

חובות  
הַלְבָבוֹת



CHOVOS  
HALEVOVOS

NEWLY TRANSLATED AND ELUCIDATED



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## FOREWORD

It is with a sense of great reverence that we approach the groundbreaking project of drawing the *Sefer Chovos Halevovos* closer to the Anglo public. A timeless textbook, studied and taught by generations of the very greatest Torah leaders, the *Chovos Halevovos* continues to inspire and commit Torah-true Jews wherever they are, to an even greater sensitivity in their relationship with Hashem and their approach to His service.

To translate the *Chovos Halevovos* into readable English is one thing. To clearly present the issues addressed in this Sefer and at the same time to impart some of the intensity of feeling conveyed by the great author — without deviating from the original text — is quite another. It requires an appreciation of the issue under discussion; sometimes in light of other Mussar works, a thorough understanding of the derived stages of the argument, and painstaking study of the relevant commentators. Our undertaking enables the beginner to relate to the often complex style of the author and will appeal at the same time to the more versed student with its concise summaries and informative analyses.

We have endeavoured as far as possible to cut the fine line between remaining true to the original Hebrew text whilst retaining the free flow of clear, idiomatic, understandable English. To this end, we have incorporated explanatory phrases and sentences in normal type, within the actual translation – which appears in bold type. Thus, the text may easily be read in its entirety to gain an understanding of the point being made, following which one can read the bold type only, to give a fairly accurate translation of the Hebrew.

We have avoided the antiquated style, following feedback from various people, who find the archaic translations rather more impressive than instructive. However, we have not oversimplified the text, considering that the *Chovos Halevovos* wrote in a philosophical and thought-provoking style, often containing profound messages in a few short words. Also, in many instances, the *Chovos Halevovos* uses parallels and apparently repetitive synonyms. In such cases we have followed the classical commentators – particularly the *Pas Lechem* – who explain the specific intent behind each expression, and we have meticulously included those differences into our translation.

To enable the reader to follow the discussion, we have sectioned the text into a number of paragraphs, where each one is captioned at the top and summarised at the side. In this way the reader is prepared for the coming paragraph, is confronted

with the flow of logic one step at a time, and is able to clearly absorb the message before moving on to the next step.

The footnotes represent a digest of the major commentaries and serve a multiple purpose. They introduce the reader to the background ideas and basic assumptions upon which the *Chovos Halevovos* builds, clarify the meaning of the more obscure phrases and indicate where there is a difference of opinion in their understanding.

For a more in-depth reflection on each lesson we have added some examples of two columns: *Perspective of Tanach* and *The Baalei Mussar explain*.

The Tanach column highlights the way in which the author understood the *Pesukim* he quotes. The support from the *pasuk* is not always immediately clear and many times there is disagreement amongst the *mefarshim* so that the proof is only valid according to one understanding of the *pasuk*. Sometimes it becomes clear that the *Chovos Halevovos* had a completely novel understanding of the *pasuk*.

For further insight into the points that the *Chovos Halevovos* touches upon, we have added the column of *The Ba'alei Mussar*. This is a summary of the comments of the *Ba'alei Mussar* of recent generations, such as Rav Elyahu Dessler, Rav Yerucham of Mir, Rav Yechezkel Levenstien, Rav Wolbe and others, who address these subjects, particularly where their writings comment on a specific section of the *Chovos Halevovos*.

We would welcome your feedback or comments!

OHR OLAM

5770

שער השלישי  
שער עבודת האלהים

*Sha'ar 3 – Sha'ar Avodas Ha'Elokim*

THE GATEWAY TO THE SERVICE OF  
HASHEM



## פתח השער

בבאור אפני חיוב קבלת עבודת האלהים יתברך.

מֵר הַמַּחְבֵּר: מִפְּנֵי שְׁבָאֲרָנוּ בְּמָה שְׁעֵבֵר חַיּוּב יַחֲוֹד הָאֱלֹהִים  
בְּלֵב שָׁלֵם וְאַפְּנֵי בְּחִינַת טוֹבוֹתָיו עַל הָאָדָם, הַתְּחִיבָנוּ לְזַכֵּר  
אַחַר כֵּן, מֵהַ שְׁהָאָדָם חַיִּיב לְנַהֵג בּוֹ, כְּשִׁיתְּבָרְרוּ אֶצְלוֹ, וְהוּא קְבוּל  
עֲבוֹדַת הָאֱלֹהִים, כְּפִי אֲשֶׁר יַחֲיִיבֵהוּ הַשִּׁכָּל לְמִטִּיב עַל מִי שֶׁהֵטִיב  
לוֹ.

### SHA'AR 3 ~ SHA'AR AVODAS HA'ELOKIM

*The Gateway to the Service of Hashem*

## PREFACE

WHY THIS SECTION LOGICALLY FOLLOWS THE PREVIOUS SECTIONS.

*The next step; taking our awareness of Hashem and of the good that He bestows upon us up to the practical level – dedicating ourselves to Hashem's service in appreciation.*

**T**he author declares: Since we have already discussed the duty that every person has to establish the awareness of Hashem's Oneness fully in his heart,<sup>1</sup> and we have also presented the methods of studying the kindness that He bestows upon man,<sup>2</sup> we must proceed to address what a person guided by a sense of decency would be expected to do upon reaching a clear realisation of these matters. You already realise that the infinite and all-powerful Creator takes a personal interest in you, and caringly provides all of your needs and comforts. This should compel you to commit yourself to

1 This entails a solid awareness and understanding of Hashem's omnipresence and omnipotence, as discussed in *Sha'ar Yichud Ha'Elokim*.

2 This was the subject of *Sha'ar Habechina*; to train ourselves to overcome our natural obliviousness, and learn to note and appreciate the infinite kindness that Hashem showers upon us.

רָאוּי לְהַקְדִּים בְּפִתִּיחַת הַשְּׁעָר הַזֶּה בְּאוֹר אֶפְנֵי הַטּוֹבוֹת וְחַיּוּבֵי  
! הַהוֹדָאָה עֲלֵיהֶם מִבְּנֵי אָדָם קִצְתָם לְקִצְתָם, וְנִעְלָה מִזֶּה אֶל מָה  
שָׂאֲנוּ חַיְבִין בּוֹ לְבוֹרָא יִתְעַלֶּה מִן הַשְּׂבַח וְהַהוֹדָאָה עַל רַב חֲסִדּוֹ  
וְגַדֵּל טוֹבוֹ עֲלֵינוּ.

the service of Hashem, in compliance with the natural sense of indebtedness towards a benefactor, which common sense imposes upon the beneficiary.<sup>3</sup>

UNDERSTANDING THE EXTENT OF THE GRATITUDE WE OWE HASHEM.

**W**e would do well to preface this subject by elucidating the various forms of kindness that some people bestow upon others, and the gratitude that the recipients would be expected to show in return. After noting and acknowledging tangible feelings of gratitude that we can all relate to, we will take it a step higher, and demonstrate how the greatest of human benevolence – with all of the grateful emotions that it invokes – pales in comparison to the kindness that Hashem bestows upon us. This will enable us to comprehend how much praise and thankfulness we owe to the Creator for His abundant kindness and immense goodness towards us.<sup>4</sup>

*Appreciating our debt of gratitude to Hashem by comparing it to the gratitude that we would feel towards human benefactors*

3 In other words, our sense of commitment to Hashem's service should be naturally motivated by a keen desire to express our gratitude towards Him, and when performing our obligations towards Him, we should view them as a means of expressing this gratitude (see *Marpei Lanefesh*).

4 The *Chovos Halevovos* endeavours to invoke enthusiastic feelings of loyalty to Hashem by drawing on our grateful feelings towards human benefactors, which he assumes to be self understood. Indeed, if we lack a sense of gratitude toward human benefactors, we will not feel true gratitude towards Hashem either. As such, our service of Hashem is bound to be artificial, since we lack the sensitivities required for true service of Hashem, for as we have seen in previous chapters, the value of our service is not determined by the actions themselves, but by the intensity of the sentiments (i.e. the appreciation) being expressed in those actions. Therefore, we must work to foster our feelings of appreciation towards any benefactor, as that is the stepping stone to true service of Hashem. This is what *Chazal* meant when they declared that anyone who fails to acknowledge the good that his fellow does for him will fail to acknowledge the good that Hashem does for him as well (Rabbi Avigdor Miller).

**נאמר, כי מן הידוע אצלנו, כי כל מטיב אלינו, אנו חייבין להודות לו כפי כוונתו להועיל לנו, ואם יקצר במעשהו לדבר שיקרהו וימנעהו מהיטיב אלינו, הודאתו חובה עלינו, כיון שנתברר לנו, כי דעתו עלינו לטוב וכי כוונתו להועיל לנו. ואם תגיע לנו שום טובה על ידי מי שלא כוון בה אלינו, יסתלקו מעלינו חייבי ההודאה לו ואין אנו חייבין בה.**

**כאשר נתבונן בטובות בני אדם קצתם אל קצתם אינן יוצאות מאחד מחמשה פנים:**

*The extent of gratitude owed to a fellow human is determined by the intention behind the act.*

**Let us begin by saying: We clearly understand that if someone does good for us, we must appreciate not only the extent of the benefit derived, but also the extent of his intention to benefit us. Even if what he actually did fell short of his original intention because of some occurrence that prevented him from benefiting us, we must nevertheless thank him for his full intentions since we realize that he thinks kindly of us, and that he endeavors to do good for us. And conversely, if we receive some benefit incidentally through someone who had no intention of doing it for us, we are free of any debts of gratitude towards him; we owe him nothing.<sup>5</sup>**

THE FIVE CATEGORIES OF HUMAN KINDNESS.

**Now, if we study the types of kindness that some people do for others, we will find that they invariably fit into one of five categories:**

5 Thus the gratitude required by decency depends on the intent of the benefactor. The *Chovos HaLevovos* proceeds to develop this idea, demonstrating that it can find expression on varying levels, as kindness often stems from a combination of interest in the beneficiary's welfare along with a measure of self-interest. While we certainly owe gratitude to anyone who exerts himself on our behalf even if there was an element of self-interest involved, the debt of gratitude is enhanced in accordance with the level of his pure interest in our good. For example, if a paid doctor exerts himself to heal a sick person, the patient must certainly be grateful, but that would not compare to the level of gratitude that one would feel towards a doctor who exerted himself because of a pure interest in the patient's welfare, without expecting any pay.

הָאָחַד טוֹבַת הָאֵב עַל הַבֵּן, וְהַשְּׁנַי טוֹבַת הָאָדוֹן עַל עַבְדּוֹ, וְהַשְּׁלִישִׁי טוֹבַת הָעֶשִׂיר עַל הָרֵשׁ, בְּדִי לְקַבֵּל שְׂכָר שָׁמַיִם, וְהָרְבִיעִי טוֹבַת בְּנֵי אָדָם קֶצֶתָם לְקֶצֶתָם לְקִנּוּת הַשֵּׁם וְהַכְּבוֹד וְלִגְמוּל הָעוֹלָם, וְהַחֲמִישִׁי טוֹבַת הַחֹזֵק עַל הַחֲלָשׁ בְּעִבּוֹר חֲמִלְתּוֹ עָלָיו וְשֶׁהוּא כּוֹאֵב עַל עֲנִינוֹ.

רְצִיף שְׁנַעֲיֵן עֲתָה בְּכּוֹנֵת כָּל אֲשֶׁר סִפְרָנוּ, אִם אֵינָה תְלוּיָה בְּדָבָר, כִּי אִם לְתוֹעֵלַת מִי שְׁמִטִּיבִין אֲלֵיהֶם אִם לֹא.

The first is a father's kindness toward his son. The second is a master's kindness toward his servant. The third is the kindness that a wealthy man bestows upon a needy man in order to earn Divine reward. The fourth is the kindness that people bestow upon others in order to gain fame and honour,<sup>6</sup> or in order to receive material reciprocation. The fifth is the kindness that a powerful person bestows upon a helpless person because of his pity toward him and because he sympathizes with his plight.

*All human kindness can be classified into five groupings, where each can be shown to contain an element of self-interest.*

**W**e must now analyse the motivation behind each of the forms of kindness that we mentioned, and determine whether it is completely selfless – not motivated by anything but a sincere interest in the beneficiary's good – or not, i.e. if there is really an element of self-interest involved.<sup>7</sup>

6 The *Chovos Halevovos* is presenting two different motives. Someone who is motivated by a desire for fame wants his reputation as a great person to spread, but he does not necessarily expect active recognition of his benevolence. Conversely, someone motivated by a desire for honor does expect active recognition, either from the beneficiaries themselves, or from others who are aware of his deeds, but he is not necessarily seeking a widespread reputation (*Pas Lechem*).

7 In his ensuing remarks, the *Chovos Halevovos* is not attempting to undermine our natural sense of gratitude towards such benefactors. On the contrary; he builds his arguments on the premise that the gratitude owed to these people is axiomatic – as he stresses again and again – despite the imperfections that he enumerates, for they do not outweigh the benefactor's good intentions towards the beneficiary. His objective in noting these imperfections is to demonstrate that even

**ר**תחלתם טובת האב על בנו. ומן הידוע, כי הוא מכון רק לתועלת עצמו בו, כי הבן נתח מהאב עם עצם תקותו בו. והלא תראה, כי הוא מרגיש עליו יותר מגופו במאכלו ובמשתהו ובכסותו, ולדחות כל גזק מעליו, ונקל בעיניו סבל הטרח והיגיעה בעד מנוחתו, עם מה שהטבעו עליו האבות מן הרחמים והחמלה על בניהם, ועם כל זה חיבה התורה והשכל על הבן העבודה והכבוד והיראה, כמו שאמר הכתוב (שמות כ יב) כבוד את אביך ואת אמה, וכתיב (ויקרא יט ג) איש אמו ואביו תיראו, (משלי א ח)

#### THE FIRST CATEGORY; FATHER TO SON

*The father's concern for his son is driven both by biological instinct and desire for continuity. Furthermore it is Hashem who provides for them both, yet there are copious references to the obligation of a son to honour his father.*

**W**e begin with **the first among them; the good that a father does for his son.** It is clear that along with the father's interest in his son's welfare, **he is directing his benevolence towards himself, for the son is a biological part of the father,** and thus the father's concern for him is instinctive. This is **apart from the** fact that the father invests **great hopes** for his own future **in him.** The father's concern is obviously instinctive; **you see that he is more sensitive to the needs of his son than to his own needs, whether concerning food, drink, clothing or protecting him from any harm.** In fact, **he finds it easy to endure hardship and toil in order to provide his son with comfort.** This comes as a result of all fathers' innate feelings of **compassion and concern for their sons.** Yet although the father is just following his instincts, **both the Torah and the moral intellect dictate that a son must serve his father and treat him with respect and reverence, as the *pasuk* says: (Shemos 20:12) "Respect your father and your mother," and it states (Vayikra 19:3) "Each man must revere his mother and**

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the greatest forms of human benevolence and altruism – such as the kindness of a parent – do not compare with the quality of Hashem's kindness towards us, and thus the immense gratitude that we rightfully feel towards our parents (or other benefactors) gives us an inkling of the gratitude that we should feel towards Hashem.

שְׁמַע בְּנֵי מוֹסֵר אָבִיךָ וְאַל תִּטּוֹשׁ תּוֹרַת אִמְךָ, וְאָמַר (מִלְאָכֵי א ו)  
 בֵּן יִכְבֵּד אָב וְעֶבֶד אֲדֹנָיו, וְאִם הָאָב מִכְרַח בְּזָה בְּדַרְךָ הִטְבַּע,  
 וְהִטּוֹבָה לְאֵל, וְהוּא שְׁלִיחַ בָּהּ בְּלִבָּד.

אֵל כָּל טוֹבַת הָאָדוֹן עַל עֲבָדוֹ יְדוּעַ, כִּי הוּא מְכֻוֵן לְתַקֵּן מְמוֹנוֹ  
 בְּמְמוֹנוֹ עִם צָרְכּוֹ לְעִבּוּדָתוֹ, וְהוּא אֵינוֹ מְכֻוֵן בְּזָה כִּי אִם תּוֹעֵלַת

father;” (*Mishlei* 1:8) “My son, accept the discipline of your father and do not reject the instruction of your mother;” and it says (*Malachi* 1:6) “A son shall respect his father and a servant shall respect his master.” This is a moral obligation **despite the fact that the father is compelled to bestow this kindness by nature. The kindness is really to be accredited to Hashem; he (the father) is just the agent** who delivers it,<sup>8</sup> and yet the son is still expected to feel indebted and to reciprocate.<sup>9</sup>

THE SECOND CATEGORY, THE MASTER TOWARDS HIS SERVANT.

**N**ow let us analyse the second form of kindness – **the kindness of the master towards his servant. It is clear that his ultimate objective** in purchasing the servant and providing for him, **is in order to use his own possession, the servant, to care for his other assets** and concerns.<sup>10</sup> Thus it is in the master’s own interest that the servant be well cared for, **since he needs his services.** Here again **the master’s benevolence is directed at himself. Nevertheless,** though the

*The kindness that a master shows his servant is no more than an investment in his own assets; nevertheless, the servant is expected to show gratitude.*

8 The commentators offer varied explanations of this last remark. Some explain that the author is closing his previous remarks; after demonstrating that a father’s kindness is instinctive, he concludes that as such, the father’s kindness should actually be accredited to Hashem since it was He Who ingrained these instincts in the father in order to provide the son with the care that he needs (*Ne’edar Bakodesh*). Others explain that he is presenting an additional argument which would appear to mitigate the son’s debt of gratitude; whatever means the father uses to benefit his son are not inherently his. They were assigned to him by Hashem for the purpose of passing them on to his son (*Marpei Lanefesh, Tov Halevanon*).

9 See footnote 7.

10 Following the *Marpei Lanefesh, Manoach Halevavos* and *R’ Y.S. Natanson*.

עֲצְמוּ, וְעַם כָּל זֶה כָּבַד חַיְבוֹ הַבוֹרֵא יִתְבָּרַךְ בְּעַבְדוֹתוֹ וְהוֹדָאתוֹ,  
כְּמוֹ שְׁפָתוֹב (מְלֶאכִי א ו) בֵּן יִכְבֵּד אָב וְעֶבֶד אֲדוֹנָיו.

**א** בְּל טוֹבַת הָעֲשִׂיר עַל הָרֵשׁ לְקַבֵּל שְׂכָר שְׁמִים, הוּא כְּסוּחַר  
-: שֶׁהוּא קוֹנֵה הַנָּאָה גְּדוּלָה קִימָת, יִגִּיעַ אֵלָיָה אַחַר זְמַן, בְּטוֹבָה  
קִטְנָה וְאַבּוּדָה וְנִבְזִית, יִתְנַנֵּה מִיָּד, וְלֹא נִתְכַּוֵּן אֶלָּא לְפָאֵר נַפְשׁוֹ

master's motives are not purely altruistic, **Hashem has obligated the servant to serve his master faithfully in return and to be thankful for even this show of kindness as it says, "A son shall respect his father and a servant shall respect his master (Malachi 1:6)."**<sup>11</sup>

THE THIRD CATEGORY, THE CHARITY OF THE WEALTHY TO THOSE IN NEED.

*The charity recipient must be ever-grateful even though his benefactor is motivated by the immeasurable Divine reward in the afterlife, and is in any event not the Divinely-intended owner of his wealth.*

**N**ow we proceed to the third form of kindness we have mentioned; the **kindness which the wealthy man bestows upon the needy in order to earn Divine reward.** This seems to be altogether righteous and very altruistic. However, if we look at it objectively we can see that **he is to be compared to a businessman who – complying with simple financial strategy – is prepared to forego a small amount of temporal and inferior<sup>12</sup> pleasure in the short term in order to realize large, permanent and quality dividends in the long**

11 In line with the context of the *posuk*, which requires a son to show respect for his father by verbally acknowledging his thanks, the servant is similarly reminded to show gratitude. (*Pas Lechem*)  
We may add the following consideration. Since by definition a servant is bound to carry out every wish of his master, what can the *posuk* possibly mean to add by instructing the servant to “respect his master”? The *Chovos Halevovos* understands this as signifying, that in addition to the actual performance of his day-to-day duties, he must relate to his master – and to his duties on behalf of the master – with a sense of gratitude.

12 The *Chovos Halevovos* mentions three aspects of supremacy that the reward in the next world has over the presumed loss in this world.  
1) The outlay is of **poor quality** – for any material asset can at most better a person's physical

בְּאַחֲרִיתוֹ בְּטוֹבָה שֶׁהִפְקִידָהּ הָאֱלֹהִים בְּיָדוֹ לְתַתָּהּ לְמִי שֶׁיְהִיָּה  
 רְאוּי לָהּ. וּמִן הַיְדוּעַ, כִּי רְאוּי לְהוֹדוֹת אוֹתוֹ וּלְשַׁבְּחוֹ, אַף עַל פִּי  
 שֶׁהִיָּתָה כּוֹנֵנָתוֹ לְפָאֵר אֶת נַפְשׁוֹ בְּאַחֲרִיתוֹ וְעַם כָּל זֶה נִתְחַיְבָה לוֹ

**term.** So there is nothing strikingly gallant in his conduct, since **his only intent is to advance the interests of his own soul when the end of his time on earth arrives.**<sup>13</sup> Furthermore he is forwarding this interest **using the means Hashem deposited with him** for this very purpose; **to distribute to those who deserve it.**<sup>14</sup> Still, it is clear that it is proper for the recipient **to thank the benefactor and praise him** for his generosity, **even though his prime intent was to benefit his own soul** when it ascends to Heaven **at the end of his life.** **Thus we are nevertheless instructed** that it is proper **to show**

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existence, highlights the disgraceful aspect of man; his body and his base needs. Conversely, Divine reward is appreciated by the soul, and thus relates to the spiritual and most noble aspect of man

- 2) The wealthy person seldom gives the needy a large sum at once so that the outlay is **relatively small**, compared to Divine reward where *Chazal* tell us that even the most minute amount is equal to all the pleasures in our world.
- 3) The wealthy person's loss is **momentary** whereas Divine reward is eternal. (*Pas Lechem*)
- 13 The lay-person does not tend to view reward in the next world as a tangible commodity, but rather as a sort of mysticism. Thus the very belief in its existence in a real way, and the ability to view it as a commodity, is in itself a measure of greatness. The *Chovos Halevovos* is not negating the virtue of this vivid awareness of reward. Yet – in a critical analysis of reality – he is noting that even someone who has already advanced past this spiritual level has not necessarily reached the level of performing kindness in its purest and most altruistic form for, after all, it does resemble the give and take of a business concern.
- 14 A theme mentioned extensively in the classical commentators: the idea that a person's surplus assets are really only lent to him for safekeeping as it were, to distribute to the needy *for whom it was intended in the first place*. Addressing the *pasuk*, וְחִי אִחִיךָ עִמָּךְ, which – simply understood – means “Your fellow Jew shall live with you (i.e. he shall receive his sustenance from you), the *Alshich* offers a novel interpretation: “Your fellow Jew's source of livelihood is with you (i.e. entrusted in your possession).” This is an echo of the reminder of the *Chovos Halevovos* that the charity we give is ours for safekeeping only. (*Pas Lechem, Marpei Lanefesh*) See also *Ohr Hachaim* (Shemos 22:24) In this light, even someone who gives without any ulterior motive whatsoever is still only relinquishing a guardianship! Yet *Chazal* tell us “One who is ungrateful to his fellow man will be ungrateful to Hashem in the long run” How much more do we need to appreciate Hashem's true kindness. (*Ne'edar BaKodesh*)

ההודאה כמו שאמר איוב (איוב כט יג) בְּרִכַּת אֲבִד עָלַי תָּבֵא, וְעוֹד  
אָמַר (איוב לא כ) אִם לֹא בְּרִכּוֹנֵי הַלְּצוֹ וּמִגֹּז כְּבִשֵׁי יִתְחַמֵּם.

appreciation, as Iyov said (*Iyov* 29:13): “The grateful blessing of the despairing impoverished would be directed at me in return for the charity I would distribute freely,”<sup>15</sup> and he stated further (*Iyov* 31:20): “For surely his body would bless me as he warmed himself with the wool of my flocks.”<sup>16</sup>

- 
- 15 Iyov, who is being tested with extreme poverty, is reminiscing of the time that he was in better financial standing. He describes the way he would spare no effort or expense to come to the aid of those less fortunate, for which he was often the subject of tremendous gratitude amongst the masses.
- 16 That the body is grateful is figurative; being in itself inanimate, the body cannot have feelings. The general idea is the overwhelming feeling of gratitude for having been provided with the most basic of necessities.

#### PERSPECTIVES OF TANACH

בְּרִכַּת אוֹבֵד עָלַי תָּבֵא (איוב כט יג)

“The blessing of **the despairing** would be directed at me.” (*Iyov* 29:13)

Actually, the literal translation of *birkas oved* is “the blessing of **the lost one**”. *Rashi* understands this as referring to a deceased person, the term **lost** denoting the fact that he was “lost” on account of his sins. Thus Iyov says that the soul in Heaven would feel gratitude towards him for having provided for his bereaved family. The *Malbim* takes a similar line, with **lost** referring to the deceased person’s absence from this world. However the *Chovos Halevovos* seems to concur with the *Metzudos* who explains the word “*oved*” as referring to the live beneficiary who considers himself beyond hope in view of his extreme plight.

אֵל טוֹבַת בְּנֵי אָדָם קֶצֶתָם אֶל קֶצֶתָם בְּעִבּוֹר אֲהֵבַת הַשֶּׁבַח  
 וְהַכְּבוֹד וּגְמוּל הָעוֹלָם הוּא, כְּמִי שְׂאוּצֵר דְּבַר אֶצֶל חֲבֵרוֹ אוֹ  
 מִפְּקִיד אֶצֶלוֹ מִמּוֹן מִפְּנֵי יִרְאַתוֹ שְׂיִצְטָרֵף לְאַחַר זְמַן, וְאִף עַל פִּי  
 שְׂכֻנָּתוֹ לְתוֹעֵלַת עֲצֻמוֹ בְּהִטִּיבוֹ לְזוּלָתוֹ, כְּמוֹ שְׂאֲמַרְנוּ, חַיֵּב לוֹ  
 הַשֶּׁבַח וְהַהוֹדָאָה עָלֶיהָ, כְּמוֹ שְׂאֲמַר הַחֲכָם (מִשְׁלֵי יט ו) רַבִּים

THE FOURTH CATEGORY, THE KINDNESS THAT ORDINARY PEOPLE  
 SHOW EACH OTHER.

**N**ow we proceed to the fourth form of kindness, **the kindness that people show each other for want of good reputation, honour<sup>17</sup> and in order to receive general forms of worldly returns in reciprocation, as opposed to the incentive of Divine reward.** Thus, he is granting the benefit in order to collect it in some other form at a later time. **This can be simply compared to one who stores articles, or entrusts money with a friend for fear that he may need them at a later date when they may not otherwise be available to him.<sup>18</sup> Although his intention with this generosity to others is to further his own interests, as we have already mentioned, the recipient is still obligated to express praise and gratitude for the favour. As the wise Shlomo Hamelech said (Mishlei 19:6) “Many are**

*Kindness motivated by ulterior motives is still expected to be marked by appreciation.*

17 Two distinct incentives. One is a **reputation**, which spreads much further than his physical self; that even distant people should hear about his philanthropy. The second is the way that people actively **honour** him for his achievements. (*Pas Lechem*)

18 Were he to be confronted with sudden loss or tragedy, he would always be able to fall back upon this untouched deposit. (*Pas Lechem*)

יִחְלוּ פְּנֵי נְדִיב וְכָל הָרַע לְאִישׁ מִתֵּן, וְאָמַר (מִשְׁלֵי יח טז) מִתֵּן אָדָם  
יִרְחִיב לוֹ וּלְפָנָי גְּדוֹלִים יִנְחֲנוּ.

those who **supplicate in the presence of a philanthropist and all are affectionate towards a giver**.<sup>19</sup> And similarly he says (*Mishlei* 18:16) “**A person’s giving will broaden his assets and place him** in an honourable position together **with the great**”.<sup>20</sup> Hence, even one who gives with a desire for acknowledgement is indeed deserving of the praise and recognition that people are inclined to show him.

- 19 Though the acknowledgement and praise is not explicitly mentioned in the *posuk*, we can reasonably assume that it is proper to preface one’s request with complimentary remarks. It is similarly self-understood that a supplicant would inevitably show gratitude upon his request being granted. (*Pas Lechem*)
- 20 The fact that he is granted this honour indicates that people consider him worthy of praise, and thus the actual recipients must certainly express their gratitude. (*Pas Lechem*)

#### PERSPECTIVES OF TANACH

רַבִּים יִחְלוּ פְּנֵי נְדִיב וְכָל הָרַע לְאִישׁ מִתֵּן (מִשְׁלֵי יט ו)

*Many are those who supplicate in the presence of a philanthropist and **all are affectionate towards a giver.*** (*Mishlei* 19:6)

If we follow the interpretation of the classic commentators, the *Chovos Halevovos*’ proof from this *pasuk* is not readily apparent. Most commentators (*Rashi* and others) understand it to be saying that people show friendship to a giver *in order to receive his gifts*. If so, this *pasuk* says nothing about sincere appreciation. Indeed, the *Pas Lechem* (cited in footnote 19) states that the *Chovos Halevovos*’ proof is by implication only. In our translation, we considered the possibility that the *Chovos Halevovos* may have understood the friendship mentioned in the *pasuk* as sincere affection resulting from gratitude. It is of note that *Rabbeinu Yonah*

offers a novel interpretation of this *pasuk*, and this too would shed light on the *Chovos Halevovos*' intent. He explains the word הָרַע as an ovation or applause; read: *all give cheering approval to the giver*. If taken in this way, the *Chovos Halevovos* would have simple and direct mention of gratitude shown to the charitable.

מִתֵּן אָדָם יִרְחִיב לוֹ וְלִפְנֵי גְדוֹלִים יִנְחֹנוּ (מִשְׁלֵי יח טז).

*The gift of a person will broaden for him and place him before the great. (Mishlei 18:16)*

Most *mefarshim* explain this *pasuk* in the context of a business deal. The right amount of carefully dispensed generosity will open otherwise impassable routes in the event that one requires the intervention of a powerful contact. (*Rashi, Ralbag, Malbim, Metzudos*). Along similar lines, the *Ibn Ezra* understands it as referring to blatant bribery. *Rashi* quotes the *Midrash* as applying this *pasuk* to the virtue of charity, that it broadens the share in the World to Come, and also places a person in an honourable position in this world where all praise him for his generosity. According to the *Pas Lechem*, it appears that this is the explanation followed by the *Chovos Halevovos*, as he uses it to show that the honouree is deserving of praise.

**א**ן טובות החומל על העני הכואב לו, הוא מכון בזה לדחות צער מעל עצמו, אשר מצאהו מעגמת נפשו וכאבו למי שחמל עליו, והוא כמי שמרפא כאב שמצאהו בעצמו בטובת ה' עליו, ואיננו נשאר מבילתי שבה, כמו שאמר איוב (איוב לא יט)

#### THE FIFTH CATEGORY, KINDNESS OF EMPATHY

*Kindness out of pity, where the giver wishes to relieve his own discomfort at the recipient's distress, must be properly acknowledged, even though it is really directed at the self.*

**N**ow we approach the fifth and final form of kindness – the kindnesses that the compassionate person devotes to the indigent in distress. When we give this a little thought we realise that the giver actually intends to relieve his very own discomfort, felt as a result of the stress and agony he experiences on account of his empathy with the needy. Thus, he is like one who heals himself of a natural pain using the means Hashem has kindly placed at his disposal.<sup>21</sup> And yet although this, too, is a form of self-giving, he is not to be left unthanked<sup>22</sup> as Iyov said (Iyov 31:19) “I did not allow myself

21 Certainly, the ability to relate to the distress of another person as if it were a personal malady is a very worthy character trait, and the *Chovos Halevovos* is not negating it. Yet, just as we explained in the case of Divine reward (see footnote 4) we must stand from the viewpoint of that level and consider an even higher level – pure altruism. Thus in the framework of our discussion on the incentives behind various forms of giving, this would be the most powerful inducement since it involves his actual discomfort, albeit a form of discomfort that is in fact a great virtue. (*Rav Dessler*)

22 **Not to be left unthanked** This category is the most acute form of self-interest since it is an immediate relief to a physical discomfort. Hence, the phrasing of acknowledgement in the *Chovos Halevovos* is of the most casual degree. (*following the Pas Lechem*).

אִם אֶרְאֶה אוֹבֵד מִבְּלֵי לְבוּשׁ וְאֵין כְּסוּת לְאֶבְיוֹן אִם לֹא בְּרִכּוּנִי  
חֲלָצוּ וּמָגֹז כְּבָשִׂי יִתְחַמֵּם.

to see and tolerate the despairing of the poor in an uncovered state, nor the destitute without clothes; did his body not thank me as it was warmed with the wool of my sheep?”<sup>23</sup>

Thus we have a clear reference to the thanks the recipient must express, in spite of the favour being a means that the giver uses to alleviate his own distress.

23 There are two principle *pesukim* quoted from Iyov in this chapter:

“The grateful blessing of the despairing would be directed at me” (29:13)

“I did not allow myself to see and tolerate the despairing in an uncovered state nor the destitute without clothes, did his body not thank me as it was warmed with the wool of my sheep?” (31:20)

The second *posuk* is particularly apt here in supporting the concept of self-pity. The lack of adequate dress evokes particular empathy since it is most visible, as Iyov himself says, “I did not allow myself to tolerate the unclothed” The first *posuk*, however, refers to a food-crisis where the feeling of hunger cannot be relayed to the benefactor with the same intensity. Here the Divine reward is the incentive to the act of charity. (*Tov Halevovon*)

#### THE BAALEI MUSSAR EXPLAIN

The *Chovos Halevovos* engages here in finely tuned searching of character. The ability to relate to the distress of another as if it were one’s own is a very worthy quality indeed and in no way does the *Chovos Halevovos* mean to negate this. However, in the course of classifying and defining the driving qualities of a person, this would fall into the category of *Rachmonus*; compassion. This is indeed a worthy trait to cultivate. At the same time we are concerned with defining *Chessed*; kindness. The model of true kindness, says Rav Dessler, is where the act is done without the need to resort to any other influencing human trait.

Nowhere is this idea expressed so clearly as in the life-story of our forefather Avraham who is considered the personification of *Chessed*. Even Noach,

who kept all the animals in the ark fed and watered incessantly for a full year, is described only as *Tzaddik*, righteous. The quality of *Chessed* is accredited specifically to Avraham Avinu. Rav Dessler explains that with this tremendous act of caring, Noach was fulfilling a responsibility. The pure *Chessed* of this act is therefore called into question.

The contrast between Avraham's kindness and that of others is highlighted in the following excerpt from the *Avos D'Rabi Nosson* that Rav Dessler quotes:

*“Let the poor be part of your household” Hashem said to Iyov “You have not yet reached half the measure (of hospitality) of Avraham Avinu. You sit in your house and allow the guests to enter. Those accustomed to eat meat are served meat and those accustomed to drink wine are served wine. However, Avraham Avinu acted differently. He would go out of his way to seek out wayfarers and invite them in. He would serve meat and wine even to those who were not accustomed to it. In addition he built a large mansion at the crossroads so that all passerby could enter to eat and drink...”*

Herein lies the difference between kindness and compassion. Iyov made sure to replace whatever the guest was missing. He responded to the need that he perceived. That is compassion. Kindness is personified by Avraham Avinu; who went out of his way to initiate opportunities to generate kindness, just pure *Chessed* for *Chessed's* sake. In determining the definition of unadulterated *Chessed*, *Chovos Halevovos* declares the kindness that is driven by empathy to be self-directed. (*Michtav Me'elياهو vol.2 p.178*)

It is worth noting that the *Chovos Halevovos* quotes *pesukim* from Iyov as an example of gratitude towards compassion-rooted kindness – possibly an allusion to the aforementioned passage from *Avos D'Rabi Nosson*.

**ר** כְּבָר נִרְאָה מִמָּה שֶׁהִקְדַּמְנוּ, כִּי כּוֹנֵת כָּל מִטִּיב לְזוּלָתוֹ מִבְּנֵי אָדָם  
 הוּא לְתוֹעֵלַת עֲצָמוֹ תַּחֲלָה וְלִקְנוֹת קִשׁוּט נֶאֱדָה לְעוֹלָם הַזֶּה אוֹ  
 לְעוֹלָם הַבָּא אוֹ לְדַחוֹת צַעַר מֵעַל נַפְשׁוֹ אוֹ לְתַקְנַת מָמוֹנוֹ, וְאִין כָּל  
 זֶה מוּנֵעַ מִשְׂבָּחָם וְהוֹדָאָתָם, מִיִּרְאָה וּמֵאֲהָבָה אוֹתָם וּמִהֶשִׁיב לָהֶם  
 גְּמוּלָם, אֵף עַל פִּי שְׁהִטּוּבָה הִיא שְׂאוּלָה בְּיָדָם, וְהֵם מְכַרְחִים  
 לְהִיטִיב בָּהֶם, כְּאֲשֶׁר זָכְרָנוּ, וְטוֹבָתָם אֵינָה תְּמִידִית וְלֹא נְדִיבוּתָם

A SUMMARY OF THE MOTIVES BEHIND HUMAN KINDNESS, AND  
 ITS LIMITATIONS.

**W**ith this introduction it becomes plain that the motive behind all forms of human kindness is first and foremost self interest, where it is either to acquire some sort of decoration of honour and recognition in this world, or of Divine reward in the next world, or to relieve his own distress where the suffering of others allows him no peace, or to add value to his assets as in the case of the master providing for the servant.<sup>24</sup> And yet none of all this is a legitimate reason to neglect praising the benefactor and thanking him, revering him, adoring him, and reciprocating when the opportunity presents itself. This is what decency dictates even though, after all, the means of distributing kindness was only given to him on loan,<sup>25</sup> and in addition, the benefactor is compelled to impart it as we have already mentioned.<sup>26</sup> Moreover their actual benevolence is not continuous, its effects are not everlasting<sup>27</sup>

*We have seen the way human generosity is given due credit in spite of it being*  
*a) either completely motivated by one or more of the five categories mentioned, or, at best, tainted with one of those intentions.*  
*b) not really the property of the giver.*  
*c) very limited in quantity and quality.*

24 Following the definitions of the *Ne'edar Bakodesh*.

25 See footnote 5

26 When a person's kindness owes itself to strong incentive or instinctive nature, we can say that he is essentially forced into that act. (*Pas Lechem*)

27 Here the *Chovos Halevovos* looks at the quantitative and qualitative content of the typical gift. A typical display of human generosity:

a) is periodical at best and certainly not continually renewed

b) even the effects of that particular gift do not last in the long-term. (*Pas Lechem*)

וְנִמְשְׁכֶתָּ, וְחִסְדֹתֶם מְעוֹרְרֶת עִם כְּוִנַּת תּוֹעֵלַת נַפְשָׁם אוֹ לְדַחֹת  
הַהֶזֶק מִמֶּנָּה.

**א**ם כֵּן כִּמָּה הָאָדָם חַיֵּב מִן הָעֲבוּדָה וְהַשְּׂבַח וְהַהוֹדָאָה לְבוֹרֵא  
הַטּוֹבָה וְהַמְטִיב בָּהּ לוֹ, אֲשֶׁר אֵין תְּכַלִּית לְטוֹבָתוֹ, אֲךָ הִיא  
מִתְמַדֶּת וְנִמְשְׁכֶתָּ מִבְּלִתִּי כְּוִנַּת תּוֹעֵלַת וְלֹא דְחִית גְּזֹק, רַק נְדָבָה  
וְחֶסֶד מִמֶּנּוּ עַל כָּל הַמְדַבְּרִים.

and their piety is at best diluted with the ever-present intent either to bring themselves gain or at least to prevent a loss.<sup>28</sup>

COMPARE AND CONTRAST WITH THE CREATOR'S MAGNANIMITY.

*Consider that Hashem is the ultimate source of any human gift or favour, His benevolence is not limited or contained and it is free of selfish considerations.*

**S**o then, how much more in the way of service, praise and gratitude does a person owe the One Who created both the kindness that he experienced, as well as the benefactor who bestowed it upon him? He is the real source of any benevolence that a person experiences; His kindness is unendingly renewed and continuous,<sup>29</sup> with no intent of gain or intent to protect Himself against loss. It is just generosity and kindness in its purest unadulterated form with which Hashem graces mankind.

28 Even if we were to assume that this particular person acts out of his own free and pious choice, it remains inevitable that it should not be coloured by self-interest. (*Pas Lechem*)

29 The parallel *renewed* and *continuous* when describing Hashem's kindness refers to the two different ways in which Hashem appears to confer these benefits. Some are periodical but consistently **renewed** such as the *Man* that fell daily when the Jewish people journeyed through the desert, whereas some are **continuous**; day-in day-out, such as our very life's breath. See also footnote 27.

**ר**ממה שראוי לעמוד עליו, כי כל מטיב לזולתו מבני אדם מפל המינים אשר זכרנו, אין לו יתרון על מי שמטיב לו אלא במקרה מן המקרים, אבל באנושותם ועצמם נמשלים, וקרובים זה לזה בעצם ובדמות ובחבורם ובצלמם וטבעיהם וברוב מקריהם, ועם כל זה חיב מי שמטיבים לו מן העבודה למטיב מה שספרנו.

THE FACTOR OF DIFFERENCE IN STATUS BETWEEN GIVER AND RECEIVER.

**N**ow we would do well to carefully note the following: That when any person should engage in any of the above-mentioned categories of benevolence he has **no intrinsic superiority over the recipient save for pure circumstance**, the fact that one of them has greater means or is in a better position than the other. Now, circumstances and means are no more than qualities which are attached to, but independent of, the real self.<sup>30</sup> **However, in their physical existence and spiritual makeup the giver and recipient are really very similar; they are, for the most part, equal in body, in soul, in build, in form of mind,<sup>31</sup> in strength of constitution, or as regards most of life's hurdles and vulnerabilities, which challenge rich and poor alike. The recipient may be just as physically and mentally gifted as the giver and even just as virtuous. Nevertheless the benefited must still honour his duties to the giver in the way we have described** regardless of the fact that he is in not inherently inferior.

*In the case of human kindness there is generally no intrinsic difference between giver and recipient aside from the circumstantial difference in available resources. Nevertheless the recipient must show his gratitude.*

30 A person's physical acquisitions are no more than appendices that accommodate his existence in his current surroundings, but what real difference do they make in determining his inherent status and value?

31 Our definitions follow the *Pas Lechem*. "in form of mind"- *Pas Lechem* quoting the *Moreh Nevuchim*.

**ר**אם היינו חושבים, כי מי אשר מטיבין לו בתכלית החסרון  
 והגריעות בהרפכתו וחבורו ודמותו, הִיב חַיב בְּעֲבוּדָה יוֹתֵר.  
 וְכֵן כִּאֲשֶׁר נֶחְשַׁב, כִּי הַמְטִיב בְּטוֹבָה טוֹב וְשָׁלֵם מְכַל נִמְצָא, וּמִי  
 שְׁמְטִיבִין לוֹ גְרוּעַ מְכַל נִמְצָא וְחָלוּשׁ מְכַל נִבְרָא, הַשְׂכָּל מְחַיֵּב  
 בְּתוֹסֶפֶת הָעֲבוּדָה לַמְטִיב עַד אֵין תְּכֵלִית.

THE DEBT OF GRATITUDE INCREASES ACCORDING TO THE  
 DIFFERENCE IN STANDING BETWEEN BENEFACITOR AND  
 RECIPIENT.

*In the event  
 that the giver is  
 a more quality  
 person, that  
 debt would be  
 all the more  
 multiplied;  
 still more when  
 the beneficiary  
 is far less  
 adequate.*

**N**ow supposing we were to consider a position where  
 the beneficiary is the most lacking of advantage and  
 of the very poorest constitution, build and appearance, and  
 nevertheless this benefactor has chosen to assist him. **He would  
 find himself even more obligated in the service** of gratitude  
 because of the very fact that the benefactor deigns to associate  
 with him.<sup>32</sup> **Let us similarly consider the following scenario;**  
 where the giver of the kindness is more intrinsically good  
 and perfect than anything else in existence. **In addition, the  
 recipient of the kindness has a more despicable nature than  
 anything in existence, and is of weaker constitution than any  
 other creature.**<sup>33</sup> In such an extreme case **the thinking intellect  
 would surely compel the beneficiary to forever intensify his  
 efforts on behalf of the benefactor.**

32 The greater the qualitative difference between benefactor and beneficiary, the more obligated the beneficiary must be to the giver. Not because there is less reason to extend a hand but because there is a natural tendency for people to interact and associate with their own kind.. Since people usually associate with those in their social and intellectual stratum, bridging that gap requires special effort on the part of the giver. (*Tov Halevanon*) See *Sotah 5a* where the *Gemara* notes this human characteristic.

33 The terms “despicable” and “weaker” correspond to “most intrinsically good” and “perfect” used in reference to Hashem, highlighting the contrast between Man and his Creator. Though man seems more good-natured than animal, it is only when he so chooses that he allows himself to rise above his natural inclinations, many of which are indeed more despicable than animal behaviour (such as jealousy, pride, desire for power, and other such characteristics that can – and have – led men to unspeakable atrocities). (*Pas Lechem*)

כְּאִשֶׁר כְּאִשֶׁר נִבְחַן עַל הַהִקְשָׁה הַזֹּאת דְּבַר הַבוֹרָא יִתְבָּרַךְ וּבְנֵי  
 אָדָם בְּשִׁכְלָנוּ, נִמְצָא הַבוֹרָא יִתְבָּרַךְ נִעְלָה וְנִשְׂא וּמְרוֹמָם עַל  
 כָּל נִמְצָא וְכָל מִשְׁגַּב בְּהִרְגָשָׁה וּבִשְׂכָל, כְּפִי אֲשֶׁר הִתְבָּאָר בְּשִׁעַר  
 הָרֵאשׁוֹן מִן הַסֵּפֶר הַזֶּה. וְכֵן נִמְצָא הָאָדָם בְּהִקְשָׁתוֹ אֶל שְׂאָר מִיְנֵי  
 הַחַיִּים, שְׂאִינָם מְדַבְּרִים, חָסֵר וְחָלֵשׁ מִכֻּלָּם, וְיִרְאֶה לָּהּ זֶה בְּשִׁלְשָׁה  
 עֲנִינִים.

APPLYING THE ABOVE PRINCIPLE IN THE CONTRAST BETWEEN  
 HASHEM AND MANKIND.

**W**hen we use this comparison in connection with the Creator vis-à-vis mankind, we find that the Creator is more intrinsically good, far more completely self contained, and utterly remote from anything that the senses or intellect could comprehend, as we have already explained in the first part of this work: the *Sha'ar HaYichud*. Conversely, we find that when Man – in his natural and unrefined state – is compared to the other creatures, he is more lacking and vulnerable than them all.<sup>34</sup> These disadvantages can be clearly observed in the following three areas:

*Consider that the Creator is the very embodiment of perfection and man the most physically deficient of all forms of life. This can be demonstrated in three ways.*

34 In summary: Consider

- a) The agreed obligation of gratitude when giver and recipient are similar.
- b) The extra debt of gratitude when the recipient is of a lower status than the average recipient.
- c) Consider when, in addition, the giver is of higher standing than the average recipient.
- d) How much more do we owe our Creator Whose absolute perfection cannot even be fathomed?  
*(Ne'edar Bakodesh)*

**א**חד מהם בענין גדולו ועוללותו, כי נמצא שאר מיני החיים חזקים ממנו ויכולים לסבל הצער יותר ולנשא את עצמם ואינם מטריחים אבותם בגדולם באדם.

**ב**הענין השני בשנעין במה שיש תוך גוף האדם מן הלכלוכים והטנופים, ומה שנראה עליו מחוץ ממה שהוא קרוב מהם, כשהוא נמנע מן הרחיצה והנקיות ימים רבים, וכן כאשר ימות, כי זהמתו יותר כבדה מכל זהמת כל נבלות שאר בעלי חיים וצואתו יותר מסרחת מצואת שאר בעלי חיים וכן שאר טנופיו.

THE THREE WAYS IN WHICH MAN IS MORE DEFICIENT THAN HIS ANIMAL COUNTERPART.

THE FIRST OF MAN'S DEFICIENCIES.

*1. Animals are born far more durable and independent than man.*

**T**he first of man's inadequacies is his relatively slow growth pattern and his infancy stages.<sup>35</sup> All other animals have the upper hand in that they have a higher pain threshold since man is by far a more sensitive creature, and in that they can take care of their own needs and therefore do not trouble their parents with their upbringing as much as people do.

THE SECOND DEFICIENCY.

*2. Human waste matter and bodily secretions are far more repulsive than those of animals and they are far more compromised by lack of personal hygiene.*

**T**he second aspect is when we consider both the presence of the waste matter inside the human body as well as similar external phenomena – equally offensive – that become noticeable when the body is not properly washed or generally attended to for a long period. This is in stark contrast to the animals who are not thus degraded by personal neglect. In death, too, his corpse is more repugnant than the corpse of any other living being, his excrement likewise has a more repulsive odour, and the same holds true for any one of his body's discharges.

35 *Marpei Lanefesh, Pas Lechem and Ne'edar Bakodesh*. However, the *Tov Halevonon* understands this to mean the physical inclination of a person, that he cannot bear discomfort.

רְהֵעֲנִין הַשְּׁלִישִׁי מֵהַ שֶׁהוּא נִרְאֶה מְחֻלָּשֵׁת תְּחִבּוּלוֹתָיו בְּשִׂיחָסֵר  
 כַּח הַדְּבוּר, אֲשֶׁר נָתַן לוֹ הַבּוֹרָא יִתְרוֹן עַל שְׂאֵר הַחַיִּים, שְׂאִינָם  
 מְדַבְּרִים, לְמֵאֲרָע שְׂאֲרָע בְּמַחוּ, כִּי בָעֵת הַהִיא יִהְיֶה נֶעְוָה וְנִתְעָה.  
 מִשְׂאֵר בְּעֵלֵי חַיִּים, וְאִפְשָׁר שְׂיִשְׁחִית עֲצֻמוֹ בְּשִׁחִיתוֹת וּבְתַמּוֹתוֹת.  
 וְנִמְצָא רַב בְּעֵלֵי חַיִּים, שְׂיִשָּׁ לָהֶם מִן הַהִכָּרָה בְּדַרְכֵי טוֹבָתָם  
 וְהַתְּחִבּוּלָה בְּהִשָּׁגַת מְזוֹנוֹתָם, מֵהַ שְׂמֻקְצָרִים רַבִּים מִן הַמְּשֻׁכְּלִים  
 שְׂבִבְנֵי אָדָם מְכֻמוֹתָם, כֹּל שְׂכֵן מִי שְׂיִפְקֹד שְׂכָלוֹ מֵהֶם.

### THE THIRD DEFICIENCY.

**T**he third aspect of this contrast can be seen in the way **all of man's resourcefulness** that he depends upon for survival **dissipates upon losing his** intellect – which is generally manifested in the **power of coherent speech** – **through some brain-damaging event.**<sup>36</sup> **It is through this** intellect that Hashem set Man over and above all other living beings. When he loses it, **he becomes more confused and senile**<sup>37</sup> **than any other living being** and in such a state **he may wreak damage or even death upon himself.** In this way, even the advantage that man has works against him, for though his mental prowess compensates for his physical deficiencies, when he loses it he becomes the most helpless of creatures. Contrary to man, **we find that most animals are provided with an instinct to protect their general welfare and more specifically to provide themselves with food, something that even intelligent human beings sometimes fall short of, let alone those whose lucidity is deficient.**<sup>38</sup>

*3. Man depends on his intellect for survival and the degrading deprivation he suffers without it. Animals are equipped with their instincts.*

36 The power of speech to which we refer is the reasoning behind the words formed — not necessarily the sounds made. (*Marpei Lanefesh, Manoach Halevovos*).

37 The commentators suggest other translations, including the phenomenon of hallucination, physical and mental instability (*Pas Lechem*) and post-traumatic breakdown (*Tov Halevonon*).

38 Man is so weak and fragile that when robbed of his reasoning, he is not only bereft of a means of survival, but he becomes self-destructive. Compare this to a spider's web or a beehive where the most original and complex architecture is executed as a matter of survival instinct without any reasoning whatsoever. (*Marpei Lanefesh*).

**כְּאִשֶׁר נֶעְמַד בְּמַחְשְׁבוֹתֵינוּ עַל גְּדֻלַּת הַבּוֹרָא יִתְעַלָּה וְעַצֵּם יִכְלָתוּ**  
**וְחֻכְמָתוֹ וְעִשְׂרוֹ וְנִסְתָּבֵל בְּחַלִּישוֹת הָאָדָם וְחֻסְרוֹנוֹ, וְשֵׂאִינוּ**  
**מִגִּיעַ אֶל הַשְּׁלֵמוֹת, וְרַב צָרְכּוֹ וְרִישׁוֹ לְדַבָּר שִׁימְלֵא מַחְסוּרוֹ, וְנִבְחַן**  
**רַב טוֹבוֹת הַבּוֹרָא יִתְבָּרַךְ וְחֻסְדּוֹ עָלָיו וְשִׁבְרָאָהּ כְּמוֹ שִׁבְרָאָהּ מִן**  
**הַחֻסְרוֹן בְּעִצְמוֹ, וְהוּא רֵשׁ וְצָרִיךְ אֶל מֵה שֵׁישׁ בּוֹ תִקְנָתוֹ, וְלֹא יִגִּיעַ**  
**אֵלָיו כִּי אִם בִּיגִיעַת נַפְשׁוֹ. וְזֶה מִחֻמְלַת הַבּוֹרָא עָלָיו, כְּדִי שִׁיכִיר**  
**אֶת עִצְמוֹ וְיִבְחַן בְּכָל עֲנִיָּו וְיִדְבֵק בְּעִבוּדַת הָאֵל עַל כָּל פְּנִים,**

THE KINDNESS OF THE CREATOR IN CREATING US WITH INADEQUACIES.

*Consider the exalted position of the Creator versus mankind's failings and that even those very failings are a part of Hashem's great master-plan.*

**O**bserve on one hand the scope of the Creator's greatness, His terrific capabilities, His wisdom and infinite means. Observe, on the other hand man's weaknesses and deficiencies; that he never reaches spiritual perfection, and how utterly dependent and needy he is for the means to fill his constant lack. Consider all the good and the kindness that Hashem has bestowed upon him which is the subject of the second chapter, *Sha'ar HaBechinah*. Thus in addition to the benefit itself, we must be overwhelmed with gratitude at the very fact that Hashem takes a personal interest in us, and wishes to associate with us! Furthermore, **He purposely created man in this state of deficiency**; he is inherently **needy and constantly requires all kinds of means for his upkeep, which he must obtain at the expense of considerable effort.** Hashem could have easily created man in the self-sufficient way that He created the thousands of types of animal. We are compelled to reason that **all this is in itself part of Hashem's great benevolence in order that man should recognise his own failings and observe and analyse the inevitable Divine kindness in his affairs and thereby be steadfast in the service**

וְיִקָּבַל עַל זֶה גְּמוּל הָעוֹלָם הַבָּא אֲשֶׁר לוֹ נִבְרָא, כְּמוֹ שֶׁהִקְדַּמְנוּ מִן  
הַדְּבָרִים בְּשַׁעַר הַשְּׁנִי מִן הַסֵּפֶר הַזֶּה.

**כ**מָה הָאָדָם חַיֵּב לוֹ יִתְבַּרְךָ מִן הָעֲבוּדָה וְהִירָאָה וְהַשְּׁבַח  
וְהַהוֹדָאָה וְהַתְמַדַּת הַתְּהִלָּה עִם בְּרוּר חַיִּיב כָּל אֲשֶׁר הִקְדַּמְנוּ  
מִן שְׂבַח בְּנֵי אָדָם וְהוֹדָאָתָם קִצָּתָם לְקִצָּתָם.

of Hashem under all circumstances,<sup>39</sup> for which he will be rewarded in the next world. For this service of Hashem and the accompanying reward is the purpose of man's creation,<sup>40</sup> a subject we have already addressed in the second part of this work, the *Sha'ar HaBechinah*.

#### PRACTICAL CONCLUSION.

**L**et the thinking individual come to the conclusion: **How much man is indebted to Hashem, how much homage he must pay Him, how he should rightfully be in awe of Him, how he should praise Him, thank Him and incessantly laud Him, once we have clearly established the norm of appreciation that is proper for people to show each other.**

*How much more we owe Hashem.*

39 Man must realise that he is created ex-nihilo; from very nothingness. The very fact that he exists is by Hashem's merciful will. Similarly, he enters this world bereft of personal possessions so that he may be struck by the message that anything he owns must have been given to him at some stage, whether as a gift or through his acumen, both of which lead him to the true and ultimate source—the Creator. When he is thus aware of his complete dependence on Hashem's grace, he remains forever faithful to His service, come what may. (*Marpei Lanefesh*).

40 The commentators appear to differ as to which purpose the *Chovos Halevovos* means. Some say that it refers both to the service of Hashem and the ensuing reward (*Marpei Lanefesh*) whilst some say that it refers only to the reward in the next world (*Pas Lechem*). This idea is emphasised extensively in the *Sifrei Mussar* with perhaps the most famous of all being the *Mesillas Yesharim* where he writes that in an expression of His true goodness, Hashem ultimately created a person to enjoy *Hashem's closeness* — the essence of the reward in the world to come.

**אם יש איש משכיל שחולק בחיוב כל זה לבורא יתברך על האדם, כשהוא מבחין ומתבונן בענין הזה ומודה באמת על עצמו, הלא יעור הישן וייקץ המתעלם ויבחין הכסיל וישכיל המשכיל ברור חיוב קבלת עבודת האלהים עם ברור הראות ופרסום העדים ואמתת המופתים, וכמו שאמר הנביא ע"ה למי שהתעלם מעין בקבלת עבודת האלוהים יתברך (דברים לב ו) הלה תגמלו זאת עם נבל ולא חכם.**

*Let every person honestly consider this argument and come to the correct conclusion; each at his own level.*

**A**t this point, we have reasoned enough to convince the most skeptical of thinkers, as long as he is honest with himself. **Should there be an intellectual who would initially question every man's debt of gratitude towards the Creator, when he observes and contemplates our presentation on this subject, then – if he is honest with himself – surely he will agree.** For the slumbering conscience will awaken, and the indifferent will now pay attention; let the foolish take note and the intellectual grasp in yet greater clarity, our obligation to commit ourselves to the service of Hashem, based on the rational proofs we have enumerated, the well-known testimonials provided by the *pesukim* of the Torah, and the undisputable veracity of the miracles that we – as a nation – were shown in order to corroborate this truth.<sup>41</sup> We must chastise ourselves as the greatest prophet, Moshe Rabbeinu may he rest in peace, directed at those who neglected to study – and thus failed to appreciate – the obligation to commit to the service of Hashem (*Devarim* 32:6): “Is this how you repay Hashem – you ungrateful and undiscerning people?”

41 Following the *Pas Lechem*. However the *Marpei Lanefesh* understands this “proof and witness” in the context of the ensuing *pasuk*, to be referring to the period of *Yetzias Mitzraim*, the splitting of the sea and the subsequent journey through the desert up to and including the greatest revelation of all, *Matan Torah*. The *Chovos Halevovos* reminds us that, aside for the logical approach, this alone provided eternal proof, hundreds of thousands of witnesses and such miraculous experiences as to remove any doubt as to our obligation in the service of Hashem. Whichever explanation is followed it would seem that the miracles referred to are the same.

אם כן כָּבַר נִתְבָּרַר חַיּוּב קִבְּלַת עֲבוּדַת הָאֱלֹהִים עַל בְּנֵי אָדָם  
מִצַּד הַתְּמַדַּת טוֹבוֹתָיו עָלָיו .

רְצִיף שֶׁנִּבְּאָר מֵעֵינֵי הַשַּׁעַר הַזֶּה עֲשָׂרָה עֲנִינִים:  
! אֶחָד מֵהֶם הֵעֲרָה עַל הָעֲבוּדָה וְחֻלְקֵיהָ, וְהַשְׁנִי בְּצַרְף הַמְּבִיא  
אֶל כָּל חֵלֶק מִחֻלְקֵיהָ, וְהַשְּׁלִישִׁי בְּגֵדֵר הָעֲבוּדָה וְחֻלְקֵיהָ וּמַעֲלוֹתֶיהָ,  
וְהָרְבִיעִי בְּצוּרַת הֵעֲרָה הַתּוֹרִיָּה וְחֻלְקֵיהָ וּמַעֲלוֹת אֲנָשִׁים בִּידִיעַת  
סֵפֶר הַתּוֹרָה וְהַבְּנֵת עֲנִינָיו, וְהַחֲמִישִׁי בְּצוּרַת הֵעֲרָה הַשְּׂכֻלִית  
וְלַהוֹרוֹת עָלֶיהָ עַל דֶּרֶךְ הַשְּׂאֵלָה וְהַתְּשׁוּבָה, וְהַשְּׁשִׁי בְּמִינֵי חַיּוּבֵי

We have now established the duty of mankind to commit themselves to the service of Hashem in view of His continuous benevolence towards them.

THE CONTENTS OF THE TEN CHAPTERS IN SHA'AR AVODAS ELOKIM.

Now, in this Gateway we must examine the following ten subjects:

1. Identifying the stimuli that motivate a person to engage in the service of Hashem, and the necessity of such stimulation.
2. Having said that there is more than one form of stimulation, we need to understand why we require these varying forms.
3. The definition of service of Hashem, its different facets, and the particular advantage gained in pursuing each of them.
4. A description of how the Torah motivates us towards the service of Hashem, a description of the varying degrees of this motivation and the varying levels of knowledge and understanding present amongst those who learn the Torah, with the ramifications of each level.
5. A description of the motivation provided by the intellect, presented in the form of an imaginary question and answer dialogue between the intellect (*Seichel*) and the conscious self (*Nefesh*).

הַעֲבוּדָה כְּפִי מִיָּנִי הַטּוֹבוֹת וּמְחַלְקוֹתֵיהֶם, וְהַשְּׂבִיעִי בְּאֹר הַפְּחוֹת  
מֵה שְׂחִיב בּוּ מִי שְׂמִטִּיבִין לוֹ בְּטוֹבָה מִן הַטּוֹבוֹת לְמִטִּיב בָּהּ,  
וְהַשְּׂמִינִי בְּמַחְלֶקֶת הַחֲכָמִים בְּהִכָּרַח וּבְצֶדֶק וְהַדַּעַת הַקְּרוּבָה אֶל  
הָאֶמֶת מִן הַדַּעוֹת בְּזָה, וְהַתְּשִׁיעִי בְּסִפּוּר סוּד יִצִּירַת הַמִּין הָאֲנוּשִׁי  
בְּעוֹלָם הַזֶּה בְּדֶרֶךְ קִצְרָה, וְהַעֲשִׂירִי בְּסִפּוּר דֶּרֶךְ הַשְּׂמוּשׁ בְּכָל מַדָּה  
מִמִּדּוֹתֵינוּ בְּמִקּוּמָהּ.

6. That **different levels of service** are expected from different people, **corresponding to the level and details of the kindness** that Hashem shows them.
7. What is the **absolute minimum obligation that the beneficiary of Hashem's kindnesses has towards Hashem, the giver?**
8. **Of the difference of opinion between the wise, as to whether man's deeds are a result of his free choice or whether he is coerced into whatever he does, and the correct opinion to follow in the matter.**
9. A **concise explanation of the secret purpose behind the creation of mankind on earth.**
10. A **description of the way each of our opposing character traits must be used in its correct time and place** in the true service of Hashem.

