

BS"D

Serving God Today

USE YOUR INNER GUIDE



RABBI YOSEF DAVID GOTTESMAN

Elad, 5775

Revised 5776

Translated 20 Adar alef 5776

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Copies of this book may be obtained from
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Rabbi Noah Weinberg, of blessed memory, dean of **Aish HaTorah**, Jerusalem, writes in his book ***48 Ways to Wisdom***:

Buried within the subconscious, in the farthest corner of our memory, lies the knowledge of everything we need to know about living. Now bring it to the forefront of your mind.

We **can't simply look at the norm to gauge what's straight** and not. We have to check it out for ourselves. We need a basic set of ethical laws for guidance. But that's not enough. Since circumstances constantly change, laws cannot be legislated to cover every possible case. **So we have to cultivate an inner sense of the right thing to do.**

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IN MEMORY OF

My Rebbe and teacher

הרה"ק האדמו"ר

Rabbi Avraham Menachem

Danziger

of Alexander זצ"ל ללק"ה זי"ע

In whose merit I've come this far

17 Adar 5765

May his soul be bound in the bond of life

BS"D

IN MEMORY OF

My father and teacher

הרה"צ ר'

זצ"ל **Rabbi Chanoch Henich Gottesman**

who raised and educated me
in the ways of Torah and fear of Heaven
in the spiritual wasteland of Italy

11 Iyar 5738

May his soul be bound in the bond of life

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Approbation of the Alexander Rebbe

Rabbi Avraham Menachem Danziger

To Whom It May Concern,

Abundant peace unto you.

I've known the family of **Yosef David Gottesman** for almost fifty years now.

The father, the head of the family, **Rabbi Chanoch Henich**, of blessed memory, walked within our camp. Throughout his life, he dwelled in the tent of Torah study and sacrificed himself in meticulous fulfillment of God's mitzvot – great and small alike – in a foreign land.

The Torah repays its host, and therefore he was privileged to raise a generation of upright and blessed ones dwelling in the tent of Torah. The author numbers among them. I know him to be God-fearing, "sitting in the assembly of the wise," and with God's help he'll grow to bring glory to Israel.

In honor of the Torah and its students,

Avraham Menachem Danziger

The Rebbe of Alexander

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**Approbation of the Dean of the Mir Yeshivah,
Jerusalem**

Rabbi Nosson Tzvi Finkel, of blessed memory

To the honorable heads of Poniovitch Yeshivah, *shlit"α*,

I hereby recommend Yosef David Gottesman, who has learned in our holy yeshivah for a year, and now his soul desires to taste the wellsprings of pure water – “there’s no water other than Torah” – in the crown of Torah, Poniovitch Yeshivah. Therefore I will recount some of his praise before him: He embodies “Be diligent in Torah study, toiling in it constantly,” and his heart is understanding and open. He’s talented and pleasant, and his fear of Heaven precedes his wisdom. We’ve certainly enjoyed him here, and he’ll be a great blessing to your holy yeshivah.

With esteem for the Torah,

Nosson Tzvi Finkel

Dean of Mir Yeshivah, Jerusalem

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**Approbation of Rabbi Yeshaya Portnoy, *shlit"a*,
Kol Torah Yeshivah, Jerusalem**

I hereby recommend Rabbi Yosef Gottesman, *shlit"a*, whom I know well, and who studied under me in Yeshivat Kol Torah.

He's a God-fearing person who serves God truly and faithfully and is meticulous about Jewish law.

He has much experience in writing Torah scrolls, tefillin, and mezuzot and is very careful about their laws. In addition, his prayers can arouse and uplift a congregation. He conducts himself pleasantly and is very devoted to his Rabbis, asking and heeding their words! To conclude as I began, he's genuinely God-fearing.

In honor of the Torah,

Yeshaya-h Portnoy

Faculty, Yeshivat Kol Torah

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RABBI E. SCHWAB

12 Yabrov Street

Bnei Brak 51503

ISRAEL

9 Tevet 5772

Confirmation

I hereby make known the stature of my dear childhood friend Rabbi Yosef David Gottesman: He's God-fearing, upright and proper, yeshivah-trained, and Torah-oriented.

I've known him many years, since we learned together in the Torah institutions in Gateshead, England, and subsequently in Ponevezh Yeshivah in our Holy Land. And I remember his saintly father, of blessed memory.

I can attest that Rabbi Yosef David's righteousness integrates the previous generation's fear of God and genuine simplicity.

Anyone who deals with him will see and sense his genuine virtues and enjoy how he "faithfully conducts his affairs" in the most correct way.

May you succeed in everything.

Respectfully,

Eliezer Schwab

About the Author

Exercising Your Soul

by Sandra M. Eisenberg

Jewish Press, March 2006

Born in Florence, Italy, home of the Renaissance, Rabbi Gottesman is a true Renaissance man. The dictionary defines a Renaissance man as one who has broad intellectual interests and is accomplished in many things. This is a description of Rabbi Gottesman, a world-renowned cantor, Rabbi, and *sofer* (scribe) who speaks Hebrew, English, Italian, and a little Yiddish! Who is this remarkable man who wants to help you tone your "inner Jew"?

His journey has taken him around the world. Born in Florence, Italy, to a survivor of Auschwitz, he journeyed to the Gateshead Jewish Boarding School in England when only twelve years old, moving on to the Manchester Jewish Grammar School to complete his basic education.

At eighteen he moved to Israel to study first at Yeshivat Kol Torah and later at the Mir Yeshivah, both in Jerusalem. Founded nearly 200 years ago, Mir is one of the most famous yeshivas in the Jewish world. Here Rabbi Gottesman studied privately with Rabbi Nossan Tzvi Finkel, the great *rosh yeshivah* (dean). He then progressed to the Harvard of Haredi yeshivas, Ponevezh. In these years of intense Talmudic study, Rabbi Gottesman immersed himself in Talmud, halachah (Jewish law), and *musar* (Jewish ethics).

For fifteen years Rabbi Gottesman was a *sofer*. A *sofer* is one who writes Torah scrolls – a complex and holy vocation. The first *sofer* was Moses, who wrote thirteen Torah scrolls. One of them was given to each of the twelve tribes, and one was placed in the Ark of the Covenant. Following in Moses'

footsteps, *soferim* are observant Jews who learn the 4,000 laws of writing the Torah scroll. As a *sofer*, Rabbi Gottesman became a human vessel for Torah, and as he worked he prayed that the Torahs he made with his hands would be filled with the holiness he felt as he wrote them.

To be a *sofer* demands more than tremendous skill. It requires vast knowledge of Torah, Judaism, and the mitzvot specific to the *sofer*. The 4,000 rules are painstaking and minuscule, from how to prepare the special skins of a Torah to how to write the letters on the parchment (from left to right!).

Rabbi Gottesman is a *sofer* of renown, having written eighteen Torahs, the first residing at the Kotel (Western Wall) in Jerusalem.

As amazing as this accomplishment is, this is just one aspect of the Renaissance Rabbi. He is also a renowned singer. He recorded his first album with the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra at age eighteen. “*Hallelu – A Song Is a Prayer*” was dedicated to his late father. After this, he recorded *Lechu Neranena* (light cantorial music) as well as opera in the synagogue – opera with Hebrew words and Carlebach Chazanut (Galapaz Productions).

While in Israel pursuing his Rabbinical studies, Rabbi Gottesman also trained at the Cantorial Academy of Tel Aviv at the Central Cantorial School and at the Cantorial Institute of Jerusalem under world-famous cantors: Mordechai Sobol (a renowned Manager, Cantor, Conductor, and Composer) Naftali Herstik (Former chief cantor of the Jerusalem Great Synagogue), Eli Jaffe (a renowned cantor, conductor, and composer), and Moshe Stern (considered by many to be the finest cantor alive today).

Critics have praised the natural, attractive timbre of Rabbi Gottesman’s tenor, commenting on his powerful voice, which combines heartfelt sincerity with control and power. His beautiful voice has received great acclaim in concerts around the world. Rabbi Gottesman is known by many as “the Jewish Pavarotti” due to the similarities in their voices, and having sung in the Piccolo Teatro in Milan, which has hosted such great opera stars as Luciano Pavarotti and Placido Domingo.

Rabbi Gottesman's beautiful voice has inspired Jews in Europe, Israel, Italy, South Africa, Canada, and the United States.

Along with his work in Orlando, Rabbi Gottesman acts as cantor at Anshei Emunah in Delray, Florida. His cantorial history is also impressive. He was the cantor in Acco, home of the second-largest synagogue in Israel, which hosted 1,200 people on *Kol Nidre* night. Here he replaced Naftali Herstik who now serves as chief cantor of the Great Synagogue in Jerusalem, also replaced the Cantor Chaim Adler in Vienna Austria, was in South Africa, and six years in Canada as a yearly cantor .

This is the man who will be your mentor, your "personal coach" in strengthening your Jewish soul. Your mind will enjoy an incredible workout – in just one hour a week, you may learn Torah, or Talmud, or just the answers to questions you have about the "whys" and "whats" of Judaism. There is no catch, and it won't cost you a dime. It's better than free – the Rabbi will even buy you lunch (sponsored by Kosher Resorts Orlando).

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Preface

I am filled with gratitude to God for graciously helping me record the novel insights in this book. "You grace man with knowledge."

Most of these ideas are ones God has taught me through life experience, plus a few that I've read or heard from important Rabbis and orators in several places.

I hope these concepts will also constitute a way of life for people who don't know their right from their left in terms of how to serve God.

As the Messiah approaches, falsehood prevails; even among the ultra-Orthodox, truth is nowhere to be found. But enough about that. May God grant me the strength and wisdom to continue in His way, distribute books, and magnify and strengthen His Torah.

Please note that although I refer to "sins" committed by lofty, righteous people such as the biblical Adam – God's own creation – and the Rebbe of Berditchev, these deeds weren't actually sins. They were considered as such only because of the stature of those involved. For us, these quasi-sins would be mitzvot! But on their exalted level, these spiritual giants "sinned" and were punished, and we must learn from them to avoid such mistakes.

Thanks to **Rav Aharon Michael** for typing this complex material and to **Rabbi Yeshaya Portnoi**, *Shlit"a*, **Rabbi Avraham Ohana**, *shlit"a*, and **Rabbi Eliezer Schwab**, *shlit"a*, who reviewed this book and expressed their opinion.

Special thanks to my beloved wife, **Nava Vani**, for her patience while I wrote this book, which demanded my entire being.

Rabbi Yosef David Gottesman

Elad, 2015

Chapter1

What Is Straightness?

”Love of straightness “is one of the forty-eight ways to wisdom listed in *Ethics of the Fathers* ,[6:6] those being :

Study ,listening ,verbalizing ,comprehension of the heart ,awe ,fear , humility ,joy ,purity ,serving the sages ,companionship with one’s contemporaries ,debating one’s students ,tranquility ,study of Scripture , study of the Mishnah ,minimizing engagement in business ,minimizing one’s social life ,minimizing pleasure ,minimizing sleep ,minimizing talk , minimizing gaiety ,slowness to anger ,good-heartedness ,faith in the sages , acceptance of suffering ,knowing one’s place ,satisfaction with one’s lot , qualifying one’s words ,not taking credit for oneself ,likability ,love of God ,love of humanity ,love of charity ,**love of straightness** ,love of rebuke ,fleeing from honor ,lack of arrogance in learning ,reluctance to issue rulings ,sharing in the burden of one’s fellow ,judging him favorably , correcting him ,bringing him to a peaceful resolution] of his disputes ,[deliberation in study ,asking and answering ,listening and illuminating , learning in order to teach ,learning in order to observe ,making one’s teacher wise ,exactness in conveying a teaching ,and saying something in the name of its speaker.

And number 34 is" love of straightness " and the question is asked :what does ”love of straightness “mean ?I could understand loving the Torah ,loving God , loving mitzvot ,loving doing good – but what is loving straightness ?What does it mean to be straight ?After all ,different nations define this term differently .Some people) such as Americans (think financial success is good and” straight “,others)such as the Japanese (reason that performing acts of kindness is the essence of life ,and still others consider such deeds optional .Regarding the fundamentals of how to live ,nations clearly differ ,as do religions .Some) such as Americans (forbid killing under any circumstances ,even if the victim is a criminal ,and some)such as Arabs (say one must kill whenever possible ,even if the victim is righteous .Some) Catholics (enshrine celibacy ,while others) Muslims (permit

polygamy .Catholicism forbids divorce ,while in some societies divorce is rampant.

But let's talk about Judaism ,since it's known to be the most authentic faith . Even in Judaism there are different opinions .What's good for Hasidic Jews) for whom good character is the main thing (isn't good for Lithuanian-style Jews) who emphasize sharpness in Torah study ,(and what's good for the Lithuanians isn't good for Sephardic Jews) for whom a faithful heart and the study of Jewish mysticism are most important .(So where is the truth ?What constitutes the straight path ?Maybe everyone has his own ,according to his customs ?This too is incorrect ,for even among Sephardic Jews customs vary ,depending on one's Rabbi or yeshivah .So let's say everyone has a *Concise Code of Jewish Law* – Sephardim ,Ashkenazim ,and Hasidim all have one ,each according to their Rabbinic predecessors .So where's the truth ?Who's right ?And when we refer to "loving straightness " ,which straight path do we mean ?The Torah has seventy facets!

So am I allowed to focus on a new facet every day ?Is that really what God wants ?For me to jump from Rabbi to Rabbi to get the ruling I'm looking for ?And even if I concentrate on one Rabbi ,one custom ,one community ,one *Code of Jewish Law* – even *that's* incorrect ,since the *Code* goes according to one's situation :Where did one grow up ,e.g .,in Jerusalem or South Africa ?Is he newly observant ,or was he" born religious ?"Does he work ,or does he learn Torah full-time ?Is he healthy or ill ?Burdened by earning a living or not ?Does he stand to lose a lot of money in this case or not ?So where is the straight path ?How can one know what path to take when ?Even the *Code* is written according to a person's situation ,and it's impossible to know which ruling suits a particular predicament . So must one be a genius?

So let's say we'll ask a Rabbi or a kabbalist what the halachah is.

There are two problems with that .First ,does the Rabbi know enough about the questioner and his situation to determine the halachah ?After all ,so many questions are constantly coming before today's halachic authorities that they have no time to clarify the exact situation and its halachah .Second ,even if let's say one should go to a Rabbi who knows him and his background ,and who will therefore understand the situation better – and even if this Rabbi has time to clarify the case –how can a Hasid ,a student ,or a young man ask every time his situation changes ?He'll have to consult the Rabbi at least five times a day ,because in the

morning the questioner had energy ,but in the afternoon he didn't ;this week he was more religious ,but next week he'll regress ;today he has money ,but tomorrow maybe he won't ;today he's liable to lose money ,but tomorrow he won't ;today the family makes demands on him ,but tomorrow things may be easier .How many Rabbis can have their students come to them five times a day to detail their situations ?Today ,if one calls a Rabbi more than once a day ,he's a pest !And when it comes to a Rebbe and his Hasidim ,asking a question even once a week is a lot .So what are we to do?

Furthermore ,regarding even the smallest decision – such as whether to eat meat , fish ,or cheese ,or to study seven hours or nine or a half hour ,or to help one's wife or mother or neighbor – there's a good choice and a bad one ,a mitzvah or a sin . So every moment there's a new dilemma .Who can cope ?Even a scholar would have a hard time ,to say nothing of an ordinary person.

Since it's impossible to determine the straight path every minute ,we do whatever the neighbor does ,and what everyone around us is doing .They pray three times a day ,so I will too .They learn Torah an hour a day ,so I will too .They learn *eight* hours a day ,so I will too ,etc.

Such are the demands of my environment ,my dates ,my wife ,my father-in-law , or my neighbor .So really we're" worshipping "our in-laws ,our neighbors ,etc.

But what about serving God ?When will we stop catering to those around us and start serving Him ?Yet the problem remains :How do we know what God wants at any given moment?

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Chapter2

The Solution for the World

The answer lies in works such as Rabbi Tzaddok HaKohen's *Tzidkat HaTzaddik* paragraph:(222)

God calls to man every day .As it is written” ,Since I called and you refused ,I stretched out My hand and no one listened “Proverbs .(1:24)This call takes the form of one's thoughts ,which arise out of longing for God , who in turn longs for us ,for” one heart reflects another “ibid.(27:19) .

But man must prepare himself to hear the voice of God calling to him ,inspiring him to repent ,and strengthening his resolve .Someone focused on nonsense neither hears nor grasps any of God's abundance .

We find a similar idea in *48 Ways to Wisdom* ,by the late Rabbi Noah Weinberg , founder and dean of the famous Aish HaTorah yeshivah .Rabbi Weinberg writes:

Way :34# Use Your Inner Guide

Buried within the subconscious ,in the farthest corner of our memory ,lies the knowledge of everything we need to know about living .Now bring it to the forefront of your mind... .

We can't simply look at the norm to gauge what's straight and not .We have to check it out for ourselves .We need a basic set of ethical laws for guidance .But that's not enough .Since circumstances constantly change ,laws cannot be legislated to cover every possible case .*So we have to cultivate an inner sense of the right thing to do.*

Furthermore ,the Midrash *Bereishit Rabbah* (95)states :

From where did Abraham learn Torah ?Rabbi Levi says :From himself .

From here we see that ,at every moment and in every situation ,a person can discover everything he needs to know within himself .It's all inside him ;he need only search himself for the truth.

Among gentiles as well ,there's the” Twelve Steps “of Alcoholics Anonymous , written by Bill Wilson and Dr .Bob Smith and accepted today even among the most religious Jews ,especially Rabbi Dr .Abraham J .Twerski ,scion of a Hasidic

dynasty and a renowned psychiatrist ,who has written many articles and books on this program .The Twelve Steps actually originated with Dr .Frank Buchman ,born ninety years ago ,who added a thirteenth step ,which he called quiet time ,i.e ., being in touch with one's innermost self and knowing the Creator's will .By following this path ,he and his" Oxford Group "lived happy and successful lives.

But let's return to our sources .Rabbi Weinberg cites a famous Talmudic passage:

Before we're born ,while in our mother's womb ,the Almighty sends an angel to sit beside us and teach us all the wisdom for living we'll ever need to know .Then ,just before we're born ,the angel taps us under the nose)forming the philtrum ,the indentation that everyone has under his nose ,(and we forget everything the angel taught us.

So why teach us all this wisdom if we just forget it ?We forget so our free will won't be compromised ,but we can retrieve this knowledge by negating our own will and rationalizations

.Interestingly ,the first thought that pops into our heads comes from God ,but then we make all kinds of" calculations".

So why is it so hard to know and do the right thing ,to follow the straight path ? If it's all inside us ,why are there so many evil people in the world ?Why so much discord ,evil ,uncertainty ?Why so many mistakes ?On the other hand ,if God wants us to do His will ,why is it so difficult to figure it out?

The answer :**Rationalization** .Personal bias garbles our inner knowledge . Sometimes we want to do our spouses 'will ,not the Creator's .And sometimes we want to do our own will ,or our friends ,'not His will .This desire muddles our sense of truth.

So to know the truth ,we must eliminate all our inner biases ,all our rationalizations .Only then can we know what the Creator really wants.

How do we do that ?First of all ,we tell ourselves" ,Master of the Universe ,I'm willing to do Your will at all costs .I'm willing to do or not do whatever it is ,just tell me what Your will is ".And then the truth becomes clear .Rabbi Weinberg cites a few more techniques for knowing the truth ,and likewise the Oxford Group has others .We'll review them later .

Chapter3

The Final Solution

What if everyone in the world wanted solely to do the Creator's will ?The judicial system would be obsolete ,because both sides in any dispute would want to do God's will ,and there's only one .Divorce courts wouldn't be necessary ,since couples wouldn't fight ,for husbands and wives would both want the same thing .Parents and children wouldn't argue ,for there's only one Creator who runs the world and directs everyone's thoughts ,and He has only one will .And wars would cease ,for every nation would want to do the Creator's will ,not its own ,or its leaders . 'What a perfect solution to all the world's problems!

No one wakes up in the morning and decides" ,I want to do evil " .Everyone wakes up wanting to do good .But our definition of good is distorted by our will ,or that of our loved ones .Even a murderer doesn't want to do evil .Even Hitler didn't think it was evil to kill six million Jews .He truly thought it would be good to purge the world of this" evil – "the Jews ,God forbid .He thought he was saving the world ;he considered himself a saint !Nonetheless ,he brutally annihilated six million Jews – men ,women ,and children.

No nation goes to war thinking it's evil .Every country rationalizes that it's right ,and that the world will benefit from its domination ;any casualties are seen as mere animals with no right to live.

So if everyone wants only to do good ,why are there so many wars in the world ? Why so much strife ,schism ,and pain?

The answer :rationalization.

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Chapter4

The Source in the Torah

”In the beginning ,God created the heavens and the earth “.Thus far ,there was only one will ,and it was good.

”And God created man in His image ;in the image of God He created him “. Now the problems began” :in His image ;in the image of God “means with a will . So there were already two wills ,good and evil.

”Male and female He created them – “now there were three wills.

”Be fruitful ,and multiply ,and fill the earth – “now there would be an ever increasing number of wills .But if everyone does what’s good ,what the Creator wants – if everyone embarks on what we’ve called” the straight path – “there’s only one will.

Let’s look at Adam’s sin .God gave Adam and Even one commandment ,not to eat from the tree .They understood that God didn’t want them to do that .Then along came the serpent ,the first creature to disregard God’s will .The serpent was completely free .It did whatever it wanted – and *got* whatever it wanted ,stopping at nothing .And what did it want ?Eve .And so it is to this day :There are innocent ,righteous people who want to do God’s will .And there are evil people for whom God’s will is irrelevant .They want what they want :money ,glory ,women ,pleasure – in short ,this world .They don’t care about the next world .They don’t even believe in it” .Eat ,drink and be merry ,for tomorrow we die “,and after that there’s nothing .So everything is for today .These people are agents of the devil ,of the serpent .They destroy this world and have caused more than 5,000 years of suffering .They even convince the innocent and righteous to join them in doing evil in God’s eyes ,and evil for the world .May their names and memories be blotted out.

Thus did the serpent convince Eve .Why her ?Because women are more impressionable and thus more susceptible to evil.

The serpent convinced her to eat from the tree .The snake hoped Adam would divorce her ,and then *it* could live with her.

Naïve Eve wanted to do the Creator's will ,but she was only one day old ,unwise to the ways of the devil and seduced into eating from the tree.

So the serpent ruined the world ,and Eve ruined herself *and* the world ,but there was still hope :If Abraham wouldn't eat from the tree ,maybe God would create repentance ,and the world would be repaired .But there was a problem :Now Eve too had desires of her own .What woman wants to marry a serpent !?Eve wanted to return to her husband ,but now she would die ,and he'd create a new dynasty . She didn't seek to solve this problem in keeping with God's will .She began with machinations of her own” .I'll give my husband to eat ,and then God will have to find a solution for both of us .He won't destroy the world and then rebuild it“.

Eve didn't think about God's will .She didn't let her husband rectify her sin .She didn't confess” ,I made a mistake and ate .I wanted to do the Creator's will ,but the serpent beguiled me .Help me !What should I do “?Then Adam would have found a solution that was good for her and the world *and* for God .Instead ,she schemed that he too would disobey God's will .**This is the sin of women even today :They convince their husbands not to do the Creator's will ,instead of finding a solution according to His will ,which will help both them and their spouses *and* the world *and* God .**

At Eve's urging ,Adam ate from the tree ,for he thought his wife – his own flesh and bone – would die .He listened to her instead of thinking of a solution based on God's will .He could have told her” ,Don't worry ,I'll pray for you .I'll shake the world's very foundations for you !I love you ,and I don't want anyone else .Just don't force me to eat from the tree “!Then they both would have been saved ,the world would have entered its next phase ,and we would have been spared thousand of years of suffering

And this is the pre world's sin of Adam that we all men must rectify in our house with our wives: when the wife demands, requires, implores, it is usually correct ,but due to her strong emotions, often makes mistakes on the solution to her specific request, instead of resolving it in a good way, for her for him and for God, she demands a solution that contradicts God's will, and man is required to listen to the problem and fix the a matter in a way acceptable to all ,including and most importantly, the will of God

Isn't it a shame” ?Taste and see that God is good“ Psalms :(34:8)God wanted Eve to listen to Him and live with her mistake .He wanted Adam and Eve to enter

the next world with all its endless blessings .But we were” wiser “,and we knew what was good for us .We thought our way was best .And look what resulted :long millennia of suffering ;so many pogroms ,murders ,and wars .And the world continues along this path ,learning nothing from Adam and Eve’s grave error and the serpent’s diabolical will.

Let’s go further .With Cain and Abel ,both wanted to do the Creator’s will .They brought Him an offering .Abel brought from his choicest flocks ,and Cain from shrubs .God responded to Abel’s offering ,not Cain’s .Cain was furious ,but that’s normal .His solution should have reflected God’s will :Next time he’d bring a better offering than Abel’s ,and God would rejoice in *his* offering more than in his brother’s .But Cain opted for a simpler solution :killing Abel .And so the world continued with Nimrod ,Esau ,Potiphara’s wife ,the mixed multitude ,etc.

That’s what happens when we choose the easy way ,the way that suits us .Today is the Me Me Me Generation – what’s good for me ,what suits me ;not what suits God *and* me .But we forget that what suits God is the most suitable thing for us ; it’s what’s best for us.

Another biblical illustration of this principle is the Binding of Isaac .The Torah states:

And it was after these things that G-d tested Abraham and said to him ,
”Abraham ,Abraham “,and he said” ,Here I am “.And He said” ,Please take your son ,your only one ,whom you love ,Isaac ,and go to the land of Moriah ,and bring him up there as an elevation offering on one of the mountains that I will tell you“. Genesis (2–22:1)

What was Abraham’s great test at the Binding of Isaac ?What was so remarkable about offering his son up to G-d ?If G-d spoke to us and told us to do something – anything at all – wouldn’t we listen ?Furthermore ,G-d subsequently tells Abraham) via an angel (that He’s rewarding him” since you’ve done this thing and didn’t withhold your son ,your only one ,from Me .(22:16) “Not” since you’ve done this thing *of* not withholding “,but” since you’ve done this thing *and* didn’t withhold “,implying that Abraham did two things ,and the first ,unspecified thing was even greater than the second ,than not withholding his son .

Another interesting point :According to the Midrash ,when God instructed Abraham to enter into a covenant of circumcision (Genesis ,17) he consulted with his good friends Aner ,Eshkol ,and Mamre .So why didn’t he do so when he was

about to slaughter his only son ?And what about the great sages of the Yeshivah of Shem and Eber ?Shouldn't Abraham have seen what they had to say ?After all ,he was about to sacrifice his only son ,which defies everything holy ,everything he had preached for over 130 years .As the Midrash says ,Abraham preached that child sacrifice was an evil practice for evil gods and had no place with the G-d of Israel .Had he slaughtered his son as G-d wanted ,he would have been the laughingstock of the whole world ,which respected him .That world included his wife and the great Shem and Eber .This act would have branded Abraham a schizophrenic who imagined G-d telling him horrendous things .

That's exactly why it was such a great test" .And Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey and took his two lads with him and his son Isaac and took the logs of the elevation offering and went to the place that G-d told him "(Genesis .(22:3)He didn't consult anyone ,not even his wife .He simply did G-d's will" .Since you've done this thing – "this is the" thing "G-d means .

Abraham was willing to give up the G-d accepted in the civilized world – the G-d of the sages ,his friends ,his wife ,and even himself until now – in order to follow the G-d deep inside of him ,the voice that nobody else could hear but that he knew was the real G-d .He was prepared to lose G-d in order to find Him ;to sin for G-d ,which is greater than performing a commandment *not* for G-d (i.e .,with ulterior motives).

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Chapter5

Prophecy Today

In chapter 3 of his *Epistle to Yemen* ,the great sage Maimonides writes that in the pre-Messianic era ,prophecy will return to the Jewish people :He even dates the beginning of this period” :Prophecy will return to Israel 4,976 years after the creation of the world .The return of prophecy undoubtedly presages the arrival of the Messiah “.This date was 800 years ago ,at which point the voice of prophets indeed began to be heard in Israel .Among the most famous was the prophet Samuel – not the biblical figure ,but a contemporary of the Tosafists who was known as a” prophet “on account of his prophecies . (See Rabbi Chaim Vital , *Gateways of Holiness* ,3:7 the chapters of revelations of Rabbi R .Margaliot in his introduction to *Responsa from Heaven*.)

I‘m not saying we‘re talking about actual prophecy here ,but rather a kind of very simple holy spirit that‘ s part of every person today ,even non-Jews.

If Maimonides predicted that 800 years ago prophecy would return ,surely in our generation ,in the” footsteps of the Messiah “,we can reach the level we‘ve spoken about.

BS"D

Chapter 6

How Do We Know It's from God?

In Way” ,34# Love of Straightness “,Rabbi Noah Weinberg offers several means of determining if what you're thinking is from God:

Follow your gut reaction .The first thought is often the true response.

Actually ask yourself aloud :What's the right thing to do?

Ask yourself :What would God say about this?

Ask yourself :Am I being completely honest(*)?

Listen to your conscience.

After you've reached any decision ,pause .If you've chosen correctly ,you'll find yourself feeling a thrill of pleasure .There are no nagging doubts ,no hidden agendas .You feel clean.

Before making a decision ,ask yourself] :What [will I feel after I do it ?Pleasure or disgust?

Sometimes after we know what's right ,we tell ourselves :*But I can't* !Replace that with *I don't want to* ,and then you'll have all kind of ideas about how to do the Creator's will.

Sometimes we begin telling ourselves” ,But “...Don't let rationalization destroy your solution.

Sometimes we feel we don't have to .Pay no attention to that feeling .Do what's right .

Rabbi Weinberg concludes with two citations” :God made man straight ,and they sought many calculations) “Ecclesiastes ,(7:29 and” Which is the straight path that a person should choose ?Any that is beautiful to those who do it and beautiful to others) “*Ethics of the Fathers* .(2:1

There are other quotes by Frank Buchman within the thirteenth step ,quiet time ,in A .J .Russell's *For Sinners Only* (Page 75):

The The thirteenth step

Intentional omission of Bill

Revealing Time

With pen and paper ,write down the thoughts that come to you in meditation on what to do:

(1)Does it go counter to the highest standards of belief that we already possess?

(2)Does it contradict the revelations God has already made through the Bible? (**)

(3)Is it absolutely honest(*) ?

(4)Is it absolutely pure?

(5)Is it absolutely unselfish?

(6)Is it absolutely loving?

(7)Does it conflict with our real duties and responsibility to others?

If still uncertain ,wait ,continue in prayer ,and consult a trustworthy friend who believes in the guidance of God.

I would add three points:

1 (*)Bear in mind the verses” With the gracious ,be gracious ;with the innocent ,be innocent .With the pure ,be pure ;and with the crooked , be crooked) “Psalms .(28–18:27 The Talmud) *Bava Batra* (123 allows us to cheat cheaters ,as we see with Jacob and Laban .Therefore ,don‘t be completely honest with someone dishonest .

2 (**)When we think if it contradicts the revelations that God has already done in the Bible we have to remember that the sacrifice of Isaac was against the revelation of God in the Bible and yet God commanded Abraham to do so (those who understood will understand)

- 3 When using this method ,one must be kind .As the Zohar *Mishpatim* states” :Who is a kind person ?One who is kind to his Creator “.Then one merits Divine guidance .As it is written” ,Then You spoke in a vision to Your pious ones“ Psalms.(89:20)

BS"D

Chapter7

Don't Be Overly Stringent

We say in the evening prayers” ,Remove the Satan that looms ahead and lurks behind “.He” lurks behind “when telling us to sin and” looms ahead “when he telling us to do mitzvot .If a person does mitzvot beyond his level ,he squanders his money and energies and those of his family and friends who help him .This is sinful ,since he then can't devote these resources to the mitzvot on his level ,as God demands of him . Ultimately he neglects the mitzvot he's supposed to do ,such as being patient with his family ,leading to anger with God and the world ,for which he'll be judged.

In *Life and Light* ,Rabbi Yehudah Toledano of Jerusalem writes and cites statements to the effect that a person who does mitzvot beyond his level leaves his *nefesh*) the lowly ,animalistic part of the soul (exposed while he's busy dealing with the *ruach* and *neshamah*) loftier parts of the soul .(Thus the *nefesh* grows distant from the *ruach* and *neshamah* ,and the body remains coarse ,while the *ruach* and *neshamah* reach higher levels . This is not God's will .The *nefesh* must gradually ascend with the *ruach* and *neshamah* to the heights of the Torah ,and only then is the body elevated ! Otherwise ,it remains lowly and sterile ,and the service of God becomes heavy and joyless .This is what happens when the various parts of the soul separate.

The Talmud) *Makkot*24 a (states :

Rabbi Simlai expounded :Six hundred thirteen mitzvot were relayed to Moses 365 – prohibitions ,corresponding to the days of the year ,and 248 imperatives ,corresponding to man's limbs .

Said Rabbi Himmuna :What is the scriptural basis of this teaching ?
”Moses commanded us the Torah as an inheritance) “...Deuteronomy .(33:4 The numerical value of the word” *Torah* “is] ,611 with the first two commandments not being reckoned ,because [we heard” I am the Lord ,your God “and” You shall have no other gods “from God Himself .

David came and reduced them to eleven] principles[

Amos came and reduced them to one .As it is written” ,Thus said God to the House of Israel :See Me and live) “Amos .(5:4

Rabbi Nachman son of Isaac challenged :Shall I say” ,Seek Me “by observing the entire Torah ?Rather ,**Habakkuk came and reduced them to one .As it is written” :And the righteous shall live by his faith)** “Habakkuk .(2:4

In these difficult generations preceding the Messianic era ,where both body and soul are often in danger ,God has given us just one mitzvah ,and if we do it ,we’re called” righteous “,even if we’re wicked in other respects .If one isn’t ”righteous in faith “,he won’t survive .He’ll gradually become entangled in sin ,and his *neshamah* will slowly leave this world .One must truly be righteous in faith .As it is written” ,He who has what to eat today but worries what he’ll eat tomorrow ranks among those of little faith “.

If a person goes through this world with faith ,he’ll have everything – both here and in the next world .If he can do a few more mitzvot along the way ,even better ,but faith alone suffices under these circumstances .It’s well known that in these times it’s very hard for every Jew to do all the mitzvot done in previous generations .Therefore , God doesn’t demand that of us .The main thing is faith .The rest only makes us arrogant ,thinking we’re so righteous even as we trample on and denigrate our brothers in our arrogance.

Don’t worry what people will say” :You don’t pray three times a day in synagogue . You don’t learn Torah eight hours a day” .You don’t have the lofty spiritual intentions that some do .How can you be like that “!?”Don’t think” :Who will allow my kids into his school ?Who will marry my daughters “?”After all ,that’s why we do most things.

Know that it’s better to be denigrated all your life in this world than be denigrated even once before God .Can’t God not provide us with a sufficient livelihood ?We can be as we were in the desert ,where manna fell daily from heaven ,and there was no need to have tens of thousands of shekels in the bank .When necessary ,God will provide .I strive to observe whatever mitzvot I can do with my limited powers and with the opportunities God gives me .I’m happy in the service of God ;I’m happy with God and with myself.

The most important mitzvot involve matters of faith and unconditional love of our neighbor ,which are the key to ending this bitter exile.

I conclude with a story that powerfully clarifies all the above:

One Passover ,the Rebbe of Berditchev) a town in what is today Ukraine (completed the seder with all the special spiritual intentions and joy .He was elated ,for surely God had greatly enjoyed this seder .Then the holy spirit came to him ,and God told him” ,Don’t be so proud .I enjoyed the seder of Moshke the porter more than yours .The Rebbe immediately sent his disciples to seek out this Moshke .In the middle of the night ,they searched and searched .Finally ,on the outskirts of town ,they found a dilapidated old house where they were told he lived .There ,Moshke’s wife informed them that he was sleeping ,because he was drunk .They shook him awake .)Where is the justice ?Where is the honor for this man whom God loves more than their Rebbe” (?The Rebbe wants to see you “,they told him .They dragged Moshke by his hands and feet to the Rebbe’s table .They seated him beside the Rebbe ,as all the disciples snickered .

”How did you burn your leavened bread “?the Rebbe asked him” .What lofty intentions did you have“?

Moshke answered” :I hid ten pieces of bread ,then looked for them ,but I didn’t find them all .I put them aside ,and I think they’re still there ,because I forgot to burn them the next day “.

”What lofty thoughts did you have during the seder “?the Rebbe persisted .

”I was told it’s forbidden to drink whiskey on Passover “,Moshke began” ,so I polished off several bottles before the holiday and fell asleep .Then my wife came to me and said’ :Moshke ,do me a favor .Get up and come to the seder .Sit with us and say a few words ,and then you can go back to sleep ‘.I told her’ ,I’m a simple man and have nothing to say at the seder .Let me sleep ‘!But she said’ :For me ,Moshke ,come to the seder ‘.I looked at the table laden with delicacies’ .For you ‘,I told her’ ,since you went to such trouble to set such a beautiful table ,I’ll come to the seder ‘.At the table ,I raised a shot glass of wine and said’ ,We were in Egypt ,and it was bad ,and God took us out of there .And now we’re here ,and again the Bolsheviks are persecuting us ,and I know God will perform a miracle for us and bring us to the land of Israel ,which is beautiful ,and there we’ll have endless blessings ‘.We drank another *l’chaim* to God ,we ate meat ,and I fell asleep at the table “.

That’s the story of Moshke ,a simple man whose service God loved more than all the lofty intentions of the Rebbe of Berditchev.

Let's understand .God didn't derive more satisfaction from the Rebbe of Berditchev's esoteric thoughts as he drank the four cups ,recited four blessings ,ate exactly the right amounts of matzo and bitter herbs ,etc?.

How did Moshke steal the show!?

Moshke was broken inside ,and **he did a simple little thing ,but he did it with all his heart** .And that gave God greater satisfaction than all of the Rebbe's service.

Furthermore ,when people like us do good deeds in public – before an audience – we cheapen the mitzvah ,since we naturally want others see how great we are .We should conduct ourselves as simple men ,acting as we do in private ,doing mitzvot somewhat for their own sake .Then God will have much greater satisfaction from us , and we'll prosper.

Moreover ,if we served God like the Rebbe of Berditchev ,that would be one thing . But since we don't ,let's at least be like Moshke the simple Jew .Then God will be happy with us ,and we'll be better off.

Such a person was my father ,of blessed memory :Reb Chanoch Henich of Łódź , Poland .During the Second World War war ,this Hasid of the Gerrer and Alexander dynasties sacrificed his life for Jews in mortal danger.

He served God simply ,with no need to show it.

All his life ,he loved his fellow Jews – particularly the scholarly and devout ,but all others as well – and even the non-Jews he worked with or met.

People sensed that he genuinely loved them and wanted the best for them .That's the way to serve God and bring the Messiah.

BS"D

Chapter8

Conclusion

Yalkut Shimoni cites the following Midrash (Samuel/247 sec):(71 146 .

Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai taught ... :The children of Israel despised three things :the kingdom of Heaven ,the kingdom of the house of David ,and the building of the Temple.

When did they despise these three ?In the time of Jeroboam .As it is written) II Samuel” :(20:1 The men of Israel answered ... and said’ ,We have no part in David – “ ‘this is the Kingdom of Heaven’ ” .Neither have we an inheritance in the son of Jesse – “ ‘this is the kingdom of the house of David ” .’Every man to his tents ,O Israel – “ ‘and not to the Temple ;read not’ to his tents) *ohalav* ‘(but’ to his God) *Elokav* ‘.(

Said Rabbi Simon son of Menasia :**Israel will never see a sign of redemption until they return and request these three** .As it is written)Hosea” :(3:5 Afterward the children of Israel will return and request the Lord , their God – “this is the Kingdom of Heaven” .And David their king – “this is the kingdom of the house of David” .And they’ll fear God and His goodness “ –this is the Temple.

Rashi comments on this verse that this prophecy will be fulfilled in the End of Days.

In Summation

According to what we’ve said ,this is the solution both for the world and for the individual ,and thus we’ll usher in the Messianic era speedily in our days .May God grant us the privilege of doing His will wholeheartedly .As we pray” ,And may they all form one association to do Your will wholeheartedly “ .May the Hasidic Jews leave the Sephardic Jews alone ,and may the Lithuanian-style Jews leave the Hasidim alone . May the ultra-Orthodox – those who tremble at God’s word – unite and set aside all the calculations and quarrels and political scores to settle ,and may the secular leave

the ultra-Orthodox alone) in the news and in the draft .(May the non-Jews leave the Jews alone) of course .(And may everyone show unconditional love for his fellow ,for our failure to do so has been the main reason for our-2,000 year exile.

May we all merit complete redemption speedily in our days and be privileged to "form one association to do Your will wholeheartedly".

Completed with God's help

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