctrinal system, no schools and no schoolbooks. The ceremonial law, interwoven with so many holy and wise teachings, was a sufficient institution; it was their code, their pedagogy and their study; a pillar of cloud that went before them from morning till evening, and a pillar of fire to light the way to virtue when, clouded by desires, they were in danger of stumbling. The observance of religious customs occupied them unceasingly; if there was no actual act of worship to perform, there were nevertheless countless occasions to remind themselves of God's presence through words of praise and thanksgiving. The rising and setting of the sun, thunder, lightning, the rainbow and every phenomenon that elevates the soul, and everything that refreshes, revives or delights a person — the enjoyment of food, drink and fragrances, in short every pleasant sensation — is accompanied by an outburst of gratitude expressed in formulas composed especially for the purpose. Even unpleasant things, even painful sufferings, have their blessings, as an expression of childlike submission to the divine dispensations, with the trusting confession that all adversities and misfortunes are only fatherly chastisements, and as such aim solely at our good, and are therefore true benefits.

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[19] The first-fruits, the sheaf of the first ears, the two loaves of the newly cut grain, with which the priest in the Temple had to make a waving before God, were signs of gratitude towards the Giver of all good, and thus a ceremony that leads to the eternal truth that God's all-wisdom has ordered everything for the best of mankind, and that without His providence and all-goodness none of our labours and efforts would prosper. — The chief festivals of the nation and many ceremonies lead in turn to historical truths: to the covenant God concluded with Abraham, to the liberation from Egyptian slavery, to the forty years' wandering in the wilderness, and more. With these ceremonies Holy Scripture always adds: *that ye may remember*; *so that ye recall* — namely the extraordinary events in the national history. Everything memorable that other nations perpetuate by images and monuments was here to be handed down by the ceremonial to posterity, to whom no occasion for *image-worship* was to be given.

[20] *Jerusalem, or on Religious Power and Judaism*. By Mos. Mendelssohn. p. 163 ff. [Translator: Moses Mendelssohn, *Jerusalem oder über religiöse Macht und Judentum* (Berlin, 1783), Part II; Homberg quotes it somewhat freely.]

It was a life full of holy occupations, a walk before God and a constant converse about His sublime attributes and His inscrutable will. "These words (precepts) which I command thee this day *shall be ever in thine heart. Thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them always*, when thou sittest in thine house, or walkest about by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. Bind them for a sign upon thine hand, wear them as a frontlet between thine eyes, and write [p. 88] them upon the posts of thy house and on thy gates." (Num. 6:4–9)[21] That is: wherever you stand and go, wherever you turn, and in all your actions, the ordinances of God, your protector, liberator and king, shall be present to you; all your movements and utterances shall bear the stamp of gratitude, childlike love and deep reverence, and remind you unceasingly of the benefits that the all-good Being shows to all men, and has shown to your forefathers in particular.

Thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children: not out of the dead letter of dry textbooks; not in a gloomy schoolroom, not through a mercenary, peevish or hair-splitting dogmatist, but through every one of your relatives and friends, and always and everywhere. Under the open sky, in flowery meadows, on green hills of vine and olive, on hillsides and pastures, in the midst of a grazing flock, in living nature so rich in wonders, where budding, growing and thriving hold the youthful heart with so powerful a spell; where every glance falls upon emanations of the divine goodness and of the benevolence of our Father of all. And there parents and friends had opportunities without number to instruct astonished youth in all that is good, through questions and answers, through instructive conversations and meaningful sayings. Into their gentle and penetrating instruction there entered, to be sure, no scholastic syllogisms; instead, for their naive teaching they drew their reasons from nature, which speaks to every heart, and these reasons seldom fail of their effect. If they wished to spur them on to universal goodwill towards all creatures, to love of mankind, to sympathy with the joys and sorrows of others, to the support of the unfortunate, they took their examples from the goodness of God, which is spread throughout all nature, manifests itself everywhere, and lives and moves in the worm as in the elephant.

Thus the young person, and in the same way the young Israelite, was always initiated into his laws on occasions and opportunities that aroused the youth's desire for knowledge. If his father, a neighbour or someone else had a little boy circumcised, and the youth asked in his astonishment: what does this act mean? then, and not before, he received the instruction: this is a sign of the covenant that God made with our patriarch Abraham, when He said to him: "This is the covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee, which ye shall keep: ye must circumcise every male. Circumcise your foreskin, and this shall be the sign of the covenant [p. 89] between me and you, etc." (Gen. 17:10)

If he saw a young husband carrying his first-born son, the first pledge of his love and of maternal tenderness, to the priest, who accepts it as an offering consecrated to God and gives it back to the

[21] Translator: The book number is misprinted: "4. B. Mos." (Numbers) should read 5. B. Mos., i.e. Deut. 6:4–9 (the words quoted are vv. 6–9).

father for a ransom, the strangeness of this custom could not but put the question on the youth's tongue: what is the reason for this ceremony? To him Scripture says: "*And when thy son shall ask thee* one day: *What is this?* then say unto him: With a strong hand the Eternal brought us out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. When Pharaoh so stubbornly refused to let us go, the Eternal slew all the first-born in the land of Egypt, from the first-born of man to the first-born of beast. Therefore I sacrifice to the Eternal all the males that first come out of the womb, and all the first-born of my children I redeem." (Exod. 13:14, 15)

When Passover came, which was celebrated by the whole nation with so much solemnity and with a quite special preparation of the paschal lamb, it was entirely natural that the children should want to know the reason for the general joy mingled with a lofty seriousness. Now Scripture again says: "*And when your children shall say unto you*: What mean ye by this service? ye shall say: It is a sacrifice of passing-over to the Eternal, because He passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when He smote Egypt and delivered our houses." (Exod. 12:26, 27)

So it always says: *when thy son shall ask thee*; *when your children shall say unto you*; when they call upon you to make known to them the reason for this or that law and custom — then speak, then instruct. Wait until an occasion, an opportunity for instruction, presents itself; do not prattle at them the dry, spiritless doctrine of the Law, which they will long since have forgotten again before the time comes to practise the Law. Let practice precede instruction; then instruction too will impress itself, living, warming and fruitful, deep into the mind and heart of the young Israelite and remain present to his memory all his life.[22] Elsewhere they led [p. 90] the youth to the monuments to teach them national history, and through them to awaken enthusiasm, to encourage emulation, etc. But the monuments are usually found only in the capital or on a battlefield, and cannot be placed before the eyes of the whole nation or be present everywhere. Also, the impression of the memorials left in the soul can fade with time and finally vanish altogether. Not so the religious ceremonial, visible everywhere and never extinguished, which is ever newly revived in repeated practice, by which love for the national constitution, for the divine service peculiar to this nation, for its manners, customs, establishments and institutions is refreshed from time to time, and which instils a national pride that, *well guided and kept within proper bounds*, ennobles the nation and every citizen in it and makes them capable of all great deeds and sacrifices.

Such was the instruction of youth in those times of innocence and simplicity of morals; and as long as the theocratic constitution maintained itself in its purity and the nation found its happiness in the patriarchal way of life, this instruction, which may seem meagre to our eyes, was sufficient to secure its temporal welfare and its future happiness.

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[22]Lessing, *Nathan the Wise*, Act 5, Scene 6 [the scene is given as verse]: *Recha.* — — My father loves / Cold book-learning, which / With dead signs presses into the brain, / Too little. *Sittah.* Eh, what are you saying! — Indeed / He is not so very wrong! — And so much of what / You know . . . ? *Recha.* I know from his lips alone. / And could tell you, for most of it, / How? Where? Why he taught it me. *Sittah.* So / Everything does cling better. So / *The whole soul learns at once.* [Translator: Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Nathan der Weise* (1779), V.6.]

People seldom know their true happiness; they leap so readily from one extreme to the other, without suspecting that it is to be found only on the middle road. To keep the Israelite nation in that happy mediocrity in which one lives equally far removed from poverty and from superfluous wealth, moderate, quiet and content, and thereby to found and consolidate the general welfare, was the ruling and sole aim [p. 91] of all *political* ordinances in the divine legislation. Moses, an enemy of splendour, voluptuousness and luxury, and of everything that can lead a people away from simplicity of manners, was also averse to those arts that merely tickle the senses, heat the imagination and further inflame the desires that are always active anyway — such as dancing, music, painting, poetry, sculpture, in short every artistic representation of human passions. The use he nevertheless made of them was sanctified, consecrated solely to divine worship and the adornment of the Tabernacle. The spirit of this legislation, which rested its edifice on the two main pillars — moderate enjoyment and moderation of the passions — could therefore favour commerce, the mother of superfluity, of wealth and of the fine arts, all the less because commerce acquaints people with new pleasures, and thereby widens the narrow circle of natural, real needs by a countless multitude of merely imaginary ones, and makes at least the majority of the members of a civil society, if not outright unhappy, then always dissatisfied with their station.

To prevent every seductive example that could lead to discontent in the nation and to the awakening of new desires, Moses sought to banish all splendour, every costly expenditure and excessive wealth even from the throne, which one so likes to see surrounded with brilliance, by laying down as a fundamental law: "He (the king) may not keep many horses; neither may he take many wives, lest his inclination turn aside (from virtue); likewise he may not amass silver and gold excessively." (Deut. 17:16, 17) He allowed the king only as much as was needed to maintain his dignity, and, in order to forestall even the pride and self-exaltation that might arise from this little, he prescribed to him: "to make a copy of the book of the Law, which the priests kept, in which he shall read every day of his life, that he may learn to fear the Eternal his God, to observe exactly all the words of this teaching and of these statutes; *that his heart be not lifted up above his brethren*, and that he turn not aside from the commandment to the right hand or to the left, so that he and his descendants may remain long years in the kingship in Israel." (ibid. v. 19)

Every overstepping of these limits could easily lead, in a constitution formed on such principles, to abuse of supreme power, as the outcome also proved; but every preponderance that a citizen could gain over his fellow citizens through great wealth or the possession of many estates [p. 92] would have been no less dangerous for *this* state. Hence the equal distribution of the promised land among the tribes, and within these among the families of each tribe of the Israelites.

To preserve this equality of property for ever undisturbed, it was ordained as a fundamental law that no tribe, nor any individual, might increase or diminish the land inherited through the original allotment, whether by marriage, by inheritance or by sale. "The land shall not be sold for ever," says God, "*for the land is mine, and ye are but strangers and sojourners on my soil*." (Lev. 25:23)

The owner was God; the Israelites only His vassals: they merely drew the usufruct from it; this alone they could transfer and sell, but only until the jubilee year, for as soon as that arrived everything returned to its first possessor or his heirs. (Ibid. v. 14–16)

Thus the hereditary estate could receive no increase through purchase, but neither through marriage. Under the Mosaic law a daughter could inherit only in the case that her father left no son; but then she was obliged to marry someone from her own family, "so that the children of Israel may each inherit his father's estate, and no inheritance pass from one tribe to another, but the tribes of the children of Israel each cleave to its own inheritance." (Num. 36:8, 9)

The case in which one could come into possession of a new estate through an inheritance was extremely rare. For even if someone died childless and his brother inherited from him according to the legal order of succession, he had, under the law of levirate, to marry his widow and cede this inheritance again to the first-born son she bore him. The law adopted this child as the son of the deceased uncle and installed him as his rightful heir.[23] From all these and similar ordinances

[23]This law is exceedingly obscure, and in order to secure the sense in which I take it against all objections, I may be permitted the following somewhat lengthy remark. The levirate, or brother-marriage, dates from hoary antiquity. Already *Judah* said to his son *Onan*: "Go in unto thy brother's wife and take her in brother-marriage, that thou mayest raise up offspring to thy brother." (Gen. 38:8) In the much later legislation Moses did allow this compulsory marriage to be refused, but laid a harsh disgrace upon the refusal. The law on this reads, according to the *Mendelssohnian* translation, as follows: "If brothers dwell together, and one of them dies without leaving a son, the wife of the deceased may not marry a stranger outside the family; her brother-in-law shall go in unto her, take her to wife, and perform the brother-marriage. *The first son that she bears shall retain the name of the deceased brother*, so that his name be not put out. But if the man will not marry his sister-in-law, she shall then go up to the gate to the elders and say: My brother-in-law refuses to preserve his brother's name in Israel; he will not take me in brother-marriage. The elders of the city shall summon him and speak with him. If he then stands up and says: I do not wish to take her, then the sister-in-law shall step up before the eyes of the elders, draw his shoe off his foot, spit before him, and say: So be it done unto the man who will not build up his brother's house! — Thereafter he shall bear in Israel the by-name: *The house of the barefooted one!*" (Deut. 25:5–10) According to this translation it would be aimed merely at the name, namely that if the deceased was called, for example, Joseph or Jochanan, the son first-born of the brother-marriage should likewise be so named. This opinion, however, is contradicted not only by the Talmud (Yevamot, folio 14, side 1) [Translator: the discussion is at BT Yevamot 24a] but also by linguistic usage. For in that case Scripture would have had to use the word יִקָּרֵא [*yiqqare*], from קרא, *to name* (cf. Gen. 48:6), instead of יָקוּם [*yaqum*], from קום, which means either *to rise, to set out, to withstand, to oppose, to rebel*, or *to take possession, to acquire a right, a title* (cf. Gen. 23:17, 20; Ruth 4:5, 10), but nowhere in all of Holy Scripture means *to name*. But even setting all this aside, the sole purpose of the brother-marriage cannot have been merely to make the first-born the bearer of his uncle's name, because, first, the name does not yet *build up the brother's house*, and secondly Moses would hardly have burdened the brother, for the sake of such a trifle, with marrying a woman without love or inclination. *Michaelis* (in his *Mosaic Law*, § 98) does indeed regard the brother-marriage as an entirely purposeless old popular custom founded merely on a superstition, which Moses really retained only so as not to offend against tradition, and for that very reason also permitted refusal of the brother-marriage. [Translator: Johann David Michaelis, *Mosaisches Recht* (1770–75).] But had Moses regarded the brother-marriage as a meaningless popular custom, why would the law have charged the elders to urge the brother to the marriage, and, in case of refusal, to treat him so contemptuously before the whole nation? *Rabbi Moses ben Nachman* takes the matter far more seriously, and assures us that the brother-marriage was founded on a very important *secret, known to the ancients and exceedingly beneficial to human nature*. (See the Commentary to the Mendelssohnian translation, Gen. ch. 38.) [Translator: Nachmanides (Ramban, 1194–1270), whose comment on Gen. 38:8 alludes to the mystical ("secret") meaning of levirate marriage, is cited in the *Biur* accompanying Mendelssohn's German Pentateuch.] If that were so, however, one could not comprehend how Moses, to whom so important a secret must have been known and sacred, could nevertheless have permitted the refusal of the brother-marriage. Most incomprehensible of all, however, is what is also remarked in the cited passage of the Commentary, that Onan would have committed so abominable a vice if it had merely been a matter of giving the first-born his uncle's name. And why should the name of a villain, of whom Scripture says: "*Er*, Judah's eldest son, was wicked, displeasing in the eyes of God," live again and be propagated? Finally it is also evident that the son first-born to Tamar was called not *Er* but *Perez*, just as the son of *Boaz*'s kinship-marriage with *Ruth* received the name *Obed*, and not that of *Mahlon*, who had died childless. All these difficulties cease, however, everything becomes intelligible and clear, and the law acquires an important interest, if it is explained and translated as follows: "And the first son whom she bears *shall, in the name of the deceased brother* (i.e. the child's uncle), *enter*

[p. 93] the intention of the lawgiver shines forth all too clearly: to maintain in this state the greatest possible equality of property among the citizens, [p. 94] and to prevent anyone from obtaining a great preponderance of landed property, so easily turned to the oppression of his fellow citizens.

[p. 95] The land in which milk and honey flow, where within there reigns great abundance, was furthermore, according to the divine intention, to have from without a poor appearance, no considerable commerce, no shipping, and in general nothing that could arouse the envy, covetousness and lust for dominion of neighbouring peoples. "No one shall covet thy land, [p. 96] when thou goest up to appear before the Eternal thy God three times in the year." (Exod. 34:24) You can make pilgrimage to Jerusalem in peace and without fear of hostile incursions. No one will think it worth the trouble either to make war on so poor-seeming a people or to enter into trade relations with it. The whole of the trade that was to be carried on among this nation, and actually was carried on, concerned only internal traffic on a small scale, which could if need be be done by barter, so that money could be almost entirely dispensed with. The seclusion in which, according to the Law, the Israelites had to live from all the neighbouring idolatrous peoples cut them off from every opportunity of entering into trade relations with foreign lands. Since, then, great undertakings requiring heavy outlays of money were not to take place in this state, the money that this or that citizen possessed necessarily lacked circulation and the great value it has among a trading nation. This explains why Moses strictly forbade taking not only usurious interest but even the very slightest increase. "If thy brother beside thee becomes impoverished and his hand fails, thou shalt support him, and the stranger as well as the tolerated sojourner (all non-Israelites), so that each may live (make a living) beside thee. Thou shalt take neither interest nor increase from him, but fear thy God, and let thy brother live beside thee. Give him not thy money upon interest, nor thy victuals for increase." (Lev. 25:35–37) The only opportunity to make fruitful the money that could not otherwise be employed and lay idle in the chest, and the accumulated superfluous provisions, you are to find in supporting the unfortunate Israelites and non-Israelites who are tolerated among us with advances bringing no profit, in raising them up and letting them prosper again beside you. The interest on the advances, if you hesitate on that account, you shall not lose;

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into his rights, take possession of his estate, and thereby restore the extinct line, *build up again the fallen house*." This child was to form a tribe entirely separate from the family of its begetter, and that for the reason that no one should obtain, through the death of his childless brother, an increase in landed property, whereby the equilibrium of possessions, which was to be neither diminished nor increased, might be upset. Judah, accordingly, was not the father of Perez but only his begetter; his father was Er; or conversely, Perez was the son of Er, whose rights he inherited and whose line he continued. This also makes intelligible the blessing of the elders upon Boaz: "*And let thy house be like the house of Perez* (whom Tamar bore unto Judah), of the seed which God shall give thee of this young woman" (Ruth 4:12) — namely, may it form a tribe of its own! Now the intention of Onan in the vice he committed also becomes clear. Onan, "who knew that the seed would not be his," that the first-born of the brother-marriage, forming a new tribe, would claim the inheritance left by his brother Er, which had still fallen to him, committed the well-known vice out of self-interest, "in order to give his brother" — not no name-bearer, but — "no offspring" who might wrest the inheritance from him. Warned by this ugly example of Onan, which might be imitated to frustrate the law, Moses did permit refusal of the brother-marriage, but wished to brand avarice, as it deserves, with public disgrace. — With this explanation the Talmud (in the passage cited) also agrees, namely that the law ordains not the adoption of a name but the taking possession of the inheritance; only, from the analogy of this passage with that one (in Gen. 48:6), the Talmud would argue that he who performs the brother-marriage, and not the child, should be the heir. But R. Moses ben Nachman declares the inference occurring in the Talmud to be a mere specious argument that has no legal authority. (See the Commentary to the Mendelssohnian translation, Deut. 25:6.)

you will one day receive it abundantly and with usury in the life to come; and in this life you already enjoy a foretaste in the blissful consciousness of having stood by your [p. 97] brothers. — If Moses nevertheless permitted interest to be taken from idolaters, who are to be clearly distinguished from the Noachides,[24] this was done not out of religious hatred and intolerance, but solely in order to hamper as much as possible, through the yield of interest, the large commercial undertakings of foreigners, which might turn out to the detriment of the internal constitution: as I have already shown at length in a small work of mine.

Equality of property among the citizens, moderate worldly goods, industry and activity as far as the middle station requires, but not for the acquisition of great riches; moderation, contentment and peace within, and security without — these were the pillars that supported the simple and beautiful edifice of the Mosaic constitution. Happy the nation, so long as it persevered in it, set before its children, through its patriarchal life, an example and model easy to imitate, and, as already said above, impressed upon their hearts, through the observance and explanation of the ceremonial law, the most effective motives to godliness and the practice of all virtues — which no schoolbook and no artful course of instruction can do. But O, pitiable fate of mankind! this happy, enviable condition did not last very long.

It is striking that it was precisely the wisest man of his nation and of his age who broke through all the barriers that the lawgiver had drawn with such great caution around this constitution, perhaps unique of its kind; it was that great and rare man who by his life sowed the seed of its disruption and final ruin, a seed which already at the end of his days brought forth bitter fruits. *Solomon*, the wise ruler, the gifted poet, philosophical thinker and far-sighted statesman, whose accession promised so much good, acted — and that publicly — entirely contrary to all that Moses had so strictly commanded. Whole cities were fitted out as stables for his countless horses; besides seven hundred princely wives, three hundred concubines had to be maintained as well; and through the trade relations with Chirom,[25] the king of one of the foremost trading nations of that time, so much gold came into the land that silver was no longer regarded [p. 98] (1 Kings 9 and 10).[26] Such an example of public violations of the law could not long remain without imitation. The abundance of money, the luxury, the opulence and the sensual pleasures, which the nation had not known before, would alone have sufficed to corrupt its innocence, good morals and religiosity, even if a most unfortunate circumstance had not been added besides. The great evil which had the most damaging effect on the nation was that he took so many heathen wives and kept so many heathen

[24]Noachides are those heathens who observed the laws of nature and worshipped the true, one God. These were tolerated by the Israelites and treated as brothers.

[25]Translator: Hiram, king of Tyre (Hebrew Ḥiram/Ḥirom); see 1 Kings 9:11–14, 26–28; 10:11, 22.

[26]Translator: The horses and the abundance of gold are described in 1 Kings 10:14–29 (cf. 5:6); the seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines in 1 Kings 11:3.

concubines, and with them brought idolatry into the land, to which in the end he himself paid homage, publicly worshipping *Ashtoreth* and *Milcom*.[27]

Since such immeasurable wealth prevailed in the land, one would think the nation was at least happy and content. Quite the contrary! Without the bitterest misery and general despair it would hardly have approached Solomon's successor on the throne with the harsh words: "Your father laid a hard yoke upon us; lighten now the oppressive service which we had to render your father, and the all too burdensome yoke which he laid upon us; then we will serve you" (ibid., ch. 12). And what wonder? What treasures, however immeasurable they may be, will not at last be exhausted in satisfying the most extravagant desires of a thousand women, each of whom kept a royal household? Thus does nature avenge every transgression, every excess and every wrong that individual men or whole peoples commit against her! But here there was added besides a special divine chastisement, and the rule that the father had exercised over the whole nation was restricted, under the son, to a single tribe of it.

The oppression under which the nation groaned, and which was still increased under the following reign, was nevertheless far from the greatest evil. The political situation might yet have been improved with time; but the intermarriage with heathen women, who led the greater part of the Israelites astray into idolatry, which was so little compatible with the theocratic form of government, [p. 99] shook the Mosaic constitution so badly that one could foresee its complete overthrow even without being endowed with a prophetic spirit. *Nehemiah*, who contended, cursed, struck and cried out: "Did not Solomon, the king of Israel, sin by just such a union (with idolatrous women)? a king such as there was none among many nations; beloved by his God, the Lord made him king over all Israel: even him the heathen women led into sin. And now you, of all people! Is it a thing unheard of, to commit so great a crime, to be unfaithful to our God and to marry heathen women?" (Neh. 13:26–27). This God-fearing man seems in his zeal to have quite forgotten that his hearers could turn his own weapons against him and say: It is precisely for that reason that we have united ourselves with foreign women, women given to idolatry, and held it no transgression, because the favourite of God himself did it. If so great a sage as Solomon was weak enough to let himself be seduced by these enchantresses into idolatry, into so unheard-of a faithlessness towards the Lord, who can blame us, the uninitiated?

These enchantresses, however, played a very wicked game not only with their husbands but also, and chiefly, with their children. They were most motherly in their zeal to instruct them diligently in the mythology they had brought with them and to hold them to the worship of idols; and in order to stifle in their minds every knowledge of the true, one God, every memory of Israelite national

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[27] Even the commercial industry described (in v. 18 and 23 of the last chapter of the Proverbs of Solomon) is not in the spirit of the Mosaic constitution, nor by any means so praiseworthy a trait in the female character. The wife should look after the household and devote her industry to that alone; but if she works for sale, she can no longer be wholly wife nor wholly mother. [Translator: The selling of her work is in Prov. 31:18 and 24; "23" is probably a misprint for 24. Solomon's worship of Ashtoreth and Milcom: 1 Kings 11:5.]

history and every spark of love of the fatherland, they made use of the artifice of bringing them up in a foreign language. The youth were no longer able to speak the Hebrew language (ibid., v. 24).

Deep had the nation sunk, and the evil at last attacked even its noblest part, the priesthood. In its degeneracy it had so completely neglected its holiest office — to preserve the divine book and from it to teach and improve itself and the people — that among the priests, too, the teaching of God fell into utter oblivion, until an accident let the high priest Hilkiah find the scroll of the law (Torah); which accident he related with great astonishment to King Josiah's secretary: "I have found the book of the law in the house of God." And this on the occasion when, at the king's command, the secret treasure in the Temple was being taken out in order to take from it what was needed for the repair of the house of God. [p. 100] When, in the present religious condition of the nation — scattered under so many different governments, without Temple and priests, and considering that the art of printing spares us all copying — every Jewish community, however insignificant, nevertheless possesses five or six copies in the very same form and of the same exactness as that scroll of the law which the high priest discovered by chance, and from time to time has new ones made, then it is utterly incomprehensible that the whole nation possessed only a single copy of the five books of Moses and did not even know where this single one had gone. We saw above that the law obliges the king, on his accession, to have a copy of the book of the teaching of God made for himself, to keep it constantly at hand in his cabinet, and to read in it daily as long as he lives. Now Josiah, as Scripture says, was one of the most pious kings; and yet he had violated this duty, sacred to him and beneficial to his people, and was so unacquainted with the law that when it was read to him he rent his clothes and at once commanded the high priest and his other confidants, saying: "Up! hasten! inquire of the will of God for me and for the small remnant of the good who are still to be found in Israel and Judah; for great is the wrath of God that has been poured out upon us, because our forefathers did not keep the word of God, to do what is prescribed in this book" (2 Chron. 34).

It is not part of my subject to set out all the causes that contributed to the downfall of the Israelite kingdom, nor to trace all the natural and supernatural ways by which fate has led our nation. My purpose is only to show, from the brief sketch here thrown out of the degeneracy, irreligion and immorality which had prevailed for so long and so generally, how absurd it would have been to demand of the few noble souls who still lived here and there in Israel and Judah in concealment that they compose a textbook of religion and morals — and that, moreover, in a language which the youth no longer understood. As long as the intermarriage with heathen women lasted, and idolatry threw open door and gate to all the vices, what would a schoolbook have accomplished, when people passed coldly by the zealous and urgent exhortations of the prophets, who in the name of God now threatened, now gently persuaded — nay, even mocked and ridiculed them?

[p. 101] *Ezra* came, and seemed to bring with him fair prospects for religion and morals. First of all he applied every effort to bring about the separation from the heathen women. Through his forceful

exhortation he succeeded in getting many to promise, by oath and signature, to walk according to the teaching of God, to perform his holy precepts, never again to give their daughters to the sons of the heathen, and never to take the daughters of these for their sons (Neh. 10). Sincere remorse, earnest conversion and good resolutions, to be sure, need no oath and no signature, especially since, according to the Talmudic dictum, every Israelite was already placed under oath at Mount Sinai to observe the religious laws.[28]

After the separation from the idolatresses had been accomplished, Ezra was chiefly concerned to restore the sanctification of the Sabbath, then to introduce divine worship, whose essential part consisted in the sacrifices, according to the prescription, and to fix the functions and revenues of the priests. That was all, for the time being. For morality, for the improvement of manners and dispositions and the purification of the heart, and for the God-pleasing education of the youth, not much had yet been done; perhaps not much could yet be done. First the former cult of the true, one God, after it had for a long time been displaced by the jugglery and the alluring, lascivious games and dances of the heathen priests, had to regain a firm footing; the pious Israelite servants of God had to come again to bread and esteem; and the Sabbath had to be restored to its original holiness, in order to gain one day each week on which the people could be instructed and brought to reflect on the sinful life they had led until then. For according to Nehemiah's account the nation had so completely profaned the Sabbath that it had sunk to a working day. "In those days," he says, "I saw in Judah people treading winepresses on the Sabbath, bringing in sheaves and loading them on asses; likewise wine, grapes, figs and various other burdens which were brought into Jerusalem on the Sabbath day; I always rebuked them when they brought all kinds of provisions to market on such a day" (ibid.).[29]

Ezra regarded the sanctification of the days of rest instituted by God, and the exact observance of outward divine worship, as — given the licentiousness prevailing at the time — a foundation and preparation for the future moral improvement of the nation, and left the completion of this gigantic work to his [p. 102] successors, in the hope that the new Temple would gradually bring about the reorganization of the people and of its constitution. But the outcome, alas, did not answer his expectation.

It was already no good sign that, when the foundation of this Temple was laid, the old priests, Levites and heads of families began to weep; it was no tears of joy that flowed from their eyes, but bitter tears. The young people, to be sure, incapable of reflection, were boisterously merry; they believed they were living to see the return of the old times, of freedom and independence. The old had quite different forebodings. They compared this ambiguous solemnity with the founding of the first Temple, at which they had been present, and held that so long as the nation did not regain its independence and had to live under the dominion of a foreign government, however mild it

[28]Translator: Cf. BT Shevuot 21b and 22b (every Israelite is "already sworn from Mount Sinai").

[29]Translator: Neh. 13:15.

might be, it could never again be wholly happy, Temple and priesthood notwithstanding. And indeed, even under Cyrus, one of the most magnanimous and exalted kings of antiquity, the nation did not lack reasons for complaint. "To this day," the Israelites lamented, "to this day we are but servants in our own land, which you (O God!) gave to our forefathers to enjoy its fruits and its goods; in this land we must be subjects! Yes, its fruit grows abundantly, but only for the kings whom you have set over us because of our sins; they dispose at will over our persons and our cattle, and we are still in great distress" (Neh. 9). If they perhaps had to endure much oppression from without, within things looked far worse still. "There arose," as Scripture relates, "a great outcry among the people and their wives against their Jewish brethren. There were some who said: Our sons and daughters, we are many, and we — we must buy grain to keep alive. Others said: We have had to pledge our fields, vineyards and houses so that we could buy grain in the famine. Still others said: We have had to borrow money on our fields and vineyards for the king's tax. Yet we are of the same flesh as our brethren, our children as good as theirs, and yet *we must subject our sons and daughters to slavery; several of our daughters are violated*, and we have no power in our hands, since others possess our fields and vineyards" (Neh. 5).

[p. 103] This uprising was indeed quelled; and they also began to read to the people from the Torah on Sabbaths and festivals and to explain a good deal. But, as has been said, this related for the most part only to the observance of the ceremonies of worship in the Temple, to the punctual payment of the heave-offerings and tithes to priests and Levites, the bringing of sacrificial animals and so forth, and only very little to the improvement of the inner man, the establishment of firm trust in God, the administration of justice, the promotion of brotherly love — in a word, to what aims at the genuine religious formation of the people and the education of the youth.

If it was not yet the time to provide for the youth then, it was still far less so under the ensuing governments — if one can call them that — of the high priests. As heads of the nation and as the organ of the divine word, it would indeed have been their particular task, since the first constitution could after all no longer be restored, at least to compose a book of faith and morals and to watch carefully over the proper instruction of the coming generation. But the high priests, who obtained their dignity in a different manner from those of the first Temple, followed one another so quickly,[30] were always being displaced one by another and deposed from office, that they held it only for a short time: amid sheer enmities and persecutions, which most of them brought upon themselves, they could not get round to thinking of the word of God. — — — To these very gloomy prospects for the religious and moral instruction of the nation was added, moreover, the embitterment of the various schismatics: the *Samaritans*, the *Sadducees*, the *Essenes*, the *Karaites* and others. The sectarian spirit, which is seldom concerned with the matter itself and more with asserting its own authority and satisfying its pride, its lust for power or for possessions, inflamed

[30] In a period of a hundred years nearly thirty high priests were deposed from their office. Since *Herod*, none died in his dignity unless by a violent death. Besides, this dignity had long since lost its former prestige. Histoire des Juifs, par M. Basnage. Tom. I. pag. 463. [Translator: Jacques Basnage (1653–1723), *Histoire des Juifs depuis Jésus-Christ jusqu'à présent* (1706–1711).]

the leaders of the various parties with a fury that did infinitely more harm than the supposed false doctrine, which they sought to root out with fire and sword, could ever have done. Thanks be to the present enlightened [p. 104] century! which has wrested from these sects — some of which still exist — the axe of murder which they raised in order to slaughter God's children for the honour of God.

Weary perhaps of slaughtering and sacrificing altogether, or because the measure of sin had overflowed, providence in its wise counsel found it more salutary to put an end at once to the Temple service and to the priesthood, which had been so greatly abused; to take from the nation even the last shadow of its former greatness, and to lead it through manifold sufferings and persecutions to better knowledge. — With the Men of the Great Assembly, precisely at the time when the nation had sunk into deep abasement, a new dawn seemed to rise for religious and moral improvement as a whole. Schools began to be founded in various large cities; and although, as is evident everywhere in the Talmud, their chief subject was tradition and the exposition of the ceremonial law, the doctrines of salvation and the moral laws were not neglected either; of the latter we possess much that is good, chiefly in the so-called *Chapters of the Fathers*, פרקי אבות [*Pirkei Avot*]. Nor did they fail to give thought to the better education of the youth — properly speaking, only of the boys.

"Were proper schoolbooks composed for them?" The Talmud tells us nothing detailed about this. All that we find in it is that the young pupils were taught individual verses from the books of Moses and the Prophets, and that, it seems, not in proper order, but at the discretion of the teacher and according to the occasions that offered, now from this, now from that chapter of one book or another. The people at that time still occupied themselves with agriculture, cattle-raising and many other rough kinds of labour; and since these made up the most numerous class, it may have been thought sufficient for the youth of such people to be acquainted with individual passages of Scripture — and indeed with such as are comprehensible to plain common sense and suited to their future calling.

For those young men who devoted themselves to study, it was considered still less necessary to compose a special textbook of religion. The sense of Holy Scripture was not yet twisted and disfigured, not yet made a plaything of wit and of folly, not misinterpreted through hair-splitting and subtlety, and people did not yet permit themselves to draw from Scripture conclusions that obscure its sublime simplicity [p. 105] and produce misunderstandings. At a more mature age these young men were gradually instructed in the higher schools in the teaching of the unwritten laws, transmitted only orally; and for this class it would have been partly superfluous, partly impracticable, to prescribe a special textbook of religion, as is evident from what follows.

However definitely Moses delivered the correct interpretation of the laws to his disciple Joshua, with the strict command to hand it on unaltered to the elders of the nation, without taking anything from it or adding anything to it — which Joshua, and after him the elders, the prophets, and after

these that Great Assembly, which received the unaltered explanation of the law from the hands of the latter, held sacred and observed — nevertheless in the course of time many a doubt arose about the explanation of various points of law. If the head of one school had forgotten something, or the mind of the head of another school had penetrated more deeply into the sense of the explanation and presented the matter differently, or a pupil had not been attentive enough to his teacher's lecture and, when he was put at the head of a school, left out of the explanation much that had escaped him: enough, the schools became so divided over many subjects that often their rulings on one and the same subject were opposed to each other. The disputes of the schools therefore gave good reason to fear that a textbook to be composed for the youth, since it could expect no general authority, would only supply fresh material for discord and disunity among the synagogues. What attacks has contentiousness not dared against the teaching of *Maimonides* and other great teachers, now generally acknowledged as excellent and drawn from the spirit of Scripture and tradition?[31] At the conclusion of the [p. 106] Talmud, after all the disputed opinions of the schools had been decided and unalterable resolutions passed upon them, and finally after Maimonides, in a concise extract from the Talmud, had published the whole ritual law in an easily comprehensible presentation not open to any misinterpretation, it was indeed believed that an end had been put to all contradiction. But — be it ignorance of the language, be it excessive zeal, which believes it cannot do too much of a good thing, or the craving to shine through acumen — enough, it is simply the lot of men, as at the building of the tower of Babel, to be unable to understand one another, or out of conceit and dogmatism to be unwilling to understand one another! — But enough of this. I return to my subject, to seek out the reason why in recent centuries the idea was not conceived of preparing special textbooks for the youth, and for this purpose I shall make use *in part* of the words of one of the most deserving scholars of our nation. "It is not yet three decades," he says,[32] "since among the Israelites one knew little or nothing of a systematically ordered [p. 107] religious book, did not feel its lack very painfully, and — what may seem paradoxical to many — could, if not

[31] Criticism is salutary and useful for the development and correction of ideas only when it investigates without any ulterior motives, purely out of love of truth; it is odious and harmful when it is guided by the spirit of contradiction and dogmatism. In this spirit, and not without bitterness, the so noteworthy and yet so little read philosophical-theological work of Maimonides, entitled *Guide of the Perplexed*, מורה נבוכים [*Moreh Nevukhim*], was attacked by not insignificant Jewish theologians of his time. This plague, which begins with belittling and disparaging merit but soon passes over into a spirit of persecution, has deterred so many men of intellect from clarifying ideas, refuting errors and dispelling superstition. It takes a very rare love of truth to disregard fortune, peace, reputation and often life itself, in order to dedicate one's leisure to the ennoblement of the nation and to communicate to it one's better and beneficial insights. —

[32] In the review of the religious and moral textbook and reader Imre shefer, אמרי שפר, by Herz Homberg. See *Sulamith*, a periodical for the promotion of culture and humanity among the Jews, etc., 3rd year, vol. 2, pp. 117–135, 194–210, 256–274. I take this opportunity with great pleasure to express here my heartfelt thanks to the reviewer, who did not choose to name himself, for his modest censure even more than for the praise bestowed on the work in too generous a measure. The keen eye with which the work is judged, the ardent longing for the culture of the nation, and the indulgence towards many of its weaknesses characterize the noble, insightful and fair-minded thinker and critic. I cannot, however, refrain from remarking that, for certain reasons, and chiefly in order to interest in what is good even those minds that shy away from the strictly systematic, love the Oriental flight, and like to see gaps left that they can fill themselves, I preferred to admit some irregularities in the work rather than scare such readers away. To similar and no less laudable reasons are to be ascribed those unevennesses and deliberately committed infidelities in the translation. — The meaning of the word אח (brother), on the other hand, has been corrected, more precisely defined and supported with biblical passages in *Bne-Zion* § 170. [Translator: Homberg's *Imre Shefer* (Vienna, 1808), a Hebrew–German religious and moral reader, and his catechism *Bne Zion* (Vienna, 1812).]

entirely, at least in part, do without such a work. The house of almost every Israelite was, as it were, a holy temple of the fear of God, a *religious institution*; father and mother were the high priesthood, who sought with consecrated hand to keep the pure sacrificial flame burning on the altar. *Everything*, deed and word and look, bore the genuine colour of religion *on and in itself*. In the voice of the *instructing father* the son heard the voice of God, and in the modest bearing of the quiet mother the daughter adored the very essence of love and innocence. The friends of the house were for the most part animated by the same spirit. And if there were some among them who saw with other eyes and heard with other ears in religious matters, they did not dare to clothe their thoughts in words and to profane the holy family circle, from which, in the contrary case, they would have been shown out not in the most delicate manner. Thus the impressions furthering religiosity were renewed in the child hourly and every moment, and the feeling for the Exalted and Invisible was raised into a second nature in the heart of the growing human being. For he had the best, *the first teacher* for his instruction: example; and the saying was confirmed: *Longum iter est per praecepta; breve et efficax per exempla*.[33] In this pious and holy awe the boy and the girl[34] attended the so-called *teaching room*,[35] and found repeated there what they had [p. 108] seen and heard in their parents' house. In intellectual respects the tender soul was, to be sure, greatly neglected and left uncared for; but the heart of the simple was formed by what I might call a *religious contemplation*."

And further below: "The Pentateuch was indeed taught *inappropriately enough*, but it had nevertheless produced this good effect in the child, that every word in it was to him an immediate utterance of God, whose infinite spirit shone before him in every passage of it and spoke to him with vividness — in the mere register of names and generations no less than in the most holy Ten Commandments, which God himself inscribed with his finger. A few more strokes of the pen, in order to complete the picture quite faithfully, without in the least flattering it. In this period the Israelite — admittedly out of prejudice[36] — was only very rarely to be met in the society of his Christian brethren; he confined himself entirely to himself and his fellow believers, lived isolated, and experienced no mutual friction — unless such rubbing occasionally took place in trade; of the arts and sciences he knew little or nothing, and seldom even heard them spoken of (out of

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[33] Translator: "The road by precepts is long; by examples, short and effective" (Seneca, *Epistulae morales* 6.5).

[34] But what did the girl learn there? Certainly not the Bible; but also neither moral maxims nor the doctrines of faith. The whole instruction consisted, and still consists, merely in reading the Hebrew prayers and in reading and writing the so-called *Judeo-German*.

[35] Advisedly it says here *teaching room* and not school; for to this day there exists among the nation in Germany and Poland no proper religious school.

[36] Not merely out of prejudice. The Jew, to whom all schools remained closed; who, shut up in the ghetto, was not permitted to show himself at any public gathering, neither in the theatre nor at other public entertainments — where would he have had the opportunity to refine his outward manners in the society of educated Christians? Nor could one in a thousand express himself intelligibly. They were admitted to no public instruction, and so they had to persist in their old jargon. At bottom, however, the reviewer is right after all; for in the end the source of all the uncouthness with which the Jews were reproached was nothing other than — prejudice. — — — [Translator: The sentence "Auch konnte unter tausend Einer sich verständlich ausdrücken" reads literally "Also one in a thousand could express himself intelligibly"; a word such as "kaum" (scarcely) has evidently dropped out.]

misunderstood religious zeal they were even depicted to him as the grave of morality); to reason about religion was a most rare occurrence, and in the presence of minor children one that never happened."

After completing this picture — which, despite his assurance, is not overly faithful — he urges a more appropriate religious instruction, and that for the following, not entirely satisfactory reason.

"When now," he says, "reason awoke in the child in riper years (in many, to be sure, it lay in an eternal [p. 109] sleep of death and never celebrated the day of resurrection!), and its power of thought was summoned to *reflection* either by itself or by a divinely guided chance, as by a flash of lightning, and the dawning mind now perceived that much of what its parents or teachers had passed off to it as religion by no means deserved that name, then it began to place doubt and mistrust in their whole teaching and was no longer disposed to take *everything* that was offered it into its believing heart. And although it did not occur to it to shake the foundation, yet on occasions as they arose — especially where passion played the mediator — here and there one stone after another was loosened from the building thought to be solid. Storm and rain and tempest now seized all the more readily upon the stronghold of the youth in need of protection; the lightning-conductor — I mean childlike pious faith — had by no means enough of the genuine metal any more: a flash — a stroke — the building stood in full flames and was turned into a heap of rubble."

So he continues in his flowery style to depict the various situations in which a particular steadfastness, a full moral strength, is required in order to withstand the enticements of the passions, and then proves at the end what has been proved so often already and is confirmed by daily experience: that good example alone is not able to steer the ship tossed about by the waves safely through all storms into harbour, and that without the sure guiding star (I mean firm principles) it is every moment in danger of being wrecked. But since this struggle of the passions against feeble reason is as old as the human race, it cannot possibly contain the reason on account of which the need for a textbook of religion is supposed to have become so urgent only in the last three decades. At all times good example was to be regarded only as a preparatory work, which by its salutary impressions makes the tender mind receptive to take up the beneficial seed of religious and rational moral principles; without these supports, however, the best example always has been, and always will be, not only among the Israelites but among all men, only a weak, swaying reed. And may not the young man, after all, come into company to whose evil life and example he would have nothing to oppose but, again, an example; and which of the two will then carry off the victory?

[p. 110] In general, one principal feature has been left out of that picture, a feature on which a very great deal depends here. In his description of the former instruction the reviewer has stopped at the Pentateuch and passed over in silence the study of the Talmud, which was so universal. The all too great restriction in which the nation was kept allowed it no other means of livelihood than petty trade (the licence for wholesale trade was granted only extremely sparingly) and lending money on pledges. It was, as may easily be imagined, very badly off; only the strictest frugality

and the utmost contentment could make its condition in some measure bearable. But these political barriers — the exclusion from all trades, crafts and mechanical labour, and from the learning and practice of the arts and sciences — had brought about yet another evil: *the complete lack of occupation*. To escape harmful idleness and oppressive boredom, no other means remained to the greater part of the nation than to spend its time on the study of the Talmud; and so this study, which greatly engages the mind, became universal, and people believed that thereby, too, they were living up literally to the biblical saying: "You shall meditate in the law day and night." Even those who carried on some trade had a rabbi come to the house daily, in order to review with him in their hours of recreation either a leaf of the Talmud or a chapter of the *Mishnayot*.[37] Not as a breadwinning study — scarcely one in thousands could attain a rabbinical post — but as the occupation of most and the recreation of the few, all applied themselves to the study of the Talmud, which gives the mind such abundant nourishment and in which the body, too, does not remain wholly idle.[38] Hence it came about that every boy, however well-to-do or however poor his parents might be, as soon as he had learned here and there a few disconnected chapters of the Pentateuch — of the Prophets there was never any question — was early, and usually in the seventh year of his age, introduced to the instruction in Mishnah and Talmud. This was the general custom among the Israelite nation; only the Italian Jews [p. 111] made an exception to it. This custom explains why there are so few Jews entirely ignorant in matters of religion. Even the quite common Jew has some notions of Judaism, even if only wavering ones.

For translating those chapters of the Pentateuch, and then the Mishnah and the Talmud, use was made of the so-called Judeo-German, a jargon formed of obsolete German words gone out of currency, mixed with mutilated Hebrew words, which no one outside the Jewish quarter understood. Extremely poor and disfigured, like the nation in that period of abasement, this language was still sufficient and adequate for so narrow a circle of ideas and activity, for communicating with one another after a meagre fashion. All instruments concerning mine and thine, such as contracts, marriage contracts, bonds, deeds of sale, wills and so on, were drawn up in Hebrew; the commercial books were kept in the aforesaid jargon and in Jewish letters. Since in those times all lawsuits among the Jews were decided by the rabbis according to Talmudic jurisprudence, the cases in which the Christian court had to examine the instruments drawn up in Hebrew or the commercial books kept in Judeo-German were extremely rare; and when such a case arose, both the one and the other had to be translated into good German by a neophyte who had command of both languages.

The Talmud, this ocean of learning, as the rabbis rightly call it, is an extensive commentary on all the laws, both written and unwritten, orally transmitted, and indeed not only on such

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[37] Text of the Talmud. [Translator: i.e., the Mishnah.]

[38] Our scholars seldom sit while studying; they often move hands and feet, read not only with their eyes but also speak while doing so in a *very loud voice*. Hence they also suffer far less often from hypochondria.

commandments, prohibitions and ceremonies as are still to be observed at present, but also on those which had passed out of use and application with the destruction of Jerusalem and the complete downfall of the Jewish kingdom; but it contains at the same time excellent interpretations of such biblical passages as speak to the heart, to the inner man, as well as forceful doctrines of salvation, powerful moral maxims, moving moral tales, attractive allegories, now sublime, now ingenious, apt psychological observations and rules of practical wisdom; so that one can maintain without exaggeration that whoever has sailed this ocean wholly, or even only for the most part — for these things are not found treated together and coherently in *one* tractate, but scattered through thirty and more folios and interwoven with the legal teachings — does not come home without great and precious treasures.

[p. 112] "But this voyage requires a great deal of time." Certainly! but in 10–12 years it is after all accomplished, and just so long did the instruction usually last. Usually, I say, and I mean those who applied themselves to the study of the Talmud from the sixth to the eighteenth year — the age at which most entered the married state — and then gave it up and devoted themselves to trade. There were, however, many for whom parents or parents-in-law continued to provide even after marriage, and who, without any intention or prospect of a rabbinical post, pursued Jewish theology without interruption. Now it is easy to understand why in those times a systematically ordered book of religion and morals was dispensable, was not missed, and the usefulness of such a work was not even felt — although even then it would have been necessary and profitable for the female part of the youth. The male part, however, had absolutely no need of it. Through the frequent repetition of those doctrines of salvation and moral maxims — even though bound up with the subtle legal teachings — these, however disconnectedly they had been conveyed to the soul, came together in it, strung themselves together as if of their own accord, and formed a system of religion and morals. And even in the souls where they did not combine with one another, they had always done much good: a treasure of unstrung pearls is no less a treasure for that.

Only the female part was entirely deprived of it; it remained in complete ignorance. Its whole instruction consisted, as already touched on above, merely in reading the Hebrew prayers without understanding them, and in reading and writing Judeo-German. What was still done for their good — not in school but at home — was that on Sabbath afternoon the mother took her daughter or daughters in hand and had them read aloud to her in Judeo-German, from the so-called book *Zeena ureena*,[39] the portion of the Pentateuch that is read in the synagogue in the morning.

It is incomprehensible how so little attention has always been given to the education of girls. Does this unconcern [p. 113] stem from the Oriental prejudice that sought in this sex only beauty and never cultivation; or from the circumstance that it cannot fulfil the condition of the covenant

[39]This book is supposed to be a translation of the five books of Moses, but it is a mixture of legends, absurd interpretations, insipid fairy tales and so on, from which no sound religious idea emerges, nor the least instruction in those duties which the wife and mother has to observe in her sphere. [Translator: *Tse'enah u-Re'enah*, the Yiddish paraphrase of the Pentateuch with homiletic material by Jacob ben Isaac Ashkenazi of Janów (first extant edition 1622).]

concluded by God with Abraham; or from its inability to perform the holy ceremonies inside and outside the synagogue; or finally from the Talmud, which expressly forbids initiating female levity into the mysteries of theology? Yet the Talmud itself somewhere raises the question: Wherein does the merit of women chiefly consist? and answers it very aptly: in the good education they give their children.[40] But to give a good education presupposes one's own cultivation and suitable instruction, without which the mother is not able to guide her children properly. Nor could the Talmud possibly permit, still less command, the neglect of the souls of a sex to some of whom God even granted the prophetic spirit: such as *Miriam*, *Deborah* and *Huldah*.

If in spite of this the girls of those times were obedient to their parents, pious and modest withal; the wives frugal, domestic and chaste; if unfaithfulness, impudence and unhappy marriages were extremely rare phenomena, then the exemplary life of these women must be ascribed to the example of the mothers, but chiefly to poverty, which does not easily let disorderly desires arise; to the strict seclusion in the Jewish quarter, where they could not escape the watchful and sharpened eyes of the stern matrons; and to the lack of acquaintance with young men, who were always occupied with the study of the Talmud, which left them almost no idle hour.

So matters stood for several centuries, until the beginning of *the last three decades*. At that time there appeared in Germany two very rare men: *Emperor Joseph*, the sublime friend of mankind, and *Mendelssohn*, the God-fearing philosopher. Both an ornament of humanity, both born for the welfare of mankind, both immortal and especially unforgettable to our nation; may their memory be hallowed for ever and ever!

Both, though in different ways, worked with equal power on the spirit of the nation and sowed the seed of its culture: the former through the splendid so-called Edict of Toleration,[41] and the latter through his beautiful, incomparable translation of the Pentateuch.

[p. 114] The Edict granted the Israelites in the Austrian states various privileges: free access to public instruction in gymnasia and universities; participation in all popular amusements and entertainments; the freedom to leave the Jewish quarter and to choose a dwelling outside it according to convenience and preference; finally a considerable extension of the means of livelihood, in that they were permitted to establish factories, to carry on wholesale trade, and to practise the arts, sciences, light and heavy labour, and finally to engage in agriculture. The same Edict, on the other hand, abolished the jurisdiction of the rabbis in so far as it concerns mine and thine; declared all instruments drawn up in the Hebrew or Judeo-German language — marriage contracts, commercial agreements, wills and so on — invalid and void for the future, and

[40] Translator: Cf. BT Berakhot 17a: "Whereby do women earn merit? By bringing their children to the house of study…"; the prohibition alluded to above is in Mishnah Sotah 3:4 and BT Sotah 20a–21b.

[41] Translator: The Toleranzpatent of Emperor Joseph II, issued for Bohemia in October 1781 and for Lower Austria in January 1782; Moses Mendelssohn's German translation of the Pentateuch (*Sefer Netivot ha-Shalom*, 1780–1783), to whose commentary (*Bi'ur*) Homberg himself contributed.

accordingly ordered that these be drawn up in the language of the country, and that the commercial books and correspondence be kept in the same idiom and in proper order; and finally prescribed, among other requirements for obtaining a licence for wholesale trade, a thorough knowledge of commercial science. As a natural consequence of this new order of things, all Jewish communities were charged with establishing German schools on the model of those set up among the Christian nation, and with having their youth instructed in them in reading, writing, arithmetic, business style, and then in language and moral teaching.

The very natural desire to make use of the new privileges, the indispensable necessity of acquiring the German language, without which one could neither profit from these nor continue one's former business, and the daily attendance at the German school brought about an extraordinary revolution in the heads of old and young — above all in Talmud instruction. The young men could no longer, as before, apply themselves to the study of the Talmud until their eighteenth year; for before they even became young men, already in boyhood, as soon as they had acquired some knowledge of the German language and the ability to write a commercial letter, they were snatched from the Jewish school and employed in business as far as this could be done: they had to come to the aid of their fathers' ignorance. Even during the time they still attended the Jewish school, they had to devote 3–4 hours daily to German instruction. Not to mention the manifold points of contact into which the Israelites gradually came with the Christians, the enjoyment of the theatre and other [p. 115] public entertainments, in which good-natured parents let their children take part, and other diversions to which the charm of novelty carried them away — all of which together contributed their share to cooling zeal for the study of the Talmud. The little that the boys still brought with them of it on their early departure from the Talmud school was soon lost; at least it could neither fill nor warm the souls of the pupils. Hence the lukewarmness — not to say indifference — towards religious truths and moral teachings, which seems to be gaining the upper hand more and more; and hence too the need, now generally felt and ever increasing, for an improved religious and moral instruction for girls no less than for boys; for the unhappy inclination to read such clever novels, in which chastity, modesty, marital fidelity and the holiest feelings are reasoned and unreasoned about so lightly, so wittily, so amusingly, evidently threatens to throw everything out of joint. Only a methodically composed textbook, in which, without any admixture of rabbinic learning, the fundamental truths of morality and of Judaism are set forth clearly and impressively, can check this mischief.

The appearance of Mendelssohn's translation of the Bible has produced no small revolution in biblical teaching and in part in the study of Jewish theology. With a brilliantly illuminating exegesis it has dispersed the airy web of folly, subtlety and over-interpretation, and with its apt and beautiful German rendering it has presented the greatness, the sublimity and the inimitable simplicity of Holy Scripture so attractively that many have thereby come to recognize that until then the Bible had been as much misunderstood and disfigured in its interpretation as it had been marred in its ill-sounding translation. This recognition has led to the reflection — which could and

should have been made long ago — that it is absurd and preposterous *to study the notes without the text*, which was nevertheless generally the case, in that the boys were taught only a few quite disconnected fragments from the five books of Moses — of the Prophets, as has been said, there was not even any question — and were then at once made to pass on to the study of the Talmud, which is properly only a commentary on the Bible.

That these and still other reflections — which I pass over out of forbearance — were not made for so long a time, or, if they were made by this person or that, nevertheless remained without effect, has its cause in the inner and outer arrangement of the school system, which has neither form nor substance.

[p. 116] Whoever has no feeling for the temporal welfare and the eternal happiness of the present and future generation — on him all eloquence is lost; and the noble men to whom I address my words need only hints. But to bring light and order into this chaos — this extremely important national concern, which sooner or later must after all be taken to heart if everything is not to come apart at the seams — will seem to many a gigantic work, a new creation; and I myself confess that it is no easy undertaking. Yet what can a firm resolve and a brotherly union of worthy, insightful and respected men not accomplish under divine guidance! Of materials for erecting a house of God full of light — should this be any less a house of God than the synagogue? — there is, thanks be to providence, no lack whatever, and we possess enlightened scholars of Scripture who would certainly not fail to supply whatever might still be wanting. In a word: *public spirit and persevering zeal* can very soon bring on the days of which it will be said:

^"The children of Israel had light in their dwellings!"[42]

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[42]Translator: Exod. 10:23.

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