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Duties of the Heart

(Sefer Hovot HaLevavot)

**A Jewish Classic that outlines one's
personal intellectual, and moral obligations.**

A Five-Hour Audio Course

The Three Sciences that Reveal the Will of God.

Lesson 1 – Introduction. This class introduces us to a classic of Torah literature. Yet, however Jewish this text is, we confirm how the author, Rabbeynu Bahya Ibn Pquda, was inspired by, and borrowed often from a then popular Islamic Sufi text. This respect for, and borrowing from sources outside the normal chain of Torah tradition serves us as a role model and example to always respect truth, wherever that truth is to be found.

The importance of the study of the natural sciences, math and music are to understanding the world around us, and by consequence enabling us to better understand God, through that which He has made.

Recognizing God in nature, and in all things. Maturing our understanding about God from being a personification, and into a recognition of universal Being and Mind. The purpose of meditation, as opposed to its forms.

What are the Duties of the Heart

Lesson 2 – Introduction. What are the duties of the heart, and are they obligations or recommendations.

We discuss natural law, inalienable human rights that are incumbent upon all humanity, without need of a law code to dictate them to us.

Only then comes religious laws observed by members of a religion. Duties of the heart must be fulfilled for proper observance of the duties of the limbs.

What must we believe, what must we know, what's the difference between the two.

Discussion of Jewish Law with relationship to the obligation to perform religious rituals with sincere devotion, does the lack of sincerity disqualify one's observance?

This lesson addresses many issues, and defines many concepts that reveal to us the true nature of the spiritual path and how we all must walk it.

Who Says We Have “Duties” of the Heart

Lesson 3- Are we really obligated to perform matters related to the heart?

How can they be obligations when there is no action associated with them?

An in-depth discussion of what exactly is meant when we refer to the heart.

A digression into understanding the heart from Maimonides, and his discussions about the secrets of the Torah, as well as understanding the Sefirot of Hokhma and Binah from the Sefer Yetzirah, the Zohar and practical psychology.

Do we have an obligation to intellectually explore and prove the unity of God, or is it enough to just proclaim, without having to think about it?

Do we stand on principles, or do we yield to practicality? Discussion of the Rabbi

Eliezer/Rabbi Joshua debate with Heaven, and the principles we learn from it to apply daily.

The Obligation to Think and thus to Know

Lesson 4 – Is faith in God enough? Is faith in our sacred beliefs all that is asked of us?

According to our author, we are required to investigate sacred beliefs in order to verify, as best as possible, their authenticity.

Blind faith is not the proper path. All matters received in religion should be subject to analysis and intellectual review. This mental exercise is for the purpose to confirm faith, not deny it. Yet, one must be open to the discovery of truth, and be willing to reinterpret sacred beliefs, if it can be proven that our way of understanding a thing in the past is incorrect or insufficient. This was the methodology of the Talmudic Sages, and explains why learning Talmud is such a great exercise in the development of logic and strong thinking skills.

Knowing & Living Proper Halakha

Lesson 5 – Just as we are required to know God, so too are we required to properly know God's Way for us. This takes us into a discussion about what is the nature of Halakha.

Halakha is traditionally thought of a Jewish Law, the application of the commandments of the Torah and the Sages. However, Halakha means “the way” and therefore, has applications to everyone, everywhere, each in accordance to one's individual needs, and lifestyle.

What is Halakha, be it in a Jewish context or otherwise? Halakha is humanly defined.

Example of the story of R Eliezer and R Joshua, and the moral that the Torah is not in Heaven, that Law is defined based upon foundational principles and proper applications of those principles. Examples of modern applications of how was it decided that electricity should be defined as fire, and thus forbidden on the Sabbath, and whether or not a married woman is required to cover her hair under all circumstances.

Halakha is not decided from a book or by proclamation but rather by a careful consideration of all essentials. This is called Ikar HaDin. This class discusses this concept, and concludes with a discussion of the requirement of sincerity in religious practice.

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Course Details

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