

God, Purpose and the Necessity of the Mitzvot*

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* The mitzvot refer to the regulations of conduct prescribed by Judaism. They stand as testament to the will of the Creator, their performance being obligatory irrespective of any benefit identified with them.

The question - the most compelling reason to do mitzvot - is a most penetrating and provocative one, for it strikes precisely at the core of Judaism - often defined as the *science of mitzvot*. At the same time, Judaism is a philosophy concerned with addressing the monumental question of man's existence - what is the purpose of man's being. It is in appreciation of the profound role that purpose plays in man's existence, that the utter necessity of the mitzvot will become affirmed.

Purpose

The search for meaning and purpose is so essential to our very existence that a whole field of Psychotherapy - Logotherapy - is based on this very premise. Dr. Victor Frankl, discoverer and developer of Logotherapy, explains his theory as follows:

Logos is a Greek word which denotes "meaning". Logotherapy, . . . focuses on the meaning of human existence as well as on man's search for such a meaning. According to logotherapy, this striving to find a meaning in one's life is the primary motivational force in man.¹

His detractors argue that embarking on such a search deters the individual from real issues; and that such a reliance on meaning is merely a sophistic way to cope with a situation. They contend that meaning provides no resolution, and is rather just a "defense mechanism" that serves to mitigate present dilemmas and sublimate real concerns.² If however, the *will to meaning* was really just a "defense mechanism", and did not in fact address the root of man's condition, then upon encountering hardship or intense suffering (forcing one to choose life or death) the individual would succumb. The delusive "defense mechanism" of meaning would thus be exposed as a psychologically insubstantive means to cope with life's trials.

Meaning is no placebo; on the contrary, for the sake of his ideals and values, man is able to live and even die.³ After a lifetime of encountering people who emerged from the most trying of circumstances (Viet Nam, Aushwitz, Quadriplegia) with a healthy attitude toward life and the tragedies they suffered - Frankl discovers that all endured as a result of the individuals' maintenance of meaning in their lives.⁴ As a survivor of the concentration camps himself, he bears personal witness to the efficacy of this theory.⁵ Nietzsche encoded this notion as, "He who has a *why* to live can bear with almost any *how*." Suffering, of course, is not essential to derive meaning, but rather provides a litmus test to the necessity of meaning in one's life. As Gordon Allport, Professor of Psychology at Harvard University, emphasizes, "If there is a purpose in life at all, there must be a purpose in suffering and dying."⁶

Frankl enjoins that everyone must be challenged to fulfill a potential meaning.⁷ However, he also cautions that one should not confuse the *will to meaning* with the *will to power* or the *will to pleasure*; for these are but adverse attempts to fulfill the primary will. Furthermore, attempts at satisfying the will to power result in the pursuit of money, and aspiring to fulfill the will to pleasure results in the quest for

sexual gratification.⁸ The search for meaning, on the other hand, is not by any means a rationalization of instinctual drives.⁹ Rather "meaning" is a very real concern which provides a powerful impetus for man to live a positive healthy life.

Ultimate Purpose

Whatever the purpose, without positing the existence of God, one cannot hope to discover *ultimate* meaning or purpose. Although one may find meaning in one's life, unless one posits God, the meaning found is ultimately as limited as oneself. To use a crude, yet instructive example, assume an architect desires to build a house. The architect draws up the plans and defines the necessary tasks to accomplish his final goal - the completed house. Every worker, although only responsible for his specific portion, is nevertheless a vital contributor to the overall project. Thus, the individual's task and purpose are bound up in the *ultimate purpose* of the project. Conversely, a worker who does not endeavor to accomplish his assigned task, choosing instead to pursue his own heart's desire, is not fulfilling the ultimate goal.¹⁰ Though he may be said to have a purpose (albeit self defined), he cannot be said to be part of the ultimate purpose. Of course, if there is no architect, then there is no ultimate goal, and consequently all the would-be workers are free to define and pursue their own ventures.

Similarly, if the world has no Architect, then by definition, there can simply be no overall plan, no ultimate purpose. As modern commentator Dennis Prager explains:

If the physical world is all there is, i.e., if there is no metaphysical source to life, then life is ultimately purposeless. Life is then nothing more than the chance result of innumerable coincidences, and human beings are nothing more than self-aware molecules. We differ from all other molecular combinations only in that we want to believe that our particular combination has some ultimate meaning and purpose.¹¹

This principle - if there is no God, then life has no ultimate meaning - should come as no surprise, as it forms the basis of secular Existentialist thought. In consonance with Frankl's thesis of *will to meaning*, existentialists such as Albert Camus and Jean-Paul Sartre assert that as life is a mere physical coincidence, man must endow his life with some meaning, lest he perish in the pain of life.¹²

If we posit a Creator - an Architect if you will - with a design, a plan, a purpose, than all we must do is follow His design to be instantly at one with His transcendent purpose. In the words of King Solomon, "Many are the plans of man, but only the purpose of the Creator endures" (Proverbs 19:21).

Evidence

It may be clear that *meaning* is essential in one's life, and furthermore, that ultimate meaning necessitates a Creator - yet is there tangible evidence of a Creator? Is there supportive data with which to remove the hypothesis from the realm of wishful thinking to that of highly plausible? I offer, briefly,

two cases in support of a Creator: the first, on the presence of a Creator in space; the second, on the presence of a Creator in time.

Space

One of the most ardently argued positions put forth by those that deny a Creator is that of Science. It is often proposed that science provides more credible an explanation of the world, from its beginnings onward, than having to suppose a Creator. Yet science merely seeks to *describe* nature. This does not limit the possibility of a Creator - on the contrary, the information science reveals only furthers our amazement at the world's order.¹³ Of the scientific theories used to depose the notion of a Creator, none are more vigorously advanced than the Big Bang Theory and the Theory of Evolution. Yet, in fact, these theories do quite the opposite!

The long held popular depiction of the universe was one of eternal motionlessness, a universe that was, and would always remain static. Such a description, while not disallowing the possibility of a Creator, provided a simple explanation for the existence of the universe without a Creator. That is, since there was no perceivable beginning or end, there may quite plausibly, never have been a *creation*. Following the discovery and validation of the Big Bang characterization of the universe, the static model was soon abandoned.

The Big Bang theory came as the result of empirical data verifying the phenomenon of galaxies speeding away from the earth at hundreds of thousands of miles per hour.¹⁴ This discovery, that we are in the midst of an explosion resultant from some "big bang", thereby imposed two possible models of the universe. Either the universe is presently in an expansion, after which it will contract, after which it will expand, ... continually; or the universe is currently in an irreversible expansion that will eventually, like all explosions, burn out into absolute nothingness. In either case, a finite end can be projected, for there has never been any physical process found which goes on forever - at some point even an expanding/contracting model would have to end.¹⁵ Therefore, if the universe is expanding to extinction, or will in a future cycle expand to extinction - then just as there is an end, so there has to have been a beginning. The Big Bang Theory thus describes a universe which requires energy from nothing - an exigency neatly satisfied by a Creator.¹⁶ In 1988 Stephen Hawking, mathematician and theoretical physicist at Cambridge University, noted: "Many people do not like the idea that time has a beginning, probably because it smacks of divine intervention ..."¹⁷

Whereas the Big Bang theory seeks to explain the existence of the universe, the Theory of Evolution attempts to explain the existence of life within the universe. The Theory of Evolution proposes that from precise chemical reactions in a prebiotic organic soup, a basic life form was generated. This creature then began copious reproduction, occasionally producing a mutant form. This process of reproduction and mutation continued until the world contained the diverse array of living creatures in existence.¹⁸

The theory requires the realization of two fundamental operatives: 1) the primary conditions conducive to the genesis of life; 2) the evolution of species by deviant reproduction. Regarding evidence of a

initial conditions conducive to spontaneous generation,¹⁹ F. Hoyle and C. Wickramasinghe wrote, "In accepting the 'primordial soup theory' of the origin of life, scientists have replaced the religious mysteries which shrouded this question with equally mysterious scientific dogmas."²⁰ George Wald, physiologist and renowned evolutionist, emphasizes the sheer impotence of the theory, conceding that even if there was such a conducive environment, "One has only to contemplate the magnitude of this task to concede that the spontaneous generation of a living organism is impossible."²¹

As for species evolving one from another, fossil records are conspicuously lacking many of the transitional forms required to support the gradual mutation aspect of evolution. Commenting on these "missing links", microbiologist M. Denton writes, "it seems unlikely that we will see any return in the future to the old comfortable notion that the fossils will provide evidence of gradual evolutionary change."²² As for mutation performed in the laboratory, many experiments have been done in which a specific species was successfully mutated. Yet researchers found that there was always a very real limit to mutation, after which an organism could not be mutated without dying off.²³ Even more astounding was the fact that after several generations of normal breeding, the mutant forms returned back to the original form!²⁴ August Wiesmann, founder of modern genetics, admitted:

Though we may never be able to determine (by means of observation or lab experiment) the process by which a new species was 'generated' by means of natural selection in the struggle for survival, we are nevertheless obligated to accept the principle of natural selection because it offers the only explanation of a diversified natural living world, without having to assume that it was created by a force that desired and created it intentionally.²⁵

Though much scientific data is lacking in support of the theory of evolution, it is possible that such data will surface lending credence to the theory. However, even barring all objections to the theory and allowing the thesis of random generation and evolution to stand as true, the sheer enormity of the task imposes that unintentional creation borders on the absurd - let alone unlikely. The probability of a *single bacterium* randomly evolving from some "organic soup" is so small that Nobel Scientist F. Hoyle declared it more likely that "a tornado sweeping through a junkyard might assemble a Boeing 747 from materials therein."²⁶ All this for one bacterium! The probability of a human being evolving randomly has been likened to the "odds of a gambler, using ordinary dice, rolling 100 trillion consecutive double sixes."²⁷

There is simply no way to account for the rational order of nature without referring to a Supreme Intelligence.²⁸ In fact upon assessment of any great work, be it poetry, art, engineering - we immediately assume a poet, artist, engineer. It is unbelievable, incomprehensible, that such works are the result of random coincidence.²⁹ Why then do we permit ourselves the unfathomable notion that the world - from the cosmos to the quark - is all the incredible consequence of coincidental chaos?³⁰ Aldous Huxley, son of Sir Thomas Huxley, self proclaimed "Bulldog of Darwin", responds that acceptance of such a notion is indicative of someone who, for some ulterior motive necessitating a world that lacks meaning, denies a purposeful creation.³¹ In his article entitled *Confession of a*

Professed Atheist, Huxley writes, "the philosophy of meaninglessness was essentially an instrument of liberation . . . from certain political and economical systems and from a certain system of morality."³²

In debating the credibility of a Creator in the context of the physical, one can neither confirm nor deny that One exists. Furthermore, as God is not contained by the physical,³³ He may not be so readily apparent in the physical. One can, however, deduce that He is surely as plausible a candidate as impetus of the physical as "random coupling of gases and molecules" - if not more plausible.

Time

There is a "place" in which God is more readily revealed - history. As expressed by the philosopher Abraham Joshua Heschel, "God manifested Himself in events rather than in things."³⁴ So it is not surprising that precisely the examination of history itself reveals some of the most striking evidence of God's existence. More specifically, it is in the history of the Jews, the people distinguished as God's chosen, that the most dramatic testimony of the divine emerges. As disclosed by a Lutheran pastor, upon being asked to provide King Fredric the Great with visible proof of God's existence, he replied, "the Jews".³⁵ From time immemorial the Jews have been persecuted, yet - against all odds - the Jews survive and flourish. There is simply no theory of history, no criteria which applies to all the nations, that can explain the history of the Jews.³⁶ This fact has been duly noted throughout time by historian and social scientist alike. The mysterious nature of the Jew is aptly summarized by Mark Twain:

If the statistics are right, the Jews constitute but one percent of the human race. It suggests a nebulous dim puff of stardust lost in the blaze of the Milky Way. Properly the Jew ought hardly to be heard of; but he is heard of, has always been heard of. He is as prominent on the planet as any other people . . . His contributions to the world's list of great names in literature, science, art, music, finance, medicine, and abstruse learning are also away out of proportion to the weakness of his numbers. He has made a marvelous fight in this world, in all the ages; and he has done it with his hands tied behind him. . . The Egyptian, the Babylonian, and the Persian rose, filled the planet with sound and splendor, then faded to dreamstuff and passed away, the Greek and the Roman followed, and made a vast noise, and they are gone; other peoples have sprung up and held their torch for a time, but it burned out, and they sit in twilight now, or have vanished. The Jew saw them all, beat them all, and is now what he always was, exhibiting no decadence, no infirmities of age, no weakening of his parts, no slowing of his energies, no dulling of his alert and aggressive mind. All things are mortal but the Jew; all other forces pass, but he remains. What is the secret of his immortality?³⁷

The answer to the anomaly of Jewish survival lies clear in the words of the Creator Himself: "Thus, even when they are in their enemies' land, I will not grow so disgusted with them nor so tired of them that I would destroy them and break My covenant with them, since I am God their Lord. I will therefore remember the covenant with their original ancestors whom I brought out of Egypt in the sight of the nations, so as to be a God to them. I am God" (Leviticus 26:44,45). Our history is only explainable with such divine assurances. Our very existence bears witness to the authenticity of God

and His decrees, as He promised through His prophet Isaiah, "You are my witnesses, says the Lord, and I am God" (Isaiah 43:12).

Thus science and its theories pose no rational alternative to the existence of God. And as for the history of mankind, the destiny of the Jews presents a phenomenon discernible only in the context of a Creator.³⁸ To summarize in the words of Voltaire, opponent of organized religion, "In the opinion that there is a God, there are difficulties; but in the contrary opinion there are absurdities."

God's Purpose

Upon positing God - clearly a rational and viable supposition - we can imbue our lives with the ultimate purpose inherent to such a view. Such a supposition, though, demands an answer to the age old question: what exactly *is* God's purpose? The answer to this epic question is elucidated by the eighteenth century philosopher R. Moshe Hayim Luzzatto in his classic work *The Way of God*:

God's purpose in creation was to bestow of His good to another. . . . God alone, however, is the only true good, and therefore His beneficent desire would not be satisfied unless it could bestow that very good, namely the true perfect good that exists in His intrinsic essence. . . . [As] true good exists only in God, His wisdom decreed that the nature of this true benefaction be His giving created things the opportunity to attach themselves to Him to the greatest degree possible for them.³⁹

To amplify on this idea, God is intrinsically perfect, and hence has no need for anything - including Creation. Accordingly, creation itself is inherently the result of an altruistic act of love, designed solely for the purpose of giving to another being.⁴⁰ As such, God Himself is the very definition of good. Thus to attain ultimate goodness one must *attach* to the ultimate source of goodness - namely God.⁴¹ Some have gone so far in emphasizing this point, as to restate the purpose of creation to be *to cleave to God*.⁴² But if man is composed of a soul which is said to be a spark of the divine, what exactly is *attachment*, or more fundamentally - what is distance in terms of the metaphysical? Clearly, distance in the spiritual is not measured in inches, but rather it is likeness of form that functions as the yard-stick in this dimension. That is to say, the more one is *like* God the *closer* one is to Him, and similarly the converse is true.⁴³ The sages of the Talmud expound this principle, asking, "How is it possible to become attached to the Almighty?" They answer, ". . . only by becoming attached to His characteristics."⁴⁴

The essential difference between man and God can be summarized in one term - *will to receive*. The Creator is an infinite giver, possessing only the will to give. Expression of this will took the form of creation's initial thought - to give to a being. Consequently it was His desire to give that caused the creation ex nihilo of the *will to receive*.⁴⁵ For without a will to receive, no being will enjoy any gifts bestowed it.⁴⁶ Furthermore, no being can truly enjoy receiving without earning, for the pleasure of satisfaction comes only with effort.⁴⁷ As R. Luzzatto explains, "God's wisdom decreed that for good

to be perfect, the one enjoying it must be its master. He must be one who has earned it for himself, and not one associated with it accidentally."⁴⁸

Thus in order to fulfill the purpose of creation - receiving from the Source of Goodness - we must work to emulate God. In other words, we must struggle to transform our instinctual *will to receive*, into the divine *will to give*.⁴⁹ By translating our inherent will to receive into the will to give, we actually attach (by virtue of resemblance) to the Creator, thereby achieving His goodness.⁵⁰ Furthermore, it is by the very nature of engaging in this struggle, that one derives the sense of accomplishment essential for complete fulfillment.

Torah and Mitzvot

Of necessity is the need for a means to achieve this lofty goal. For this, one need look no further than the very book in which the Creator proclaimed His purpose - the Torah. For it is the Torah which, having served as the blueprint for creation,⁵¹ is to now serve as the manual for the fulfillment of that creation.⁵² Just as any intricate product (e.g. computer) demands a manual of operation, appropriately man and his universe have been furnished with the Torah.

Yet how is the Torah to bring us to the attainment of attaching to the Source of Goodness? The answer lies in the verse declared by R. Akiva to be the fundamental principle of the Torah, "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Leviticus 19:18).⁵³ It is this verse that reveals the Torah as "road map" to the realization of the goal of creation. For it is in the endeavor to fulfill this verse that one begins to transform the will to receive into the will to give, thereby cleaving to his Creator through emulation. Thus, the single commandment, "Love thy neighbor as thyself" is merely the imperative form of the purpose of creation.

Deeper reflection on this golden rule reveals that it is in fact a very difficult task, requiring monumental effort toward transforming man's very nature.⁵⁴ Such *transformation* can only be effected through concerted constructive *action*, wherein one performs good deeds and eschews bad ones.⁵⁵ This idea is echoed in the thirteenth century Jewish philosophy text, *Sefer HaHinukh*:

Man is influenced by his actions and his intellectual and emotional life is conditioned by things he does, good or bad. . . . it is actions that shape character. . . Do not be lulled into a false sense of security saying, "seeing that my heart is perfect and unimpaired in its belief in God what harm is there if I occasionally indulge in worldly [forbidden] pleasures, in idling in the streets and marketplaces, engaging in vain and boastful talk with the scorners. Why should they influence me?" Nay my son, beware of them, lest you be caught in their net.⁵⁶

The *Sefer HaHinukh* is emphasizing that not only are actions the only viable method of affecting character, but that even if one believes he has a good heart and further, believes in God (i.e., here implying a belief in a higher authority demanding good) - it is only through action that one can hope to

affect, maintain, and improve moral integrity. Hence the Torah, with its detailed system of *actions* (mitzvot), was given as a *means* to realize the goal of perfecting man that he may attach to his Creator.⁵⁷

This system can be seen to operate on two levels.⁵⁸ The first level is one whereby the commandments serve to proscribe man's egocentric tendencies.* The second level, wherein man more directly forges a connection with God, can be divided into two distinct categories. One class addresses those commandments which oblige man to turn his efforts outward, developing concern for his fellow and the world around him.** The other class comprises those commandments which direct man's ambitions upwards, evoking communion with the Holy One.

On the primary level, by practicing the mitzvot we acquire the necessary self-discipline to curb our natural disposition toward satisfying the self. This is achieved by regulating every aspect of daily life such that one makes a conscious effort to constrain impetuous fulfillment of one's desires.⁵⁹ The system of mitzvot does not however, limit man in the sense of caging him, but on the contrary serves to provide essential control. This "control system" is analogous to that of almost any system in the world (be it physical, biological, economic, etc.). Consider for example the common motorized lawn mower, without some control *restricting* the motor's inherent propensity to go forward, it would run through walls - *out of control*. Needless to add, the human being is no simple motor. In fact, Engineering Professor Bernard Kuo, in the introduction to his Automatic Control Systems textbook describes the human being, "as perhaps the most sophisticated and the most complex control system in existence."

On the physical plane, the control is provided by man's elaborate physiology, but what on the more enigmatic intellectual, emotional, spiritual plane? One might be tempted to answer, "Man's conscience, his good nature, etc.." In response, witness the History of Mankind. From his inception, man has maintained an incredibly abhorrent record of running *out of control*. Beginning with the first man born, Cain, who killed his brother in cold blood, and continuing uninterrupted to our century, in which the specter of the Holocaust looms as the most frightening testimony of man left to his own conscience, there is little evidence to support the wishful thinking of the secular humanist.

Rather the Torah, with its intricate system of mitzvot, provides a means for control on this more ephemeral plane of man's being. Appropriately, the Talmud describes the Torah as corrective to man's selfish, base inclination.⁶⁰ To this end, the Torah prescribes no less than 613 mitzvot⁶¹ encompassing every facet of man's existence - from "when thou riseth up to when thou liest down." The mitzvot delimit all conduct, from the mundane: diet, clothing, hygiene, etc.; to the sublime: love, honor,

* The use of the term *proscribe* here does not refer solely to the "don't do" commandments, for there is also proscription imposed by the "do" commandments. (e.g. "do dwell in a sukkah"(Leviticus 23:42) precludes one from dwelling any where else).

** The use of the term *outward efforts* here does not refer only to the "do" commandments, for there are many "don't do" commandments which serve to direct man's external interactions. (e.g. "Don't harvest the corners of your field"(Leviticus 19:9) compels man to have concern for those less privileged than himself).

rejoicing, mourning, etc.. Thus on a fundamental level, the mitzvot require of us, at the behest of Another, to refrain from indulging our every whim.* We thereby purify ourselves of selfishness, an essential prerequisite on the path to *giving* selflessly.

Referring back to the control system analogy, a control system is characterized by three fundamental components: objective, control mechanism, and result.⁶² Noteworthy is the fact that defining a propitious objective is equally as important as providing the proper control to attain the desired results.

In other words, control in and of itself does not achieve desirable results, (just as worthy objectives remain just that, without a system to realize them). Accordingly, the mitzvot must not capriciously proscribe our actions, but rather must focus them on achieving the desired result of the fulfillment of Creation - cleaving to the Creator.⁶³ As previously mentioned, the mitzvot accomplish this in two distinct ways - governing man's relation with man (and his environment), and directing man's relation with God.

The class of laws dealing with man's relation with man can be generally described as ethical laws. On this level, the mitzvot demand of us to develop concern, through action, for others.** We are commanded to be charitable, establish judiciary, maintain ethical business practice, visit the sick, etc.. Through these observances we directly imitate God's quality of giving, thereby transforming our will to satisfy the self. Even the commandments which do not on the surface seem to conform to this premise, actually do fulfill the objective. For example, the mitzvah of 'sending the mother bird', in which we are directed, should we come upon a nest from which we need the eggs, to first send away the mother bird. The Ramban, thirteenth century biblical exegete, explicates this precept to be purely educational, established to inculcate compassion in man.⁶⁴

Complementary to the ethical laws, are the class of laws dealing with man's relation with God - traditionally identified as laws of holiness. This class of directives bids man to aspire to the divine as it is written, "Ye shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy" (Leviticus 19:2). The Ramban comments that only through making ourselves holy will we be worthy to cleave to God.⁶⁵ To be *holy* denotes a status of being distinct.⁶⁶ Accordingly, these precepts are to transform man's base will inspiring him to elevate and distinguish himself above the natural. For example, through adhering to the injunctions which govern eating and sexual activity, man elevates the mundane by distinguishing and ennobling his actions from that of the animal.⁶⁷ By practicing the religious rites and ceremonies,

* This controlled indulgence should in no way be construed as harsh self-affliction or puritanical self-denial. On the contrary, one can be enjoying oneself while at the same time denying oneself. In fact, one could argue that it is necessary to deny oneself of certain things in order to fully enjoy others. One clear example of this is the necessity to refrain from incestuous relations in order to enjoy healthy familial relations.

** This concern must be clearly defined, for the Torah is not of the opinion that unbounded compassion is good. One example that clearly illustrates this concept is the Torah injunction prohibiting court-room favoritism towards the poor (Exodus 23:3). If compassion was the overriding concern, "courts would always have to rule in favor of the poor - and then we would have to close our court system, putting in its place a compassion-assessor" (Dennis Prager, "The Case for Ethical Monotheism," *Ultimate Issues*, Vol.7, Num.3, p.17).

man cultivates his love and awe of God through constant reminders of His Presence.⁶⁸ One thereby draws close to the Creator through focus of these powerful emotions of love and awe.⁶⁹

As with the ethical laws, the laws of holiness also operate on transforming man's will to receive for oneself. By doing God's will, one is promoting the completion of that will - the bestowal of good to another. In so doing, one is indirectly giving to all beings. Furthermore, by doing God's will for the sake of fulfilling His desire (as opposed to fulfilling one's own desire), one reinforces the characteristic of giving just as surely as when one gives to his fellow.⁷⁰ And finally, through display of gratitude (i.e., prayer) for what one does receive, one is, so to speak, giving. Though one must receive, by expressing gratitude, the taking aspect is mitigated in deference to giving.⁷¹

However, beyond their mutual inducement to transform man's will toward giving, the two categories of laws are actually completely interdependent in their effort to perfect man. The nineteenth century commentator Samson Raphael Hirsch, explicates this idea in his commentary on the verse "Love Your Neighbor" (Leviticus 19:18). Hirsch notes that the verses surrounding this maxim contain both precepts concerning the relation between man and man and precepts concerning the relation between man and God. The striking juxtaposition of commandments deriving from both categories of laws profoundly intimates the interdependence of the realization of their objective - the perfection of man. In his own words:

. . .the text seems quite specifically to point to some underlying connection between these apparently so unconnected categories of laws. They must act mutually towards forming one another and be mutually complementary to each other. And in fact, such a connection does strike one immediately in two ways. The teachings of honesty, sincerity, truthfulness, faithfulness, conscientiousness, caution, justice, consideration of, and the care of the well-being of others in word and deed, suppressing all tendencies to hatred, together with the teachings of the highest godliness in man and complete forgetting of all wrong suffered, and finally the quintessence of making social life holy in the teaching of the most general and equalizing love of one's fellowman, all these demands for the ordering of our social life are ordered under the Divine seal "I am God", and thereby eliminating any selfish motive of practicing them as a wise measure for reciprocal benefits. They are registered as the sole consequence of a true consciousness of God. Realize God, and hence honor everything that exists and breathes as belonging to Him, as being His. Realize God, and hence the ability in ourselves to be, and our calling to be, holy, i.e. to be "Man", having complete freedom of Will in all moral and ethical matters, and striving to imitate God in truth, in justice, and in love.⁷²

Performance of the ethical laws draws one close to the Creator through emulation, thereby elevating us to a state of holiness - ready to receive His absolute goodness. Performance of the laws of holiness draws one close to the Creator through recognition of His Presence, His ways and His demands, thereby effecting ethical behavior - epitomized as love of one's fellowman.⁷³

Thus, all the mitzvot, whether between man and man or man and God, are necessary to facilitate the transformation of man's base will to receive into the divine will to give.⁷⁴ The archetype for this transformation, as stated by R. Akiva, is encapsulated in the command, "Love your neighbor as yourself."⁷⁵ In the inimitable words of Abraham Joshua Heschel:

The Law, stiff with formality, is a cry for creativity; a call for nobility concealed in the form of the commandments. It is not designed to be a yoke, a curb, a straight-jacket for human action. Above all the Torah asks for love: Thou shalt love thy God: Thou shalt love thy neighbor. All observance is a training in the art of love.

Only by engaging in the mitzvot does one begin to break his own selfish predilection, until reaching the point where all his actions are done to benefit others; ultimately, even ones own necessities are performed in order to enable giving.⁷⁶ Only upon fulfilling the mitzvot can one hope to attain the second nature of loving another, and thereby immediately merit cleaving to his Creator.⁷⁷ To refine God's creatures to merit cleaving to Him, this in fact is the ultimate intention of the mitzvot.⁷⁸ And as expounded in the Talmud, "The Holy One, blessed be He, desired to give Israel the opportunity of gaining merit, He thus gave them many mitzvot."⁷⁹ Indeed, the very word *mitzvah* comes from the root word meaning "to bind".⁸⁰ Thus it is through the mitzvot that we are bound to God, His purpose, and His Goodness. The fulfillment of one's purpose - and that of Creation - lies in the assertion of one's unique ability to perform the mitzvot.

Notes

1. Victor E. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, p.121.
2. *ibid.*, p.121.
3. *ibid.*, p.121.
4. *ibid.*, pp.171-2.
5. *ibid.*, p.126.
6. Gordon W. Allport, preface to *Man's Search for Meaning*, p.11.
7. Victor E. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, p.127.
8. *ibid.*, p.129.
9. *ibid.*, p.121.
10. This is Judaism's paradigm of the perfect being, the tzadik, and the impious being, the rasha. "The tzadik ... is the one who responds to the real objective requirements without considering himself. The rasha ... is one who acts entirely according to his own sweet will" (R. Samson Raphael Hirsch, *Commentary on the Pentateuch: Exodus*, p.104).
11. Dennis Prager, *The Nine Questions People Ask About Judaism*, p.25
12. *ibid.*, p.25
13. Steven Hawking, *A Brief History of Time*, p.122, in Kelemen, *Permission to Believe*, p.64. Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Wisdom of Heschel*, p.143.
14. Lawrence Kelemen, *Permission to Believe*, pp.32-33,38.
15. Stanley L. Jaki, "From Scientific Cosmology to a Created Universe," in *Intellectuals Speak Out About God*, R. A. Varghese, p.76, in L. Kelemen, *Permission to Believe*, p.41.
16. Lawrence Kelemen, *Permission to Believe*, p.36.
17. Stephen Hawking, *A Brief History of Time*, p.46, in L. Kelemen, *Permission to Believe*, p.40.
18. Lawrence Kelemen, *Permission to Believe*, p.52.
19. Scientists have concluded that there is no evidence that such a "soup" ever existed, or of any biotically formed organic compounds. Results are published in:
Denton, *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis*, p. 336;
Brooks and Shaw, "Critical Assessment of the Origin of Life", Oparin, ed., *Origin of Life*, p. 604;
both in L. Kelemen, *Permission to Believe*, p. 53.

20. Hoyle and Wickramasinghe, *LifeCloud*, p.26, in L. Kelemen, *Permission to Believe*, p.53.
21. G. Wald, "The Origin of Life", *Scientific American*, Vol.191, No.4, pp.46,48.
22. M. Denton, *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis*, p. 194.
23. This phenomenon of "gene mutability limit" was identified by Harvard University geneticist Ernst Mayr and verified on the *Drosophila melanogaster* fruit fly. The fly normally has 36 bristles, Mayr was able to breed mutants with as few as 25 bristles and as many as 56 bristles; after this limit was reached the strains died out. (L. Kelemen, *Permission to Believe*, p.57).
24. In 1982, Francis Hitching discovered upon creating eyeless flies and then interbreeding them, that after a few generations, contrary to expectations, the new flies hatched with eyes! F. Hitching, *The Neck of the Giraffe: Where Darwin Went Wrong*, p. 57, in L. Kelemen, *Permission to Believe*, p.57.
25. August Wiesmann, *The Omnipotence of Natural Selection*, in Abraham Korman, *Evolution and Judaism*, p.99.
26. Robert Shapiro, *Origins*, p.127, in *Permission to Believe*, p. 60.
27. Lawrence Kelemen, *Permission to Believe*, p.61.
28. Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Wisdom of Heschel*, p.146.
29. R. Aryeh Kaplan, *The Infinite Light*, p.11.
30. Dennis Prager, *The Nine Questions People Ask About Judaism*, p.28 .
31. Aldous Huxley, *Ends and Means*, p.270.
32. A. Huxley, "Confession of a Professed Atheist", *Report*, June, 1966.
33. The incorporeality of God is one of the thirteen Principles of Faith delineated by the Rambam. Maimonides, *The Commandments: Volume One*, p. 273.
34. A. J. Heschel, *The Wisdom of Heschel*, p.240.
35. R. Aryeh Kaplan, *The Infinite Light*, p.12.
36. Nicholas Berdyaev, *The Meaning of History*, pp.86-7. R. Aryeh Kaplan, *The Infinite Light*, p.13. Dennis Prager, *The Nine Questions People Ask About Judaism*, p.28.
37. Mark Twain, *The Complete Works of Mark Twain*, p.286.
38. "The Jews have played an all important role in history. They are pre-eminently an historical people and their destiny reflects the indestructibility of the divine decrees." (Nicholas Berdyaev, *The Meaning of History*, pp.86-7).

39. R. Moshe Hayim Luzzatto, *The Way of God*, 1:2:1.
40. R. Aryeh Kaplan, *Free Will and the Purpose of Creation*, p.1. R. A. Kaplan, *If You Were God*, p.41. R. Yehuda Ashlag, *A Gift of the Bible*, p.64.
41. R. Moshe Hayim Luzzatto, *The Way of God*, 1:2:1.
42. R. Moshe Hayim Luzzatto, *The Way of God*, 1:4:6. R. Aryeh Kaplan, *If You Were God*, p.57. R. Yehuda Ashlag, *A Gift of the Bible*, pp.34,37.
43. R. Aryeh Kaplan commenting on *Bahir* p.88. R. Aryeh Kaplan, *If You Were God*, p.71. R. Yehuda Ashlag, *Entrance to the Zohar*, Chapter 3. R. Yehuda Ashlag, *A Gift of the Bible*, pp. 127,128,138.
44. Talmud *Sotah* 14a.
45. R. Yehuda Ashlag, *Entrance to the Zohar*, p.18. R. Yehuda Ashlag, *A Gift of the Bible*, pp.122,3.
46. R. Aryeh Kaplan, *If You Were God*, p.53. R. Yehuda Ashlag, *Entrance to the Zohar*, p.17.
47. R. Aryeh Kaplan, *Free Will and the Purpose of Creation*, p.2. R. A. Kaplan, *If You Were God*, p.53.
48. R. Moshe Hayim Luzzatto, *The Way of God*, 1:2:2.
49. R. Aryeh Kaplan, *If You Were God*, p.64.
50. R. Aryeh Kaplan, *If You Were God*, p.59.
51. Beraishit Rabba (1:1).
52. R. A. Kaplan, *If You Were God*, p.44.
53. "This is an important principle." Beraishit Rabba (24:7). R. Aryeh Kaplan, *If You Were God*, pp.63,64. ". . . when he says the commandment 'love thy neighbor as thyself' is an important principle in the Torah, we must understand that the other 612 mitzvot in the Torah . . . are no more or less than the sum of the specifics contained and conditioned in this one commandment, 'Love thy Neighbor as thyself.'" (R. Yehuda Ashlag, *Gift of the Bible*, p.30).
54. R. Moshe Hayim Luzzatto, *The Way of God*, 1:4:3. R. Samson Raphael Hirsch, *Commentary on the Pentateuch: Leviticus*, p.530.
55. R. Moshe Hayim Luzzatto, *The Way of God*, 1:4:4,5. Maimonides (Rambam), *Commentary to the Mishnah Avot*, in N. Leibowitz, *Studies in Shemot*, p.180.
56. *Sefer HaHinukh*, (Precept 16), in N. Leibowitz, *Studies in Shemot*, p.179.
57. R. Moshe Hayim Luzzatto, *The Path of the Just*, p.25. R. Moshe Hayim Luzzatto, *The Way of God*, 1:4:11. Judah Halevi, *The Kuzari*, 1:98,3:23,3:53.

58. The Rambam in his *Guide for the Perplexed* (3:33) expresses as the "ultimate causes of the Law": 1) the rejection and reduction of the fulfillment of desires, 2) the promotion of virtuous interaction between men, 3) the sanctification of its followers. He goes on to relate (3:35) that the precepts can be divided into two classes: those concerned with the relation between man and man, and those concerned with the relation between man and God; leaving the proscription of desires as a class operating over both of these. Hence two conceptual levels: 1) proscription 2) man and man, man and God.
59. Moses Maimonides, *The Guide for the Perplexed*, 3:33.
60. Talmud *Kiddushin* 30b.
61. Talmud *Shabbat* 87a.
62. Bernard Kuo, *Automatic Control Systems*, p.2.
63. R. Moshe Hayim Luzzatto, *The Path of the Just*, p.27.
64. Ramban, *Commentary to the Torah: Devarim*, quoted in N. Leibowitz, *Studies in Devarim*, p.220.
65. Nachmanidies, *Commentary on the Torah* quoted in the Soncino Chumash, p.723.
66. Samson Raphael Hirsch, *Commentary on the Pentateuch: Leviticus*, p.498 quoting H"ZL on T"C. R. Adin Steinsaltz, *The Thirteen Petal Rose*, p.69.
67. These examples (laws of kashrut, laws of sexual relations) are particularly pertinent, for in every instance the Torah refers to them, the term *holy* is also mentioned.
68. Moses Maimonides, *The Guide for the Perplexed*, 3:35,3:44.
69. R. Moshe Hayim Luzzatto, *The Way of God*, 1:4:8.
70. R. Yehuda Ashlag, *A Gift of the Bible*, pp.41,52.
71. R. Eliyahu Dessler, *Strive for Truth*, pp.147,150,154-5.
72. Samson Raphael Hirsch, *Commentary to the Pentateuch: Leviticus*, p.529.
73. Samson Raphael Hirsch, *Commentary to the Pentateuch: Leviticus*, p.505,510-11,513.
74. R. Aryeh Kaplan, *If You Were God*, p.62. R. Yehuda Ashlag, *A Gift of the Bible*, p.39.
75. R. Aryeh Kaplan, *If You Were God*, p.62.
76. R. Eliyahu Dessler, *Strive for Truth*, p.123. R. Yehuda Ashlag, *A Gift of the Bible*, p.39.
77. Samson Raphael Hirsch, *Commentary to the Pentateuch: Leviticus*, p.530. R. Yehuda Ashlag, *A Gift of the Bible*, p.42.

78. Beraishit Rabba 44:1.
79. Talmud *Makkot* 23b.
80. R. Aryeh Kaplan, *Love and the Commandments*, p.4.

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