About these translations and transcriptions

Every English translation and transcription on this site was produced by artificial intelligence: Anthropic's Claude did the transcribing, translating and formatting. These versions have not been proofread or checked against the originals, and they may contain errors in wording, numbering, citations or Hebrew.

They are offered so readers can explore and compare these catechisms. They are not a scholarly edition. Anyone quoting or citing these texts for research should work from the original printed books.

English translation by Claude of Beer Frank (Pressburg), Sefer Machne Levi: the Ten Commandments of God, explained through extracts from the Talmud and Midrash and interwoven with collected narratives and poems to awaken pious feelings (Prague: printed by M. I. Landau, 1827). The German title page describes the book as the history of the Israelite religion, explained through moral remarks. The main text is German printed in Hebrew letters (Judeo-German) and was translated from the page images. The approbations and introduction are in Hebrew. The censor's approval is in Latin. The opening "History of Ethan the Ezrahite" covers sacred history from Abraham to Sinai. It is followed by a section for each of the Ten Commandments, each with Talmudic and Midrashic teaching, moral stories and poems, several of them by Gellert and Schiller. Hebrew quotations are given in Hebrew with English. Rhyme in the poems has not been kept, so that the sense can be rendered faithfully. Front-matter pages are unnumbered and marked [p. —]. Notes beginning "Translator:" are the translator's; the others are Frank's.

[p. —] Sefer

Machne Levi [ספר מחנה לוי]

containing
the Ten Commandments of God,
explained
through extracts from the
Talmud and Midrash,
and interwoven with collected
narratives and poems,
in order to awaken pious feelings, to preserve from dangerous errors, and also to point toward the divine, supra-terrestrial, eternal good.

Published
by
Beer Frank.[1]

MACHNE LEWI
contains: the history of the Israelite religion, explained through moral remarks.
Prague 1827.
Printed by M. I. Landau, on the great Old Town Ring, No. 933.

[p. —] The author, R. Beer Frenk, has in this work, under the title *Machane Lewi*, written a history of the religion of the Israelites, and has illustrated it with moral teaching and good examples; I therefore judge that this work, useful to the youth and also to persons of more advanced age of his nation, may be printed.[2]

Prague, 21 August 1826.
Carolus Fischer,

---

[1]Translator: The upper part of the title page is in German printed in Hebrew letters (Judeo-German); the lower part, from "MACHNE LEWI" on, is printed in roman type in German and is translated here from the German.

[2]Translator: The censor's approval is printed in Latin and is translated here from the Latin. Carolus (Karl) Fischer (1757–1844) was the imperial censor of Hebrew books in Prague.

Imperial-Royal Censor, Reviser and Translator in Hebrew matters.

[p. —] Words [of Approbation]

of our teacher and master, the crown of our heads, the great and renowned rabbi and Gaon, the wonder of the generation and its marvel, his honor, holy be his name, our teacher the Rabbi R. Moses Sofer, may his light shine, head of the rabbinical court of our community, the holy community of Pressburg, may God protect it.[3]

This camp which I have met[4] fights the battles of the Lord, and its work is the work of Heaven: *this is God's camp*; therefore he called its name *Mahanaim* (Two Camps) — the *Camp of Israel* first and the *Camp of Issachar* second.[5] And now there has joined them the *Camp of Levi*, and it *has surpassed them all* in wisdom, knowledge and understanding, from *a man of understanding and skilled in speech*, the accomplished and wonderful scholar, the honored R. Beer Frank, a Levite,[6] slaughterer and inspector of our glorious community, the holy community of Pressburg, may God protect it. *Have I not written for you excellent things in counsels and knowledge*? There is *a time to build and a time to plant*. And indeed it is already known in *the gates of Zion*, the precious ones, what became of the two camps: the first ones have long since come and *found favor and good understanding in the eyes of* all who saw them, for these words issue from the mouth of the Talmud, and they are *the words of the living God*. And this third one is [p. —] yet more honored, for it speaks wonders about the Ten Commandments that were *written, engraved upon the tablets*, in words that draw the heart of the children of Israel, and of women, in a gentle, clear and polished language. And besides these three camps he has also composed a fourth book in holiness: booklets on laws and rulings, *Shomer Emunim*, accurately in accordance with the halakhah, on the laws of the reading of the Shema, of tzitzit and of tefillin. Behold, these are matters that *stand at the summit of the world*[7] and are entrusted to every person; and the *Laws of Passover*, in so far as they are entrusted to women and to the unlearned. I have gone through them by way of examination, in passing, and found most of them correct and upright; and presumably in the remainder too he *will do no wrong*, and there is a presumption that he does not let anything go forth from his hands that has not been put in order,[8] and the man has already been found reliable. Therefore *my hand shall*

---

[3]Translator: R. Moses Sofer (1762–1839), known after his chief work as the *Hatam Sofer*, rabbi of Pressburg (Bratislava) from 1806. The approbation is entirely in Hebrew, written in the style of a mosaic of biblical phrases; the allusions are marked here in italics.

[4]Translator: The opening plays on Gen. 32:2–3 and 33:8 (Jacob's "This is God's camp," "Mahanaim," "all this camp which I met"); further allusions: Prov. 31:29 ("you have surpassed them all"), Isa. 3:3 ("skilled in speech"), Prov. 22:20, Eccl. 3:2–3, Ps. 87:2, Prov. 3:4, BT Eruvin 13b ("the words of the living God"), Exod. 32:16, Zeph. 3:13, Ps. 89:22, Isa. 5:19, Zech. 4:9, Ps. 63:9, Ps. 91:16, Isa. 35:10.

[5]Translator: *Machane Israel* and *Machane Issachar* are Frank's two earlier books, of which the present *Machne Levi* ("Camp of Levi") is the third; the Hebrew מחנה לויה also puns on "camp that has joined" (cf. Gen. 29:34).

[6]Translator: Hebrew סג"ל (*segan leviyyah*), the customary designation of a Levite; Frank was also *shochet u-bodek*, ritual slaughterer and inspector, of the Pressburg community.

[7]Translator: BT Berakhot 6b, of matters that people treat lightly although they "stand at the summit of the world."

[8]Translator: A talmudic formula of presumption (cf. BT Pesahim 9a: "a *haver* does not let anything go forth from under his hand that is not in order").

be established with him, and I urge him to *make haste and hasten* and to *finish* his work; and all who help and support him — may the right hand of the Lord uphold them, and may they see His salvation; and may he merit to come to Zion with joyful song, to the camp of the Shekhinah.

Here in the holy community of Pressburg, Sunday, the first day of the New Moon of Marheshvan, [5]585 by the minor reckoning.[9]

Moses the humble Sofer, from Frankfurt am Main.

[p. —] Letter[10]

from the distinguished rabbi, the great grammarian, the sage perfect in every branch of knowledge, our teacher R. Wolf Heidenheim, may his light shine.[11]

To my friend, the accomplished scholar, perfect in Torah, in wisdom and in the fear of God, R. Beer, may he live, peace and abundant salvation!

All your letters have reached me, and I hasten to answer the last of them first, so as to cause no delay in your printing work. You re- [p. —] quest permission to reprint my Passover Haggadah with my German translation, and to join it to your booklet *Beit Chorin* — behold, let it be according to your word! But how do you come to offer me, by way of compensation, a reward of 500 copies free of charge? Do you believe that I would be capable of accepting such a reward from you? חס לי אם אקח מכל אשר לך מאומה [Far be it from me that I should take anything at all of all that is yours; cf. Gen. 14:23]! And if you believe that my permission will bring you some advantage, you may print a letter of permission from me, in whatever fine language you please, in front of the Haggadah. All that I stipulate for myself in return is that you, too, grant me permission to reprint your *Camps* and *Beit Chorin* when the occasion arises, and to add to them or to take away from them as seems right in my eyes. From this request of mine you may conclude how very highly I esteem your works, and how much I wish *to divide them in Jacob and scatter them in Israel*;[12] for only books of this kind are capable of setting right the, alas, so greatly confused spirit of our youth and of the unlearned, and of implanting in them true fear of God and genuine religious feeling;

---

[9]Translator: 1 Heshvan 5585, i.e., late October 1824. Sofer, a native of Frankfurt am Main, signs in the customary way as "the humble."

[10]From the above letter it may be seen that already two years ago I received from Mr. Heidenheim, who is most honorably known and highly esteemed in the literary world, his kind consent to reprint the *Haggadah for the Night of Watching* [הגדה לליל שמורים] with his excellent translation and to append it to a *Beit Chorin*. However much I thereby found the value of a *Beit Chorin* raised, a work adorned by the Heidenheim Haggadah, and myself in this way highly rewarded, I nevertheless had to see myself deprived of this honor and reward, since important reasons prevented me from publishing it; I was therefore compelled to let a *Beit Chorin* appear without the said Haggadah, which took place fourteen days before the past festival of Passover. But I cannot leave the honored letter of the celebrated and highly esteemed Mr. Heidenheim without due appreciation, and I feel myself obliged to make known publicly before the eyes of all the world both my due gratitude and the magnanimity he has shown toward me.

[11]Translator: Wolf (Benjamin Ze'ev) Heidenheim (1757–1832), Hebrew grammarian, liturgical scholar and printer at Rödelheim near Frankfurt, famed for his editions and German translations of the prayer book, the festival prayers and the Passover Haggadah. The letter is in Judeo-German interspersed with Hebrew phrases.

[12]Translator: Gen. 49:7, here used in a positive sense: to spread them throughout Jewry.

and certainly you earn more merit through your books, and also do more good, than many scholars who compose works of [learned] subtleties.

For the rest, you may be assured of my readiness to satisfy you in all matters; and may the Lord ordain peace for him and for all Israel, as is his own wish and the wish of his friend who seeks his peace and his welfare at all times.

Rödelheim, 18 Kislev [5]585.[13]
Wolf Heidenheim.

[p. —] Letter

from the distinguished rabbi, the renowned sage and author, whose name is known in the gates, of distinguished lineage, his honor our teacher R. Moses Landau.[14]

To the honor of the wise and understanding man, of noble spirit and pure of heart, perfect in virtues and crowned with every fitting quality, R. Beer Frank, may his light shine, peace and the blessing of the year!

Your pleasant letter of the 25th of Menahem [Av] contains the honorable request to me to add my judgment on the work *Machne Levi*, now in the press in my printing house, to the letter of the sage, our teacher R. Wolf Heidenheim; assuming that it would recommend your useful work and might promote the spread of its moral content.

I do indeed see in this opinion, so flattering to me, a bold overestimation of my few merits in the literary world; yet you should by no means regard this sincere admission as the cloak of a refusal of your wish.

Although I have made it a firm principle not to read any work appearing in my printing house before it has become a public property of the [p. —] reading world, and all the less to express my opinion of it, for the sake of propriety, I was nevertheless prompted on this occasion by the recommendation of Mr. Heidenheim, who is honorably distinguished in Hebrew literature, to read this writing and to express to you my sincere approval in one of my earlier letters. I repeat it here publicly: עיני ראתה כי מחנה אלהים זה [my eye has seen that this is God's camp]! And in this may the author, may his light shine, glory, that he has done a wonder in steadfast faithfulness, to spread the seed of truth in the camp of the Hebrews, to magnify the Torah and make it glorious among our brethren.[15] The words of his friend, who rejoices in the precious splendor of his work and desires his honor.

---

[13]Translator: 18 Kislev 5585, i.e., December 1824. *Beit Chorin* ("House of Freedom") is evidently a Passover work by Frank.

[14]Translator: Moses Landau (1788–1852), grandson of R. Ezekiel Landau, Hebrew author, community leader and owner of the Hebrew printing house in Prague in which this book was printed. The letter is in Judeo-German, with Hebrew opening and closing.

[15]Translator: Allusions to Gen. 32:3, Isa. 25:1 ("you have done a wonder … in steadfast faithfulness") and Isa. 42:21 ("to magnify the Torah and make it glorious").

Prague, eve of the holy Sabbath, 6 Elul [5]586 by the minor reckoning.[16]
Moses Segal Landau.

[p. —] Introduction

This book I have called by the name *Machne Levi* (Camp of Levi), for I said: *This time my husband* Israel *will be joined to me, for I have borne him* these three books, which are the children of my thoughts, which were *born upon the knees* of the Torah, *all of them bearing twins* in moral instruction of understanding and in the love of the Lord, *and none is bereaved among them*.[17]

And behold, I divided these children of my thoughts into *three camps*. The one camp is the *Camp of Israel*, which I established; and that one camp *shall be for an escape* for women, *to preserve for them a remnant in the land* of the living, for they walk in the way which I prepared for them in that camp all the days of their life with their husbands; and also the Lord God *walks in the midst of their camp*, and His holy name dwells among them, as our Sages of blessed memory say in the Talmud,[18] and its success is in their conduct all the days of their life here upon [p. —] the earth, until they come to the House of God, where the angels [bring them] the fruit of the keeping of their commandments and their true reward. —

The second camp, which I set in its midst, is the *Camp of Issachar*. Through that camp I *cleared a highway* from end to end and founded it with *precious stones*: moral instruction of understanding; and all its borders are peace and knowledge, the fear of the Lord and His Torah, together with admonitions and upright qualities, without which no man shall enter into the holy place within, and without which no man shall be established; and that camp shall be holy to the Lord and to man, and this is my reward. —

And it came to pass after I saw that in these camps *the house of Jacob walked in the light of the Lord*, *the people went about* round about them *and gathered — a day's portion every day*, and *every man and woman* of the children of Israel encamped there and journeyed by the banner of the commandments and admonitions — I resolved to set up also this third camp; and among the names of the tribes its name is called, for I am *a man of the house of Levi*.[19] And after the manner of the first camps I raised its banner too, and founded it on sapphire: the decree of the Ten holy Commandments, concerning which the Lord made a covenant with His people at Mount Horeb; these are the roots of faith and the foundations of religion. And I filled them with a spirit of grace

---

[16]Translator: Friday, 6 Elul 5586, i.e., September 1826. "Segal" (סג"ל) marks Landau as a Levite.

[17]Translator: The introduction is entirely in Hebrew. The opening plays on Gen. 29:34 (Leah naming Levi: "This time my husband will be joined to me, for I have borne him three sons"), with Gen. 50:23 and Song 4:2; further allusions in what follows: Gen. 32:8–9, 45:7, Deut. 23:15.

[18]Translator: BT Sotah 17a: "If husband and wife are worthy, the Shekhinah dwells between them."

[19]Translator: Isa. 62:10, 54:12, Isa. 2:5, Num. 11:8, Exod. 16:4, 35:29, Exod. 2:1; Deut. 28:69 follows below. Frank was a Levite; hence the title.

that gives radiance and brightness to every reader, for I *painted them with vermilion*[20] — the stories of our Sages of blessed memory, which [p. —] I gathered from the Talmud and the Midrash, as well as from the sources of the peoples and the times *of the years of many generations*. And I knew for certain that all sayings of moral instruction, and the good qualities that come forth from them, will be sweet to the soul of their reader, *and my soul too shall live because of them*. And the Lord God knows that it was not in order to make myself a name as a wise author that I composed this book and the things that came out before it, and in Him I trust that I shall not be put to shame before my people; and may He further grant me the merit to understand and to comprehend His Torah all the days of my life, Selah.

Thus the prayer of His servant Beer Frank, of the house of the Levite.

[p. —] **The Ten Commandments.**[21]

From heaven came the holy Torah down;
God gave it to His chosen company.
Then Sinai shook, the region echoed round,
When, amid the rolling thunder wondrously,
Out of the clouds' dark veil and shroud
God's lofty will was heard aloud;

[Tablets]

I — אנכי ה׳ [I am the Lord] | VI — לא תרצח [You shall not murder]
II — לא יהיה לך [You shall have no …] | VII — לא תנאף [You shall not commit adultery]
III — לא תשא [You shall not take …] | VIII — לא תגנב [You shall not steal]
IV — זכור את [Remember the …] | IX — לא תענה [You shall not bear …]
V — כבד את [Honor the …] | X — לא תחמד [You shall not covet]

When thus the Torah came from God's own height
With thunder's peal unto the chosen band,
They cried: "We have not strength to understand
Your word; therefore speak, Moses, you!"
And when, astonished, they so prayed to God,
He spoke: "They have well said."[22]

---

[20] Translator: Jer. 22:14 ("painted with vermilion"), used figuratively of the colorful narratives that adorn the book; further allusions: Deut. 32:7, Gen. 12:13.

[21] Following the piyyut for the morning service of the first day of Shavuot, which begins שבוית מרום לקחה.

[22] Translator: Cf. Exod. 20:16 (Hebrew numbering) and Deut. 5:21–25: "they have well said all that they have spoken." The ten commandments appear between the two stanzas as an engraving of the two tablets, the first words of each commandment with roman numerals; the tablet on the right holds I–V, the one on the left VI–X.

[p. —] The History of Ethan the Ezrahite [תולדות איתן האזרחי]

which is

The Introduction to the Camp.

[p. —]

בשעה שעשו ישראל אותו מעשה, היה אלהים כועס עליהם ואמר למשה הרף ממני ואשמידם, אמר משה רבינו רבון העולם על מה אתה כועס כל כך על ישראל? אמר, בשביל שבטלו עשרת הדברות, אמר ליה יש להן מהיכן ליפרע, אמר לו מניין? אמר הזכר שנסית לאברהם בעשרה נסיונות, ויצאו עשרה בעשרה.

> At the time when Israel did that deed [the golden calf], God was angry with them and said to Moses: "Let Me alone, that I may destroy them." Moses our teacher said: "Master of the world, why are You so angry with Israel?" He said: "Because they have annulled the Ten Commandments." He said to Him: "They have something from which payment may be exacted." He said to him: "From where?" He said: "Remember that You tested Abraham with ten trials — let the ten go against the ten." (Midrash Rabbah, Exodus 44)

[p. —] The History of Ethan the Ezrahite[23] [תולדות איתן האזרחי][24]

In the first and most important question of inquiry — namely, what the destiny of man is here below before all other creatures — one will, by every insight, always find only the answer that man here below has but this true destiny: as the only earthly thinking being, to know his Creator; to pay Him homage through devout praise as the Ruler of all created things; through unceasing virtuous action to draw near to Him with all his powers; and to make himself as like as possible to this all-holiest Being, in order one day to attain a perfect happiness. But how infinitely far would [p. 16] man have strayed from his destiny, instead of drawing near to it,[25] if he … these virtues,

---

[23] Since the narrative presented here, *From the History of Ethan the Ezrahite*, by no means aims to set out the life story of the patriarch Abraham, but only the origin of the faith through him down to the receiving of the Ten Commandments, some readers will be indulgent if many more detailed traits of the patriarch's character have been left out of this narrative.

[24] איתן האזרחי זה אברהם — "Ethan the Ezrahite: this is Abraham" (Bava Batra, fol. 15). [Translator: BT Bava Batra 15a, on Ps. 89:1.]

[25] Since the generation of Enosh men had become degenerate children of lust in physical as well as in moral respects (see the Biur on the verse "And it came to pass, when men began [to multiply] … and they took them wives of all whom they chose" [Gen. 6:1–2]), and they went ever further astray, regarding the sun, the moon, the stars and all the visible bodies of the firmament as angels of God, and building temples and altars to them; here one saw the image of the sun, there that of the moon and the stars, drawn or carved out of wood and venerated as divine. This delusion finally brought them to the point of regarding and worshipping these objects as real deities, and even of forgetting the Creator of all (Maimonides, Laws of Idolatry, ch. 1). When, after the building of the tower of Babel, the language of men became diverse and the nations were scattered to all parts of the globe, the inhabitants of the various colonies made gods of their own: here the sun, because it shines so gloriously, ripens the fruits, illumines the earth and warms everything, was worshipped as the good god; elsewhere the moon in turn received divine worship for similar qualities; little by little men also deified human beings who had distinguished themselves by unusual strength, size, beauty, or extraordinary understanding and inventiveness; and in other regions they even deified animals — those animals that were useful to them as good deities, and those that were harmful to them as evil ones. Thus the Egyptians venerated the gentle beast [*das fromme Thier*] as the symbol of a good deity, and the crocodile, an animal very dangerous to man, as an evil deity. Thereby idols were set up; men knelt before them and sacrificed to them, in order to make the good gods favorable to themselves and to appease the evil ones. In this way idolatry and polytheism arose.

which [p. 17] the way to eternal happiness, according to his own conceit, he would himself have had to devise and shape; how often would not short-sighted and weak man have committed the blackest and most abominable deeds as models, out of misguided piety, in the belief that he was pleasing God, and on the other hand trampled underfoot the most splendid virtues as though they were vices.

A thousand terrible examples can confirm this truth and prove it well founded. Thus our holy Torah says of the heathens of that time (כי גם את בניהם ואת בנותיהם ישרפו באש לאלהיהם, "for even their sons and their daughters do they burn in the fire to their gods" [Deut. 12:31]): they burned even their own sons and daughters in honour of the gods; and so too the Spaniards, when they discovered America three hundred years ago, found it in Mexico.

How many people among all nations practised the most gruesome deeds in the belief that they were thereby showing themselves pleasing to God, while they omitted the highest virtues merely because they held them to be godless.

Many tribes in North America believed they were doing their father and mother a service of love, and making themselves agreeable to them, when, once their parents had reached a great age, they struck them on the head with the death-club and murdered them, in order to free them from the burdens of old age.

So women in the East Indies, when their husband dies, throw themselves voluntarily onto the prepared funeral pyre, so that the blazing flame may consume them together with the corpse of their husband, and believe that they thereby perform the finest virtue.

[p. 18] In such unhappy ways and manners did mankind degenerate in its first childhood, and would do so still now, as one in fact still finds among savage peoples, if the All-Father, in His infinite mercy toward the human race, which He created and destined only for true and eternal happiness, had not provided for it, and through His all-goodness guided it in a special way that brings all those who do not leave this path surely (לאושר האמת בזה ובבא, "to true happiness in this world and the world to come") to true temporal and to eternal happiness.

Just as His omnipotence caused the most glorious and all-enlivening sun to arise out of the womb of eternal darkness, for the welfare of the whole creation, so His all-ruling goodness at last caused His sun to break forth out of the unhappy darkness of heathen faith. This sun, the herald of true happiness, was our patriarch Abraham, who, inspired by the thought of his true God and by the deepest love of truth, began, to the astonishment of others of his time, to draw from their eyes the dark veil with which the faith fashioned by their own fancy had blinded them.[26]

---

[26] ישנים היו אומות העולם מלבא תחת כנפיו של הקב״ה ומי העירן לבא תחת כנפיו? אברהם, שנאמר מי העיר ממזרח "The nations of the world were asleep, not coming under the wings of the Holy One, blessed be He; and who awakened them to come under His wings? Abraham, as it is said: 'Who raised up one from the east' [Isa. 41:2]" (Yalkut, Psalms 110).

God the All-Father then revealed Himself to him, like a natural father, in order to confirm him through facts in the notions he had formed of himself; He charged and commanded him: לך לך מארצך וממולדתך ומבית אביך ["Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house," Gen. 12:1], to leave his native city, his fatherland, parents and [p. 19] kindred, so that the false heathen faith in which he had been born and raised, and to which his parents and kindred had always been wholly devoted, should not lead him astray in the experience of truth), and so that he might spread this holy truth more freely in other lands.[27]

God put him to the test through severe trials, which greatly burdened his soul and often endangered his life; but He foresaw that, despite the difficulties that everywhere laid themselves as obstacles in his way, he would nevertheless remain firm and unshakable in his resolve and in faith in his true Creator.

When God now actually found him so, He consecrated him through the first commandment: ונמלתם את בשר ערלתכם והיה לאות ברית ביני וביניכם, "Ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin, and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt Me and you" [Gen. 17:11]; ובן שמנת ימים ימול לכם כל זכר לדרתיכם, "but among all your descendants every male shall be circumcised when he is eight days old" [Gen. 17:12]. A commandment whose observance our patriarch had, as it were, to seal with his own blood, so that it might serve all his descendants as a characteristic sign that God had chosen them as His people in preference to all the other nations of that time, and so that the holy descendants of Abraham might be distinguished, in body as well as in spirit, from all the other peoples of that time.[28]

[p. 20] Now the foundation was laid by God for bringing the hitherto erring human race, in its beginning, onto the path of virtue, and the light-bringing sun most salutary for all mankind arose; for our pious patriarch Abraham was now acknowledged as the progenitor (patriarch)[29] of the pure

---

[27] משום חביבותי׳ דאברהם הוא דקאמר רחמנא קום התהלך בארץ "It is because of His love for Abraham that the Merciful One said, 'Arise, walk through the land' [Gen. 13:17]" (Bava Batra 100 [a]).

[28] Thus Nahmanides, of blessed memory, in the *Ma'amar ha-Sekhel*, fol. 49, concerning circumcision: that the people of the nation who sanctify the Blessed Name should have a bodily sign that receives them and separates them from the other nations, etc. And so it is in the *Sefer ha-Mitzvot* of Maharam Hagiz, on the portion *Lekh Lekha*, in these words: "The Holy One, blessed be He, commanded His people Israel to make a mark and a sign on their bodies, and gave them the commandment of circumcision, so that they should be separated from the other nations," etc. And this is the reason for drawing a drop of blood even from one born circumcised. [Translator: Maharam Hagiz is R. Moses Hagiz (1672–c. 1751); the attribution of the *Ma'amar ha-Sekhel* is the author's.]

[29] עם כל המצות שעשה אברהם אבינו לא נקרא שלם עד שמל "With all the commandments that our father Abraham performed, he was not called perfect until he was circumcised" (Nedarim 31 [b]); and after the covenant he was made the father of a multitude of nations, as Scripture says, הנה בריתי אתך והיית לאב המון גוים "Behold, My covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be the father of a multitude of nations" [Gen. 17:4], that is, the mighty one (אביר) of a multitude of nations (see the Biur on this verse).

faith everywhere he turned, and was highly revered. He had already begun to spread the doctrine of the true belief in God among the heathens[30] and to convert ever more of them to his pure faith.[31]

[p. 21] People streamed to him in crowds, not only because through his wise, clear and heart-penetrating explanations they received bright notions of a true God and thereby came to know His real existence, but because the blessing of God, which accompanied all his actions, made itself clearly known through the fortunate and happy outcome of all his undertakings, and convinced them completely that the God whom Abraham worshipped was the true God.

For scarcely had he attained reason and religious insight of his own[32] when he smashed the idols of his father תרח [Terah]; yet this was left unpunished as a crime committed by a child not yet of age. But when, with advancing years, he went on to grow bolder and more daring, publicly derided their gods,[33] and smashed and shattered the idols themselves wherever he could, he was condemned by King Nimrod to be thrown into a burning furnace.[34] The [p. 22] king, together with

---

[30] ויטע אשל בבאר שבע "And he planted a tamarisk in Beersheba" [Gen. 21:33]: he made an inn to lodge guests there, giving them food and drink and afterwards escorting them on their way, and he caused the name of the Holy One, blessed be He, to be called upon in the mouth of everyone who passed to and fro. He said to them: "Have you eaten of what is mine? You have eaten of what belongs to the God of the world; give thanks and praise to Him at whose word the world came into being." And the word *eshel* is an acronym of *akhilah, shetiyah, leviyah* — eating, drinking, escorting (Sotah, fol. 10 [a]; see Rashi there).

[31] And this is the meaning of R. Simeon b. Yoḥai: אבן טובה היתה תלויה בצוארו של אברהם אבינו, שכל חולה הרואה אותה מיד נתרפא "A precious stone hung on the neck of our father Abraham, and every sick person who saw it was immediately healed": a pearl adorned Abraham's neck (namely, the true knowledge of God), and every sick person who edified himself by it (that is, who listened to his teaching) was healed on the spot and came to the true faith (Bava Batra 16 [b]).

[32] בן שלש שנים הכיר אברהם את בוראו "At three years of age Abraham recognized his Creator" (Nedarim 32 [a]).

[33] Maimonides, in the first chapter of the Laws of Idolatry, brought: "At forty years of age Abraham recognized his Creator"; and the Rabad objected to him: is there not an aggadah that he recognized Him at three years of age? This aggadah is at the end of chapter 3 of Nedarim, as cited above. And the author of the *Kesef Mishneh* wrote that at three he began to think and to range in his thoughts so as to recognize his Creator, but when he was forty years old he completed that recognition.

[34] תרח [Terah] was an idolater, and made images of the idols in order to sell them. Once he went away from home on a business journey and entrusted the selling to his son Abraham. Whenever someone came who wished to buy a god, Abraham asked him: "How old are you?" On receiving the answer, he laughed at the buyer and said to him: "You are already so old, and you want to worship a thing that was finished only a day ago!" The buyers were ashamed and went their way. At last an old woman came and brought a measure of wheat flour in order to offer it to all of them. Abraham seized a cudgel, smashed all the idols except the largest, which he spared, and put the cudgel in its hand. Terah came back; when he found his idols smashed and laid waste, he asked Abraham who had done all this, and received from him the answer: "An old woman came with an offering of flour and offered it to the gods; since now the little ones were many and each wanted to have some, a great quarrel arose among them; the largest seized a cudgel, smashed all the others to pieces, and kept the flour for himself." Terah noticed his son's mockery; he flew into a rage, bound Abraham, and led him before Nimrod so that he might punish him. The king stood beside a burning furnace in which the flames were beating with the greatest fury, and before which they worshipped the fire; the king commanded Abraham to kneel and worship the fire. Abraham: (נסגוד למיא דמטפין נורא "Let us bow down to the water that puts out the fire.") "It would be better to worship the water, which quenches the fire." (כותיים עובדים לאש, וקדריים עובדין למים "The Kutheans worship fire and the Kedarites worship water," Ta'anit 5b.) Nimrod: "Then worship the water." Abraham: (נסגוד לעננא דטעין מיא "Let us bow down to the cloud that carries the water.") "But then it would be better still to worship the clouds, which hold the water." Nimrod: "Very well, worship the clouds." Abraham: (נסגוד לרוחא דמדברי לעננא "Let us bow down to the wind that drives the clouds.") "But the winds deserve it even more, for they scatter the clouds." Nimrod: "Well then, worship the wind." Abraham: (נסגוד לבר נש דסביל רוחא "Let us bow down to man, who bears the wind.") "Then it would be most advisable of all to worship man, against whom the wind can do nothing." Nimrod: (מילין אתה משתעי "You are bandying words.") "I see that you are only mocking. Fire is a god, and I will have you thrown into it; we shall see whether your God is mightier and will rescue you from it." Abraham was thereupon thrown into the burning furnace, and came out again unharmed and safe (Genesis Rabbah 38). [Author's sub-note *) on Nimrod's words: The author of* Mattenot Kehunnah* explains מילין אתה משתעי as "you are speaking empty words"; but he did not interpret well, for are these empty words? On the contrary, he gave him a fitting and proper answer. It seems likely that

all the great men of the realm and still other idolaters, attended the spectacle, in order to feast their eyes on the death [p. 23] of the despiser of their idols; but silent and deeply praying stood all [his] fellow believers there, when Abraham remained unharmed in the glowing lime-kiln, when they heard him worship the almighty and only God and proclaim His divine might. After this event (Abraham), accompanied by his father and by his family, went to Haran. No one any longer dared to offend him or to come too near him; rather, everyone showed him all honour and respect. When they had arrived in the paternal [p. 24] dwelling, Terah fervently clasped his son Abraham in his arms, pressed him hard to his breast, kissed him, and said: Truly! you, my son, have found the true light of faith, have recognized the true God and Creator, and Him alone shall we henceforth serve faithfully and sincerely; but in order no longer to live among these godless worshippers and blind believers, and to secure you against further persecutions,[35] we will leave this place and move to another.

ויקח תרח את אברם בנו ואת לוט בן הרן בן בנו ואת שרי כלתו אשת אברם בנו ויצאו אתם מאור כשדים

> "And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran, his son's son, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees" (Gen. 11:31).

Terah took his son Abraham and went away with his entire family out of *Ur Kasdim*, which name had been given to this place on account of this rescue out of the burning furnace.[36]

Yet this was only the first budding of faith: for by religious faith one understands the firm holding-true of the divine laws and ordinances which we are bound to follow, and through whose observance alone we can attain lasting well-being of the soul and eternal happiness. Since our patriarch Abraham was now still entirely alone, God did not yet wish to bind him with all the religious laws, although he himself, already foreseeing them in spirit, [p. 25] observed them,[37] and anticipated the actual commandments. The Eternal was concerned first of all to make of him a

---

Abraham wished to dispute with Nimrod that it is right and proper to bow down to and serve the mightiest power, and by this path to lead him step by step to the house of God, to believe in the great and mighty God, Maker of heaven and all its host, the earth and all that is on it. But when Nimrod saw and understood Abraham's intention, he was afraid to dispute with him any longer before the eyes of the people standing opposite them, lest they listen to him and change their religion; therefore he broke off from the subject and rebuked him: "You are bandying words," that is to say, "this is the man who dared to mock us; throw him into the fire of our god."]

[35] לאחר הנס שנעשה לאברהם רצה תרח להתרחק מאור כשדים מפחד המלך ההוא וללכת למקום אחר לגור שם עם כל בני ביתו After the miracle that was done for Abraham, Terah wished to remove himself from Ur Kasdim for fear of that king, and to go to another place to dwell there with all his household; and the place was called Ur Kasdim on account of the miracle that, when they cast Abraham into the fiery furnace, a miracle was done for him and he was saved. And this is hinted at in the verse "I am the Lord who brought thee out of Ur Kasdim" (Gen. 15:7): it does not say "who took thee" but "who brought thee out," in the manner of the verse "who brought thee out of the land of Egypt," which was by way of a miracle (from the words of Ramban). [Translator: cf. Nahmanides on Gen. 11:28.]

[36] Translator: Hebrew *ur*, "fire"; the town's name is read midrashically as "the fire of the Chaldeans."

[37] Rav said: Our father Abraham kept the entire Torah, even the *eruv tavshilin* (Yoma 28[b]); and in Midrash Rabbah, Genesis 49, R. Aḥa said in the name of R. Samuel bar Naḥman: Abraham knew even the laws of *eruvei ḥatserot*.

people of His own, chosen by Himself, as the divine word had assured him (ואעשך לגוי גדול): "I will make of thee a great nation"; for that, however, time was still required. God first gave him a son, whom he begot, with the consent of his wife Sarah, with Hagar; for Sarah said to him: הנה נא עצרני ה׳ מלדת, "Behold, the Eternal has shut me up so that I do not bear" (my name and memory will be wholly extinguished); בא נא אל שפחתי, "go in to my maid; אולי אבנה ממנה, perhaps I shall be built up through her" (if I raise her child on my lap), and perhaps a memorial of me will be perpetuated.[38] Abraham took Hagar to wife from Sarah's hands; she bore him a son, who was named Ishmael; this son, however, was not the one in whom the divine promises were to be fulfilled. Abraham afterwards saw his faithful devotion to God and his virtuous self-sacrifice for his convictions richly rewarded; the saying אבל שרה אשתך ילדת לך בן, "Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed," was at last fulfilled, to his highest joy, through a second son, whom Sarah bore him in the ninetieth year of her age. With this son the foundation stone was, as it were, laid for a people descended [p. 26] from Abraham, as God Himself told him at that time:

וברכתי אתה וגם נתתי ממנה לך בן וברכתיה והיתה לגוים מלכי עמים ממנה יהיו

> "I will bless thy wife Sarah, and give thee also a son of her; through a blessing she shall become nations, and kings of peoples shall come from her" (Gen. 17:16).

On this son the first commandment, that of circumcision, was performed, on the eighth day after birth.

Sarah, who had given her maid Hagar to Abraham as wife, thereby occasioning the begetting of Ishmael, could therefore exercise a mother's rights over him. She observed his conduct; and when she found him, to whom the base, slavish disposition of his natural mother had been passed down, dissolute and immoral[39] (which the holy text expresses with the few words ותרא שרה את בן הגר המצרית אשר ילדה לאברהם מצחק, "And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne unto Abraham, making sport"[40]), she feared, with reason, that this boy might lead astray her pious son Isaac, and therefore wished to remove him from her house. She said to her husband Abraham: גרש האמה הזאת ואת בנה, "Cast out this bondwoman together with her son from this house, כי לא יירש בן האמה הזאת עם בני עם יצחק" (for he is not worthy); "I do not wish him to enjoy an equal right of inheritance with my son, with the pious Isaac." וירע הדבר מאד בעיני אברהם, "And the thing was very grievous in Abraham's eyes," for Abraham was vexed by [p. 27] this demand, and he was thrown into the greatest perplexity at having to thrust mother and son out of his house;

---

[38] As in: ותקח נעמי את הילד ותשתהו בחיקה ותהי לו לאמנת ותקראנה לו השכנות שם לאמר ילד בן לנעמי "And Naomi took the child and laid it in her bosom, and became nurse unto it. And the women her neighbours gave it a name, saying: There is a son born to Naomi" (Ruth 4:16–17).

[39] Sarah saw Ishmael going out to evil ways, and she said to Abraham: "Cast out this bondwoman and her son" (Midrash Rabbah Deuteronomy 4).

[40] Rashi on Prov. 19:[26], "He that spoileth his father and chaseth away his mother, is a son that causeth shame and bringeth reproach": because Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian "making sport," worshipping idols and committing sexual immorality, this caused his mother to be driven out; see there.

but God comforted him and said: אל ירע בעיניך על הנער ועל אמתך, "Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad and because of thy bondwoman" Hagar; כל אשר תאמר אליך שרה שמע בקלה, only fulfil the demand of your good and pious Sarah, כי ביצחק יקרא לך זרע, "for in Isaac shall seed be called to thee": only through Isaac's descendants shall the name of your family and your line be continued.

But do not be anxious either about the boy and his mother; him too I will make into a nation, because he is your offspring. Thus Hagar with her son Ishmael was removed from Abraham's house and sent away,[41] and the favourite son Isaac, on [p. 28] whom the eyes of father and mother

---

[41] After Hagar with her son Ishmael had to leave Abraham's house and remove herself from it, she went into the wilderness of Paran; here the boy grew up and became an archer. Later he married a daughter of a noble Moabite tribe (named עשיה [ʿAsiyah]), for everyone wished to come into closer kinship with the celebrated prince Abraham; but since Ishmael loved the hunt and the unbound nomadic life more than a peaceful home, he went back with his wife into the wilderness of Paran, where he begot four sons and one daughter. The Eternal blessed him for the sake of his father Abraham; his herds multiplied immensely, and his wealth grew daily, so that in a short time he became a rich and respected prince. Once there awoke in Abraham's heart a father's longing for his son Ishmael, and he could no longer resist the urge to convince himself in person of his welfare. As a faithful husband he shared this intention with his pious wife Sarah. However unwillingly Sarah saw this, she nevertheless consented to her husband's wish, yet under the solemn assurance that he himself would not linger there, but would merely speak with Ishmael and convince himself of his prosperity. Sarah prepared everything needed for the journey according to the custom of the country, and Abraham travelled, accompanied by the blessings of his family, to Paran. [Author's note: When one must push a person away from oneself because of his transgression, one should nevertheless not reject him entirely, but leave him hope of forgiveness, and on occasion seek again to draw him to oneself in a friendly way (as our Sages, of blessed memory, said: לעולם תהא שמאל דוחה וימין מקרבת, "Let the left hand always push away and the right hand draw near" [BT Sotah 47a; Sanhedrin 107b]). Abraham's visit to his son Ishmael, who had been expelled from his father's house because of his vices, made such a strong impression on Ishmael's heart that he resolved to amend his way of life according to the will of his father Abraham and to carry out this resolve, as the further course of the history shows.] It was at the hour of noon; the sun stood in its unclouded brightness, and its rays fell burning upon the old man's head, when he arrived in Paran and approached Ishmael's tent. When the venerable old man, from whose countenance majesty and dignity shone forth, came into view of Ishmael's herdsmen and servants, they bowed reverently before him. He returned the greeting of the astonished herdsmen with grace and friendliness, and turned toward Ishmael's tent, which distinguished itself from all the others by its splendour and brilliance and gave him clearly to understand that it was his son's tent. In the hope of surprising his son, he rode straight up to his tent, where he met Ishmael's wife; he greeted her with venerable dignity and asked in a friendly way after her husband, whom he wished to speak with. Coldly and defiantly she answered his friendly address that Ishmael was at the hunt, and that he could neither speak with him nor wait for him. Downcast at this unexpected answer, he asked only for a little bread and a drink of water for refreshment; but this proud and unfeeling woman refused him even this, with the words that for wandering strangers there was neither bread nor water to be found here; grumbling, she turned her back on him and went into the tent, where she let her children feel her exasperation at this unwelcome visit: she beat them, cursed her husband, and railed at his descent. Sad and deeply moved, the noble old man listened to all this; he nevertheless suppressed his displeasure and waited until she came out of the tent again. With dignity and composure he then said to her: "Permit me to discharge a commission to your husband; tell him on his return: 'An old man from the land of the Philistines was here, who would gladly have spoken with him; he did not have that good fortune, but he made the discovery that the threshold of his tent, which ought to be its first ornament, is very bad and unseemly for him; he therefore advises him to remove this threshold as soon as possible (חלף מפתן ביתך שאינה טובה ולא ראויה לך, "Exchange the threshold of your house, which is not good and not fitting for you" — so it is in the Midrash Yalkut) and to put another, better one in its place.'" Hereupon he quickly withdrew, sadly looking back at his grandchildren, while tender tears rolled down the holy cheeks of the noble old man, and he vanished from the sight of the wicked woman. When Ishmael came home, his wife told him, in a tone of offended pride, that an old traveller from Philistia had been here, had stopped before her tent and had had the impudence to demand bread and water from her, and when she refused him, had had the boldness to leave a message, which she related to him. From the description of the stranger Ishmael at once recognized his father; seized with joy, terror and grief he fell senseless to the ground; when he had somewhat recovered and raised himself up, he said to his wife: "Know, unhappy woman, the old man whom you so shamefully turned away from your door was my venerable father, the patriarch Abraham, and his words were a wise hint." Deeply moved at the lost joy of seeing his much-beloved father again after so long a time and pressing him to his heart, and at seeing himself robbed of this joy through his wife's wickedness, he wept aloud and could not compose himself over the bad treatment of his venerable father. After he had recovered from his grief, he weighed carefully his father's admonition to remove the threshold of his tent and put in another, better one, and soon guessed its meaning: he separated from his wife and sent her back to her father's house. Soon afterward he married Fatima, a charming and virtuous maiden from Egypt, and travelled with her

remained constantly fixed, now walked alone and by himself in the pious [p. 29] paternal house; but soon afterward Abraham's father-heart was terribly shaken: this wonder- [p. 30] boy Isaac, whom his mother Sarah had borne only in her ninetieth year, and on whom the continuation [p. 31] of Abraham's line and of the whole nation that was to arise depended, was demanded by God as a sacrifice, that the father [p. 32] should slaughter him with his own hands and offer him up. A command that must have fallen all the more painfully upon Abraham's tender heart, since it struck at his only, so dearly beloved son; for thus ran God's command: קח נא את בנך את יחידך אשר אהבת את יצחק, "Take thy son, thine only one, whom thou lovest so dearly, (the pious wonder-boy) Isaac," and bring him as a whole burnt-offering.

The son, then, who by God's express demand was to remain alone in the house, and of whom God had assured כי ביצחק יקרא לך זרע, for only [p. 33] "through Isaac shall your descendants arise, who shall be called after you," was now to be slaughtered; but it was the will of the Lord — the inexorable command of God, whom he had acknowledged as almighty but at the same time as a kindly Father, and whom he therefore neither could nor would resist. From the pious Abraham (אברהם) there escaped no murmuring question, and early in the morning he hastened with his son toward the appointed place. ביום השלישי וישא אברהם את עיניו וירא את המקום מרחק [Gen. 22:4]: but only on the third day could he see the place of his destination, so that he might recover from the

---

to his dwelling in the wilderness of Paran. [Author's note: In the *Seder ha-Dorot* the first wife is called מריבה (Merivah) and the second תרצה (Tirẓah), which expresses as much as "the quarrelsome" and "the gentle"; names that Ishmael probably gave these women afterwards on account of the difference of their characters. — Translator: Seder ha-Dorot, the chronicle of R. Jehiel Heilprin (1769).] Hardly three years had passed after Ishmael's second marriage when the stirrings of fatherly love toward his son Ishmael awoke anew in the heart of the venerable old man Abraham; he undertook the journey to Paran a second time, and after a few days he reached Ishmael's home. Chance let him this time too find his son Ishmael absent at the hunt, and his young wife playing with her little children before her tent. When the old man approached them, she went out to meet him in a friendly way, to greet him respectfully. With dignity and grace the old man returned her greeting and asked after Prince Ishmael. Kindly and graciously she replied that she was very sorry to have to tell him that her husband had gone out hunting just that day, from which he would probably return only after some days; but if it pleased him, he might turn in to her tent and stay there until her husband came back from the hunt. Touched by the kind and friendly offer of the young woman, Abraham answered that the urgency of his journey did not allow him to make use of her kind offer, since he had to travel on again at once; he had only wished, as an old friend of her husband, passing through, to pay his respects to him there; but he asked her for a little refreshment. She ran hurrying into the tent, and soon afterward she reappeared with some servants, who had to carry bread, milk, fruits of the finest kind and water to the old man; the young woman herself led the little ones up to the old man to welcome him. In a friendly way and with childlike tenderness the little ones kissed the old man's hands and cheeks and nestled trustingly against him; tears of joy welled up from the venerable patriarch; he blessed the dear little ones and partook of the fruits. After he had enjoyed the refreshment offered him and had sufficiently rested from the long journey, he thanked her cordially for her invitation and for the refreshment and hospitality offered him, and, wistfully and with heartfelt regret at not being able to wait for her husband, took his leave of her. At the same time he charged her to tell her husband that an old friend from Philistia had greatly rejoiced at his prosperous circumstances, and had found everything in his tent very fine and good, just as it ought to be, and that he (namely Prince Ishmael) should not change a single nail of it (so it is in the *Seder ha-Dorot*); whereupon he withdrew with visible tears and hastened away. When Ishmael now came home from the hunt and learned from his wife of the visit she had received from a stranger from Philistia, he was very sorry not to have been present; but he at once resolved to leave the wilderness, to move to Canaan, and to lead a new, better way of life (ישמעאל עשה תשובה בחיי אביו, "Ishmael repented in his father's lifetime," BT Bava Batra 16b), and to spend his life with his family near his father in Canaan. Full of joy that his wife had found favour in his father's eyes and won his good pleasure, he embraced her fervently, kissed her and thanked her with emotion for the honour and pleasure shown to his father, and soon afterward the journey to Canaan was undertaken. (מעשה זו מלאתי בפרקי דרבי אליעזר פרק למ״ד ובילקוט וירא כ״ה והובא בסדר הדורות בשינוי ותוספת ואנכי קבצתי יחד להיות אחד "This story I found in the *Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer*, chapter Lamed [30], and in the *Yalkut*, Vayera §25 [likely §95], and it is brought in the *Seder ha-Dorot* with changes and additions; and I have gathered them together to make one.")

stupefaction and the shock of the divine command, purify his thoughts, collect his senses, and act with deliberation. And so as not to be taken by surprise on arriving at the appointed spot, the place had to be made visible to him from afar. Free of fear and trusting in God, he went on with his son, courageous and composed; he built an altar, upon which the tears trickled down from the eyes of the tender-hearted father. With trembling hands, weeping eyes,[42] and a contrite heart, the father bound his holy, much-beloved son, on whom all his joy and hope hung, and laid him upon the wood. Resigned, in the feeling of his innocence, and firmly convinced of the true faith of his father,[43] the gentle, innocent [p. 34] boy submitted patiently, with childlike love and with obedience, to the command of his father. The most momentous and most harrowing moment had now come. Swiftly the father seized the sacrificial knife, looked up once more toward heaven, and was already about to accomplish the heart-rending deed; already he stretched out his hand to deal the death-stroke to his holy, beloved son; already he thought he saw him bleeding and wrestling with death — when unexpectedly the voice of the Eternal called to him: "Abraham, Abraham, אל תשלח ידך אל הנער (Gen. 22:12): stretch not out your hand against the boy, and do nothing to him!!"[44]

So the boy Isaac (יצחק) was given back to his father by God. Abraham now hastened with winged steps to his home, in order joyfully to announce to his wife, to whom the purpose of the journey had remained wholly unknown, the command of God to sacrifice his son to Him, as well as the piety of the son — how steadfast, ready and patient he had shown himself — and also the wondrous rescue through the voice of God. With the blissful feeling of a happy father he hastened into Sarah's (שרה) tent, and found it empty. Anxious and dismayed, he inquired of her maids where she was, and learned from them that Sarah, out of tender anxiety, had gone to Hebron (חברון) in order [p. 35] to seek her husband and her beloved child.[45] Immediately he set off after her and came to Hebron; but what a fate awaited his tender heart there, as he felt it most painfully: Sarah, the first matriarch, had received from another the news of the sacrifice of her son demanded by God, but not the joyful outcome, so that she, the mother, in her maternal love and gentleness, could not endure the thought of the death of her son; rushing to look for her husband and her son, the anxious mother, robbed

---

[42] וישלח אברהם את ידו, הוא שלח את ידו ליטול את הסכין ועיניו מורידות דמעות ("'And Abraham stretched out his hand': he stretched out his hand to take the knife, and his eyes were shedding tears") (Genesis Rabbah 56). [Translator: Gen. Rabbah 56:8, on Gen. 22:10.]

[43] אמרינן בגמרא סנהדרין והובא ברמב"ן פ' שופטים, אברהם בהר המוריה היכי שמע לי' יצחק? אלא דמוחזק לו לנביא וכו' עיי"ש ("We say in the Gemara, Sanhedrin, and it is cited by Nahmanides on the portion Shofetim: Abraham on Mount Moriah — how did Isaac obey him? Only because he was established for him as a prophet, etc.; see there"). [Translator: BT Sanhedrin 89b; Nahmanides on Deut. 18.]

[44] When Abraham laid the sacrificial knife at the throat of his son Isaac, the soul of the boy, seized by mortal terror, departed from him; when the voice rang out, אל תשלח ידך אל הנער, he suddenly returned to earthly life; and in the newly gained conviction that the dead too will one day awaken from death, Isaac praised the all-good God and said: ברוך אתה יי מחיה המתים ("Blessed are You, O Lord, who revives the dead"). (Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer, ch. 31.)

[45] When Abraham had finished his service, he returned with Isaac his son to his young men, and they rose and went together to Beersheba; and they came to her house and sought her in the tent and did not find her; and they asked after her, and were told: She went as far as Hebron to look for you, where you had gone. And Abraham and Isaac his son went to Hebron and found that she had died; and they fell upon Sarah's face, lifted up their voices and wept over her (*Sefer ha-Yashar*). [Translator: Hebrew in the original.]

of strength by the overwhelming report, sank to the ground and died;[46] and so, instead of the embrace of his loving wife, he found her cold and pallid corpse. In this sad situation, too, he recognized the severe trial[47] of the Inscrutable. Tears of the [p. 36] of grief flowed into the grave of his dear wife. But soon he composed himself again; he resigned himself calmly to the will of God and remained steadfast in all his sufferings. Here he purchased the cave of Machpelah (מערת המכפלה) from Ephron (עפרון), where he had his wife Sarah decently buried, and kept the week of mourning with his son Isaac (יצחק).

God, the all-wise Father, therefore put Abraham (אברהם) once more to the test; not as though He had doubted his steadfast piety and his unbounded trust — for before God, who knows everything in advance, before whom the future lies unveiled, and who knows the most hidden folds of the heart, nothing is subject to doubt; His divine purpose was solely to set up for mankind, in the patriarch,[48] a [p. 37] model of piety and virtue worthy of imitation, one who in the greatest happiness and in the deepest misfortune remained always alike,[49] and whom not even His inscrutable decrees could shake.

The boy now grew up under pious discipline to the age of a young man; the father's most ardent wish was therefore to see his beloved son married and his line propagated according to the divine promise. Yet he would not give him any of the Canaanite daughters to wife, nor would he let him emigrate from the land in which he had settled by God's will; he therefore charged his faithful steward Eliezer (אליעזר) to undertake a journey to his native land, and there to seek out from his

---

[46] ע"י בשורת העקידה שנזדמן בנה לשחיטה וכמעט שלא נשחט פרחה נשמתה ומתה ("Through the news of the Binding — that her son had been made ready for slaughter and was all but slaughtered — her soul flew from her and she died") (Rashi). [Translator: Rashi on Gen. 23:2.]

[47] That our Sages of blessed memory did not count the death of Sarah among the trials of Abraham appears to be so that one should not err, God forbid, and think that God decreed death upon Sarah our mother in order to try Abraham her husband. And in truth this matter was a great trial for our father Abraham, the husband of our mother Sarah: for after he returned from the Binding of his son with gladness of heart, and hastened with his only son to bring her the tidings and to tell her of the binding of her son, of his righteousness and of the Lord's deliverance, he did not find her in his house, and heard and knew nothing of her, until he was compelled to go after her to Hebron, to another city; and in another place he found her dead. But the matter is thus: since the time of her visitation had come, God brought about her death and drew the matter out until the time of his departure from home; and he did not question God's ways, but accepted all the events and their causes in love from the Lord, and stood firm in his righteousness, turning and hearkening to all that his God commanded him; and although he saw in all this the cutting-off of his soul and the pain of his heart, he was careful and zealous to hearken to the voice of the Lord. [Translator: Hebrew in the original; the note continues onto p. 36.]

[48] The Blessed Name knows the thoughts of men; and the matter of the trial and its benefit is so that the coming generations should know the ways of that man whom God chose, and know and recognize his eminence above other men (*Pardes Rimmonim* by R. Shem Tov). And this is the intent of Nahmanides on the portion Va-yera: that God tries the righteous man when He knows of the righteous man that he will do His will, and does not try the wicked, who will not obey. And it is found in the Midrash Rabbah, portion Noah, in these words: R. Jonathan said: The potter (the craftsman of earthenware vessels) does not test cracked jars, for he cannot strike them even once (to tap and knock once) before he breaks them. And with what does he test? With jars (with the good and strong jars he taps, to show the buyers that they are good) which, even if he taps on them several times, do not break. So the Holy One, blessed be He, does not try the wicked but the righteous, as it is said, "The Lord tries the righteous" [Ps. 11:5]; and it is written, "And God tried Abraham" [Gen. 22:1]. End of quotation. [Translator: Hebrew in the original; Gen. Rabbah 32:3 (also 55:2); Nahmanides on Gen. 22:1.]

[49] אברהם הוא בצדקתו מתחלתו ועד סופו ("Abraham was in his righteousness from his beginning to his end") (Megillah 11). [Translator: BT Megillah 11a.]

kindred a wife for his son, who, however, would have to leave her fatherland and follow him into the land of Canaan (כנען). Eliezer set off; the Eternal favoured his journey and let him find Rebekah (רבקה), the daughter of Bethuel (בתואל), Abraham's nephew, who accepted his proposal with joy; with the consent of her parents and brothers she travelled to the land of Canaan and married Isaac. Rebekah became pregnant and bore two sons, Jacob (יעקב) and Esau (עשו); Jacob begot twelve sons. This was now already a considerable tribe, the germ of a nation in the making. God's assurance now went gradually into fulfilment. These twelve sons grew up, multiplied, and came through the wondrous dispensation of God — as He had already foretold to Abraham (with the words: ידוע תדע כי גר יהיה זרעך בארץ לא להם [Gen. 15:13], "Know of a surety that your seed shall be a stranger in a land not theirs") — to Egypt (מצרים), where, in spite of the hard slavery in which they were, and in spite of the fact that their [p. 38] increase was hindered by every possible means, they grew, in the space of two hundred and ten years, into a populous nation.

Now the divine plan was ripe in its full maturity, namely to bring to fulfilment the promise given to Abraham, to make of him a great nation; already that promise had gone into fulfilment, since God Himself had called the descendants of Abraham, and with them this new nation, "My people" — for so we find it (Exod. 7:26): שלח את עמי ויעבדני; the Eternal sent Moses (משה) to King Pharaoh (פרעה) with the words: "Let My people go, that it may serve Me." But so that this pure, nascent people should not again be led astray and coerced, it was therefore necessary that Israel be torn loose from the Egyptians (מצריים) and set free even earlier than the time of redemption that God had fixed for them, in order then to guide and lead it as a nation of its own according to divine precepts.

But since God wished to free this people through wondrous deeds, so that it might thereby be strengthened for ever in the belief in one true, almighty God and Creator of the universe, a mediator between God and the people was needed for this purpose; for this the Eternal chose the worthiest of all men, namely Moses son of Amram (משה בן עמרם), who brought the divine commands to the Egyptian king and, after the many divine wonders worked through him upon the Egyptians, happily led the people out of the slavery of Egypt.

The people of Israel, which had groaned so long under the most cruel tyrannical yoke of the Egyptians, and had already truly believed itself either near its complete destruction or else condemned for ever to unspeakable slavery, and which now at once saw itself freed from the hands of its tyrants through wonders [p. 39] that only an infinite omnipotence is able to perform, was now firmly convinced of the existence of a true and almighty God, of whom its forefathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had given it knowledge, and clung with firm belief to this eternal Being and to His chosen servant Moses, just as our holy Torah (תורה) says (Exod. 14:31): ויראו ישראל את היד הגדלה אשר עשה יהוה במצרים וייראו העם את יהוה ויאמינו ביהוה ובמשה עבדו. "When Israel saw the great

power which the Eternal had exercised upon the Egyptians, they feared the Eternal, and believed in Him and in His servant Moses."

But so that the people might not fall back into the heathen belief they had before their eyes, it was now, according to God's all-wise counsel, necessary that He Himself give them laws; for this people, therefore, His revelation was necessary. Thus the wise Solomon also says (Prov. 29:18): באין חזון יפרע עם, "without revelation the people would have degenerated." In consequence of this necessity, God charged Moses, בחדש השלישי לצאת בני ישראל מארץ מצרים (Exod. 19:1), in the third month after the departure of the people from Egypt, to assemble the people at Mount Sinai (סיני), after a preparation beforehand, so that the wondrous giving of the law should not take them wholly by surprise, and so that they might first entirely purify their thoughts, sanctify themselves and fast. On the sixth day of this month of Sivan (סיון) the divine Majesty revealed itself before the eyes of the people of Israel, amid extraordinary lightnings, peals of thunder and flames of fire, on Mount Sinai, and, with the preceding admonition that no one should move forward from his place, set before them עשרת הדברות הקדושות, namely the ten fundamental commandments, [p. 40] which contain within themselves all the other commandments flowing from them.

But since the divine voice was too shattering and unbearable for the senses of the people, they besought their leader Moses our Teacher (משה רבינו) (Exod. 20:16): דבר אתה עמנו ונשמעה, "O, do you speak with us; we will gladly hear and accept everything"; ואל ידבר עמנו אלהים פן נמות, "only let God not speak further with us, lest we die through this address that shakes us too greatly."[50]

The whole people remained standing at Mount Horeb; God had Moses our Teacher come up into the thick cloud upon the mountain, and handed over to him the ten fundamental commandments, together with the six hundred and thirteen that flow from them, namely all the תרי"ג מצות [the 613 commandments], which Moses our Teacher then communicated and explained to the people.

These תרי"ג מצות consist of two hundred and forty-eight *commands*, or מצות עשה [positive commandments] (just as many members as a man has in his body), and of three hundred and sixty-five *prohibitions*, or מצות לא תעשה [negative commandments] (just as many days as there are in a solar year); so that every member and every day should remind us of a law of God.[51]

[p. —]

---

[50] Translator: The verse is Exod. 20:16 in Hebrew numbering (20:19 in most English Bibles).

[51] דרש ר' שמלאי שש מאות ושלש עשרה מצות נאמרו לו למשה, שלש מאות וששים וחמש לאוין (כמנין ימות החמה) ומאתים וארבעים ושמנה עשה (כנגד אבריו של אדם) דכל אבר ואבר אומר לו עשה מצוה, וכל יום מזהיר עליו שלא לעבור ("R. Simlai expounded: Six hundred and thirteen commandments were told to Moses: three hundred and sixty-five prohibitions, corresponding to the number of the days of the solar year, and two hundred and forty-eight positive commandments, corresponding to the members of a man's body — for each and every member says to him, 'Perform a commandment,' and each day warns him not to transgress") (Tractate Makkot 23, see Rashi there). [Translator: BT Makkot 23b; the clause beginning "for each and every member" is from Rashi's comment there.]

במה האמינו בו במשה? במעמד הר סיני, שעינינו ראו ולא זר ואזנינו שמעו ולא אחר, האש והקולות והלפידים, והוא נגש אל הערפל והקול מדבר אליו, ואנו שומעים משה! משה! לך אמור להם כך וכך, וכן הוא אומר: פנים בפנים דבר ה' עמכם וכו'.

> "Through what did they believe in him, in Moses? Through the stand at Mount Sinai, where our own eyes saw, and not a stranger's, and our own ears heard, and not another's: the fire, the thunderings and the flames; and he drew near to the thick darkness, and the voice spoke to him, while we heard: 'Moses! Moses! Go, tell them thus and thus.' And so it says: 'Face to face the Lord spoke with you,' etc." (Maimonides, ch. 8 of *Hilkhot Yesodei ha-Torah*)[52]

[p. —] First Commandment.

אנכי יהוה אלהיך אשר הוצאתיך מארץ מצרים מבית עבדים (Exod. 20:2)

> I am the Eternal, your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.[53]

When we contemplate with calm reflection the world and all the creatures existing in it, we recognize that they must have a Creator; for reason tells us that nothing can come into being of itself. Should man, then, be able to doubt the existence of a God? Showered with so many benefits, surrounded by so many pleasant joys, should he not lift up his hands to heaven with fervour, in order to offer the All-Father his most heartfelt thanks? Should he not occupy himself unceasingly with the means of learning to know his Creator ever more closely? Everywhere he sees the omnipotence of his God and His grace, and everywhere he recognizes His presence: he sees Him in the heavenly bodies, whose rays light up the earth in the periodic return of day and night, as also in the endless multitude of living beings of every kind, which have received their existence from Him. [p. 43] Yet all these signs are for us only faint intimations; therefore, when His holy will made the Ten Commandments known, the first of the holy commandments was: "I am the Eternal, your God, who led you out of the land of Egypt." That is as much as to say: through the exodus from Egypt and through the wondrous deeds that I showed there before your eyes, I have proved to you that I alone am God, the Creator of the world and Ruler of destinies. For only the One who made the light, who only by His word "Be!" formed the moon, who fixed the countless stars in the immeasurable spaces of heaven and separated the day from the night — only that One could in Egypt turn the light of day into the thickest darkness for three days without interruption; only that One who by His utterance caused all kinds of animals to come into being upon the earth could, as a plague upon the Egyptians, summon the wild beasts together in Egypt in a single moment, and yet in Goshen, where the Israelites dwelt, let not one of these creatures be seen; only that One who

---

[52]Translator: Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, Laws of the Foundations of the Torah 8:1, quoting Deut. 5:4. This page carries no printed page number (it would be p. 41).

[53]Translator: Printed in two columns, Hebrew on the right and Judeo-German on the left. This page carries no printed page number (it would be p. 42).

set bounds to the sea and the course of the rivers could command the sea to stand still, to divide only to the right and to the left and to pile itself up, so that the Israelites could walk dry-shod over the floor of the abyss; only that One who gave the earth the power to be fruitful and adorned it with all kinds of trees, fruits, flowers and grasses could, after the exodus from Egypt, in the camp in the wilderness (מדבר), whose soil He did not grant the power to produce bread, let bread fall from heaven for forty years, which was called manna (מן). [p. 44] In a word, you have seen all this with your own eyes; therefore believe also that I am the sole, almighty and eternal Being. So God speaks in the first commandment: He, the Creator of heaven and earth, and also our Creator; He, the Preserver and Ruler of the world, and our future Judge. So He spoke to Israel at Mount Sinai, and so He speaks to us still today through nature and through the voice of our conscience.

Through unhappy wars, which were a deserved punishment for the apostasy from the commandments, for the denial of the all-holy God and for the contempt of His holy Torah (תורה), the throne of Judah (יהודה) was shattered and the kingdom wholly destroyed under the last king, Zedekiah (צדקיהו). Before the eyes of the unhappy king his children were murdered; he himself was loaded with shameful chains, robbed of the light of his eyes, and carried off as a slave to Babylon (בבל) with the other Jews (יהודים). After Jerusalem (ירושלים) had been plundered and desecrated, its crown (namely our Holy Temple, בית המקדש) shattered, its precious vessels carried off and the fortifications of the city razed, the kingdom of Israel went to ruin.

The time during which the Israelites who had been carried away lived in captivity in Babylon is called גלות בבל: the Babylonian captivity. This captivity lasted seventy years. Many noble children of Judah who had been carried off to Babylon were instructed in the sciences together with the noble inhabitants there, and were even brought up at court as royal pages. [p. 45] Among these, four youths especially distinguished themselves, namely Daniel (דניאל), Hananiah (חנניה), Mishael (מישאל) and Azariah (עזריה), who, in the midst of the heathen and amid the seductive splendour of a luxurious court, remained true to the worship of the only true God, and who even as boys had the courage to scorn the dishes allotted to them from the royal table, which are forbidden in our holy Torah (בתורתנו הקדושה), and to content themselves with pulse and water. They applied the abilities they had received from God with such zeal to the learning of the sciences that, at an examination which the king had held among the pages, they distinguished themselves most advantageously above all the others.

In an especially high degree, however, Daniel won the favour of the king and at the same time that of the people. He remained at the court of the king, who, on account of his proven wisdom, entrusted him with affairs of importance. His three other youthful friends received considerable offices in Babylon.

The fortune of arms of the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar (נבוכדנאצר) made this monarch overweening. He had a golden statue made, and appointed the day of its erection as a great festival. All the officials and great men of the realm were to assemble there, in order, at the king's command, to fall upon their knees at the sound of the trumpets and to worship this statue as a god. Daniel, who was the king's privy minister, had probably been sent at the time of this event on royal business to a distant province; therefore he was not present at this festival. For what follows will show that he too would not have lacked the courage [p. 46] rather to throw himself into the burning furnace, which the king had had erected for everyone who would not obey this command, than to deny the holy God and to worship the statue as divine.

The three others who had been brought up with him as pages, namely Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, showed that even with contempt of death one must honour God's laws more highly than those of men. They did not worship the statue; thereby they gave the great men of Babylon, who had long envied them the king's favour, the most welcome opportunity to bring about their fall.

Nebuchadnezzar heard this report, which was at once brought to him, with fury; he had the accused brought before him and commanded them in his own presence to worship the statue, failing which they were to be thrown at once into the glowing furnace, from which, as he scornfully said, surely no deliverer would rescue them.

Neither the splendour of the throne nor the threat of the enraged king was able to shake the noble steadfastness of the pious youths. They answered the king with modesty, yet with firm and unshakeable courage: "The God who gave the holy commandment אנכי ה' אלהיך וגו' לא תעשה לך פסל וגו' ולא תשתחוה להם ["I am the Lord your God, etc. You shall not make for yourself a graven image, etc., and you shall not bow down to them"], and whom alone we worship, is mighty enough to free us from the fiery furnace and from all your power; but even if He should not wish to do so, we would nevertheless not honour your gods and not worship your statue."[54]

Immediately the enraged king had the heat of the furnace made seven times stronger, and had the three youths Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah thrown at once, just as they were, with bound feet, [p. 47] into the flaming blaze, which burst out with such violence that it consumed the men by whom the youths were thrown in; but the three youths walked about in the flames with a fourth, and sang songs of praise to God their deliverer.

Then the astonished Nebuchadnezzar came to himself. "You servants of the Most High God!" he cried into the furnace, "come out! Praised be your God; woe to him who would blaspheme Him, for He is the only and almighty God!" —

Now the three youths stepped out unharmed. Only the cords with which their feet had been bound were gone; but not a thread of their garments and not a hair of their heads was singed; not even the

[54]Translator: The commandments quoted are Exod. 20:2–5; cf. Dan. 3:17–18.

smell of smoke and fire could be perceived on them. For God, to whom they clung with unshakeable faithfulness, had sent an angel to them — to preserve them: this was the fourth whom one had seen with them in the furnace; he turned every flame away from them and, in place of the stifling heat of the fire, filled the furnace with a cooling wind.

Daniel's faith in the one true God, too, was likewise to be glorified. After Nebuchadnezzar's death several kings followed on the throne of Babylon. The last, named Belshazzar (בלשאצר), was murdered in the night by discontented conspirators during the siege of Babylon, and Babylon was conquered by Darius (דריוש). With this king, too, Daniel remained in his former great esteem and kept the ministerial rank conferred on him by the last king. The other royal officials and courtiers envied him this favour all the more because he was a Jew (יהודי), and misled the weak [p. 48] king into the law that for thirty days no one, within the whole realm, might ask any favour either of the Deity or of anyone else apart from the king; but in everything should turn to him alone. For the transgressors of this law the punishment fixed was to be thrown into a lions' den — animals expressly kept for this purpose. Daniel, however, did not let himself be deterred by this threat from praying, as he had done hitherto, in his dwelling three times a day, namely תפלת שחרית מנחה וערבית [the morning, afternoon and evening prayers]. His malicious enviers very soon learned of this through their spies, who had been bribed for the purpose; they reported it to the king and pressed for Daniel's punishment. — The weak Darius loved his pious minister; he sought excuses, but in the end consented, though unwillingly, to have Daniel thrown into the lions' den; yet he comforted himself with the quiet hope that the God whom Daniel always worshipped could protect him even from the lions. But to secure him against every murderous attempt by his embittered enemies, the king himself sealed the entrance of the den.

Darius spent this night sleepless, and hastened very early the next morning to the lions' den. But how great was his astonishment when Daniel answered the king's call and, praising the omnipotence of the Most High, was drawn out of the den. The king, exceedingly glad at this and carried away by the victorious truth, cried out: "Your God, Daniel, is the living and true God, whose might endures for ever; everyone shall honour and fear this God whom you worship. It is He who protects and rescues, [p. 49] "who works wonders and astonishing things in heaven and on earth; it is He who protected you from the power of the lions. Woe to those who also pressed for your execution!"

Now these wretches were let down, and scarcely had they touched the ground when they were attacked and torn to pieces by the hungry lions. With Daniel it went well ever afterwards, both during the reign of Darius and during the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

God does not forsake His own
Who love Him tenderly;
To trust in Him, that is our duty;
Virtue means to practise it —.

Though sorrow press upon us,
God still gives us joys;
Beyond, we shall be made happy,
Consoled for our sufferings.

The Roman emperor once had the worthy Rabbi Joshua ben Hananiah brought before him and said to him: "It is boasted of you that you are an understanding man and know how to give information in spiritual and worldly matters; so tell me, then, and impart it to me: how can I see your God, the God of the people of Israel? For I have a great longing to see Him who is so great, so mighty and exalted above all." In vain did this Rabbi object that no mortal can see the Immortal; the monarch insisted on his demand. Rabbi Joshua therefore led him out into the open, just as the [p. 50] day was very fine and the sun, bright and unclouded, sent its glowing rays down upon the earth: "Now lift up your eyes, O emperor, and look upward; for above your head is the way to God." When the emperor raised his eyes, the burning rays met them, and, half blinded, he at once had to lower his weak gaze to the earth. —

"Have you no other way to your God?" said the emperor now; "an eye cannot follow this path, for I would go blind were the rays to strike me once more." —

Then Rabbi Joshua said: "What, O emperor! you wish to look upon the countenance of the Lord, of whose splendour all worlds are full, and yet you cannot bear the glance of the least of His servants? — Truly! though an emperor, you are and remain a weak son of earth, as we all are, and here below you will never behold the Eternal, who already said to His faithful servant and the greatest of the prophets, namely to Moses our teacher: לא יראני האדם וחי (Exod. 33:20): 'man cannot see Me so long as he lives on earth.' But if you would nevertheless know a God, you need not search far at all; admire Him in the smallest mote of the sun, as in the mountain that strives heavenward; in the worm that crawls in the dust, as in the eagle that soars up to the sun: everywhere is the Lord; His majesty fills the whole world."

"You have taught me, wise Joshua!" said the emperor; "no longer will I proudly raise my gaze to God, nor seek in heaven what is near to me on earth."

(Ḥullin fol. 60b, and Midrash Rabbah, *Ki Tissa*.)[55]

[p. 51] Let us behold nature!
Mountain, wood and meadow
Speak: there is a God!
From the breath of the tree,
From the lap of the earth
It sounds: there is a God.

[55]Translator: printed חולין דף ס' ע"ב; the story of the emperor and R. Joshua ben Hananiah and the sun is at BT Ḥullin 59b–60a.

All that I see
The Gracious One created,
Rich in lovely splendour;
Sun, moon and star
Are the work of the Lord,
Witnesses to His might.

O! how great is He
Who holds the sublime heaven
And the earth!
Who leads the clouds,
Governs lightning and storm
And the whole world!

Soul! gladly rejoice
In your God and Lord,
Rejoice in His grace;
All the world is His,
And He thinks of you too,
Full of fatherly grace.

[p. 52] The Second Commandment.

לא יהיה לך אלהים אחרים על פני לא תעשה לך פסל וכל תמונה אשר בשמים ממעל ואשר בארץ מתחת ואשר במים מתחת לארץ לא תשתחוה להם ולא תעבדם כי אנכי ה' אלהיך אל קנא פקד עון אבת על בנים על שלשים ועל רבעים לשנאי ועשה חסד לאלפים לאהבי ולשמרי מצותי (Exod. 20:3–6)

> You shall have no other gods before My countenance: you shall make yourself no image of an idol, nor any likeness of what is above in heaven, or below on the earth, or in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down before them, nor serve them; for I, the Eternal, your God, am a zealous God, who visits the crimes of the fathers upon the children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren of those who hate Me; but who shows grace to the thousandth generation to those who love Me and keep My commandments. (Exod. 20:3–6)

[p. 53] I have already related in the introduction to this little work that our patriarch Abraham recognised and worshipped the one and true God. His descendants, too, retained the knowledge and worship of the one and true God until they came to Egypt [מצרים]. In what followed, however, it became otherwise; the slave service in Egypt disturbed them in their divine worship and took from them the practice of their religious ceremonies. Since the inner prayer of the heart alone, without public divine worship and without ceremonies, could not satisfy them, the true faith vanished from them little by little. Through the unremitting hard labour, through the constant oppression of their tyrants, and through the hardships that piled up daily, their minds were dulled, so that they became incapable of any spiritual contemplation: for only the free man can think freely

and rightly, not so the slave and the oppressed. The Egyptian idolatry, which they always had before their eyes, took root in their hearts all the more easily, and made them wholly inclined toward the worship of gods after the manner of the Egyptians.

After they had thus been instructed about the unity of God, about His omnipotence and about the true faith, there followed the second commandment: לא יהיה לך אלהים אחרים על פני לא תעשה לך פסל וכל תמונה וגו' לא תשתחוה להם ["You shall have no other gods before Me; you shall not make yourself a graven image or any likeness, etc.; you shall not bow down to them"], namely that they should in no way and manner worship and adore the true God, the All-Creator, according to the customs and ceremonies of the Egyptians whom they had left and of the surrounding peoples, so as not thereby to be led away little by little from faith in the true God; as the holy Torah also further forbids in express words: ובחקתיהם לא תלכו ["neither shall you walk in their statutes"] (Lev. 18:3).

[p. 54] But this commandment, too, very strictly forbids every kind and manner of the religious customs and divine-worship ceremonies of the Egyptians and the surrounding peoples, in order to banish and wholly uproot them from people's thinking, as the holy Torah likewise expressly forbids every heathen practice. We can show reverence and venerate only the Holy One, the Almighty, and God alone, and Him alone serve with our heart's amendment. —

A philosopher once asked the rabbis: "If your God does not tolerate idolatry, why does He not destroy it, so that it would never more be any occasion for seduction?" — The rabbis replied to him: "If the fools worshipped only such things as are of no further value to the world, He would surely destroy them; but they also worship the sun, the moon, the stars, fire, water and other such things. Shall then the Creator ruin His world on account of these fools? Shall the sun cease to shine when men use it improperly? Should the sun not rise because foolish men worship it? No! the wise Creator lets nature go its way; the unreasonable one who misuses it will in time be punished." —

(Tractate Avodah Zarah fol. 24.)[56]

Next to Rabbi Meir there lived very wicked and depraved neighbours, who led a godless, dissolute life and caused this pious man all kinds of vexation. At first Rabbi Meir admonished them lovingly to go into themselves and to amend their ways; but they mocked his words and answered him with mocking insult. Then anger overcame Rabbi Meir, and [p. 55] he already wanted to lift up his hands toward heaven and call upon the Almighty to take these godless men away from the earth; but Beruriah, his wife, cut him short and said: Rabbi! what are you undertaking? Are you not mindful of the words of the Anointed One, which read: יתמו חטאים מן הארץ ורשעים עוד אינם ["Let sins cease out of the earth, and the wicked be no more," Ps. 104:35]: O, that the sins might vanish from the earth, so that there would also be no more godless men! (מי כתיב חוטאים? חטאים כתיב [Is it written "sinners"? "Sins" is written].) Only see: let the sins pass away, then the earth will be free and pure

[56]Translator: printed מס' ע"ז דף כ"ד; the exchange is in Mishnah Avodah Zarah 4:7 and BT Avodah Zarah 54b (possibly a misprint of כ"ד for נ"ד, i.e. fol. 54).

of evildoers. Pray therefore rather to God that He enlighten the dark path of those who go astray, so that they too may abandon it and take the ways to a God-hallowed life.

(Berakhot fol. 10.)[57]

Turnus Rufus, a heathen, once said to Rabbi Akiba: "Does it not mean meddling with your God's punitive judgment when you support your poor with alms? Would not he who wished to hand provisions to one of his servants, whom the king had cast into prison for a crime and from whom he had had food and drink withheld, bring upon himself the wrath of a mortal king?" — "Would he not rather win the love of a king," answered Rabbi Akiba, "who showed kindness to a king's son who had been driven out by his father on account of an offence? Though the father visits one of his children with poverty, it nevertheless pleases him when he sees that others take up the cause of his child and lend him brotherly help." —

(Bava Batra fol. 10.)[58]

[p. 56] To love God,
To practise virtue,
Is the greatest bliss.
Never to hate one's friends,
Never to forsake one's neighbour,
Gives the heart contentment.

Are we wretched, sick and blind,
Hope can still console us
That we are God's children.
Our Father provides for the best,
He does not forsake His own;
To comfort us is His concern.

Full of goodness and of love,
He would see the poorest too;
He takes note of the smallest stirrings
In the heart of mortals.

[p. 57] The Third Commandment.

לא תשא את שם ה' אלהיך לשוא כי לא ינקה ה' את אשר ישא את שמו לשוא (Exod. 20:7)

You shall not utter the name of the Eternal your God in vain; for the Eternal will not leave unpunished him who utters His name in vain. (Exod. 20:7)

[57] Translator: BT Berakhot 10a (Rabbi Meir and his wife Beruriah).
[58] Translator: BT Bava Batra 10a.

This most exalted commandment encompasses religion, the reverence owed to the Most High, and the preservation of civil life. — The greatness of His omnipotence and the attributes of the great Creator are expressed only in the little words: God! Eternal! Almighty! and so on; but each of these expressions contains in itself the whole greatness and all the attributes of the Almighty, and should therefore be named and uttered only at holy and blessed acts[59]; nor may one therefore by any means carry the most holy Name, be [p. 58] it in whatever expression or in whatever language[60], on one's lips in a frivolous manner, as: in jest, in curses, in protestations, and in general without need; much less, however, may one with unscrupulous intent swear to a matter, even a true one, by His holy Name. The unnecessary oath is a thing in the highest degree contrary and offensive to the divine Majesty; the judge, too, may make use of it only in the greatest emergency, namely when the legal case is so entangled that it could be decided by nothing else; but among private persons, and in private affairs, the oath is an act contrary to the laws of religion, criminal and shameful. — The greatest contempt of God is shown by a false oath. The oath is one of the holiest acts of religion: it is the appeal to God, who is present, that one is speaking the truth, and that He will punish the un- [p. 59] truth: it is therefore the most solemn confession and declaration that all our actions stand under the eye of God, under a God, namely, who is not only the founder and preserver of the world, but also the lawgiver of mankind, the supreme, most impartial and most just requiter of good and evil, who, if not already here, yet beyond the grave will reward each according to his deeds.

The one who swears sincerely thus shows true reverence toward God, in that he makes a public confession of God's perfections. The perjurer, however, displays the greatest contempt of God, because he denies His most sublime attributes, His omniscience, justice and omnipotence: therefore the Almighty in this commandment pronounces the punishment of this crime with more emphasis, more definitely and more clearly: כי לא ינקה ה' את אשר ישא את שמו לשוא: the Eternal will not leave unpunished him who utters His name in vain.

---

[59] אמרו חכמינו ז"ל, מדלא אמר הכתוב לא תשבע, אלא לא תשא, היינו לומר לך דאפילו לברך ברכה שאינה צריכה, עובר בלאו זה שנאמר בו כי לא ינקה ה' את אשר ישא את שמו לשוא. Our sages of blessed memory said: Since Scripture did not say "you shall not swear" but "you shall not take up," this is to tell you that even one who pronounces a blessing that is not needed transgresses this prohibition, of which it is said: "for the Eternal will not hold guiltless him who takes His name in vain." [Translator: cf. BT Berakhot 33a and Tanḥuma.]

[60] In the supplement to *Leket ha-Kemaḥ*, [§] 48, by R. [Moses] Hagiz [printed מהר"י חגיז], he writes as follows: One should not mention any of His holy names, blessed be He, except in the reading of the Torah, Prophets and Writings, or in prayer, and in a clean place; and in this every God-fearing person and everyone who esteems His name is obliged to be careful and diligent to fulfil the commandment "את ה' אלהיך תירא" [You shall fear the Eternal your God, Deut. 6:13], in the manner of the verse "ומפני שמי נחת הוא" [and he was in awe of My name, Mal. 2:5]. And also "God" as the gentiles mention it in their vernacular — Gott, *Deus*, *dio* and the like — is not one of the epithets but a full name denoting God, and one must treat it with holiness and caution as with the other names; and all letters in which this name is written must be stored away (לגנזם) so that they are not treated with contempt; and better still for one who fears the word of the Eternal is to refrain from writing this name in a letter at all, but rather to write the initials הי"ת, meaning "the Name, blessed be He" (השם יתברך), and in the vernacular *il Sig.* And see the responsa *Ḥavvot Ya'ir*, [printed מכתבי סי' ק"ו, §106], who treated this matter at length and concluded that the holy books, whether in the holy tongue or in a profane language, and even in profane letters, must be treated with holiness; see there.

The Eternal does not escape [sic] the punishment[61]; it will be avenged on him, as on a shameful transgressor, sooner or later.

A frivolous youth had given himself over to every excess of dissoluteness, and carried it so far that, forgetting his station and his family, he finally joined a notorious band of thieves. Wholly taken up by them, and thoroughly instructed in the finest artifices of thievery, his shameful passion received that direction which soon formed him into a [p. 60] consummate robber. It came about that soon afterwards the leader of the band, together with several of his accomplices, fell into the hands of justice and ended their lives on the wheel. Without letting himself be deterred by this frightful judgment, this youth remained in his accustomed shameful way of life, and, as the boldest of the band, was chosen by his fellow robbers as their leader. Favoured by seductive fortune, he made gigantic progress in robbing and stealing, and soon became the terror of the whole region. But very soon the veil of blindness fell from his eyes; for the more he had at first taken pleasure in this new way of life, the less happy he felt by degrees. His slumbering conscience had awakened, and now set before him the shamefulness of his way of life and the consequences arising from it in all their gigantic form. In despair he wandered alone at night; sleep and rest he had none; the curse of his parents and the shame that awaited him occupied his soul unceasingly; they alternated with the happy images of the past and reminded him of his youth, spent in innocence, in comparison with the shameful present and the dreadful future. But reason and virtue, the strongest pillars of moral life, regained their rights in the heart of this unhappy youth too. With a contrite heart he now threw himself down in a remote cave, bitterly weeping over his lost virtue, prayed fervently to God for forgiveness of his crimes, and solemnly vowed to Him the amendment and change of his way of life.

Disguised as a beggar, he escaped the vigilance of his thieving companions and fled into a strange region. [p. 61] Now he did not know how he should go about wholly suppressing his lust for robbery, which had become his most vehement passion, and how to be able to resist every temptation to this vice with strength. With this intention he went to Rabbi Simeon ben Shetah, who was highly esteemed for his pious wisdom, fear of God and gentleness of heart. "Holy man of God!" he addressed him with tearful eyes, "forgive an unhappy man who disturbs you in your rest consecrated to the Deity; recognise in me that horrible criminal whom humanity spat out, so as to set up in him, too, the dreadful image of vice and of human depravity; but if sincere remorse, a complete change of heart, can still prevail with you, then do not thrust me from you, and take me up as a lost sheep. I implore you for rescue, comfort and help out of this wretched condition." He now faithfully told him the life he had led until then, confessed all his offences and vices, and closed with the request that he give him a powerful counsel how he might wean himself from this shameful vice and withstand the temptation to steal.

---

[61] Translator: the text reads "Der Ewige entgeht der Strafe nicht" (literally "The Eternal does not escape the punishment"); evidently a misprint for "Der Meineidige" ("The perjurer does not escape the punishment").

Gently and with angelic mildness the wise Rabbi Simeon ben Shetah replied: "Dry your tears, my son! for in them I have recognised your sincere remorse and your earnest resolve to amend. You are not yet lost; all hope is still there for you, and you will surely be reformed. I will give you a means which will seem very easy to you, but which in reality is hard for you to carry out, because it requires a very exact attentiveness to oneself." — "O name me this means!" cried the youth joyfully; "however hard it may be, I swear to you by [p. 62] the living God, whom you faithfully serve, that I will follow it exactly and hold it sacred."

"Now then, hear!" replied the holy old man; "abstain henceforth from all lies; let not even the smallest untruth, be it ever so insignificant, slip from your tongue. If you follow this counsel, and are strong enough to turn all your attention unremittingly upon yourself, then you are surely saved as well."

Delighted at having found so easy and sure a means for the amendment of his life, the youth, deeply moved, fell upon the neck of the holy old man and promised to follow it faithfully; the youth thereupon confirmed his promise with a holy oath in the old man's hands, whereupon the latter, moved, clasped him in his arms and, after some fatherly admonitions and blessings, dismissed him.

With the firm resolve to become an upright man, he betook himself to his native city, where for some time he abstained from all lies and thieving. But how hard it is wholly to suppress a vice that has become a passion! Lack of useful occupation, which he could not find at once, soon made his so honestly formed resolve waver. A rich woman in his neighbourhood, with whom he had become acquainted, went on a journey with her servants; this temptation woke his not wholly suppressed thieving disposition once more; he broke into her dwelling in her absence, and had already robbed all the treasures she had left behind and brought them into his own dwelling, when he repented of his shameful deed. "How?" he said to himself, "when the woman now comes back and sees herself robbed, will not the whole suspicion fall on you? And what can you bring forward in your defence — nothing but a lie! Re- [p. 63] member your oath!" his admonishing conscience cried to him: "you are lost!" Quickly he resolved to carry all the stolen treasures back, and he actually carried out this good resolve.

From that time on he never stole again; he came to love virtue, abstained from all lies, became a true champion of truth and an altogether honest man: he led a virtuous life, soon became one of the most respected men of the city, and lived for long years in the enjoyment of a modest fortune and a pure contentment, in the glad consciousness of having acted beneficently, piously, well and justly. When at times he looked back with sadness and horror on the shameful way of life he had formerly led, he could never refrain from exclaiming with tearful eyes: "Holy Rabbi Simeon! a rescuer! an angel! how much thanks do I not owe you! how wise was your counsel, how fatherly your will! To you alone I owe a happy life, a peace here, and a bliss there beyond the grave."

(מעשה זו העתקתי מספר איומה כנדגלות והובא בספר כפתור ופרח והוא ירושלמי דחגיגה: This story I copied from the book *Ayummah ka-Nidgalot*, and it is cited in the book *Kaftor va-Feraḥ*, and it is [from] the Jerusalem Talmud, Ḥagigah.)[62]

Black wickedness must dwell in the heart
Of such wicked men
As jest with oath and swearing
And profane what is holy.

Hypocrites are they who mock us
Through the show of holiness;
Who pray to God toward heaven
In the very deed of cruelty.

[p. 64] Sooner would I reconcile
Nature with murder, and darkness with light,
Than call honest
Him who breaks his oaths![63]

How can innocence protect itself,
How is the world to be borne,
When the strongest walls collapse,
When the faith of men falls?

When the black servants of wickedness
Boldly profane troth and faith,
Who then protects the rights of innocence,
And where will one be safe?

[p. 65] Fourth Commandment.

זכור את יום השבת לקדשו ששת ימים תעבד ועשית כל מלאכתך ויום השביעי שבת לה' אלהיך לא תעשה כל מלאכה אתה ובנך ובתך עבדך ואמתך ובהמתך וגרך אשר בשעריך כי ששת ימים עשה ה' את השמים ואת הארץ את הים ואת כל אשר בם וינח ביום השביעי על כן ברך ה' את יום השבת ויקדשהו (Exod. 20:8–11)

Remember always the day of rest, to hallow it. Six days you may labour and do all your business, but the seventh day is a day of rest in honour of the Eternal your God: you shall do no work, neither you yourself, nor your son or your daughter, your manservant, your maidservant, nor through your cattle, or through your stranger who dwells within your gates:

---

[62] Translator: *Kaftor va-Feraḥ* is probably the homiletic compilation of R. Jacob ben Ḥananel of Sicily; the story of the thief who reformed by refraining from lies, attributed to R. Simeon ben Shetah, is not found in the extant Jerusalem Talmud Ḥagigah.

[63] Translator: the stanza literally reads "Rather will I call honest the one who breaks oaths, [than] reconcile nature with murder and darkness with light"; the sense is clearly the reverse, as rendered.

> for in six days the Eternal made heaven, earth and sea, with all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day: therefore the Eternal blessed the day of rest and declared it holy.

[p. 66] Among all the creatures of the world it is granted to man *alone* to contemplate the masterwork of creation. Through his reason he also rules over all other creatures, a right which the Almighty conferred on him at his coming into being with the words ורדו בדגת הים ובעוף השמים ובכל חיה הרמשת על הארץ (Gen. 1:28): rule over the fish of the sea, over the fowl of heaven, and over all living animals that creep upon the earth.

God alone does he recognize as exalted above him; on Him alone does he feel himself dependent; to Him alone does he entrust himself in pious faith in His omnipotence, wisdom and goodness; just as a child, trusting in the wisdom and love of its parents, wholly yields itself to their guidance with the glad conviction that its destiny rests in the best hands. In all the arrangements of nature he recognizes the wise and useful order when he ponders maturely that the wise Creator first, for five days one after another, arranged all creation for the use of man, and let him come into being only on the sixth day, so that on his entry into life he should not be helpless and poor.

Great and glorious, like everything that has come forth from the hand of the divine Creator, man saw himself, as the greatest ornament of all the living beings created around him, in a richly adorned hall full of delight and bliss. With the creation of man the whole great work of creation was now completed; the holy Creator contemplated with glad satisfaction His great masterwork, and found everything fitting to His great plan of creation, good and perfect. [p. 67] The seventh day now drew near, and with it began the first universal rest. He instituted this day as a day of rest, in remembrance of creation: namely, that His holy omnipotence created everything out of nothing, ordered it in six days, and on the seventh rested from the work of creation. He blessed and hallowed this day, because He found the highest satisfaction in the completed work of creation.

This seventh day of the week was already given the name שבת by the most ancient peoples, and called *Sabbat*. And the sacred history of antiquity furnishes many proofs which attest the will of the divine Creator that this שבת day is to be יום קדוש ושבת לה' [a holy day and a Sabbath unto the Lord].

Already at the Exodus from מצרים [Egypt], the kind Creator showed Himself, throughout that whole forty-year journey, always as a loving father and sustainer of His creatures; but even then He maintained His hallowed order in nature, in that He let the מן [manna], which fell from heaven six days in succession, fall on the sixth day in double measure, namely as much as was needed for

food for the sixth and the seventh day, so as not to disturb the rest of the holy שבת by the gathering of the manna, and so that this day might be celebrated in glory.[64]

By this the Almighty also wished at the same time to assure us that He had blessed this day: that is, that one is compensated in advance for abstaining from all trades, business and work on the שבת; therefore this day shall be יום קדוש ושבת לה'.

We find this still more clearly in the case of the שמיטה [the sabbatical year], where the holy תורה expresses [p. 68] itself clearly and definitely: שש שנים תזרע שדך etc. ובשנה השביעת שבת שבתון יהיה וצויתי את ברכתי לכם בשנה הששית ועשת את התבואה לשלש השנים etc. לארץ שבת לה' שדך לא תזרע (Lev. 25:3–21): For six years you may sow your field, prune your vineyard and gather in its fruits; but in the seventh year the land shall keep a festival of rest: a festival in honour of the Eternal; your field you shall not sow, your vineyard you shall not prune; the land will yield its fruits, and you will have enough to eat. You will perhaps say: but what shall we eat in the following year, if in the past seventh year we have sown and harvested nothing? Hear, then, the clear assurance of His omnipotence: וצויתי את ברכתי לכם בשנה הששית ועשת את התבואה לשלש השנים: I will bestow My blessing in the sixth year; even though the field has already borne fruit for five years in succession and has by degrees grown exhausted, I shall nevertheless give it so much strength in the sixth year that it shall bear a threefold harvest; thereby you will surely be convinced that the שמיטה is שבת לה' [a Sabbath unto the Lord].

We will now turn to the chief purpose of this fourth commandment. It begins with the words זכור את יום השבת לקדשו: remember always the day of rest, to hallow it.

A day of rest is the name of a day on which man rests from his work. Many who are given to idleness, revelry and gluttony take the day of rest to mean that on it one may live in abundance, revel and gorge oneself. But let us not [p. 69] forget that the divine commandment says "*to hallow it*"! — That is the weighty word on which every Israelite should reflect: namely, that this day is to be spent in *rest* and with *solemnity*, and *hallowed*.

It is spent in *rest* when one abstains from all work and casts off all cares; it is *celebrated* through fitting recreation and lawful pleasures; it is finally and especially *hallowed* through self-examination and the searching of one's conscience concerning the actions one has committed in the preceding week; when one asks oneself: have I neglected no duty, acted against no religious law? when one repents of the evil and forms the pious resolution to avoid it in future and to will and do only the good; when, finally, one seeks to occupy oneself preferably with God alone, our Father, who should be above all to us, through devout prayers, through private study of the holy תורה וספרי מוסר [Torah and books of moral instruction], especially בסדר התורה [in the order of the Torah], namely בפרשת השבוע [the weekly portion], through attentively hearing the instruction

[64] Translator: Exod. 16:22–30.

given by a regular רבי (teacher) בהתורה ובמצות השם ב"ה [in the Torah and in the commandments of the Name, blessed be He], and with guidance and instruction in civic laws and in morality.

Through all these exercises God is worshipped, the שבת day hallowed, and our heart calmed and improved; this is the will of God and the meaning of the words זכור את יום השבת לקדשו.

These too are the words of the holy prophet (Isa. 58:13):

אם תשיב משבת רגלך עשות חפצך ביום קדשי וקראת לשבת ענג לקדוש ה' מכבד וכבדתו מעשות דרכיך ממצוא חפצך ודבר דבר אז תתענג על ה' והרכבתיך על במותי ארץ והאכלתיך נחלת יעקב אביך כי פי ה' דבר

> If on the שבת you rest your steps, if on My holy day trades rest, if you call the שבת the delight of the soul, wholly consecrated to the hallowing of God, by resting from the turmoil of the world; if the soul is silent from vain wishes, the mouth from empty talk: yes! then you will find rest for your soul with the Eternal; surely you will rise through Him above all the heights of the earth, and enjoy the heritage of your father Jacob; thus speaks the Eternal. (Isa. 58:13–14)
>
> The שבת must be holy to thee,
> To thy God thou must hallow it;
> Yet it is not enough merely
> To exalt God on the שבת:
> No, thy whole lifetime
> Be consecrated to His תורה and מצות.

The daughter of רבי נחונינא בן דוסא [Rabbi Ḥanina ben Dosa], busy in devout zeal, was once running to and fro on an ערב שבת [Sabbath eve], complaining of the sluggishness of her maid; for she wished to kindle her שבת lamp, but saw that it had been filled with vinegar instead of oil. With a distraught face and tears in her eyes she stepped into her room, just as her pious father came in her way and noticed her troubled face and tear-filled eyes. What has happened to you, my dear daughter, he asked her, that you look so downcast and troubled? With [p. 71] childlike pious sense and innocence in her gentle, gracious countenance, the motherless daughter replied, fearful and embarrassed: Ah! I meant to hallow the Sabbath, as the law requires, by kindling the lamp, and carelessly poured vinegar instead of oil into a lamp; evening is already falling, my maid is too sluggish, and the fright has so shaken me that I am now too weak to fetch oil from the town so quickly.

Be comforted, my dear daughter! the holy Rabbi Ḥanina answered her; He who commanded the oil to burn can also bid the vinegar burn.

Humbly the pious daughter placed herself before her lamp and prayed to God with pure faith, and her sincere prayer was heard.

^(מסכת תענית ומדרש ילקוט [Tractate Ta'anit and Midrash Yalkut])[65]

In my *Machane Yisrael* I explained that the Sabbath was instituted in remembrance of the creation of the world, because God completed creation in six days and rested on the seventh day; and that the Sabbath festival is therefore begun with the kindling of lights, because the all-wise Creator began the greatest work of creation with the illumination of light.[66]

Now when the daughter of Rabbi Ḥanina saw that the honouring of the Sabbath had become impossible for her, she wept over the offence she had committed in her devotion. Her wise father wished to comfort and instruct the grieving girl, saying that the kindling of the Sabbath lamp[67] in

---

[65]Translator: BT Ta'anit 25a (the story of R. Ḥanina ben Dosa and his daughter); the name is printed in the forms רבי נחונינא בן דוסא / רבי נחוניא.

[66]Translator: *Machane Yisrael* (מחנה ישראל) is evidently an earlier work of the author's; the Hebrew note below likewise cites his *Megillat Mattityahu*.

[67]Our Sages of blessed memory already said that the choicest way of fulfilling the commandment is to kindle with olive oil, as it is stated in Tractate Shabbat, folio 23 [BT Shabbat 23a]: "R. Joshua ben Levi said: All oils are fit for the lamp, but olive oil is the choicest." And in Judges 9[:9], "And the olive tree said to them: Should I leave my fatness, wherewith by me they honour God and men" — Radak explains: God, in that they kindle with it before God; and men, in that they offer it in meal-offerings before God. And the Ba'al ha-Turim finds an allusion in the portion "that they bring thee pure olive oil" [Exod. 27:20] to the kindling of the Sabbath lamp; see there. One may wonder: what advantage has olive oil over all the pure, sweet-smelling oils found in nature? And why did they choose it for every holy purpose — from it our fathers took the holy oil to raise up the perpetual lamp, to anoint with it the vessels of the Tabernacle and the priests who drew near to offer sacrifice to the Lord, and to anoint a king with it, and much else? — It appears from what is said in Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer, and is cited in the Yalkut in various places: "He sent forth the raven [...] to know what was in the world, and it went and found a carcass cast out and sat upon it, and did not return; and he again sent forth the dove [...], and it brought an olive leaf plucked off in its mouth and announced peace on earth" [cf. PRE 23; Gen. 8:7–11]. And one may remark: did not the raven also see the olive on the Mount of Anointing [the Mount of Olives], which was exposed, since the Flood did not sweep over it — as it is said in the Midrash that the land of Israel was not flooded by the waters of the Flood [cf. Gen. Rabbah 33:6]? And did it not find a carcass on the dry land? Why then did the Lord reject the first raven from announcing peace through it to those left in the world, and the matter was delayed until the dove was sent, and the Lord chose it to announce good and peace? — Now I have found in the Jerusalem Talmud, Kilayim [1:7], cited in Yalkut Tehillim §881: "R. Simeon ben Lakish said: 'Thy children like olive plants' [Ps. 128:3] — just as the olive admits no grafting, so thy children have no unfit ones among them." And so it is in the books of natural science: that over all the trees in the world the hand of man has power to graft them, to improve and beautify them and bring forth new fruit, except the olive, which will not change nor alter its stock among those planted and will not be mingled, and will not cease to yield fruit like pleasant plants, as those grown up in their youth; and if the hand of man touches it to graft it, even its branches and roots go little by little to ruin and destruction. Therefore Israel, the people in which God chose to separate them from the star-worshipping nations, He called by the name of olive as His inheritance, as the prophet Jeremiah said: "A green olive tree, fair with goodly fruit, the Lord called thy name" [Jer. 11:16], since its waters do not fail; and no man among the people, neither priest nor prophet, can put forth his hand to graft their faith and religion and unite them with the religion and faith of a foreign people, unless the religion and faith go to ruin. And likewise they compared them to the dove, which always keeps its way and does not pair with any but its own mate, as Rashi wrote on the Song of Songs: "As this dove cleaves to its mate, so Israel acknowledge and cleave to their Father in heaven." And now see and consider! In the generation of the Flood, from man to beast, the fowl of the heaven and the beasts of the field corrupted their way and mated with what was not of their kind, except the species of the dove, which always keeps its way and has not changed its nature; and it was only for the sin [of mixing kinds] that the creatures of the generation of the Flood were gathered away. Therefore the Lord chose these, the dove and the olive, for both of them are pure and unique in their nature and steadfast in their formation; both are fitting and worthy to announce good and peace on earth (and so even in our days the olive branch is the sign of the covenant of peace in the wars of the kings of the East). — Now in the introduction to *Megillat Mattityahu* we discussed at length the subject of the Sabbath, from the words of Nachmanides and the *Guide* [of Maimonides]: that the Sabbath teaches the creation of the world, and creation teaches and implies One who brought existence into being, who is the cause and reason of all causes and all existence; and the Lord is One and unique, without composition, in heaven, and Israel too is one nation on earth, who will not unite their faith and religion with others; and God gave the Sabbath as

remembrance of [p. 72] creation had been instituted, and that the Almighty, who at creation gave the oil the power to burn, could also lend this power to the vinegar without thereby changing the laws of nature.

[p. 73] Hostile warriors had once taken a city by force of arms, and led away into slavery as captives those of its inhabitants they could lay hands on. Among these unfortunates there was also a little boy, who was just coming out of school, and had the [p. 74] ספר בראשית מהחמשה חומשי תורת משה [the Book of Genesis, from the Five Books of the Torah of Moses] under his arm, and he had been seized by the enemy soldiers, who took the Chumash from him and brought it with them to the capital of the land. He was put in prison, but the Chumash was kept in the royal library. Some time afterwards the king once could not sleep, and tossed about on his bed; the time grew long for him; and so, to drive away his tedium, he had some books fetched from his library. By chance the attending servant had also brought the ספר בראשית taken from the boy. The king opened the book and wondered at the script, unknown to him. He asked how this strange book had come into his library; one of the court officials who had been called in recognized it, and said: Royal Majesty, it is the same book which, in the last war, at the conquest of that city, was taken from a Jewish boy, who together with several others of his nation is still in Your Majesty's prison. Eager to learn the contents of this book, the king had the captive boy brought out of the prison, in order to have him read to him from the book.

The boy then appeared before the king. When he caught sight of his Chumash, he began to weep violently. The king, thinking the boy was weeping from fear, sought to comfort him, and said: Do not be afraid, child, dry your tears, no harm will come to you. Ah! magnanimous and gracious king, the boy answered, it is not fear of a misfortune threatening me that is the cause of my tears, but the memory of those happy [p. 75] times when, in the house of my parents, I was taught out of this holy book, which contains so many instructive and comforting teachings, that presses tears of joy from me. Yes, believe me, my lord and king! the boy went on with rising enthusiasm, the teachings of the wisdom of life, of nature, of religion and of peace of soul are contained in this book.

If you know the book so well, the king answered, then read to me from it! — Undaunted, the boy sat down before the king's bed and read; the king listened very attentively, and when the boy had finished, the delighted monarch cried out: Praised be God the Eternal! the great Creator of heaven and of earth, who is great and sublime in His works, and just in the guiding of human destinies; even a child shows this in this matter that concerns us both!

---

a sign of a covenant of peace between Him and Israel. And the kindling of the Sabbath lamp is a remembrance of the work of creation, as we said in our book *Machane Yisrael*: since the beginning of the work of creation was with light, therefore the beginning of the holiness of the Sabbath and the remembrance of the work of creation should also be with light; see there. Therefore it is fitting always to take care to kindle with olive oil, which admits no change and no grafting. [Translator: this Hebrew note runs from p. 71 to p. 73.]

Your God has heard your innocent prayer and your pleading for release: for in order to deliver you from your captivity, in which you languished far from your parents, He took from me my night's sleep and rest; He sent me your book and made you known to me. That your pious childlike spirit might be rewarded, and that you might be restored to your grieving parents, He awakened the feeling of compassion and of love of mankind in my breast, and gave me the noble pleasure of founding your happiness. Receive, then, your freedom from my hand; you have truly earned it, for you have taught me to know the true God, who is the Lord and Father of all creatures, and who [p. 76] has ordered the world so. Your captive fellow believers too, who had the misfortune to be brought in as slaves, shall be set free. —

The noble king kept his word. Scarcely had day broken when he had the boy, richly endowed with gifts, brought back to his poor and bowed-down parents, who, newly revived by the joyful and happy reunion with their son, reached a great age in wealth, happiness and blessing.

^(מעשה זו העתקתי מספר א' ישן נושן [I copied this story from an old, ancient book])

[p. 77] Fifth Commandment.

כבד את אביך ואת אמך למען יארכון ימיך על האדמה אשר ה' אלהיך נתן לך (Exod. 20:12)

> Honour thy father and thy mother, that thou mayest live long upon the land which the Eternal thy God will give thee.

God is the first object of our reverence, for He is the original source of all things. Just as God gave us life and sustains it, and is our Creator and Father, so He also gave it to us through our parents. Just as He is fatherly disposed toward us, loves us and cares for us, so too He implanted a similar disposition toward us in our parents, and planted in their hearts the tenderest inclinations for us, which are so tender, so ardent and so invincible that our parents' love for us increases with their whole life. One would think that the mother in childbirth, because of the great pains and the almost unbearable danger to life which she must endure in giving birth, ought to be angry with the child that caused her these pains and this danger, and ought to feel hatred rather than love toward it; but still pierced with pain, still trembling and quaking with fear, the mother turns to the little helpless [p. 78] creature, presses it with her trembling arms to her heart, glowing with mother-love, and caresses it with joy and tenderness. The preservation of mother and child fills the father with anxiety; yet in spite of it, drunk with joy, he strives to apply every means in order not only to preserve mother and child but also to be able to strengthen them.

Hence, after the first four commandments, which treat of the duties toward God, the Father of all, there follows the commandment concerning the duties toward parents: that we are to love and honour them, because they have not only given us life, but also seek to preserve it with extraordinary toil and anxious care.

Yes, after God, parents are the nearest object of our reverence; and so God calls out to mankind the first duty: כבד את אביך ואת אמך [Honour thy father and thy mother].

But true and pure filial love demands not only respect in outward form, that is, not only courteous words, friendly greetings and affectionate behaviour, but active proofs of love and gratitude; it therefore demands readiness to lighten every sorrow and every grief of one's parents; to ease their cares for their livelihood with active sympathy; to bear with patience the weaknesses peculiar to old age; to keep their faults and infirmities secret; to nourish and support them in their old age, in need, without grumbling; to tend them in their illnesses with a loving hand; to watch at their sickbed; to pray daily with fervour to God the Almighty for their health and their long life; and finally, willing obedience to their will: to renounce all desires that are against the will of the parents, and to refrain from all actions that they [p. 79] censure; to carry out their commands and charges punctually, be they gentle or stern; and to bring their last dispositions to fulfilment. Of such children the holy Psalmist speaks: נחלת ה' בנים שכר פרי הבטן (Ps. 127:3):

> Children are the gifts of God,
> The fruit of the womb is virtue's reward.

It will always go well with such children, both here below and beyond the grave, as is promised them in this commandment: למען יארכון ימיך על האדמה אשר ה' אלהיך נתן לך [that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee]. Such children are loved and blessed by their parents and by all men; and so let this holy wish also be concluded with a *blessing*[68]:

> Lord of the worlds! bless all good, pious children; implant in their רבון העולמים! hearts a grateful and active love toward their parents, and reward this their love with the whole fullness of Thy grace; give them health and long life, and teach them to make wise use of it; give them of the goods of this earth always so much that they may live happy and content; give them peace of soul; preserve them in innocence and virtue; strengthen their hearts in faith in Thy holy *Torah* and in the observance of Thy *mitzvot*; plant in their hearts high esteem for the teachings מחכמינו הקדושים בעלי התלמוד ז"ל [of our holy Sages, the masters of the Talmud, of blessed memory], whereby they will never waver; and there, there give them their portion הצפון לצדיקים [that is stored up for the righteous]. אמן.
>
> Ever wiser, more pious growing,
> Fulfilling man's destiny on earth —

[68] Rabbi Eliezer said: Never hold the blessing of an insignificant man to be slight; for two great men, David the King and Daniel, were blessed by insignificant men, and it was fulfilled in them. (מגילה דף ט"ו [BT Megillah 15a])

Therefore well for him who never forgets this
As long as he is here on earth!

A heathen named דמה בן נתינה [Dama ben Netinah] had some precious gems, which he would gladly have sold at a fair price, because he did not need them. At that very time precious stones of just this kind were being sought for the *Ephod* (this was an ornament which the *High Priest* had to put on at divine service). Now when it became known that the said heathen possessed these stones, some men of Israel were sent to him to offer to buy them. Dama showed them the stones, and they found them suited to their purpose. Without hearing his price, in their zeal they offered him an enormous sum of money for them: the heathen noticed that they would pay even more for them, and therefore refused, took the stones and locked them again in the casket from which he had taken them. The bargaining went on; meanwhile, however, Dama's old father had fallen asleep, and his feet happened to come to rest right on the casket in which the stones were kept, so that it was impossible to get at the stones without waking the father from his sleep; Dama therefore hesitated to hand over the stones. But when the envoys pressed him with the remark that they were in haste, and that they would also[69] [p. 81] be able to find such stones for sale at some other place, Dama replied: "By no means will you obtain the stones at this moment. You see that I cannot now open the little chest in which they are kept without waking my father from his sleep. I would rather let the sale of the stones fall through than make myself guilty of the sin of having woken an old father from his sleep."

The envoys, who were indeed in haste, went away and bought these stones elsewhere for half the price that they had offered Dama. So the good Dama was left with the stones. But his unfeigned filial love compensated him richly for the loss which he had to suffer through the failure of the sale.

Among the herds of this Dama there was soon afterwards a red cow, such as the Israelites needed for a *red heifer* (פרה אדומה); this was very rare, for it had to be entirely without blemish and red all over its body, so that not a single hair of another colour might be found on it; nor might it be more than three years old, or ever have been put to the yoke or used for any work. The Israelites needed such a cow, and found themselves in the greatest perplexity, since one could find one nowhere; but when they learned that Dama ben Netina (דמה בן נתינה) possessed such a cow, the sages of Israel (חכמי ישראל) went to him, looked at the cow, found it good and fit, and asked about the price. — Dama answered them: "I know how much you need such a cow, and that you [p. 82] could not find one even after a long search; I could therefore set its price as high as I pleased, and you would have to pay it, and would pay it. But since the cow is to be slaughtered in honour of your God, I will let you have it for the ordinary value of a common cow; only you must make good

[69] Translator: The story of Dama son of Netinah is told in BT Kiddushin 31a (cf. JT Pe'ah 1:1).

to me the loss which I suffered last year over the transaction in some precious stones that was left uncompleted, when I would not disturb my father in his sleep."

The sages of Israel (חכמי ישראל) approved his demand, gladly agreed to the proposal made, paid for the cow and for the loss so fairly claimed, and held up Dama's conduct and his fortune as a model of filial love: namely, that God leaves no good deed unrewarded, especially where He has accompanied His commandment with so fair a promise, that it shall go well with those who keep the commandment with such self-sacrifice.

(מס' קידושין דף ל"א עיין תוס' שם) [Tractate Kiddushin, folio 31; see Tosafot there.][70]

*

The famous Prussian general Zieten[71] was in his youth a page[72] at the court of King Frederick the Great. Zieten no longer had a father, and his mother supported herself meagrely in her widowhood; he was intent on obtaining some support for her, but at that time he had [p. 83] as yet no opportunity to earn anything, and he could spare nothing from his salary. His filial love, however, devised a means which brought the widowed mother fresh joy and the noble son much honour. The pages, namely, had to keep watch by turns at night in the room next to the king's bedchamber, in order to be at the king's service if he ordered anything during the night; for many this was too burdensome, and so they handed their watch over to others and paid them for it. Zieten therefore began to keep watch at night by the king in place of other pages, and sent the money he received for it to his mother.

Once the king could not sleep at night and wanted something read aloud to him; he rang, he called, but no one came. At last he got up himself and went into the adjoining room to see whether no page was there; here he found the good Zieten, who sat asleep at the table; before him lay a letter to his mother, which he had begun to write and over which he had fallen asleep. The king crept closer and read the beginning of the letter, which ran thus:

"My dearest, beloved Mother!

"Now the third night is already nearly over that I have kept the watch for money; I can hardly bear it any longer. Meanwhile I am glad that I have again earned ten thalers for you, which I send you herewith."

The king, moved by the goodness of heart of this youth, let him sleep, went into his room, fetched two rolls of ducats, put one into each of the page's pockets, and went back to bed.

---

[70] Translator: BT Kiddushin 31a; the story of Dama ben Netina and the red heifer is also told in BT Avodah Zarah 23b–24a.

[71] Translator: Hans Joachim von Zieten (1699–1786), the Prussian cavalry general. The anecdote of the page and his mother is a well-known one, more usually told of an unnamed page of Frederick the Great.

[72] Pages are the name given to young noblemen who must keep watch by the king at night and serve him.

[p. 84] When Zieten woke and found the money in his pockets, he at once supposed that the good king must have found him asleep here. He was glad of it, indeed, because he could now support his mother still better; yet at the same time he was alarmed that the king had found him asleep.

In the morning, as soon as he came to the king, he humbly begged forgiveness for having slept, and thanked him with the most heartfelt emotion for the gift with which the fatherly monarch had made him happy. The great king praised his filial love, at once appointed him an officer, and gave him a further sum of money to procure everything he needed for his new position. Zieten afterwards rose ever higher, was the king's favourite, became a general, and lived to a great age.

—

*

The city of Algiers, which lies in Africa, is under the sovereignty of the Turkish emperor. Its inhabitants are pirates, and for that reason keep many warships which constantly cruise about the sea in order to capture the ships of the various nations. When they take such ships, all who are found aboard, except their own fellow-believers, are brought to Algiers and made slaves, and there they must perform hard labour until perhaps their friends in Europe learn of it and buy them free again.

Among the captives who were brought there, there was once a young man from Sweden who, after he had served as a slave for some time, had the good fortune to be bought free by his relatives. He was already filled with the hope of soon being in the arms of his parents and in the arms of his [p. 85] tenderly beloved bride, of returning to Europe; already, with tears of joy, he was painting for himself the loveliest pictures of seeing his fatherland again, and thought himself the happiest of all mortals, when all at once his splendid prospect vanished and hurled him anew back into his former condition.

A ship came sailing in with a number of captured Europeans, among whom was the father of the freed slave. Who can describe the moment! Who is able to express in words the feeling that overwhelmed the thunderstruck young man when, among the number of newly arrived slaves, he had to behold his infinitely beloved, grey-haired father? He ran up and made himself known to him. Both wept for joy at seeing each other again, but at the same time they raised a loud lament and wailed over their misfortune on both sides. The son had already experienced how heavy the yoke of Turkish slavery was, and could easily foresee that his old father would not be able to bear it long; he therefore resolved to become a slave again himself and to take his father's place. He accordingly begged the pirates to release his father and to keep him instead in his place. His request was granted at once, for he was young and strong and could work more than his father. But the All-Good, who leaves no virtuous deed unrewarded, crowned this filial devotion too with a glorious outcome. The Dey[73] of Algiers learned of this story, [p. 86] and the filial loyalty of the

[73]The ruling prince.

good son pleased him so much that he granted him his freedom as a reward, so that father and son together were able to return to their fatherland.

*

Gustavus the Third, king of Sweden,[74] was riding through a village where a pretty peasant girl stood at the well drawing water. "Give me something to drink, good child," said Gustavus to her; the girl kindly handed him a refreshing draught. "You are such an obliging girl," said the monarch; "come with me to the city; you shall have good days." — "No! I must look after my poor sick mother!" — "Your mother? — where is she?" — "Here in the hut." — Gustavus went into the hut, and there found an old, crippled woman lying on the straw and groaning. "I pity you, little mother," said the sympathetic father of the country. "O heaven!" replied the unfortunate woman, "I should have to starve if my daughter did not feed me by the work of her hands and nurse me so carefully. May God repay her a thousandfold!" Tears ran down the old mother's cheeks, and Gustavus wept with her; glad in this blessed moment that he was a king, he at once left behind a considerable sum of money, assigned the poor woman [a pension],[75] promised her lifelong support and the daughter a rich dowry, and comforted them both besides with the pleasant hope that in future too he would care for them like a father.

*

[p. 87] That children, even in palaces, when they have become honoured and great, should still honour their parents and show them respect, the Bible story itself shows us.

When Bathsheba (בת שבע), the mother of King Solomon (שלמה המלך), once came to this wise king to speak with him on behalf of Adonijah (אדוניהו), he stood up respectfully, as we find expressly stated (1 Kings 2:19):

ויקם המלך לקראתה וישתחו לה וישב על כסאו וישם כסא לאם המלך ותשב לימינו

> The king rose, went to meet her, bowed before her, then sat down again on his throne, had a chair brought for her, and she had to sit at his right hand. (1 Kings 2:19)

*

Thus too a highly respected official of state, who had risen to this high rank through his outstanding merits, not only always gladly saw his parents with him, but whenever they came to him he always went out to meet them as far as the door of his splendid palace, and welcomed them in the most friendly manner and with reverence.

Once he had arranged a great banquet, at which the company consisted of the most distinguished men. Just as they were sitting at table, a servant announced to him that his old father was in the

---

[74] Translator: Gustav III, king of Sweden 1771–1792.

[75] Translator: A word here is indistinct in the print; the sense appears to be a regular allowance.

anteroom. At once the son hurried away from the table, went into the anteroom, and received the old father most lovingly; he took him by the hand, led him with visible joy into the dining room, and seated him in the highest place at the table. "This is my father," he said with childlike delight; "grant him the honour and the joy of sitting with us; he is [p. 88] an old, upright man, who is worthy of this place."

My dear children! Keep these rare examples ever in remembrance, and always hold your parents in honour, be they rich or poor, of high or low station, learned or unlearned; ומצא חן ושכל טוב בעיני אלהים ואדם [Prov. 3:4], then you will find favour and good will in the eyes of God and man.

*

What a father, for his part, is capable of sacrificing for his children, the following true story may show.

A poor craftsman at Enkirch on the Moselle, named Adam Steger, had a wife and four children, whom, in the greatest dearth, for all his utmost diligence and the hardest labour, he still could not support. Yet he was content so long as he saw his family cheerful.

Once, however, he and his family fell into the direst need; he saw his good wife and his beloved children struggling with the bitterest want; they cried for bread, and he could get them nothing. With deep tears he begged for alms, which he very often received from kind-hearted benefactors; but the want and the dearth were so great that with the gifts he received he could sustain the lives of his family for only a few hours.

He now fell into despair, and wandered disconsolately about the streets of the town. There he met one of his acquaintances, who was almost as poor as he; this man saw his sad state, and asked the cause of it, which Adam told him in the following words: "Ah, my wife, my four poor children! They have had [p. 89] since yesterday noon not a mouthful of bread more, and I know of nothing more to do — I no longer even know where I should turn to find help."

Deeply moved by the fate of this unfortunate father, his friend, who was poor as well, answered: "Here are two kreuzer; that is all I have in my possession. But if you want to earn money, I could tell you of a means."

"What sort of means is it?" cried Adam. "I will do anything, so long as it is no immoral act; only tell me, I beg you for heaven's sake!"

The other answered him: "Then go to the nearest town; there lives someone who is learning to let blood. If you can bring yourself to let him bleed you, you will get some money for it."

Adam had always been afraid of bloodletting, and for that reason had never yet been bled in his life; naturally, he had all the more reason to fear being bled by an apprentice who did not yet understand the art at all. But love for his family now overcame all fear. He did not deliberate long,

but ran as fast as he could to the apprentice he had been told of, had a vein in his arm opened, and received a gulden for it.

After he had now shed his blood with the greatest joy, to help his wife and his children, he ran, without heeding his weakness, to a baker, bought bread, and hurried home to share it with them. They rejoiced beyond words. But how great was their astonishment when, in their boundless joy over the food they had received, they saw blood flowing from the arm of their noble father. They asked him what [p. 90] was wrong with him. He told them what had happened in a cheerful voice, but from great weakness could no longer stand; he sat down on a chair, pressed his children to his heart, and fell asleep — the eternal sleep of the dead.

*

A poor widow, Ludwig Annan[76] in Ireland, who had three small children and lived in the greatest want and misery, once fell into dire need. Her children cried for bread; she did not know where to turn; she had nothing left but a few old, worn-out clothes. These she took, went weeping to a woman who dealt in meal, and asked for a little oatmeal, for which she offered to give her clothes in pledge. The meal-dealer turned her away, because the clothes had no value, and said she had no room to take such rags into safekeeping.

In the evening, when her husband came home, she told him everything, and said how much she nevertheless regretted having given the poor woman nothing. The husband at once set out, took a loaf of bread, and hurried with it to the widow's house; but he came too late: hunger, and despair over the want of her children, had already killed the poor woman.

What a pitiful sight! When the meal-dealer came into the house, he saw the mother lying dead on a straw bed; two small naked children were crying and weeping around her; the third child lay at her breast and sought in vain for nourishment from this dried-up spring. He stood as if turned to stone at this sight. — When at last he had recovered from his shock, he dealt [p. 91] the bread out to the children, took the infant in his arms and the others by the hand, and brought all three orphans into his house.

Of all the sorrows earth can show
The sharpest is a mother's pain;
Yet the purest joys we know
A happy mother's heart contains.

When grief upon the mother weighs,
And hundredfold her troubles press,
See how soon her lament stays
When her babe lies in her caress!

[76]Translator: The name is printed indistinctly (apparently לודוויג אַננאַן); the reading is uncertain.

Were it offerings that she must make,
She would give up every pleasure of the sense;[77]
Dearer to her than all gifts
Is the little child at her breast.

If it lies sick within its cradle,
See, the mother sits close by,
Listens to its every breath,
Tends it with a mother's loyalty.

She rears it with a mother's mildness,
Brings it to God as His possession,
Forms it as Sarah formed Isaac,
Draws it, pious, to His glory.

Should sin seek to lead it astray,
Silently she kneels in prayer;
Ah! and a mother's tears will move
Mightily the wandering mind.

[p. 92] Is her earthly course completed,
Lies she near to death herself,
Is her daily labour ended,
How consoled she lies there then.

Lifts her mother's hand to bless
Over every head, and speaks:
"Gladly go I forth to death;
Your God will not forsake you."

In the quiet garden of the dead
Stand they then, whom God gave her,
And with tender care they tend
The flowers upon her grave.

When the morning sun one day wakes her
From the long repose of the grave,
Ah, with what bliss God leads
All her tears back to her!

*

[77] Translator: The first two lines of this stanza are partly indistinct and their syntax is uncertain; the sense is that the mother would gladly sacrifice every sensual pleasure.

[p. 93] After a violent hailstorm, a bird was found in the Prater near Vienna lying dead upon its young in the nest, its wings spread out. A poet passing by wrote the following thoughts beneath the nest:

Could I weep for you no more,
Ah, you poor small creature, you!
Lovingly you shielded the little ones,
Covered them as a mother would.

But the hail came pelting down;
Now you lie dead upon them here,
And they live, and once again
Greedily demand their food from you.

You cared for the little ones' life
Faithfully, with a true mother's duty;
Ah! who will give you food now?
Your mother hears you not.

Father of all! in the fullness
Of Your goodness, look down here,
See a creature to whom Your will
Gave neither reason nor wisdom!

See, it follows the inner impulse
Faithfully, which Your bidding lent it;
Loves with true mother's love
Its brood, and dies for them.

After the lapse of an hour, during which the poet had given everyone time to contemplate sufficiently this wonder of divine wisdom and goodness, he took the young ones out of the nest, fed them carefully until they could fly, and then let them fly away.

*

[p. 94] I have already treated in a *Machaneh Yissachar*[78] the duties of loyalty and love toward the father of the country, toward teachers and superiors, and further those of gratitude and thankfulness, and in general all duties of right. But in order to leave no gap in this little work, I will relate some further stories of a similar kind.

In the second French war, in the year 1793, many voluntary gifts of money were presented to the Emperor Francis the Second by his loyal subjects, so that he might more easily meet the costs of the war and protect the fatherland.

[78] Translator: מחנה יששכר ("The Camp of Issachar"), evidently another of Frank's works, here referred to by its Hebrew title.

Once a peasant also came, with the words: "I bring something too —" and laid a thousand gulden on the table before the Emperor. The Emperor marvelled at this considerable gift from a peasant, and asked him his name and where he came from.

Had he told the Emperor both, it would perhaps have become known through the newspaper or in some other way, and he could have gained the greatest honour. But he had not brought this gift for the sake of honour, but solely out of loyalty and love for his good monarch; therefore he answered the Emperor's question quite briefly: "That no one is to know —" and with that he went away.

The Emperor sent people after him to ask him once more his name and place of residence; but he answered them with a laugh: "Do you think that I will tell you, when I did not tell the Emperor?"

[p. 95] Once, when there was a fire in Vienna, the Emperor Joseph the Second also came to the scene and stood right next to the burning house. A craftsman saw that the Emperor was in danger; he warned him and begged him to go away. The Emperor looked about to see whether the danger was really so great; but as he hesitated so long, the craftsman came, seized him impetuously, lifted him up, and carried him to a safe place. Scarcely was he standing there when the burning house collapsed, and the fiery beams fell precisely on the spot where the Emperor had been standing before.

The monarch offered his rescuer, by way of reward, his purse full of money; but the good craftsman did not accept it, but said: "What I did, I did out of love; but if I am to ask a favour, let it be one meant for a neighbour of mine;[79] he is an honest, industrious man, but so poor that he cannot become a master and set himself up in his trade."

The Emperor granted his request and made the poor neighbour a rich gift, but in honour of his rescuer he had a gold medal struck.

*

A ship that was going down the Rhine to Holland struck a sandbank and was dashed to pieces. The parts of the ship came apart from one another, and the people who were on board fell into the greatest danger. Each sought to save himself as best he could. The forward part of the ship still stood fast upon the sand, but was already entirely under water; therefore four per- [p. 96] sons climbed up the mast and held fast to it. One of them was a peasant from Westphalia. A Jew, who was still down on the ship, asked this peasant's permission to hang on to his leg. "Yes, yes!" said the peasant, "hang on; if I can no longer hold you, we shall both drown." So the Jew hung on to the peasant's foot. In the meantime another ship came and rescued them all. The Jew heartily thanked the peasant who had saved his life, wrote down his name and place of residence, and said at parting: "Just now I have nothing; but as soon as I can, I will show you that I am grateful for the

[79] Translator: One word in this phrase is indistinct in the print; the sense is that the craftsman asks the favour on his neighbour's behalf.

kindness you have done me." "Go in God's name!" said the peasant. "I did what every man must do for another; thank God, who has saved us from death."

The Jew went. Two years passed without his letting anything be heard of him; no one thought of him any more. At last a letter came from him to the magistrate of the place where the peasant lived; this letter was written from Frankfurt am Main. The Jew wrote the magistrate the whole story, how the peasant had saved his life, and then went on:

"For a long time I could give my benefactor nothing, because my circumstances did not allow it; but I have often thought of him; I have often prayed for him when I thanked God for the preservation of our lives. Now I have somewhat more; God has blessed my work, to Him be praise. And now I must think of the good, honest peasant. Here is cloth for clothes for him, for his wife [p. 97] "and children, and at the same time 50 ducats. — For- "give me for giving you this trouble, and I ask you "to give the good *peasant* these presents; "but should he be no longer living, his wife and "children will surely need them too, "and will rejoice over them. — It will not be disagreeable to you, "I trust, to send me a few lines in "reply, and also news of my benefactor."

The magistrate had the *peasant* fetched. The latter had been brought very low by illness, and found himself just then in great distress; for he was in arrears with manorial dues, and did not know how he was to pay them. He was therefore also frightened when the magistrate had him called. — Yet he went at once and said, quite fearfully: "What are your orders, Mr. Magistrate?"

At first the magistrate frightened him a little, and demanded of him the money in arrears. But when the *peasant* began to lament and to weep, the magistrate said:

"Now, now, just be quiet! We shall see. — But do you not remember that two years ago a *Jew* clung to your leg?"[80]

The *peasant* at first could not remember, but at last it came back to him, and he said:

"Ah, dear God! Yes, now I remember it; the poor man was so glad then at the saving of his little bit of life. — I should like to know whether he is still alive; he seemed to be a good soul. — Yes, yes, God saved us there quite wonderfully."

[p. 98] The magistrate asked further: "Did he not promise you a reward?"

"Ah, dear God!" — said the *peasant* — "he surely had nothing himself; he was very ragged. Yes, he wrote down my name, and a good deal else besides."

The magistrate said thereupon:

"The *Jew* is an honest, upright man; he keeps his word. He sends you this as a reward."

---

[80] Translator: Referring to the earlier part of the story (p. 96), where the Jew, in deep water, held fast to the peasant's leg and was saved.

At these words the magistrate laid on the table the cloth for clothing that the *Jew* had sent; the money, however, he still kept back. The *peasant* stood quite astonished, rubbed his eyes, asked — and when he heard that the *Jew* had sent it, and that this present was meant for him, he said:

"Now God reward him for it! I did too little for this; it is God and him I have to thank."

Then the magistrate brought out the money and the letter as well, counted out the fifty ducats and said:

"That is yours too!"

The *peasant* could not speak; he wept, kissed the magistrate's hand, and at last cried out: "No, God, I am not worth that for a little hanging on my leg! O God, bless him! And make all honest people happy!"

The magistrate now exhorted him to keep house well. The *peasant* followed this advice. He also wrote a heartfelt letter of thanks to the *Jew*. — The latter, however, sent every year afterwards a parcel to the good *peasant*, containing sometimes money, sometimes cloth, and sometimes other presents.

[p. 99] That the tender feelings of love for the father of the land take firm root in childlike hearts too, and can be powerfully stirred, the following story gives convincing proof.

When in the month of Adar of the year 1826 our all-beloved *Emperor Francis*[81] suddenly fell dangerously ill, hours of prayer were held twice daily, as is well known, in the synagogues (בתי כנסיות) and in the houses of prayer of the various religious denominations throughout the whole monarchy, for the happy recovery of the dear father of the land.

Scarcely had the sad news of His Majesty's dangerous illness arrived here when, on the order of the illustrious rabbi, the head of the rabbinical court (may his lamp shine), and of the leaders of the community (may their Rock preserve them),[82] all were at once called to prayer at three o'clock in the afternoon.

This unusual summons aroused general astonishment, and also let it be inferred that something of the utmost importance had happened. The illustrious rabbi, head of the court, may his lamp shine, the leaders, heads and notables of the community, and all who study the Torah, betook themselves together to the synagogue, which was soon filled by the streaming crowd: elders and youths from among the students of the yeshivah, and the schoolchildren (זקנים ונערים מבני הישיבה ותינוקות בית רבן).

---

[81] Translator: Emperor Francis I of Austria (r. 1792/1804–1835), who fell seriously ill in March 1826.

[82] Translator: The Hebrew honorifics (הרב הגאון אב"ד נרו, ואלופים קהל יצ"ו) are given in English. The rabbi is presumably R. Moses Sofer of Pressburg, the author's city.

On the order of the illustrious rabbi, head of the court, may he live, the Psalms (מזמורי תהלים) suited to the occasion were recited alternately, verse by verse (פסוק). Among the crowd there was a seven-year-old boy, the son of respectable and well-to-do parents. Scarcely had he heard the reason for the assembly — that our all-beloved monarch lay so gravely ill — when he forced his way through the crowd to the [p. 100] door, and ran quickly to his mother. She, alarmed at the boy's distraught face, anxiously asked him what had happened to him; whereupon the boy, sobbing, threw himself into her lap and addressed her, deeply moved, with the following words:

"Ah, dear mother, for grief I can hardly get the words "out of my heart and mouth, for I have "seen that almost all the people who went "into the synagogue, on entering, "for the sake of the recovery of our good and all-beloved "emperor — even the poorest of the con- "gregation — threw money into the box for secret charity (מתן בסתר); I "too would very gladly have put something in, "but I had no money with me at all."

Tears of the deepest grief and emotion welled from his eyes.

The mother, deeply stirred by the pious disposition of her boy and moved by his tears, gave him, merely to satisfy his charitable wish, three twenty-kreuzer pieces. Like an arrow the boy ran with the money into the synagogue, threw it into the box for secret charity, and recited the Psalms (מזמורי תהלים) with true fervour together with his fellow believers.

When in the evening the father came home, the mother told him of the noble feeling and action of the boy, whereupon the father at once, through the boy, sent eighteen gulden (ח"י זהובים) as a ransom for the soul (פדיון נפש)[83] to the illustrious rabbi, head of the court, may his lamp shine, with the request that he distribute it among the students of the yeshivah (בני הישיבה). When soon afterwards the joyful news of the recovery of our all-beloved monarch arrived, it was celebrated with the most heartfelt thanks for this precious life, and once again considerable sums were distributed to the poor.

[p. 101] ---

Sixth Commandment.

לא תרצח (Exod. 20:13) Thou shalt not murder.

Every human life is an inviolable possession, lent to each by the Creator for the time of his earthly existence. — The life of every human being must therefore always be holy and precious to us, for

[83] Translator: *Pidyon nefesh*, a charitable gift given on behalf of a sick person; eighteen (ח"י, "life") is the customary symbolic sum.

God has given it, and God alone is Lord over life and death. Woe to the mortal who, against this divine decree, lays a sacrilegious hand upon the rights of majesty of almighty God!

Life is the greatest of goods; therefore it must be holy to us, for it cannot be replaced. Every other earthly good, such as honour, property and so on, is replaceable, and can be acquired again when it has been lost or diminished; it can, when it has been taken from us, be made good through equal rights or through equal goods. But life is a divine good, and therefore its loss is irreplaceable. Whoever murders a man not only shortens the course of life determined for him by the Creator, but at the same time robs him of all share in the joys of this life, and of all means of ennobling his heart, of [p. 102] cultivating his mind, of perfecting his soul, and of preparing himself for a better life to come.

Therefore the blood of a murdered man comes before God crying for vengeance, and accuses his murderer; as did the blood of the innocently murdered Abel, when God Himself said to the fratricide Cain (Gen. 4:10):

קול דמי אחיך צעקים אלי מן האדמה

> "The voice of thy brother's blood cries out to me from the earth (for vengeance)."

And how terrible, then, is the awakening of a murderer's evil conscience! It hovers about him like a consuming fire; it drives him restlessly through this earthly life; nowhere does he find rest; everywhere the voice of the shed blood pursues him; everywhere his imagination sets before him the terrifying images of vengeance and of the curse upon his soul, and brings him at last to despair. The curse which God fixed upon this crime too, and which He spoke to the first murderer:

נע ונד תהיה בארץ

> (ibid., ibid. 12)

"A fugitive and a wanderer shalt thou be upon the earth," weighs heavily upon everyone who commits a murder.

Even if here and there a murder remains undiscovered for a while, it does not remain concealed for ever, because the most hidden means are thereby set in motion all too strongly for men not to summon up everything in order to discover the doer. This God has placed in [p. 103] the nature of man, and promised it with the words:

שפך דם האדם באדם[gxa101^] דמו ישפך

> (ibid. 9:6)

"The blood of the slain shall pour itself out into the hearts of all men" (that is: it shall fill them with vengeance against the murderer).

And if a murder is not discovered by other men, then the miscreant who committed it is nevertheless, as already mentioned, unceasingly tortured by the most hellish torments of his evil conscience, which gnaws at his life like a worm, until at last he gives himself up to the authorities and confesses his deed, in order to atone for the crime through the punishment laid down by the laws. — Many cannot die until they have disclosed their deadly deed; and others are robbed of their reason by the constant inner unrest of a conscience burdened with murder, so that they then declare what they know and have done. — All this is the power of conscience.

[p. 104] Now if the good Creator already does so much to the murderer, because he laid a sacrilegious hand upon His rights of majesty, destroyed what the Creator had made, and cruelly cut off the thread of life of his fellow man, which the Creator had wisely spun for the ennobling of earthly existence and for the preparation of the future life; how much more terrible is it then with the criminal who turned the fear of death into love of death, namely with the self-murderer? This unhappy man, despairing of God's goodness, would — had he still been animated by one spark of love and faith, and had he thought of an eternity that requites — surely not have departed this life voluntarily and of his own will, and so delivered himself into the hands of his Lord and Judge against His will and commandment. This unhappy man will come to know, there, there beyond the grave,[84] the stern and just Judge as the Almighty. —

But I will not dwell long on the horrifying crime of the self-murderer, and therefore I return to the commandment לא תרצח [*lo tirtzah*, "thou shalt not murder"].

I have already explained in the introduction to this little work that from these ten fundamental commandments six hundred and [p. 105] thirteen commandments and prohibitions flow. The sixth commandment here says: *Thou shalt not murder.* It does not say expressly "thou shalt not kill anyone"; for that is already understood under it in general, and is said elsewhere in the words מכה איש ומת מות יומת (Exod. 21:12): "He that smites a man so that he dies shall surely be put to death." This commandment לא תרצח forbids not only every murder committed directly, but also every indirect share in a murder; every killing incited, cunningly devised, or brought about and intended through fear, grief, vexation or by giving offence; and in general everything whereby the health and life of our fellow man could be endangered or shortened.

> Refrain thyself from selfish gain,
> And spare thy neighbour's blood;
> Commend thy cause to the Most High,
> When someone does thee wrong.

---

[84] The Ramban interprets the verse ואך את דמכם לנפשתיכם אדרש ["And surely your blood of your lives will I require," Gen. 9:5], "the shedding of your own blood will I require of you," also in the following way: whoever takes his own life, him God will call to judgment beyond the grave; for only the body decays, but the soul, which is immortal, goes back whence it came, and there, before the throne of God, each must render his account.

Offend not his honour, and always shun
Whatever may cause it to suffer!
Then contentment and joy will
Follow thee on the path of life.

Three cattle-dealers[85] travelled together and drove about a hundred head of sheep to Thuringia. On the way they stopped at an inn, fed their sheep and ate their midday meal, and then continued on their way. —

[p. 106] Four weeks later a dead man was found in that same region, in the forest, lying not far from the road in the bushes and already wholly gone over to decay; yet one could still see quite clearly that he had been killed by blows to the head.

The matter was reported to the magistrate; he had the dead body taken up and examined. No one could recognize him, and in the clothes of the dead man nothing was found from which one could have gathered who he had been. The magistrate had him opened, and all the signs of a violent murder were found.

In the meantime there was not the slightest trace of the murdered man in these parts, and still less regarding his murderer. It was indeed made known in the newspapers that such a dead body had been found, and his clothing was described; but no one came forward who could have given any news of him. — The good and upright magistrate was much grieved by this, and had no rest day or night.

About four weeks after the dead man had been found, it occurred to the magistrate during the night that he would go once more himself to the place where the murder had happened, and look whether he might perhaps still find or discover something that could put him on the track.

As soon as it was day, he rode out and examined everything very closely. A few paces from the road, in the bushes, he saw something white gleaming; he crept through and found a small slip of paper, which on closer inspection was a toll receipt for sheep that had been cleared at the nearest toll-house. [p. 107] The magistrate rode with it to the toll-house and questioned the toll-collector (who was also an innkeeper) about it. He answered him that he had issued this receipt for three sheep-drovers, who had paid duty on a hundred sheep; and that they had also eaten here, and had been going to Thuringia. "What did they eat?" asked the magistrate. The innkeeper answered that he himself no longer knew, "but," he added, "my wife may well know."

The wife was asked, and she did not know any more either; but since one could see from the date of the receipt that it had been a Friday, she said: "On Fridays I usually cook a dish with *cabbage*."

Now the magistrate remembered that at the opening of the corpse they had found quite undigested cabbage in its stomach. It was now very likely that the murdered man had been one of the three

[85] Translator: German *Viehhändler* ("cattle-dealers"); they are called sheep-drovers (*Schäfer*) in what follows.

sheep-drovers, and that he had been murdered by his companions; but no one had known them, and nobody knew where they came from. This upright magistrate, however, did not rest until he had attained his purpose. — He used the following means.

He chose a clever and sensible man from his town, informed him of all the circumstances, gave him money for the journey and a good horse, and charged him to inquire from one village to the next along the track of the two sheep-drovers, until he learned where they lived. At the same time he gave him a letter in which he asked all authorities to have them arrested; but he was not to show this letter to anyone before [p. 108] he had discovered where the murderers were staying.

The clever man who had been sent out followed his instructions: along the whole way, a distance of forty-eight miles,[86] he asked from village to village where these sheep-drovers had passed through, and followed their trail as far as *Hamburg*. There he put up at the first inn he came to. He was already very doubtful whether he should continue his inquiries in this great and populous city. Yet the murderer was nearer to him than he thought; providence had not led him to this inn by chance.

After he had inquired in the inn's parlour about various circumstances, he went out and looked about the street. Opposite was a cellar from which people fetched drinks; as he stood there, a fellow came out of it with a basket full of bottles. This fellow struck him as being a stranger who did not belong among the people of Hamburg. He made inquiries of the innkeeper and the bystanders about the house, about the people in it, and about this fellow, and learned from the innkeeper that this man had arrived here with another only four weeks before, and that this one had taken service in that house as a porter, while the other had gone into service as a sailor with Captain F. H.

Spurred on by the circumstance that these two had come from *Thuringia*, he went without delay to the burgomaster and disclosed the whole matter to him. The one fellow was arrested, and in the very first moment he confessed the whole deed, with the words: [p. 109] he could have gone no farther; he now saw well that the vengeance of God was pursuing him. The other too, namely the sailor, who had not yet sailed, was sought out and seized.

The good, active investigator then travelled with the two murderers, under proper escort, to his superior,[87] where the murderers had to confess that they had quarrelled with the murdered man in the forest and had struck him dead. — They received their deserved punishment!

Whoever reads this, let him think of the words of the Psalmist:

---

[86] Translator: German miles (about 7.5 km each), i.e. some 360 km.

[87] Translator: i.e., to the magistrate who had sent him out.

אנה אלך מרוחך ואנה מפניך אברח etc. אשא כנפי שחר אשכנה באחרית ים גם שם ידך תנחני ותאחזני ימינך

(Ps. 139:7–10)

"Whither shall I go from thy spirit? Whither flee from thy presence? If I take the wings of the dawn, to dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me."

How all-wisely every vice is discovered and punished by providence, and what attachment even animals have to their benefactors, is shown by the following true story.

An old traveller who came from Rome to Nuremberg was presented to the Emperor *Maximilian*, who gave him a roll of fifty ducats. The old traveller thanked him with a moved heart, took his leave, and took a German soldier along with him for company. This man was blinded by the gold, watched for his opportunity, and brought his travelling [p. 110] companion in a forest near *Nuremberg*, where he buried him in a shallow pit.

The emperor, who did not know that the stranger had already gone, inquired after him; and since he learned nothing further of him than that he had already departed, he grew suspicious and gave orders that exact information about the stranger be obtained.

A court officer was sent out. As he was searching about the whole region, he happened to stop at an inn where the murderer was just then sitting, regaling himself with wine, cheese and bread. The dog of the murdered man, which had accompanied its master from Rome all the way to Germany, sat beside him. The murderer, as was then the custom, offered the court officer a glass of wine; but the officer, who was vexed that he could not get onto the track of the old traveller, answered quite crossly and with vehemence that he wanted neither his wine nor his brotherhood at all.

Scarcely had he said this when the dog sprang straight at the murderer's face. The court officer, who was struck by the fact that the dog attacked the man at once upon his harsh words, went on with hard words:

"You seem to want to bribe me, because you know about the old Roman, and perhaps killed him yourself."

At this surprise the murderer fell into a faint; when he came to himself he was taken into custody, and at once confessed his crime. When he was led to the place where, according to his confession, he had committed the mur- [p. 111] der, the dog ran ahead and uncovered a corner of the cloak of its slain master; it also accompanied the murderer to the place of execution, and when he had been beheaded, the dog showed the executioner much friendliness, went home with him, and afterwards remained with him constantly.

A gravedigger was making a grave and threw out a skull. Afterwards he happened to see that it was moving; he went up to find out the cause, and found that a toad was sitting inside it and moving it. At the same time, however, he also saw that a long nail was stuck in the skull, driven deep into the head.

The matter seemed suspicious to him. He took the skull and carried it to the magistrate. The latter inquired into the matter and soon came to suspect that a violent murder must have taken place here.[88]

[p. 112] He began to inquire who was buried here. For a long time he could learn nothing certain, and was already on the point of letting the matter rest. At last it was reported to him that a smith was buried here, who had died twenty years before; that his wife had married her husband's journeyman soon after his death, and had been brought to childbed in the seventh month after the wedding. Both were still living at that time.

This information aroused a strong suspicion of murder. The magistrate therefore had the woman summoned to him; beforehand he laid the skull that had been found on the table and covered it with a cloth. When the woman came, he questioned her about various circumstances concerning the illness and death of her first husband; she answered all his questions very boldly and undauntedly, as if she had a good conscience.

The magistrate kept on asking; but when at last he let some suspicion show, she grew angry and threatened to complain; [p. 113] but the magistrate did not let himself be put off by this, and at last asked her whether she would still recognize her late husband if she saw him. She turned pale and asked in alarm how that could be possible, since her late husband had already been dead for twenty-eight years. The magistrate assured her that he would show him to her, and asked her whether she

---

[88] Jonathan ben Uzziel writes, in the section of the beheaded heifer [Deut. 21:1–9], of a wondrous thing among the wonders of nature that God, blessed be He, created in His world: namely, that as soon as the elders of the city nearest to the slain man had answered and said, "Our hands have not shed this blood, neither have our eyes seen it; forgive Thy people Israel, and lay not innocent blood in the midst of Thy people Israel," worms would come out of the carcass of the heifer and go to the place where the murderer was, and the judges would follow them; and when the murderer saw that the worms were coming after him to his house, he would be ashamed and afraid, for he knew that evil was determined against him, and he would confess; and the judges would seize him and judge him. Thus far his words. (See also Rabbenu Bahya on the portion *Shofetim*.) And R. Menahem Recanati, of blessed memory, wrote that there is an allusion to the worm mentioned there in the final letters of the last verse of the section of the beheaded heifer, ואתה תבער הדם הנקי ["So shalt thou put away the innocent blood," Deut. 21:9], which spell רימה [*rimmah*, "worm"]. And R. Moses Hagiz wrote in his book *Elleh ha-Mitzvot*, and these are his words: "Even though it is a wonder, yet for Him, blessed be He, it is no wonder to do a thing even though it is beyond nature, so that all the inhabitants of the world may recognize and know the power of His great Name, whose kingdom rules over all, and that He watches over all His creatures, small and great alike, and all of them are His messengers, His witnesses and His servants, for His greatness, His exaltation, His might and His glory. A worm, a lowly creature, on the errand of the Omnipresent can reveal the murderer in his hiding places, and there is none that can deliver out of His hand; as it is said: 'Can any hide himself in secret places, that I shall not see him?' [Jer. 23:24] (to others)." Thus far his words. And I have seen that the commentators on the Torah took pains to explain the verse ואך את דמכם לנפשתיכם אדרש מיד כל חיה אדרשנו ["And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every *beast* will I require it," Gen. 9:5]; see Rashi and Ramban. But according to the words of Jonathan ben Uzziel, Rabbenu Bahya and Recanati, Rabbenu Isaac of blessed memory, and R. Moses Hagiz — all of whom spoke in one manner — and according to our story, which happened in our own time and in our own days, the meaning of the verse follows of itself. [Translator: Targum Pseudo-Jonathan on Deut. 21:8; Bahya ben Asher on Deut. 21; Menahem Recanati on Deut. 21; Moses Hagiz, *Elleh ha-Mitzvot*; Rashi and Nahmanides on Gen. 9:5. The "Rabbenu Isaac" cited is not securely identified.]

would dare to look him in the eyes. At that moment he took the cloth off the head and said: "Behold! This is the head of your late husband, which accuses you!" Dreadful terror and anguish seized the woman at this sight, and she cried out aloud: "Oh God! Yes, that is my husband's head; it still has the nail that I drove into it."

Now she confessed the whole terrible story to the magistrate. She related that her husband had been sickly with dropsy and had lived too long for her; she had at last wished for his death, especially after he had bequeathed to her all his goods and property. On top of this came a criminal intimacy with her journeyman; and when she became pregnant by him, she feared the disgrace and the reproaches of her husband. All these circumstances had led her to the terrible resolve to murder him. So she had crept at night to the bed of her sleeping husband and held the nail to his head, and the journeyman had struck the blow, of which he died in an instant. His sudden death attracted no notice, because he had been sickly for a very long time; his burial was hastened; soon afterward she married the journeyman; they had already felt themselves quite secure for a [p. 114] long time, believing that this story had long since been forgotten and could never again come to light.

But they had been mistaken. A *toad* had to be the instrument by which God brought their crime to light. They were at once taken into custody and received the reward of their wickedness.

In one of the suburbs of *London* there lived a day labourer who supported his wife and children solely by his work. He hit upon the terrible thought of ridding himself of this burden and putting his wife and children out of the world by poison. To this end he bought a leg of mutton, rubbed it with arsenic (which is the strongest poison), brought it home, and ordered his wife to roast it on Sunday and eat it with the children, even if he should not come home. Then he went off again and did not come home on Sunday. The wife did roast the leg of mutton; but because her husband did not come home, she did not want to eat it without him; she therefore prepared a potato soup and did not touch the roast.

On Monday the man came home, to see what effect the poison had produced. He seemed somewhat taken aback when he saw his wife in good health, and asked at once whether they had eaten the leg of mutton. When he heard that this had not happened, he ordered that she and the children should eat it at midday today; but for him, since he was no lover of mutton, [p. 115] she should fry the fish that he had just brought with him. —

The wife noticed nothing and obeyed her husband's wish; she took the fat that had cooked out of the leg of mutton, fried the fish in it, and set them before her husband, who in his absent-mindedness at once ate them up. — Meanwhile she also warmed up the roast, brought it to the table and carved it for herself and her children. They were already about to begin eating it — but God averted this disaster and saved the life of the innocent. For the husband, who had already eaten his fish, now asked his wife what she had fried them in. And when he heard that she had used the fat from the leg of mutton, he cried: I am a dead man! And now in his terror he confessed

his shameful deed — at once the pains set in as well. For two hours he lived on amid the most fearful pains of the body — his conscience tormented him with the anguish of hell — and so at last he died the shameful death that he had well deserved.

A Swedish captain in *Stockholm* was murdered by his servant. The murderer struck him at night in bed with a piece of wood; then he gave him several more stabs with a knife, and thereupon fled to Germany. This story was reported in the newspapers, but no one knew where the murderer had gone.

Yet things had to fall out wonderfully, so that a few years later he was discovered in the middle of Germany. [p. 116] An officer who had the watch at the gate of a town happened to get hold of an old newspaper. Out of boredom he read it, and found the very story of the murder of the Swedish captain, who was also named in it.

Hardly had he put the paper down when a wandering journeyman came in at the gate and presented his papers. As he was putting on his hat, he let fall to the ground a small piece of paper on which he had rolled up his hair. The officer saw that red lines were drawn on the paper. It was a piece of a bill which the murderer had taken away with him from his master. The officer picked it up to see what was written on it; the first thing that caught his eye was the word *Stockholm*, and with it the name of the captain about whose murder he had just been reading. Quite naturally he at once had the thought that this journeyman might be the murderer. He had him called back, put some questions to him, and on the spot brought him to confess the murder he had committed, whereupon he was taken into custody and punished with death.

A rich young man in Holland made a journey and took only one servant with him. This servant conceived the godless thought of murdering his master and appropriating his treasures. He waited for the opportunity; once, when his master got down from his horse, he took a pistol and shot him on the spot. Then he took his purse and other valuables, and — what had been his greatest [p. 117] care — he tied a large stone to the dead man's neck and threw him into the water. Now he rode on, sold the horses, and betook himself with his stolen treasures to England, where he settled in a small town.

Here he began trading in a very small way, and let no one notice that he possessed so much money. Little by little he put more money into his trade, and at last became a rich and respected merchant. Everyone believed he had acquired his whole fortune merely through his diligence and industry; and because he was in fact diligent in his business and conducted himself outwardly with propriety, he obtained credit and great esteem everywhere. He married a rich girl from a distinguished family of the same town; he received an office, indeed he rose from one dignity to another, until at last he became burgomaster. He administered this office so well that the whole town was very satisfied with him.

Everyone therefore took him for an honest and upright man. So do other people judge, who judge only by the outside; but our own conscience judges quite otherwise. It is an incorruptible judge, and cannot be bribed by the opinion of others. So it went here too: the burgomaster, for all his good fortune, was never at peace; his conscience reproached him constantly that he had laid the foundation of his riches and honour through a foul deed, through murder and robbery. These thoughts left him no rest at all. In vain he tried to drive them out of his mind; in vain he sought to lull his gnawing conscience to [p. 118] sleep; it did not sleep, it only waited until an occasion came on which it awoke again terribly.

Once he sat in the criminal court and helped to examine a malefactor who was accused of having murdered his master. The witnesses were heard, and the accused was really found guilty. The other members of the criminal court had already given their verdict that the accused was convicted of the murder and deserved death. Now it fell to the burgomaster to pronounce the sentence of death upon him.

But now his conscience was fully awake, since he was to condemn another for a crime which he himself had also committed. The whole assembly waited for him to pronounce the sentence; but he could not bring out a word, — he changed colour, — one could see that his mind was in great turmoil.

At last he rose from his seat, placed himself beside the accused, and addressed the other judges in the following words:

"You see here a remarkable example of the just vengeance of Heaven. After I have concealed an evil deed for thirty years, it must still come to light today. This day shows me to you as a greater criminal than this accused malefactor is."

Thereupon he began to relate his crime with all its circumstances, confessed his guilt, described his great ingratitude toward his master, who had done him much good and had placed the greatest trust in him; he related how until now he had, through hypocrisy and through [p. 119] outward respectability, put on the appearance of virtue and earned a good name before the world; and then he went on:

"But now," he said, "since this unhappy man appeared before our court, my conscience has awoken; the circumstances of his crime reminded me of the abomination of my own. The pain that I felt on this account grew so great that it was impossible for me to pass sentence on this criminal before I had first accused myself. Nor can I be freed from my anguish of conscience except by imploring justice to punish publicly the cruel murder which I committed against a benefactor. Therefore I declare here before the omnipresent God and before this whole assembly that I am guilty, and I demand that sentence of death be pronounced upon me as a greater malefactor than he."

So spoke the burgomaster. — One can easily imagine how astonished the whole assembly was at this. — Meanwhile his request was granted, the sentence of death was passed upon him, and he died with a calm and penitent heart.

In a village there lived a poor shepherd, who had only one son. The son learned a trade and, after completing his apprenticeship, went off on his journeyman's travels. Some twelve years passed in which the parents heard nothing of him and did not know whether he was still alive. When the twelve years were over, he set [p. 120] out on the way home, in order to share his money with his parents as a grateful son. He had a companion with him. When they came to the village where he was born, he said to him:

"Listen, I want to give my parents a real, unexpected joy. This evening I will lodge with them and not say who I am; tomorrow morning, while I am still in bed, you come after me and ask my parents whether their son is not here. And if they say no, then just say: he is quite certainly here; he came yesterday evening."

As said, so done; the son came to his parents in the evening. They no longer recognized him. He therefore pretended to be a stranger, and asked them to give him a night's lodging for money and kind words, since he did not care to stay in the wretched inn. With this he drew out a fairly full purse of money and gave them a gulden. The people took him in; but because he had so much money with him, they hit upon the godless thought of striking him dead. They thought: he is a stranger, he came late at night, nobody knows anything about him; so it could never be betrayed if they struck him dead.

When the son had gone to bed and, from weariness, was fast asleep, they opened the door of his bedroom very softly, crept to the bed, and struck him dead with an axe. Then they took his money from him and buried him in the night behind their house.

The next morning the companion came, as had been agreed, and asked whether their son had not arrived here yesterday evening. They said no. But he stood [p. 121] firm and fast by it that he must have come; and at last he said that the very stranger who had lodged with them yesterday evening was their son *Leopold*. — At these words both parents raised a dreadful cry of woe; for now they realized that they had struck dead their own son. In their despair they told everything straight out and confessed their abominable crime. It was reported to the court, and both parents had to die on the place of execution.

A man whom people took, by outward appearance, for honest secretly practised highway robbery, by which he lived quite comfortably; above all he lay in wait for merchants who travelled to the fairs (markets).

Once he attacked a merchant on the road and tried to take his money from him; and since the man defended himself, he gave him several deadly stabs. Then he took his money and his watch, left

him lying and went away. But so that he could not be discovered, he emptied the merchant's money belt and threw it away.

Soon afterward a travelling Jew (יהודי) came along this road, found the empty money belt, and because it was still good, picked it up and took it with him. — Then he came to the place where the wounded merchant lay; he looked at him and felt him, and since he still felt warmth in him, he tried whether he could bring him back to life. In the midst of this charitable effort some peasants surprised him, took him for the murderer, and [p. 122] seized him. He protested his innocence as much as he liked; it did no good: "The *Jew* is the murderer! Yes, the *Jew* it is!" cried the peasants; they mistreated him bitterly, bound him and brought him before the court.

The judges had him searched; they found on him the money belt of the murdered merchant, which the merchant's relatives knew well. By all the circumstances it was fairly probable that he was the murderer, and although he did not confess it, he was nevertheless condemned to death.

The real murderer was so brazen that he himself went into the prison to see the unfortunate man who was to pay for his deed. —

Yes, you villain! Do not be so sure of yourself! It can soon change. Do not rejoice so much over the mistake! God knows how to rescue innocence even when everything is against it; God knows how to reveal wickedness even when everything is on its side, even when no one would think that you could be the culprit.

At the very time when he had gone into the prison to see the wretched man who was to die innocent, his servant broke open his cupboard and took out of it, among several watches, one which was precisely the watch of the murdered merchant. He wanted to sell it, and providence led him to a man who knew this watch; this man reported it to the court; the servant was brought before the court, and the whole matter came to light. The innocent יהודי [Jew] was now set free; the true culprit was arrested and received, according to the sentence of the law, his deserved reward.

> [p. 123] Well for him who, free of guilt and failing,
> Keeps his soul as a child's still pure;
> The might of vengeance dares not near him,
> He walks life's pathway free and sure.
>
> But woe, oh woe to him who stealthily
> Has carried out the heavy deed of murder:
> Fast clings to his very soles
> The tormenting offspring of hell's night.
>
> And if he thinks to escape by fleeing,
> On wings it follows him, the snares
> Casting about his fugitive foot,
> So that he must fall to the ground.

So it hunts him without tiring;
No remorse can reconcile it;
On and on, unto the shades,
And even there it does not set him free.[89]

Two horse dealers were sworn enemies. Once, when one of them was riding with several of his companions to a town where a cattle market was being held, he saw his enemy at some distance walking on a meadow. Stirred up by hatred and by the desire for revenge, he said to his companions: "Wait a little while; I want to put that fellow over there into a mortal fright for a bit." He galloped at his enemy and called out with a thundering voice:

"Ha, scoundrel! I have you at last; to take my revenge on you, this shall have been your last walk." [p. 124] He then fired his gun at him, which, however, was loaded only with a blank; but the other, startled by the report and grazed by the wad of the gun loaded only with tow, fell lifeless to the ground and remained dead.[90]

The deed became known; the murderer was brought before the court and criminal proceedings were opened against him. But although he steadfastly maintained and proved that he had by no means intended to kill him, but only to frighten him — of which the gun loaded with a blank furnished the most convincing proof — he was nevertheless condemned to death by the sword as a murderer. The executioner, however, received the secret order to deliver the death stroke with the back of the sword, and only in such a way that the condemned man should merely feel it but not be injured by it; for they wished, just as he had killed through fright, to punish him with fright. Fortunately the criminal had been endowed by nature with strong nerves and survived the dangerous ordeal; but in any case he received punishment for his criminal deed.

[p. 125] Seventh Commandment

לֹא תִנְאָף (Exod. 20:13): "You shall not commit adultery."

The word *marriage* means: a union of man and wife, the holiest bond of love and fidelity, which with us is concluded through *ḥuppah ve-qiddushin* [חופה וקידושין, the wedding canopy and betrothal] by a rabbi or *moreh hora'ah* [מורה הוראה, an authorized teacher of the law], or by one

[89] Translator: The poem is adapted, with the chorus of Furies recast in the singular ("it", i.e. the avenging conscience), from Schiller's ballad "Die Kraniche des Ibykus" (1797).

[90] Such a case also happened between two Jews, and the author of *Havvot Yair* wrote in his responsum, section 170, in these words: "I read in their [the gentiles'] book of judgments of a case that happened among them exactly so, and the sentence went forth, based on judicial discretion, that he be executed by the sword under the law of a murderer, except that they told the executioner in secret and in confidence to strike his neck with the back of the blade and not with its edge, for as he did, so it should be done to him; and since this man was strong and stout-hearted, he got up again whole and sound. And it seems to me that by the law of Heaven he is exempt, since he has received the punishment due to him; yet according to the judgments of the Lord in His holy Torah it is a doubtful case, etc." And although he is exempt under human law, he is liable under the laws of Heaven and needs great repentance; see there. [Translator: R. Yair Hayyim Bacharach, *Havvot Yair* (Frankfurt 1699), responsum no. 170 as printed (ק"ע). The note is in Hebrew, marked ¹) at the foot of the page and *) in the text.]

recognized by him as *bāqi be-tiv qiddushin* [בקי בטיב קידושין, expert in the nature of betrothal], in the presence of witnesses who are *kesherim ve-ne'emanim* [כשרים ונאמנים, qualified and trustworthy], *ke-dat Mosheh ve-Yisra'el* [כדת משה וישראל, according to the law of Moses and Israel].

Love and fidelity are man's most precious possession, and marital contentment is his only bliss. But woe, when the suspicion of infidelity is aroused in the heart of one of the spouses! This spark of jealousy is seldom extinguished, or only by *glowing revenge*, as the wise moral teacher instructs us on this in Prov. 6:34, saying: כי קנאה חמת גבר ולא יחמול ביום נקם "Jealousy is the fury of a man; he knows no mercy on the day of vengeance." Holy happiness then vanishes, harmony flees, and a fearful destruction reigns in such a house. —

How very unhappy are such spouses, whose married life is disturbed by a stranger in such an immoral manner. This dissolute seducer is not only to be regarded as a wicked adulterer, but at the same time also [p. 126] as a violent and murderous robber; for he violently tears from these two united persons, who live in mutual affection, their domestic peace and at the same time their peace of soul; and not only these does he rob of this heavenly happiness, but their offspring too are dragged down by him into the abyss of ruin.

Guard yourselves, then, dear children, even against the thought of unchastity, so that you may never come to the vice of adultery; for the law לא תנאף [You shall not commit adultery] contains not only the prohibition of adultery alone, but at the same time forbids us to commit any kind of unchastity.[91] Unchastity is the beginning, and adultery can be its consequence. Such children are usually neglected in their upbringing through the unholy discord, and end up as villains, of whom the moral teacher very wisely instructs us (Prov. 30:11), saying:

דור אביו יקלל ואת אמו לא יברך

> that is: "A generation that curses its father, and cannot greet its unhappy mother."

Such a seducer of innocence, once he has lost his honour, will in the end also grow weary of his life; and so many a one, driven to despair by the consciousness of the crime he has committed, has already taken his own life.

These, then, my beloved children, are the sad and terrifying consequences that unchastity and adultery bring in their train:

[p. 127] A young man of twenty years had seduced a girl in a village near Darmstadt. At first he wanted to make good his crime through marriage; but his father did not give his consent to it; the seduced girl, on the other hand, demanded a proportionate compensation for her stolen honour and

---

[91] See Maimonides (רמב"ם), *Hilkhot Yesodei ha-Torah*, chapter 5 (halakhah 9).

for the maintenance of the child she was expecting. But the seducer had no money; he did not know what he should do.

In this perplexity he hit upon the terrible thought of murdering the girl he had seduced. With this resolve he really carried out his cruel plan.

He went with her to the field and dug a grave in a remote spot. The next day he invited his sweetheart to go walking with him in the field as well; he led her to the grave, pushed her into it, struck her several blows on the head with a shovel, and began to cover her with earth.

In vain she wept and whimpered in a tone that could have crushed a heart of stone; in vain she begged for mercy with the words: "Oh, I am your beloved after all; your child lives beneath my heart!"

He did not let himself be moved, but went on throwing earth into the grave. But — already the anguish of hell was seizing him — he did not know what he was doing — he ran away before he had quite covered the murdered girl with earth.

Soon afterward a peasant passed by; he saw the uncovered hem of a dress, dug the earth away again, and found with fright and horror the unhappy [p. 128] woman; yes, what is more — he saw that she was not yet dead; — but she died soon afterward.

He reported it to the court; one could easily guess who the murderer was; he was taken into custody; and since he could not deny his crime, he received the deserved reward of his wickedness.

A maidservant in a distinguished house was seduced; she was at last delivered of a child without anyone knowing it. For fear of disgrace she took the terrible resolve of doing away with her child. — She threw it into the privy, which was built over a river, and believed that it would now perish in the waters and be carried off by the river.

But it was not as she thought. Right at the bottom of this privy two strong iron bars were fastened; the child had fallen exactly onto these bars and remained lying on them. In the evening a manservant heard a voice in the water; he told the others; they went there, held a torch inside, and saw the poor child hovering over the water in the greatest danger. It seemed almost impossible to rescue it. Yet a farmhand ventured it: he set a long ladder on the projecting iron bars, climbed down, and brought the child up safely.

The matter was at once reported to the master of the house; he had an inquiry made, and the mother of the child was soon discovered, who also confessed her crime at once. She had deserved death, because she had at least had the intention of murdering her child; but out of compassion she was pardoned. [p. 129] the good farmhand, who had saved the child from death at the risk of his own life, carried it home to his wife, and the good people raised it faithfully together with their own children.

When *Simon* (so the boy was named) was eleven years old, the two foster parents who had raised him until then died. Their relatives now came and took the orphaned children and the estate to themselves. — A clothmaker took pity on *Simon* and took him into his house, intending to accept him as an apprentice and teach him the clothmaker's trade. Since, however, he was prevented from carrying out this plan, he used his influence with a rich farmer; this man took the boy into service, but treated him very harshly, beat him over every trifle, and was forever reproaching him with his illegitimate birth; this made him wild, malicious and spiteful; yet he stayed six years with this master.

Once he was playing at skittles with other boys; he was lucky and won a great deal; at this the others grew angry, and one of them said he would not play with him any more at all, for illegitimate children always had more luck than legitimate ones. — This vexed *Simon* so much that in his anger he flung the ball at the mocker's head; the boy fell to the ground at once and lay senseless. *Simon* believed he had killed him with the throw, and immediately took flight. He ran on for twenty-four hours without stopping, because he still feared that he might be pursued and caught again.

In the evening he came to an inn that lay in the middle of a great forest. Hunger, thirst and weari- [p. 130] ness drove him inside. Quite timidly he asked the innkeeper whether he could have a bed for the night. The innkeeper said yes; he then had a jug of beer and some bread brought to him. — Meanwhile about twenty strange fellows came into the room, followed by three women and many large dogs. — *Simon* shrank fearfully into the corner, but the guests soon noticed him. They asked him: "Where from, countryman?" He named the place he came from. — They asked further: "Where to?" And he answered that he did not yet know where his road would lead him. — From these answers and from his fearfulness they concluded that he must have committed some crime and was therefore on the run.

These strangers were robbers; since they saw that *Simon* was young and strong, they hit upon the idea of taking him into their band as a comrade; so they began to question him whether he had not committed a theft or something of the kind; and when he would not confess anything, they threatened to hand him over. In this way they brought him to the point that he fell on his knees before them and confessed that he had committed a murder.

The chief of the robber band now began to talk at length about the danger *Simon* was in, and how he might soon be hanging on the gallows; at last he said:

"If I take you under my protection, no one shall be able to do anything to you; but you must swear to me never to leave me and never to betray me."

Simon now saw well enough that he had fallen among thieves and robbers. He struggled long with himself; at last despair overcame him, and he shook [p. 131] hands on it, ate and drank with them, swore the oath they demanded, and went off with them; they led him into the forest. He was with them six weeks, and in all that time he never came out of the forest. He would gladly have escaped

again, but they kept a close watch on him, so he had to stay with them against his will. His comrades used him to carry their provisions after them.

At last the leader once took him along into a dense thicket, where three others were also waiting, and said to him:

"Brother! today you shall make your trial piece."

Simon was alarmed, but the others talked courage into him, gave him brandy, and finally took him along and led him to a road, where they waited behind the bushes.

As it began to grow dark, they saw a woman coming up the road; then one of the robbers said:

"It is the peddler-woman; she is coming from the market, and certainly has a hundred thalers on her."

Thereupon the leader said to *Simon*:

"Courage! Seize her. Demand her money, and if she will not hand it over, cut her down; go! Courage! or else I will cut you to pieces."

Full of terror, *Simon* staggered over to the woman and cried: "Your money, here!" She tried to flee, but *Simon* took his sabre and split her head. At that moment he saw a crowd of peasants coming; he saw his comrades run, and wanted to do the same, but from fright and horror he could not move from the spot; the peasants caught him and led [p. 132] him to the nearest village. He was brought before the court, examined, and immediately confessed everything as it had happened. He was thrown into prison.

On further investigation it came to light that the murdered peddler-woman was *Simon's* mother, who, after serving here and there, had acquired a small stock of wares with which she travelled about the country.

O righteous God in heaven! How wondrously must everything come together! Eighteen years before, this woman had already deserved death, for she had meant to murder her own child. At that time she escaped her punishment; but now she received her reward after all, by the hand of her own son, whom she had meant to murder.

Simon learned in his prison that the peddler-woman he had murdered was his mother. This news went so deeply to his heart that he lost the use of his reason, ate nothing and drank nothing, and at last, in the sixth night, hanged himself in his prison.

The sad course of life and tragic end of this man can also lead to many useful reflections. All his misfortune arose from the fact that he was born illegitimate; his mother, too, came to ruin through it. Had she not let herself be seduced into unchastity, all this misfortune would not have followed.

*

About fifty years ago there lived in *Franconia* a poor unmarried woman, who was already fairly well advanced in [p. 133] years. Nothing worse could be said of her than that in her early youth she had let herself be seduced and had borne an illegitimate child. The sad consequences of this fault she had to feel throughout her whole life; for she never had the opportunity to marry, and had to earn her living by toilsome labour. Every week she went once to *Nuremberg*, where she carried vegetables to market and also delivered letters and small parcels. A faithful little dog, with which she shared her bread, accompanied her and often helped her find her way when she had to go by night or along unfamiliar paths.

Once, as she was travelling through a forest two hours from *Nuremberg*, the little dog stopped at a bush beside the path, sniffed, scratched and barked. She called it several times, and when it would not leave the spot, she went over herself and saw lying in the middle of the bush a quite clean little linen bundle. She hoped surely to find something in it that she could use. Joyfully she picked it up, and was just about to look what fortune had bestowed on her, when suddenly she heard two horsemen galloping up quite close behind her.

Since she feared that they might take her find from her, she thought it advisable to throw the bundle straight back into the thicket, to go on her way and let the horsemen pass, but afterwards to turn back and take possession of her find. So she threw the bundle in — but the horsemen were already too close. The first had seen quite clearly that this woman had thrown something [p. 134] into the bush and then quickly moved away. This seemed suspicious to him.

He galloped after her, soon caught up with her, and asked what she had thrown away there by the bushes. She started in fright and answered: "Nothing! nothing at all!"

This fright and this untruth aroused the suspicion that it could not have been anything innocent. He ordered her to come back with him; she did so, because she dared not refuse. The horseman dismounted by the thicket; the bundle was soon found and picked up. It was opened, and in it lay — a dead child, murdered with visible violence.

One can easily imagine the terror of the poor woman, who now saw clearly that she was entangled in an evil affair. She did indeed tell everything truthfully; but who believed her? She cried, lamented, begged to be let go, but in vain; by his office the horseman was bound to have her taken into custody. She was tied by one hand to the horse, had to go back to the town, and straight into prison.

In the whole town there was no one who doubted that she was the murderess; all the circumstances, and her former misstep as well, contributed to making her suspect; all her protesting and swearing, her lamenting and weeping, was of no avail; she was held to be the mother and murderess of the child.

The investigation began. The child was examined, and it was found that it had been strangled by force. Then the woman too was examined, and since she [p. 135] confessed nothing, it was decided to put her to the torture.

Had she been put to the torture, the pain might perhaps have brought her to confess a deed she had not committed; but God so ordered it that her innocence came to light before she was brought to the torture.

In a neighbouring village, at about the same time, some peasants were gathered in an inn and were talking about this story. One of them openly found fault with the intention of using the torture, and maintained that the woman might perhaps be entirely innocent.

The whole company maintained the opposite, and all of them reckoned up to him the circumstances by which the woman had come under suspicion. He granted that there was strong suspicion against her; but still he went on: suspicion was not certainty, and it was still possible that she was innocent.

Among these guests a strange woman was sitting by the stove; she had come from the town and had taken shelter in the inn because of the rain. No one knew her, and therefore no one troubled about her. So she believed that no one noticed her. She listened to the guests' conversation; and when that peasant who was defending the imprisoned woman several times used the words: "Who knows whether the wench did it at all?", the woman sitting by the stove sighed and said quite softly to herself: "Indeed she did not do it!"

None of the guests had heard these words; but a day-labourer of the innkeeper's was lying behind the stove [p. 136] on a bench; he seemed to be asleep, but in fact he was not sleeping, and he heard the sigh and the words of the strange woman, who sat in front of him. These words struck him as particularly odd; the longer he thought about them, the more suspicious they seemed to him; yet he went on pretending for a little while to be asleep; then he stirred as if he had woken from sleep, got up slowly, and went out of the door.

Now he called the innkeeper aside and told him what he had heard; the latter found nothing particularly remarkable in it. But since the day-labourer insisted that the woman's words must have come from her heart, the village magistrate, who was also sitting in the taproom, was called out, and the whole matter was told to him. The innkeeper's wife, who had heard it all, was at once of the opinion that there might well be more behind it. She also knew the strange woman, and knew that for several years she had been in service with a widower in another village. She also remembered that the woman had been ailing in the past year, but for some months had looked quite healthy again. In short, she held it for certain that this was the child-murderess.

The magistrate at once fetched a couple of helpers, and before a quarter of an hour had passed he came back. The strange woman noticed that something must be going on in the house, and was just about to slip away when suddenly she was stopped by armed men and taken into custody. She was greatly alarmed, and asked, trembling, the reason. She was answered very briefly that she [p.

137] should just think back on what she had done some months ago. Now she very nearly fainted with fright. When at last the words she herself had spoken were held up to her, she could not explain them at all, and — before an hour had passed — she confessed openly that she herself was the mother and murderess of the child, and that she herself had laid it in the bush where the little dog had afterwards discovered it.

The next morning she was taken to the town and examined; she held to her confession and stated all the circumstances so exactly that there could no longer be any doubt about her testimony. After some months she received her deserved punishment; she was executed with the sword as a murderess.

The other woman, however, who had until then sat in prison and had already been threatened with the torture, was now declared innocent by the court itself and set at liberty.

How wondrous are the ways of divine providence! How all the circumstances must come together when something is to come to light! The rain had to overtake the murderess just here and drive her into this house. Here a company had to be gathered already, talking about her murder; her heart had to be so moved by this conversation that her own tongue betrayed her; the poor day-labourer had to be lying on the bench behind the stove and catch the soft words of her mouth.

When we consider all these circumstances, we shall surely be strengthened in the belief that *there is a God, who over all the events in the world* [p. 138] *rules*; a God who looks upon the good with pleasure and upon evil with abhorrence; *a God who punishes wickedness and protects innocence*.

Oft lust's desires disguise their face
In shapes of love's permitted grace,
And you perceive no danger near.
Long intimacy makes you freer,
And oft a fire that's forbidden
Grows out of what was friendship here.

Your feeling heart will pardon this;
It will shun lust's open outbreak,
While yet it feeds the lust within.
You'll think yourself both strong and sure,
And will permit no fault, secure,
Until your virtue falls to sin.

Therefore before the paths of lust
Keep watch, and call on God in trust
For grace and wisdom in temptation's hour;
Tremble before the very first step:

With it the other steps are already taken
Toward a near and certain fall.[92]

[p. —] Eighth Commandment.

לֹא תגנב (Exod. 20:13) Thou shalt not steal.

The eighth commandment forbids us, in general, every unjust appropriation of another's property, whether it happen through *cunning*, through *secret purloining*, or through *violence*.

Each of these three kinds of vice is designated by its own name, namely: the appropriation of another's property through cunning our sages call רמאות (fraud); secret purloining is called גניבה (theft); and appropriation through force and superior power is called גזילה (robbery). Let us discuss the literal sense of this commandment more closely.

It seems striking that in the Ten Commandments the laws לֹא תרצח *Thou shalt not murder* and לֹא תגנב *Thou shalt not steal* have been placed together. But if we examine the consequences of גניבה (secret purloining) more closely, we shall very soon find that the *secret thief* is wholly equal to the *actual murderer*, and therefore deserves to be placed together with him[93] [p. 140] in respect of the prohibition.

How many examples we have of the suspicion of theft falling upon wholly innocent persons, who because of another's vice have had to languish for a very long time in the fetters of the dungeon. The man who has been robbed often accuses, on the strength of suggestive circumstances, his household or his servants and relatives, even his most intimate *bosom friends*, to whom it never occurred to commit such a vice. Affection toward one's household and the unfeigned feelings for the truly *upright friend* are thus *murdered* in the most shameful way by this base *secret thief*.

How often has an *innocent man* been handed over to the fearful arms of justice; how often did it happen in the dark ages that a wholly *innocent man*, through long disgrace in the dungeon, through torture and rack, was martyred into confessing a misdeed that he had never had in mind, and which, after horrible sufferings, even delivered him to a shameful, undeserved death. What tormenting self-reproaches! What gnawing pangs of conscience must then rend the heart of the accuser, when through the discovery of the real wrongdoer he becomes convinced that he has sacrificed the most *upright man*, and often his *best friend*, guiltlessly, merely because of his suspicion. Grief and sorrow consume his mournful life, and prepare for him too the most agonizing death. — Is not the secret thief, then, a *double murderer*? —

---

[92] Translator: These stanzas are apparently taken, with small variants, from a hymn by Christian Fürchtegott Gellert (Geistliche Oden und Lieder, 1757). In the first line of the third stanza the print appears to read "stehe" ("stand"); Gellert's text has "flehe" ("plead"), which the sense of the stanza requires.

[93] Translator: This page (PDF p. 143) bears no printed page number; by sequence it is p. 139.

[p. 141] Very often the upright man, even if he is not condemned to death nor even brought to prison, has his innocent life undermined by the mere *loss of his honour*, whereby his early death is brought about. Is not the secret thief, then, here too a *subtle and moral murderer*? —

But the sense of the commandment *Thou shalt not steal* is far more comprehensive still. For every unlawful manner and means that we employ craftily and greedily in order to appropriate another's goods to ourselves is included in this commandment. Our holy תורה [Torah] explains this very clearly, in that it instructs us (Lev. 19:11) with the very same laws:

לא תגנבו ולא תכחשו ולא תשקרו איש בעמיתו

that is: "Ye shall not steal, nor deny to one another, and not lie."

Hence there also belong here all unjust advantages in commerce and dealings; such as: false measure and weight, adulteration of wares, concealment of what has been purloined from another and brought to us, retention of lost property, withholding of promised and earned wages or of goods entrusted to us, and other dishonourable, unlawful actions.

*

About fifty years ago there was in *Franconia* a peddler who travelled about the country and dealt in yard goods. Everywhere he took with him two large English dogs, on which he loaded part of his wares, so that they looked as though they were saddled; for which reason he was commonly called *the dog-saddler*. A young woman, whom he passed off as his [p. 142] wife, accompanied him everywhere. — He was not, indeed, held to be altogether a saint, yet no one could charge him with any open injustice. —

At just about the same time there lived in a market town an honest linen-weaver, who had six children and was very poor. The dog-saddler knew him, and sometimes used to stay the night in his house. When the poor linen-weaver then complained to him of his need, he seemed to listen to him with compassion, and promised at the first opportunity to contribute something to the improvement of his circumstances.

Once the *dog-saddler* came just at a time when the poor linen-weaver's need was very great. He was to pay two gulden, or else the next morning have his weaving tools seized in distraint; mute and sad he sat behind his loom; his wife wept, the children cried for bread. — When the *dog-saddler* had watched and listened to this misery for a while, he said:

"Here I will propose a remedy to you. I am just now about to go to one of my best customers, where I have a considerable sum of money to collect; and then I mean to fetch new wares again. Come along, help me carry! I will reward you richly! Indeed, if I notice that you are fit for the business, I will use you for it from now on; and I wager it will soon feed you better than your miserable loom. But of course, since your need is great and suffers no delay, we must set out at

once. In any case I had no wish to spend the night here today. My wife, however, may stay here until we come back."

[p. 143] The weaver was at once ready to accept this proposal. The *dog-saddler* had bread and beer brought, and they ate and drank together. So the children's weeping was stilled, and the two men set out on their way.

The road went through a forest. When they were in the middle of the forest, night had already fallen. They came to a crossroads. Here the peddler stood still for a few moments and whistled four times very loudly toward all four sides. The weaver could not understand why this was done; they went on further. After a few minutes there was a rustling in the bushes on all sides. The weaver was startled and shrank together; but his dismay grew still greater when he saw nine or ten fellows spring out, who placed themselves around the two travellers and cried:

"Welcome, *dog-saddler*! Welcome! Where have you been hiding so long? And who is this here?"

"It is a new comrade," answered the *dog-saddler*; "poverty and misfortunes have fleeced him thoroughly enough in the world until now; now he means to make himself whole for it from other people's purses. I vouch to you for his loyalty, for I have known him a long time."

"If that is so, let him be welcome to us," they all answered, and one after another they seized the weaver's hand and shook it, as if in confirmation of their bond.

Only now did the *weaver* realize that he was among robbers. He would never have thought beforehand that the *dog-saddler* meant to help him in such a way. How great was his dismay now! How gladly would he now have wished himself back in his homely misery [p. 144] again! Indeed, he would have told the robbers straight out that he abhorred them; but he feared that it would then be all over with his life. Out of love of life he dissembled as well as he could, put on a willing face, pressed all their hands again, thanked them for the kind reception, and promised to do his utmost to be useful to the company.

The *dog-saddler* was the leader of the robber band. Now he revealed to them where they were to go that night. He said he knew that a rich miller, an hour away, had taken in three thousand gulden in cash a few days ago. They would fetch this money that night. But so that they should not be recognized, they would all blacken their faces. The miller, the miller's wife and the servants they must bind; and if they should offer any resistance, everything in the mill that had breath must be killed.

The proposal was accepted, they set out on their way; and when they came to the mill, the linen-weaver, because he was still an apprentice, was merely posted as sentry outside the mill. Easy as this task was, his heart pounded at it; meanwhile he went on dissembling, and promised to be as wakeful and attentive as possible. The others broke in; the miller and his people were bound and very roughly handled, but the thieves did not find what they were looking for; for the three

thousand gulden had already been lent out again. They packed up everything they found, left the people lying bound, and went off. In the forest they divided the plunder; the linen-weaver received fifteen gulden as his share. The rest of the robbers now dispersed, [p. 145] and the *weaver* went back home with the *dog-saddler*.[94]

Scarcely were they alone when the *weaver* heaped the bitterest reproaches on the *dog-saddler*, and said: had he had even the slightest inkling that they meant to use him for such a shameful deed, he would rather have chosen the beggar's staff than this way out. Nor did he want to keep the fifteen gulden; he said it was blood money, which weighed on him more heavily than hunger; and he would never be able to think without remorse of this night, when nothing but love of life and care for his wife and children had moved him to lend a hand in such a villainy.

The *dog-saddler* listened to all this quite calmly and with a smile; but he did not take the fifteen gulden back from the *weaver*; instead he said:

“Just keep them; I well understand that, timid as you are, they were hard enough to earn. Consider that tomorrow, perhaps, your wife and your children will be starving if you now throw away this money, which in any case will never go back to its rightful owner. If out of pious stupidity you are bent on remaining a poor devil, then remain one! I have at least shown you the way by which you could have helped yourself; but I do not mean to make you clever and happy by force. Only mark this, fellow! Of everything you have seen and heard among us, beware of blabbing so much as a single word; otherwise your cottage will be set on fire over your head, and not only will your own skull be smashed, but your wife and your children too shall be strangled before [p. 146] your eyes. For the rest, you may believe in my God or in the devil, as you please; I swear this to you by both! — And forty to fifty fellows will surely make it possible, who fear neither gallows nor courts!”

He said this in such a tone that one could well see he was in earnest. The poor man, who was more anxious for the lives of his family than for his own, carefully kept the secret to himself; he did not say a word of the whole affair even to his wife. Whenever the *dog-saddler* came to him afterwards, he trembled inwardly; and when the latter asked him, laughing, whether he would like to come along again, he answered nothing more than: God forbid!

A few months later the *dog-saddler* was arrested at *Bayreuth*, because he was suspected of various robberies. He firmly denied everything; but there were such strong indications against him that, according to the custom of the time, he was put to the torture. He endured the torments steadfastly, and insisted that he was innocent. Since no other means were known of bringing him to confess, he was at last released again, and was even given a written certificate of his innocence, together with permission to support himself by his trade as before. So he walked out of the prison with the firm resolve to carry on his thieving craft further, only somewhat more carefully than before.

---

[94] Translator: *Hundssattler*, "dog-saddler": the peddler-robber's nickname, from the two large dogs he loaded with his wares (see the start of the story above).

In the suburb of *Bayreuth* there was an inn where he had often been in the habit of stopping before. Now too his first visit was to it; and because it happened [p. 147] to be fair-time, he found a crowd of guests gathered in the lower room. Some old acquaintances at once surrounded him and asked him how things had gone with him in the meantime? whether he had had much to endure? whether he had been fully cleared? and the like. — Now he began to boast of his innocence, and of his courage in undeserved suffering. He showed his written certificate around everywhere, and let fall many a bitter little word against the courts in doing so. — All who heard this account admired his courage, and crowded around him, not only to listen to him but also, as a kind of compensation, to buy something from him.

But among the guests in this room there sat one whom the *dog-saddler* did not expect to find there: namely a man from *Kulmbach*,[95] who had been robbed by night a year before. This man noticed that the *dog-saddler* and his wife were wearing clothes that had belonged to him and to his wife. He let nothing show, quietly left the room, ran and fetched the watch. The *dog-saddler* thought of no danger, but went on laughing, chattering and boasting, when the watch unexpectedly entered and laid hands on him. He was taken aback and demanded to know the reason. The man from *Kulmbach* asked him where he had got these clothes? He did indeed put on an air of complete innocence and confidence, but in the end he nevertheless had to go back into the very same prison that he had only just left.

The suspicion was now stronger than before; he could give no account of the clothing, was examined very severely, and was brought to confess, [p. 148] whereupon the judges learned far more than they themselves could have imagined. For many years he had carried on his robberies, sometimes alone and sometimes in company, sometimes by day in the forest and on the highway, and sometimes by night through violent break-ins. — But that was far from being all; for this cruel villain had loaded his conscience with a monstrous mass of human blood. He had not only robbed innocent friends and friendly fellow travellers of their lives; his wickedness had risen so high that he had already murdered eight pregnant women, and also his own first wife. —

Now that he had confessed his crimes, he was required to name his accomplices and comrades as well; but this he would not do, and kept saying that he had not known them by their names and dwelling places, but had only met with them in the forest. — At the same time he assured them that they would not catch a single one of them; for they had long since agreed among themselves that they would all immediately take themselves out of Germany as soon as one of them was caught. This statement was indeed not believed, but he stuck to it; he was threatened with torture, but nothing more could be got out of him; — at last he said:

“Very well! I will name *one* after all, whose name and dwelling I know, and I believe too that he can still be laid hold of. He was my most faithful companion in all my robberies; simple as he

[95] Translator: Kulmbach, a town in Upper Franconia near Bayreuth.

pretends to be, he was nonetheless more cunning than I, and can certainly confess still more than I myself." [p. 149] He was asked who this was? and he named that poor honest linen-weaver.

On this false accusation the latter was at once taken into custody. His wife, who was just then pregnant for the seventh time, fell into a faint; his children cried out for help and mercy; the neighbours came running together; — he was dragged off quite stunned, and put into prison.

At the first examination he at once confessed everything he had done, everything he knew; but he could confess nothing further than that at that single robbery he had been forced to stand sentry. This statement, however, did not agree with what the *dog-saddler* had alleged. — They were examined together. The *weaver* almost froze with fright and horror when he heard the most lying accusations from the *dog-saddler*. He begged and implored with tears, with uplifted hands, that he should not sin against him so wickedly, and protested that he was innocent; but the *dog-saddler* insisted that he had been his helper in many robberies and murders, and offered to die for the truth of this statement.

Now because the *weaver* confessed nothing, he too was put to the torture, and he had to endure it more than once; for each time he found himself under the executioner's hands, he confessed under the torment everything he was asked; but as soon as the torment was relaxed, he retracted everything again, and maintained that he was innocent.

[p. 150] The judges in the end nevertheless held him guilty, and the sentence was pronounced that he was to be hanged, but the *dog-saddler* broken on the wheel.

When this sentence was made known to the prisoners, the *dog-saddler* smiled fearsomely; the *weaver*, however, lamented and wrung his hands in grief over the misery of his poor wife and his six naked children, who during his imprisonment had lived almost entirely on alms and on gifts from the neighbours.

His wife had with great difficulty obtained permission barely two or three times to visit him in prison. She had seen him in his pains and torments when he was brought back from the torture chamber into the prison; her heart had bled so at the sight, she had lamented so piteously, that it could have softened a stone. It was almost a wonder that, with this misery, with her unceasing anxiety by night and by day, with her want and poverty, with her heavy labours, with her frequent running into the town and back again, she did not at last perish altogether.

Amid these heavy and manifold sufferings one single feeble comfort still remained to her, namely the hope that the judges would yet see her husband's innocence and acquit him. But when the day of execution had come, when she heard the death sentence publicly pronounced, when she saw the staff broken over him,[96] when the procession to the place of execution began and the two prisoners

[96] Translator: the breaking of a staff over the condemned was the traditional German judicial gesture accompanying a death sentence.

were led off there by the watch, when her husband looked at her for the last time with tearful eyes and was about to bid her the last [p. 151] farewell, she fell almost into despair, tore herself away from them, and, carrying her youngest child in her arms and leading the others with her, ran to the palace and demanded to be admitted before her prince (the *Margrave of Bayreuth*).[97]

The sentry took her for mad and would not let her in. A compassionate person, however, told her quite softly that the Margravine was just then in the palace garden. Straightway she rushed there with her little flock of children, fell at the Margravine's feet, and with streaming tears begged her for mercy; she implored her by these her unhappy children, by the still more unhappy one that lay beneath her heart and was to see the light of the world in a few days, by her misery beyond all measure and bound, by all that is holy, that she might save the life of her innocent husband.

The heart of the Margravine was noble and tender; she was moved by the misery of the unhappy woman and by the tears of the children who were about to become orphans. She hurried quickly to her consort and herself pleaded for the *weaver's* life. He hesitated a little while yet, but at last he granted her request and pardoned the *weaver*. A servant received orders to mount the fastest horse from the princely stable, to ride with all speed to the place of execution, and to bring the *weaver* his pardon. The Margravine urged him to hurry as fast as he could.

The poor *weaver* was already tottering up the ladder — when all at once something white was seen in the distance waving in the [p. 152] air; the executioner was called to: *Pardon!* and in a few minutes the rider was there, and announced pardon, pardon for the *weaver*! The mortal terror of the innocent unfortunate was thereby suddenly turned into bliss and rapture, and indescribably great was the joy of the onlookers when they saw the innocent man pardoned and saved.

But no one was so strongly shaken by this unexpected turn as the *dog-saddler*. This hardened villain had formerly believed in no God and no eternity. In his imprisonment, when he was admonished to regret his misdeeds and to repent, he answered that he would know how to die like a man, and not like an old woman. When the judges broke the staff over him, he had laughed in their faces, and on the way to the place of execution he had still mocked at the clamour of the rabble and at the trembling of his comrade.

So hard and hardened had the heart of this villain remained up to the hour when he was to die. — Here he stood and watched the poor *weaver* climb the ladder; he did not change colour at it; no fear was yet to be seen in him, no unrest of conscience; with insolent eyes he looked up at the gallows. — But when the voice rang out that proclaimed pardon to the innocent man at the very last moment, then that hardened villain all at once became paler than a whitewashed wall; he stepped back a few paces and cried:

---

[97] Translator: Bayreuth was the seat of a Hohenzollern margraviate in Franconia until 1791.

“Yes, there is a God in heaven, and a providence, in which until now I never believed! This is the [p. 153] test I set myself! I thought I had already won, and now I see that I am losing.”

He was asked what he meant by this? and he answered:

“The *weaver* is innocent. That sentry duty at the mill he did under compulsion; even the money he received he wanted to give back, however much want and hunger pressed him. Every theft he otherwise hated like death itself; all this I knew, and I led him astray on purpose. I did it not out of enmity or out of vengefulness, but only to see whether there is a divine justice that would take up the cause of innocence; now I recognise that there is one, and I beg that I be taken back, so that I may be converted before I must die; I will also confess a good deal more, which will well deserve that I be allowed to live a few days longer.”

His request was granted, and he was led back into the prison. Now his conscience had truly awakened; he confessed, and once more affirmed the innocence of the *weaver*. And he now honestly named his real fellow thieves, who were then caught as well and received their due. He lived some ten or twelve days more; and when he was led out the second time, his heart was no longer so hard and hardened; rather he acknowledged that he had deserved death, went to the place of execution in anguish and the terror of death, and died with true remorse for his sins.

[p. 154] Ask every pious generation,
Go, ask your fathers, too!
Is God not holy and righteous?
A foe to those who transgress?
Who ever mocked at His command,
Who scorned it and went unpunished?

Then do not wantonly defy God,
You reckless evildoers!
What does He care for the scoffer's scorn?
Almighty is the Avenger!
He who builds up and also breaks down,
How easily He destroys the sinner!

In *Magdeburg* the following story took place: A maidservant who had already served a merchant faithfully and honestly for eight years, without the slightest unfaithfulness ever having been noticed in her, was one evening still awake alone, when the master and the mistress had already gone to bed. While she was still attending to her tasks in the kitchen or in the cellar, a thief crept into the house and hid himself in the room under a bedstead. Towards eleven o'clock the maid also came into the room and took off her clothes, saying to herself the words:

“What is man, after all, when he is naked.”

Then she went to bed. The thief had meanwhile kept quite still until the maid was asleep. Now he crept into the second room, stole about three thousand gulden, and also found an opportunity to get out of the house again quite unnoticed.

[p. 155] When the master of the house got up, he soon noticed that he had been robbed; he asked the maid when she had gone to bed? whether anyone had been with her in the house? and whether she had properly locked the doors? When the maid had answered all these questions truthfully, he said:

“About three thousand gulden have been stolen from me this night, and so you must know something of this theft; if you confess it to me honestly and give me back what was stolen, no one shall learn of it, and you shall receive two hundred gulden from me besides; this I will do because you have served me honestly for so long; but if you do not confess it, I shall have you put in prison.”

The honest maid could confess nothing. She began to weep, and swore by all that is holy that she was innocent, but in vain. She was put in prison and examined before the court, and because she confessed nothing she was put to the torture; here she was terribly tormented, but she confessed nothing.

When she was led into the torture chamber for the second time, she fell at the feet of the executioner's man who was to torture her, writhed like a worm, and cried to God for help. The judges ordered the executioner to do his duty; he excused himself and begged them to spare him: the maid was certainly innocent. He was reminded of his duty, but he threw the instruments of torture at the feet of the members of the court, cursed his office, and said he would not let himself be forced into this cruelty, even [p. 156] if it should cost him his office; the person was certainly innocent. Since there happened to be no other executioner's man at hand, she was led back into prison and the matter was reported to the town council. — The town council sent for the merchant, told him how the matter now stood, and that the maid might after all be innocent, and asked him whether he now wished to pursue it further, or to release her out of compassion? The merchant took pity, even took her back into his house, and she served him again just as honestly as before.

Some years later she was once sent by her master to an inn for wine. As she passed through the public room on her way to the cellar, she saw a man sitting over a glass of wine, who was already feeling the strength of the wine rather considerably. As she went close past him, he said to her quite softly and with a mocking look:

“Ah, my sister! what is man, after all, when he is naked.”

She was startled, and did not know what to answer; but as she went on to the cellar and stood there, she remembered that she herself had spoken these words on the very evening when her master was robbed. Then she reflected further that no one could have heard her except the thief who had been in the house at the time. She therefore supposed nothing else than that this man was the thief; but she let nothing show, and went back quite unconcernedly, close past the man, and home, hurried

into her master's room, and cried: [p. 157] "God be praised that He has at last heard my prayer and discovered the thief who plunged me into such great misery."

Thereupon she told him what had happened, and begged him to have the man arrested quickly. The master went, took the watch, and hurried to the inn, where they found the man still at his bottle, quite merry and in good spirits. He was taken to prison and examined, and since he confessed the deed, his trial was soon held, and he was hanged.

God, whom the innocent maid had called upon in her anguish, had thus heard her prayer, and had not only softened the hearts of men to pity, so that she was released from the torture; He also knew how to guide things so that the thief had to betray himself and received his punishment, and so that the innocence came to light.

A rich Jew (יהודי)[98] was travelling on horseback to the fair (market), and had a belt full of money about his body; he had to ride through a river that was greatly swollen by rain; the water swept him away, and in a moment neither horse nor rider was to be seen any more. A *peasant* stood on the bank of the river and saw the mishap — and because he could swim well, he quickly threw off his clothes, sprang into the water, and happily rescued the Jew. With great effort he brought him to land; the horse, however, he could not save.

[p. 158] The Jew was at least half dead already; but because the *peasant* had heard that the drowned can be brought back to life, he carried him straightway into his house, laid him on a bundle of straw, and took every pains to bring him back to life. In this he succeeded happily too, and the Jew came back to life.

When he had fully recovered, he thanked his rescuer heartily. Now he wanted to reach for his money belt and reward him richly; but it was gone. He complained, therefore, that his money belt had been lost, and said that it could not be lying in the water, for it had been tied fast about his body.

The *peasant* was startled. His conscience did indeed acquit him, but it grieved him all the same that he should fall under an ugly suspicion. He assured the Jew that he had found no money on him, and said that if he had had it in mind to take his money from him, he would not have gone to so much trouble to bring him back to life.

The Jew was indeed still in doubt whether the matter was really so, yet he would not get into a quarrel with the saviour of his life, and preferred to resign himself to the loss of the money rather than offend him. He travelled on; both parted not altogether content with each other. The Jew was displeased because he had lost his horse and his money and had to continue his journey on foot, as

[98] Translator: in this story the Hebrew word יהודי (*Yehudi*, "Jew") is printed in square Hebrew letters within the Judeo-German text; it is rendered "Jew" throughout.

poor as a beggar; and the *peasant* was grieved that he had innocently come under suspicion of theft.

[p. 159] The following spring the *peasant* was going to cart the dung from his yard to the field; as he was turning over the straw with his hoe, he saw a long leather pouch lying in it. He picked it up and found that it was heavy; he opened it, and behold! it was quite full of gold and silver coins. Full of amazement he called his wife and said:

“In all the world, how does so much gold come to be in my dung?”

“Why!” said the wife, “that surely belongs to the Jew whom you rescued from the water last autumn.”

“You are right, wife!” he said. “I am glad of that! now at least I shall not pass for a rogue and a scoundrel! He shall soon have the money back; but how did it come to be here?”

They pondered this way and that, and at last they guessed that the belt must have come loose from the Jew's body while he lay on the straw, and the straw had afterwards been thrown onto the dung heap.

The honest *peasant* meanwhile kept the money safe, until he should have an opportunity of returning it to the Jew. But his greatest worry now was that he did not know what the man was called or where he lived. Therefore at fair-time he often went to the highroad and watched whether he might perhaps see the Jew again; but several years passed without their getting sight of the Jew.

At last one evening a cart with all sorts of goods drove up before the *peasant's* door. The Jew whom the *peasant* had rescued got down; with a joyful face he came into the room and said: [p. 160] “God be with you, dear people! Do you still know me?”

“Ah!” cried the *peasant*, “thank God that I see you again! I have long been waiting for you!”

The Jew interrupted him, took him by the hand and said:

“Dear friend! forgive me for having suspected you. Every time I travelled to the fair I asked the people here whether anyone had noticed that you had grown rich? or had built yourself a better little house? But I always heard that you were still just as poor as before. So two years passed, and I could now be sure that you knew nothing of my money. Now forgive me, dear friend, and accept once more my heartfelt thanks for having saved me. I now find myself, thank God, in prosperous circumstances. Here I have also brought along on a cart a few things which I wish to give you as a small token of my gratitude.”

So spoke the grateful Jew, and fetched from his cart cloth for clothing and all sorts of other things, and also a purse of money, which he laid on the table. The honest *peasant* stood there quite astonished, and said:

“Dear friend! your money really is in my house; it was found in the dung, and probably got into the dung with the straw on which you were lying at the time; but by God! I would have brought it to you long ago if I had known where you live. Now, here is the money belt; count the money yourself, it will all still be there.”

[p. 161] The Jehudi was astonished at the honesty of the poor man and begged him to keep this money as well; the peasant would not accept it. After much entreaty he did accept the other drinks[99] that the Jehudi had brought along; and, so as not to grieve him, also fifty ducats more of the money from the money-belt.

And now he built himself a new little house, in which the Jehudi often visited him whenever he travelled through. Then the good people rejoiced together when they remembered the wonderful events through which they had become friends.

[p. 162] Ninth Commandment.

לא תענה ברעך עד שקר (Exod. 20:13)

> You shall not testify against your neighbour as a false witness.

You shall never, before a court, testify or say anything against your neighbour that is contrary to the truth. Not friendship or acquaintance, not hatred or aversion, not promises from the one side or threats from the other; nothing but the bare truth is to guide us here. We must not make ourselves guilty here of any partiality, but neither of any thoughtlessness; earnestly and conscientiously we must examine ourselves as to what we know and do not know, and we must testify according to our best knowledge and conscience. The authorities are there to administer right and justice, to punish evil in the evil-doer, to deter others from evil, ולהציל גזול מיד עושקו ["and to deliver the robbed out of the hand of his oppressor"; cf. Jer. 22:3], and to stand by the afflicted against the violent. The criminal does not confess his misdeed at all, or not completely; if, then, we do not give testimony according to our best knowledge and conscience, the authorities cannot pass a just sentence; the evil-doer remains unpunished, he continues his accustomed way of life, makes public society unsafe, and afterwards, as before, brings [p. 163] innocent people into misfortune. All this misfortune the false witness has on his conscience; by his lie he makes himself guilty of the outrages of others; indeed, still much more: the criminal often transgresses in haste, before he can properly collect his thoughts and consider the matter, and before he can overcome his passion; the false witness is thus far more of a criminal, since he has time to reflect on the matter and to consider it; hence he commits a far more abominable crime. Therefore, too, the holy Torah, merely for the sake of his *design*, even if his evil intention and his wicked deed did not come so far as the

[99] Translator: printed געטענקע, evidently a misprint for *Getränke* ("drinks").

execution of the punishment upon the accused, nevertheless imposes on the false witness the same punishment that he intended against his fellow man. It says, namely (Deut. 19:18[–19]):

> ודרשו השפטים היטב והנה עד שקר העד שקר ענה באחיו ועשיתם לו כאשר זמם לעשות לאחיו ובערת הרע מקרבך
>
> "The judges shall investigate thoroughly, and if the witness has testified falsely and given false testimony against his brother, then you shall *do to him as he intended to do to his brother*, and remove the evil-doer from your midst."

We also may not bear false witness against our neighbour in our hearts, that is, we may not judge the thoughts of others, or the intentions and motives of their doings and dealings. We can judge only what meets our eyes and what we have plainly seen with our eyes; we can testify only to the deeds of our fellow man; but about his inward self, which underlies the deed, about the good or evil will, we can pass no judgment. That only God can do, הבוחן כליות ולב [who tries the reins and the heart; cf. Ps. 7:10], who searches heart and reins. — A wicked, dishonourable man usually ascribes to the [p. 164] great, noble deeds of his fellow man an ignoble, selfish motive. If a fellow man errs, then he may not have erred out of weakness or out of haste; malice must be the cause of his misstep. Evil is less evil when not the depravity of the heart, but a momentary weakness has led to it. — Good deeds let us infer a good will, and man errs far more often out of weakness than out of malice. We may also at times — indeed, it is sometimes even our duty to — conceal the truth. If a fault, if an offence of our neighbour is hidden, the making known of which is not useful but harmful to him, then it is unloving, and betrays a bad heart, to uncover what would better have been kept hidden;[100] for once a man has lost his honour, one has also cut off his way to improvement, because he is rejected everywhere. Therefore our holy Torah teaches [Lev. 19:17]: הוכח תוכיח את עמיתך ולא תשא עליו חטא "You shall admonish and correct your neighbour for his offence, but not carry abroad his faults and bear a grudge against him."

Naboth, a citizen of Jezreel, had a vineyard near the palace of Ahab, king of Samaria [Shomron], which [p. 165] the king wished to possess.[101] He therefore spoke to Naboth and said:

---

[100] טובי׳ חטא ואתא זיגוד לחודי׳ ואסהיד בי׳ קמי׳ דרב פפא, נגדי׳ לזיגוד, אמר לי׳: טובי׳ חטא וזיגוד מינגד? אמר לי׳ אין! דכתיב לא יקום עד אחד באיש ואת לחודך אסהיד בי׳, שם רע בעלמא קא מפקת בי׳, מאחר שאי אתה נאמן בעדות אין לך עליו להעיד, והרי אתה עובר על לאו דלא תלך רכיל. "Tobiah sinned, and Zigud came alone and testified against him before Rav Papa. He had Zigud flogged. Zigud said to him: 'Tobiah sinned, and Zigud is flogged?' He said to him: 'Yes! For it is written: One witness shall not rise up against a man [Deut. 19:15], and you testified against him alone; you are merely bringing out an evil name upon him. Since you are not believed as a witness, you have no business testifying against him, and so you transgress the prohibition: You shall not go about as a talebearer [Lev. 19:16].'" (Tractate Pesachim, fol. 113a.) [Translator: the passage is BT Pesachim 113b; the closing clause, from "since you are not believed", is Rashi's explanation woven into the quotation.]

[101] Translator: the narrative follows 1 Kings 21:1–24 (Naboth's vineyard), 1 Kings 22:34–38 (Ahab's death) and 2 Kings 9:30–37 (Jezebel's death).

"Let me have your vineyard, which I wish to use for my kitchen garden, because it lies so near my palace; I will give you another, better vineyard for it, or, if you prefer, pay you its value in ready money." But Naboth said:

"The Eternal forbid that I should give up for a price the inheritance of my fathers (which from time immemorial has been the property of my family)."

This short refusal made a deep impression on the king's mind, and he went home sullen and vexed, lay down on his bed with his face turned to the wall, did not eat and did not speak.

Jezebel, his wife, soon noticed her husband's agitation, asked the reason, and he disclosed to her what had passed between him and Naboth. The queen was greatly incensed at this; she conceived a bitter grudge against Naboth, and in her false heart she forged a hellish plan of revenge against this innocent man.

"My lord and husband," she said, "take heart! and do not grieve over so trifling a matter. Are you not king in Israel? Do you lack the power or the means to show that everyone in this realm must bow to your will? Up! be of good cheer, and leave it to me to obtain the vineyard for you."

Jezebel wrote in the name of the king to the judges and elders of the city of Jezreel about a popular assembly (a public court day), and remarked that Naboth was to be seated at the head; and at the same time she ordered two depraved men to sit opposite [p. 166] him, to accuse him publicly of having blasphemed God and the king, and thereupon, on their testimony, to condemn him to death.

Everything happened according to the queen's will. The people assembled, Naboth sat at the head, the two notorious men sat down opposite him, and shamelessly, before the eyes of the people, gave testimony that Naboth had blasphemed God and the king. On this false testimony Naboth was condemned to death and stoned outside the city.

Jezebel thereupon announced joyfully to her husband that he could now take possession of Naboth's vineyard, since Naboth had been condemned to death and his goods were confiscated according to the law. Ahab set out to take possession of the vineyard, without asking his conscience by what means his wife had come into this possession.

When Ahab was in possession of this vineyard, acquired through blood-guilt, and wished to lay it out according to his plan, the divine prophet Elijah the Tishbite unexpectedly stepped before him and said:

"Ahab! Through the possession of this vineyard you have sinned grievously against God; through innocently shed blood you have come into its possession; but I proclaim to you in the name of the Eternal: as the dogs licked the blood of the innocently murdered Naboth, so will they also lick up your blood, and the dogs will devour your wife Jezebel in the vale of Jezreel."

Ahab did indeed repent heartily of this deed and of his offence against God; (and [according to *Yalkut David*][102] he also had the two false witnesses condemned with a like sentence to the one pronounced over [p. 167] him: he had them, namely, quartered and thrown to the dogs.) But the prophecy of Elijah, in the name of the almighty Judge, was nevertheless fulfilled. When, some time later, Ahab went out to war, he was mortally wounded in his chariot; the blood streamed from the wound so that the weapons that had fallen from his hands swam in blood, and it ran down onto the ground, so that the dogs licked it up; and the chariot had to be washed off in the pool of Samaria.

When later Jehu became king and marched to Jezreel, Jezebel, adorned and decked out, placed herself at a window of the palace and hailed Jehu, who was coming in at the gate, asking for peace. When Jehu caught sight of her, he commanded that she be thrown down; they threw her down, and some of her blood spattered on the wall and on the horses; he then rode over her, went into the palace, ate and drank. After the meal the king said:

"See to this accursed woman and bury her; for after all she is a king's daughter."

They therefore went to bury her; but they found nothing of her but the skull, the feet and the hands, for the dogs had already torn her to pieces. When this was reported to the king, he cried:

"Ha! So was God's word through his servant Elijah the Tishbite, namely: In the territory of Jezreel shall the dogs eat the flesh of Jezebel."

[p. 168] Tenth Commandment.

לא תחמד בית רעך לא תחמד אשת רעך ועבדו ואמתו ושורו וחמרו וכל אשר לרעך (Exod. 20:14)

> You shall have no desire for your neighbour's house; you shall have no desire for your neighbour's wife, for his manservant, for his maidservant, for his ox, for his ass, or for anything that your neighbour possesses.

Just as some people become sick and poor through no fault of their own, so too, without any guilt of one's own, some evil thoughts and desires can arise in a person. The evil desires first become sinful when a person is careless and does not seek to suppress them; when he dwells on them with pleasure and actually plans to carry out the evil that entices him; that is the proper sense of לא תחמד [*lo tachmod*], namely: "You shall not long to be able to put into practice your desire for your neighbour's house, for your neighbour's wife, etc."

As soon as we feel ourselves conscious of an evil desire, the duty of the commandment comes into force at once: to resist its first inclination. — Even voluntary hesitation, wavering back and forth between consent and resistance, even this irresolution is a sin; meanwhile the desire grows ever more violent, and the strength [p. 169] to resist it weaker; from consent to the desire there comes at

[102] Translator: Frank's bracketed source note, ע"פ ילקוט דוד ("according to Yalkut David"); the work is not further identified here.

last consent to the deed. Therefore our חכמי תלמוד ז"ל [Sages of the Talmud, of blessed memory] say:

הרהור עברה קשה מעברה

> "Brooding on how to be able to put sin into practice is a more punishable crime than when one commits the crime carried away by passion."[103]

Evil thoughts and desires arise either through our own outward senses, or through the seductive enticements of bad and dishonourable people, who represent to us the sensual enjoyment of forbidden things as alluring, but the offence as very slight. So do not direct your eye at forbidden objects, and do not lend your ear to seductive talk; avoid the evil occasion, flee dangerous places and immoral persons, and read no writings that speak for lust but poison the heart.

With all caution and watchfulness, however, we cannot avoid all evil thoughts and desires; if such arise against our will, we must seek to suppress them by at once undertaking some important business that requires attention and reflection.[104] Let one think of God and of His holy Torah; let one take refuge in such prayers as direct our mind especially to the eternity [p. 170] and omniscience of God; and let one think of death, which can strike us any day, any hour, perhaps even while we are satisfying our desires.

The governor at *Nehardea*, named *Anilicha*,[105] met a widow who was driving a donkey before her and weeping.

"Why are you weeping, poor woman?" — "A poor woman indeed," she answered; "this donkey, the sack that lies on it, and the clothing that covers my nakedness are the whole remnant of my possessions; all the rest the king has taken from me."

"And in what did the rest of your possessions consist?" asked *Anilicha*, astonished. — "I owned a small farm; it was the inheritance of the forefathers of my late husband and of my own; it was dear to us above all else; here we were born and brought up; here our mutual love had its beginning; we were married, we enjoyed the contentment of true love and of untroubled industry; — and on his deathbed my good husband begged me to take care that our little estate, which our fathers had left us, should pass to no one else but our son, who perhaps at this moment, in the king's army, is

---

[103] Translator: BT Yoma 29a (הרהורי עבירה קשו מעבירה), "thoughts of sin are worse than sin."

[104] אמר רבי שמעון בן לקיש לעולם ירגיז אדם יצר טוב על יצר הרע (שיעשה מלחמה עם יצר הרע), אם נצחו מוטב ואם לאו יעסוק בתורה, אם נצחו מוטב ואם לאו יקרא קריאת שמע, אם נצחו מוטב ואם לאו יזכיר לו יום המיתה. "Rabbi Simeon ben Lakish said: A person should always stir up the good inclination against the evil inclination (that it make war with the evil inclination). If he conquers it, well and good; if not, let him occupy himself with the Torah. If he conquers it, well and good; if not, let him recite the Shema. If he conquers it, well and good; if not, let him remind himself of the day of death." (Tractate Berakhot, fol. 5[a].)

[105] Translator: the name is printed letter-spaced, אנליכא; the reading "Anilicha" is tentative. The tale is a version of the widely told moral story of the widow's sack of earth, here set in Nehardea; Frank names no source.

shedding his blood for a lord who takes everything from his mother." — "On what grounds," asked *Anilicha*, "did the king take your land from you?"

"He wants to have a pleasure-house built on it," answered the widow. — Good God! thought *Ani-* [p. 171] *licha* to himself; he has so many palaces and pleasure-houses, and on a mere whim, to have one more, he drives a poor woman out of her property. —

"And what compensation did he give you?" asked *Anilicha*. — "Compensation? None," answered the widow; "at first he had a small sum offered to me; but since I did not want to sell the land so dear to me, he took it from me by force."

"Did you put your sad situation before him?" replied the governor. — "I threw myself down before him," answered the widow, "wet his feet with my tears, and begged and implored. — I told him everything that pain, grief and despair inspired in me!" — She could not go on for sobbing. — "And your pleading had no power over him?" asked *Anilicha* sympathetically. — "He turned me away harshly, in utter disfavour," answered the weeping woman. —

The governor raised his eyes to heaven and cried out with a sigh: Almighty One! Father of mankind! He represents you here on earth, and can turn away from himself those who ask for nothing but what justice and fairness require; and you overlook with long-suffering and patience the most unfair and unjust actions of men. — "Woman," he said resolutely after a while, "let me have your donkey and your sack for a short time, and follow me at a distance; I am going now to the king; — where is he now?"

"He is at this very moment," answered the widow, "on the land that I once called mine. — But what do you want with the donkey?" — "Do not [p. 172] worry, and follow me," replied *Anilicha*, took the donkey, and sought out the king. — The latter welcomed him in a friendly manner. "I have not seen you for so long, *Anilicha*," he said to him, "and how does it come about that I see you just now?"

"Exalted ruler of the realm!" answered *Anilicha*, "I have just spoken with a poor woman, who — — —"

"I guess what will follow," the king interrupted him in a grave tone, "and wish to hear nothing further. Let the stubborn woman pay for her conduct! Is it not within my discretion to dispose of the property and the lives of my subjects?" —

"Your power here on earth is unlimited," replied *Anilicha*; "nor does the poor widow ask for her former property back; she asks merely for a small keepsake, and if you permit, I shall fill this sack with earth in accordance with her wish." — "That she may have," replied the king, smiling, "even if she wanted ten sacks. — Soon, *Anilicha*, you will not recognize this place any more. Here a splendid palace is to be erected, there a waterfall is to beautify the view, and farther off a high tower is to rise, from which one can survey the whole region." —

"So?" replied the governor, who meanwhile had filled the sack with earth. — "I shall have finished one piece of business at once, and then, exalted ruler of the realm! one more request, which is just as insignificant as the first." — "It is granted you," said the king. "The sack is filled," con- [p. 173] tinued *Anilicha*, "and now, exalted lord! I implore your help to load the sack onto the donkey." —

"What a bold and strange request!" cried the king; "how could you ask this of me? Call a servant here, and he shall help you!" —

"Permit me, ruler! exalted ruler!" replied *Anilicha*, "to ask this favour of you; — to beg you imploringly not to refuse it to me." — "Madman!" cried the king, "the load is too heavy for me!" — "Too heavy?" said *Anilicha*; "this sack full of earth, so small a part of the land on which we are standing, seems too heavy to you? O lord! And do you not tremble at the thought of the day on which you will appear before your Judge and ours? on which not merely this sack full of earth, but the whole land, with all the palaces and towers that you mean to build on it, with all the tears with which the unfortunate have wetted it because of you, may weigh upon you far more unbearably? —

"Today you are an unlimited ruler; a nod from you cuts short a man's life, and a single word plunges thousands into misfortune; but a time is coming in which you will stand in equal rank with the lowest of your servants!" — "In equal rank with a servant?" — repeated the king. "I am mistaken," *Anilicha* resumed, "your greater pre-eminence here will only prepare greater torment for you. You have here an incomparably larger sphere of action, and consequently incomparably more to answer for. Each of your subjects has only to give account of [p. 174] what he possessed for himself, and you of all that we possess together. Farewell! — Forgive your servant his boldness." — *Anilicha* was about to withdraw; the king held him back. "Forgive you?" he said; "I owe you thanks for holding me back from a great injustice, which I had already half committed. — Call the widow; — let her take back her paternal inheritance, and, to compensate her for the tears that my harshness has wrung from her, her land shall be enlarged by as much again by a garden that adjoins it. And you shall never again leave my court, so that I may have the opportunity to reward you fittingly. Rulers need a friendly companion who does not shrink from paying homage to the truth, who makes them aware of their missteps and holds them back from them; you shall in future be mine."

Nathan de-Tzutzita,[106] one of the richest and most charitable men of his time in Israel, once saw in the street before his house *Hannah*, the wife of an insignificant man, one of the most beautiful of her sex. The woman's dazzling beauty drew the attention of the rich Nathan to herself in a high degree. Wealth and flattery by turns attempted the fulfilment of seductive designs upon the woman's honest fidelity. But all the assaults of vice broke against her steadfast virtue and piety. Seized by an unhappy and raging passion of unsatisfied desire, Nathan at last fell into a dan- [p.

[106]Translator: the figure of Nathan de-Tzutzita and his passion for a woman named Hannah is known from Rashi on BT Shabbat 56b and Sanhedrin 31a.

175] gerous illness. The physicians at once recognized its cause, and declared him lost unless Hannah, yielding to his wishes, would save his life. The *Chachamim* [Sages] opposed this verdict and said: "Let a man rather lose his life for the sake of vice than preserve it in sin through the sacrifice of marital fidelity and virtue." At least (said the physicians) the sick man should be allowed to speak with Hannah just once, in order thereby to relieve his shattered health somewhat. But this remedy, too, the *Chachamim* rejected, שלא יהי׳ בנות ישראל פרוצות בעריות, "So that no game shall be made of chastity in Israel." And they added that the evil of the illness might thereby only be made worse instead of lessened, since a conversation with the beautiful Hannah would only fan his heated passion still more.[107]

Almost consumed by the glow of an unsatisfied, passionate urge, Nathan now lay very ill, and the life of this man, who did not know how to curb his passion, was in the greatest danger.

Meanwhile Hannah's husband had fallen into debt through misfortune; his creditors proceeded against him with all the severity of the law, took the rest of his property from him, and since this did not suffice to satisfy them, they threw him into prison. Poor and without friends, nothing remained to the unfortunate Hannah but her honour and the consciousness of her innocence. Meagrely she supported herself and her husband by spinning. With calm submission to her hard, undeserved fate, and with firm hope of a better future, she sat up through the nights, working diligently, [p. 176] and often the dawn lit up her careworn cheeks over the unfinished flax. Several weeks had already passed, during which Hannah's husband sighed in the grim prison, when once, seized by torment and ill-humour, he said to his wife, who was just bringing him his midday bread:

"I am heartily weary of the wretched, idle life in this prison. You have always been, through the whole time of our marriage, the faithful companion of my life; you always shared joy and pain honestly with me; you have until now always dried the tears of grief from my brow; so be now too, in this distress, what you always were! Hear me: it rests with you alone to free me from my prison. If the preservation of my life is a holy duty to you, if your love for me is no feigned hypocrisy, then fulfil the request that I hereby address to your faithful heart: go to the rich and charitable Nathan, and ask him for a loan to satisfy my creditors, so that I may be released from the wretched prison in which I must otherwise perish. He has goods in abundance, but he also possesses a feeling heart and is charitable; he can save me, and will surely do so if you ask him."

Silent, and torn between pity and contempt, Hannah had listened to her husband's demand. After a long struggle with herself she at last composed herself; nature and love had won the victory; tears welled from her eyes, and in her gentle tone she said:

[p. 177] "Beloved husband! What are you asking of me? God, who sees my tears, knows also my heart and my faithful love for you; He alone knows for certain that I take the tenderest share in

---

[107] Translator: the physicians' advice and the Sages' refusals follow BT Sanhedrin 75a (כדי שלא יהו בנות ישראל פרוצות בעריות, "so that the daughters of Israel should not be dissolute in sexual matters"), there told of an unnamed man.

your sufferings, and that I would willingly sacrifice everything, yes, even my life, for yours. But virtue, honour and fidelity are holy pledges entrusted to me by God, which I neither may nor can give away. Remember that the rich Nathan cast his eyes on me long ago, and sought by the most shameful proposals to seduce me into vice and to the gratification of his lust, proposals which I always rejected with contempt, and that now, as people say, he is wasting away with love-sickness. How, then, should I expose myself to the danger of losing virtue and honour? No! I would rather stay awake through the nights of many years and work for you until the blood flows from my wounded hands, than violate fidelity and part from virtue. I would rather die poor, but as an honest, faithful, virtuous wife, than live with the consciousness of having sacrificed my virtue and honour to vice and of having sinned against God. Surely I suffer more in silence on your account than you do in your prison; let us hope patiently that God will have mercy on us. Truly! I would have to doubt your reason; for with a calm mind you could not demand this of me."

The wicked man, however, held firmly to his demands. — Overcome by pain and by her wounded sense of honour, [p. 178] Hanna left her husband and did not let herself be seen by him for three days; at last love triumphed over her vexation. — "I must go to him," she said to herself, "embrace him, kiss him, and be reconciled with him; he may perhaps be ill and in need of my help." — She went, and found him really very ill. When he caught sight of her, he gathered all his strength and showered the poor, wounded woman with curses.

"Ha!" he cried, "shameful woman! Have you come to delight in my sufferings? May God's curse strike you, you who tear apart the bonds of love and obedience, you who sacrifice your husband to wretched whims; yes, you wish for my death, so that afterwards you can marry the rich Nathan ."

Calmly Hanna listened to these curses in silence, and then replied composedly: "My beloved husband! Spare me such insults, for by the Most High God, whom you and I revere in humility, you do me wrong. A conscientious heart cannot possibly endure these affronts. But if you nevertheless insist that I go to Nathan and ask him for a loan, then give me a *get* [bill of divorce] beforehand, so that I may be released from the conjugal duty towards you, and be free of the danger of committing adultery."

"Ha, false, seductive serpent!" he cried out at her threateningly, "that is just what I said; that is the very trap which you, under the mask of the faithful [p. 179] and pious, laid for me, so that you might then all the more easily part from me and mock me. But in this you shall not succeed. You could free me from this prison; you do not want to. Good, then I will die here in the dungeon; but my last breath shall be a curse upon you, and into Hell with you! —"

Driven almost to despair by pain and fury, Hanna then said: "Yes, villain! Disgrace of mankind! Have I deserved this of you, that you would curse me for my faithfulness, that you would by force make me an adulteress? — Woe! woe is me!" —

She stood there in despair and sobbed, to lament her sufferings to God. But instead of soothing her, the wicked man thrust her from him. Wringing her hands she left the prison, and, hardly conscious of herself, she ran back to her dwelling; exhausted, she sank down upon her poor bed and fell into a gentle slumber, from which she awoke only after some hours. Calm and composed, she now considered what was to be done. Love and faithfulness to her husband and his preservation on the one side, shame and dishonour on the other: these were the two ways between which she had to choose. Her struggle between the two decided her for the first, in order to save her unhappy husband. — Yet she remained steadfast, and held herself bound to employ everything possible within her power, all the representations of religion and virtue for the preservation of her honour and duty, every art of persuasion, every stratagem, yes, even the strength of her life itself, to prevent a misdeed. — True to this [p. 180] resolve, she first strengthened herself with the following fervent prayer:

"O Eternal! Kind and just God! Thou who knowest the most hidden folds of my heart, and art convinced that it is not from sinful passion that I undertake this step, so dangerous to my virtue and my marriage bond, and so contrary to Thy holy laws; to Thee alone is it known that I am compelled to it by my husband. In full trust in Thy grace and mercy I implore Thee, my Saviour and Protector! Strengthen me in this perilous hour; shield me, an innocent woman, with the wing of Thine almighty power; hear the anxious pleading of Thy humble handmaid; restrain the violence of the lion when he would tear the lamb. Destroy me rather than let wickedness and vice defile my virtue; give my words the power to move the heart of a man who would murder my virtue, so that he may desist from his vicious deed."

Comforted and strengthened by the power of faith in prayer, she then arose and went to Nathan. Scarcely had his servants caught sight of her when they announced the joyful news to their master, that the beautiful Hanna was in the forecourt and wished to speak with him. Delighted by this news, Nathan said to his slaves: "If you have spoken the truth, you shall be free this very moment." And at that moment the beautiful Hanna appeared before him.

"Mistress of my heart!" he cried as he came to meet her, "what do you desire of me?" While he [p. 181] spoke, she drew back trembling a few steps. "Command" (said he), "whatever you desire, and I will grant it you." Calming herself, Hanna replied: "Forgive, noble lord, this humble request: I come humbly to ask you for a loan, — to grant it me, in order to free from prison an unhappy husband whom pitiless creditors have had cast into it. By diligent work and thrift we will then try to repay you the sum as soon as possible."

Scarcely had she finished speaking when he also handed her the sum requested, with the words: "Beloved Hanna! I would gladly give you all the treasures in the world, and would count this hour the happiest of my life, in which I can show you a kindness. But this sum is only a trifle; command more, and if it pleases you, you may dispose of it as you wish; and what I possess in the world, nothing would be too much for me to give. But you also know my wishes, and I am also certain

that in so beautiful a body there must dwell a good heart, one that will feel for the sufferings of a tender lover, will not remain cold, and will grant him what would raise him to the happiest of mortals. See, I lie here, see how I am tormented and racked with pain, and that you alone can save me from the jaws of death."

With these words he stepped nearer to her and tried to embrace her tenderly, but she tore herself away in indignation. She stepped a few paces back and said:

[p. 182] "Lord! Poor, but virtuous, I came to you to take refuge with you: would you now dishonour me in your house? — Look up to heaven! We are not alone; God sees us, and also judges righteously. He, Lord, who blessed you with riches so that you might dry the tears of the weak; who laid in your breast the beautiful feeling of compassion; who granted you the blessed pleasure of breaking the fetters of the prisoner, gave you also courage and strength to master a passion that would make you unhappy for ever and brand you with disgrace. A good angel led me hopefully towards you when I entered your house; should he, weeping over a lost virtue, forsake me? Shall I, who ought ever to thank and bless you, curse you instead for a violated virtue? — Lord! I am in your power, and am only a weak woman, but I implore your magnanimity" (at this she threw herself at his feet), "master your passion, which would make us both wretched; preserve to me the consciousness of my virtue, and to yourself the reward of noble self-mastery and of my gratitude. I have no other comfort than God, who watches over all our actions; will you now, for the sake of one moment and a fleeting pleasure, destroy the most precious treasure of your life, your peace of conscience? — No! That you cannot wish; for that you are too noble, your heart too good. — Take heart! Honour the virtue of a poor woman, master your passion, and you will have woven for yourself the fairest flower in your wreath of virtue." —

[p. 183] Shaken, Hanna then stepped back a few paces; she bowed her face and wept; and then she left the dwelling and Nathan's house. But her powerful words had made a deep impression on Nathan's heart as well, and he came to his senses. Struggling, he thought it over. — "Ah, what was I about to do!" he cried to himself; "what a wicked deed I had resolved upon, — and this woman, — this angel saved me." — Deeply moved, overwhelmed by his own baseness, and with remorse and shame he recognized his folly. —

After some time, when he had become somewhat calmer, he fell on his knees, besought God for forgiveness of his sins, and vowed improvement and a change of life.

Meanwhile Hanna had satisfied her husband's pitiless creditors and released him, she embraced him and wept for joy, and she, too, regained her joyful cheerfulness. She told him how the danger had passed, how she had not let herself be persuaded, and how the truth had been her rescue; and astonished by her virtue, he humbly begged her pardon for his insult, and overwhelmed her with signs of his deepest remorse.

Shortly afterwards Nathan de-Tzutzita went to Rabbi Akiva and asked him to impose a penance upon him, and to instruct him in the holy *Torah*. Rabbi Akiva was surprised at this change and at the request [p. 184] of this dissolute man, the more so since Nathan was known as a lascivious, licentious man; yet, when he had related everything to him, and told him how his heart had been changed, Rabbi Akiva gladly agreed. Full of reverence he extended his hand to Rabbi Akiva and asked about the cause of so sudden a change. Then Nathan told him truthfully of the incident with the beautiful Hanna, and how this woman, through her innocence and her pious steadfastness, had brought him back to the path of virtue. Rabbi Akiva received him as his pupil, and Nathan learned with such diligence that he became the best of Rabbi Akiva's pupils, and is recorded in the Talmud, alongside Rabbi Akiva himself, as a famous man.

Once Hanna came to Rabbi Akiva's lectures, and wished to be informed about the instruction and teaching that Nathan, too, had been receiving there. She inquired among the other pupils of Rabbi Akiva about the instruction, and learned to her great astonishment that this man was a man of the strictest virtue and the most learned of the pupils, who, because of a poor, virtuous wife, had changed entirely and become pious. — Overjoyed at this, yet also full of shame and confusion that he, the pious man, should once have deeply wronged a virtuous wife, he went to her, fell at her feet, and with deep feeling and with tears in his eyes asked forgiveness of the woman who had brought about his conversion. — She bade him rise, and rejoiced with him in the consciousness of pure virtue; she held out her hand to him in friendship, and both [p. 185] thanked God, who had so wonderfully saved her from an unhappy situation.[108]

> [p. 186] Oft does your heart complain how hard it is
> to walk the way of the Lord,

---

[108][Hebrew in the original:] I found this story in the *Sefer Ma'asiyyot* (book of tales) attributed to the sage Rabbenu Nissim bar Jacob, and it is cited in the *Seder ha-Dorot*; and I found him mentioned in the Talmud in several places. They say in the Gemara (Sanhedrin, end of the chapter *Ben Sorer u-Moreh*): "A certain man set his eyes upon a certain woman, and heartsick feelings came up in him. They came and asked the physicians, who said: He has no remedy unless, etc. The sages said: Let him die, etc.; let her stand before him, etc. — The sages said: Let him die, and let her not stand before him, etc.; let her converse with him from behind a fence — let him die, and let her not converse with him" (see Maimonides, *Hilkhot Yesodei ha-Torah*, chapter five), so that the daughters of Israel should not become licentious in sexual matters. In the chapter *Zeh Borer* (fol. 31b), Rashi s.v. *le-dizu li* [explains Natan de-Tzutzita]; I found in the *Sefer ha-Aggadah* concerning a man who set his eyes upon a woman and was made heartsick and fell ill, and she was a married woman. Some days later she needed to borrow from him, and out of her distress she went to him; and he subdued his inclination, released her in peace, and was healed; and when he went out to the market, a ray of light shone on his head from heaven, and for this reason he was called "Tzutzita". And in tractate Shabbat (fol. 26b), Rashi explains *Natan de-Tzutzita* in the same way: that an angel stretched out his hand and received his repentance. And Rabbenu Tam there says that it is stated in a Midrash that a lamp shone upon his head; see there. And were it not that I hesitate, I would say that what they said, that a lamp shone upon his head, was not a light actually seen upon his head, but that the recognition of his face testified that he was a man of clean hands and pure heart, and that he had a pure soul, like the soul of a godly man; and this is what they said in the chapter *ha-Mappelet* concerning the child in its mother's womb, that a lamp shines over its head; and this is what the elder Job meant when he said (29:3): מי יתנני כירחי קדם etc. בהלו נרו עלי ראשי ["O that I were as in the months of old … when His lamp shone above my head"], that is, while his soul was still pure. All this Rabbi Akiva saw on Nathan's face from his steps and his words, and recognized that this man was worthy to receive the Torah and honour. [Translator: The story of Nathan de-Tzutzita appears in the *Hibbur Yafeh me-ha-Yeshu'ah* ascribed to R. Nissim of Kairouan and is cited in R. Jehiel Heilprin's *Seder ha-Dorot*. The Talmudic passage is BT Sanhedrin 75a; the Maimonides reference is *Hilkhot Yesodei ha-Torah* 5:9. Rashi's account is on BT Sanhedrin 31b; the Shabbat reference printed "fol. 26b" should be BT Shabbat 56b (Rashi and Tosafot s.v. *Natan de-Tzutzita*). The "lamp over the head" of the unborn child is BT Niddah 30b (chapter *ha-Mappelet*).]

and daily, true to His word,
to think and act aright.

True, it is so: virtue costs some toil;
it is the conquest of desire;
yet judge yourself what it would be,
if it did not have to fight?

Those who delight in their own vice,
does no pain strike them here below?
They are the slaves of their own torment,
and they have no peace.

The pious man who curbs desire
has often his own sufferings too;
but the pain with which he struggles
is turned at last to joy.

The path of vice is at the first
a broad way through the meadows;
but its course turns into danger,
its end is night and horror.

[p. 187] The virtuous man's path is narrow at the start,
one sees but thorns and briars;
yet the further on he goes, the fairer it becomes,
and at the end it brings delight.

No, God has not condemned us
to follow our own will;
when envy, greed and folly burn,
to sate our lusts in freedom;

No, God has not ordained us
for evil, to our own hurt,
for pleasures that would make you wretched:
to such thoughts God is a stranger.

God wills that we be blessed in Him,
and so He gave us laws;
they are what makes the heart rejoice,
they are the best support of life.

He speaks to us through our understanding,
and speaks through conscience,
what we should flee, as creatures of His grace,
what we should choose instead.

[p. 188] Him to fear, — that is wisdom alone,
and freedom is to choose it;
a beast obeys the force of nature,
a man the light of the soul.

What is the spirit's own possession?
What is its calling on the earth?
Virtue! What is her reward, her glory?
To grow like unto God!

Learn but to relish the word of the Lord
and to find His grace,
and practise faithfully, and gladly,
to overcome your heart.

Who has strength, will through its use
receive from God yet more;
but who has nothing, from him too
what he has shall be taken.

You do not fight by your own strength,
therefore you must succeed;
God it is who works them both in you,
the willing and the doing.

[p. 189] Let never the scoffing of the wicked
hinder you on virtue's path;
true glory is glory with God,
and not with the children of men.

The jewel that your faith holds fast
will give you courage new;
and powers of the world to come
will quicken it with life.

And lastly, man, be not dismayed
if you do not always succeed;
if, however much your heart may dare,
some weakness still oppresses you.

God looks not on the deed alone,
He looks upon your will;

a godly merit then is yours!
Let this make your heart still.[109]

[p. 190] We have now explained the Ten Commandments and their clear meaning in particular, and have also precisely stated and set out with each commandment the means for keeping them, as well as for being able to resist transgression vigorously. But the first and strongest means, which seeks to stifle within us at their very birth all restless desires, deadly passions and budding vices, is:

Contentment

You complain, and feel the burdens
of the station in which you live in need;
you strive to become happier,
and see that you strive in vain.

Yes, complain! God permits you tears;
yet in complaining think back too:
is then the happiness that we desire
for us also always a true happiness?

Never does station, never do possessions
give a man contentment;
the true repose of the mind
is virtue and a contented sufficiency.

Enjoy what God has allotted you,
forgo gladly what you do not have;
each station has its peace,
each station has its burden too.

[p. 191] God is the Lord, and His blessing
He ever divides with a wise hand;
not as we are wont to wish it,
yet as He found it good for us.

Would you be so bold as to think
that His love forgets you?
He gives us more than we deserve,
and never what would do us harm.

Do not consume the powers of life
in sluggish discontent;

[109] Translator: The poem (printed without a title) is Christian Fürchtegott Gellert's "Der Kampf der Tugend" from his *Geistliche Oden und Lieder* (1757), lightly adapted.

attend to the business of your station,
and make good use of your lifetime.

With duty and with diligence to yield oneself to God,
to see in hope an everlasting happiness, —
this is the way to peace and life;
Lord! teach me to walk this way![110]

[p. 192] Hope

Men speak and dream a great deal
of better days to come;
after a happy, golden goal
one sees them run and chase;
the world grows old, and grows young again,
yet man forever hopes for betterment.

Hope leads him into life,
she flutters round the merry boy;
the youth is fired by her magic gleam,
she is not buried with the old man;
for though he ends his weary course in the grave,
upon the grave he still plants — hope.

It is no empty, flattering delusion,
begotten in the brain of the fool;
in the heart it loudly proclaims itself:
for something better we are born!
And what the inner voice declares
does not deceive the hoping soul. —[111]

[p. 193] Comfort of Eternal Life

After a trial of brief days
eternity awaits us;
there, there all lamentation turns
into a godlike contentment.
Here virtue plies its diligence,
and yonder world awards the prize.

True, the pious man feels on earth
many a blessed moment;
yet all the joys that come to him

[110] Translator: Gellert, "Zufriedenheit mit seinem Zustande" (*Geistliche Oden und Lieder*, 1757).
[111] Translator: Friedrich Schiller, "Hoffnung" (1797).

are but imperfect happiness.
He remains a man, and his repose
waxes and wanes within his soul.

Now he is troubled by the body's pains,
now by the clamour of this world;
now in his own heart there fights
a foe who more often wins than falls;
now through his neighbour's fault he sinks
into sorrow and impatience.

[p. 194] Here, where virtue often suffers,
and vice is often fortunate,
where one envies the happy man
and forgets the one in sorrow,
here man can never be free of pain,
never free of his own weakness.

Here I but seek it, there I shall find it;
there, holy and transfigured, I shall
feel the whole worth of virtue,
its unutterably great worth;
the God of love I shall behold,
love Him, and exalt Him for ever.

There the holy will of providence
shall be my will and my welfare,
and lovely being, salvation in fullness,
shall delight me at the throne of God;
then gain upon gain shall ever
make me feel that I am eternal.

There I shall know in the light
what I saw darkly on earth;
shall call wonderful and holy
what here befell past finding out;
there my spirit, with praise and thanks,
will see the dispensation whole.

[p. 195] What are you, sufferings of this earth,
compared with that glory
which shall be revealed in us
from eternity to eternity?

How nothing, nothing at all compared with it
is yet a moment full of toil![112]

[note] [113]

[112]Translator: Gellert, "Trost des ewigen Lebens" (*Geistliche Oden und Lieder*, 1757); stanzas 1–7 and the last stanza (12) of the original are printed, the intervening, partly Christological stanzas being omitted. The stanza numbers 1–8 in the copy are handwritten additions and are not reproduced. The remaining leaves (PDF pp. 200–202) are blank or binding and are not translated.

[113]שפך דם האדם באדם דמו ישפך — as if to say: the blood of the murdered man shall be poured out into the heart of everyone who hears of it, to stir up wrath and indignation at this great evil, and their spirit shall be embittered to take vengeance on the murderer. And even if he is hidden and it is not known who he is, men will exert and strengthen themselves to search and investigate after him until he is revealed and found; for the blood, which is the soul, cries out with a bitter voice, shrieking in the hearts of the creatures. And this is what Scripture says: נר ה' נשמת אדם חפש כל חדרי בטן, "The spirit of man is the lamp of the Lord, searching all the inward parts" (Prov. 20:27). And God has done all this, and has put it into the heart of man to be embittered at iniquity and murder, in order to guard and preserve His creatures from destruction and ruin.