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ON THE COMMANDMENT TO BELIEVE IN GOD

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It is generally assumed that there is a positive commandment to believe in God. The source of this assumption is the Ten Commandments which begins with the declaration that “I, the Lord, am your God who brought you out of Egypt.”¹ This assumption was strengthened by the pervasive influence of Rambam who began his great work the *Mishneh Torah* by stating that “the foundation of foundations and the column of the sciences is to know that there is a First Existent, and He is the bringer into existence of every existing thing. . . . And knowledge of this is a positive commandment. . . . And anyone who entertains in his mind that there is another deity besides this, transgresses a negative commandment”² Despite Rambam’s influence, dissenting voices have always existed within the Jewish philosophical tradition which challenge the idea that beliefs, including belief in God, can be governed by the Law and its commandments. These minority opinions do not dispute that philosophy, which is the science of true beliefs, is essential to Judaism; what they do dispute is the ability of God’s Law to *command* a set of beliefs or dogmas. This disagreement is of the greatest importance to Jews who feel obligated to live their lives according to the Law and who allow the commandments to regulate their everyday behavior: What type of life does the *halakhah* envision? What type of being is Man and how does following the *halakhah* lead to his perfection? By separating philosophy from the Law, these voices challenge Rambam’s identification of the perfection of beliefs as the *telos*, or goal, of the Law and ultimate perfection of Man.

The division of beliefs and commandments predates Rambam by several hundred years. The *Halakhot Gedolot*,³ the first work dedicated to enumerating the

¹ Exodus 20:2. Translations from Biblical texts are taken from *Tanakh: A New Translation of the Holy Scriptures According to the Traditional Hebrew Text* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1985) except when the verses appear in a larger translated citation.

² *Mishneh Torah*, “Yesodei ha-Torah” 1:1, 5-6 quoted in Warren Zev Harvey, *Hasdai Crescas’ Critique of the Theory of the Acquired Intellect*, doctoral diss., Columbia University, 1973 (University Microfilms, no.74-1288) (henceforth, Harvey 1973), p. 219.

³ The authorship of *Halakhot Gedolot* is a matter of dispute. It has been ascribed to Sherira Gaon or Hai Gaon by the scholars of Spain and Provence and to R. Simeon Kayyara or Yehudai Gaon by the scholars of Northern France and Germany. See Yehoshua Horowitz, “Halakhot Gedolot,” in *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol. 7 (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House Ltd., 1971) 1167-1170.

six hundred and thirteen Biblical commandments omits belief in God as a commandment.⁴ It is unclear why the *Halakhot Gedolot* omits this commandment. Ramban in his gloss to the first positive commandment in Rambam's *Sefer ha-Mitzvot*—in which Rambam counts the belief in the existence of as a positive commandment—gives the following rationale why the author of the *Halakhot Gedolot* did not include belief in God as a commandment:

The Rabbis of Blessed Memory interpreted [this commandment] as acceptance of His kingdom, may He be exalted, and this is belief in His Divinity. They said in the *Mekhilta* “why was ‘you shall have no other gods besides me’⁵ spoken since God already said “I am Lord your God?”⁶ An analogy to a king that went to rule in a new country. The king's official's said to him “legislate laws for the population.” The king responded “before I legislate laws for the population, the population must first accept my sovereignty. For if they do accept my sovereignty then how can they fulfill my laws?” Likewise the Omnipresent said to Israel “I am the Lord your God. You shall have no other gods besides me I am He whose Kingship you accepted while in Egypt.” They said “yes.” “Just as you accepted my Kingship then, accept My laws now—do not have. . . .”⁷

After all this, I saw that the *Ba'al Halakhot* did not count this commandment within the 613 [commandments]. . . . And it appears from the opinion of the *Ba'al Halakhot* that the only laws he counted as a commandment within the 613 are those laws which He, may He be exalted, commanded concerning doing an action or refraining from doing an action. Belief in His Existence, may He be exalted, which He informed us through His signs and miracles and the revelation of His Presence in front of our eyes is the essence and root from which the *mitzvot* are born and are therefore not counted. And this is the saying of the sages [quoted above]: they [the king's officials] said to him [the king] “legislate for them laws” he responded, “first they must accept my sovereignty and then I will legislate for them.” He made the acceptance of sovereignty a topic unto itself and the *mitzvot* and the Laws a topic unto itself.⁸

Both opinions in this passage agree that the Law by itself cannot establish itself as authoritative since for the Law to be authoritative, it requires a prior event or

⁴ The source for this genre is *Makkot* 23b-24a.

⁵ Exodus 20:3.

⁶ *ibid.* 20:2.

⁷ *ibid.* 20:3.

⁸ *Hassagot ha-Ramban al ha-Ramban* “First Positive Commandment.” My own translation.

principle to function as its justification. According to the opinion of the *Mekhilta*, the justification for the Law was the acceptance of God's sovereignty in Egypt. Having established God's right to legislate for the Jewish people, the Ten Commandments can begin with commandments of belief. Ramban's interpretation of the *Halakhot Gedolot* disagrees with the *Mekhilta*. According to this interpretation, all the miracles and signs which God displayed during the exodus were necessary for the Jews to believe in God. This belief in God, and its negative corollary not believing in other gods, can then serve as the justification for the Law. As a justification for the Law, they are not governed by the Law; the Law does not command them and they are therefore not commandments. Instead of commandment, their declaration by God at Sinai is a prolegomena for the Law. While this interpretation of the *Halakhot Gedolot* argues that the commandments are constituted only by actions and not beliefs, it is not clear why beliefs which are not principles of the Law cannot be commanded nor does it develop the implications of this argument. It will remain for the philosophy of the late fourteenth century thinker R. Hasdai Crescas⁹ to develop the *Halakhot Gedolot's* thought into an innovative theory of the function of beliefs and why they cannot be commanded.¹⁰

⁹ R. Hasdai Crescas (1340-1411) a philosopher and Talmudist was also the Chief Rabbi of Aragon and advisor to King John I and Queen Violante. He did much to rebuild the Jewish communities of Spain after the massacres and mass conversions of 1391 in which thousands were killed, including his own son, and over two hundred thousand Jews were forcibly converted. Four works of his are presently extant *The Epistle to the Jewish Communities of Avignon* detailing the massacres of 1391, a Passover sermon about free will and determinism, a Hebrew translation/paraphrase of *The Refutation of the Principles of Christianity* which was originally composed in Catalan, and his *magnum opus*, *The Candle of the Lord*, of which he only completed the introduction and the philosophical first section *The Light of the Lord* passing away before he completed the second section, *The Commandment Candle*, which was to have dealt with questions of Jewish Law. See Harvey, 1973, p. 13-20, Warren Zev Harvey, "The Philosopher and Politics: Gersonides and Crescas" in *Scholars and Scholarship: The Interaction between Judaism and other Cultures* ed. Leo Landman (New York: Yeshiva University Press, 1990), (henceforth, Harvey 1990) p. 55-59, and Menachem Kellner, *Dogma in Medieval Jewish Thought: From Maimonides to Abravanel* (Oxford: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2004) (henceforth, Kellner), p. 108.

¹⁰ See Kellner, p. 108-121. This is not to say that R. Crescas thought that beliefs and philosophy are not essential for Jewish practice. In *The Light of the Lord*, R. Crescas develops a four-tiered belief structure. The foundational level of beliefs are the *shorashim* (roots) of religion. They presuppose the Law and include the belief in God's existence, His unity, and His incorporeality. The second level of beliefs are the *pinnot* (cornerstones) of the *Torah* and are necessary for revelation. They include belief in God's knowledge of particulars, providence, God's power, choice, and the purposefulness of the *Torah*. The third level of beliefs are beliefs taught by the *Torah*, both implicitly and explicitly, and include belief in creation *ex nihilo*, immortality, reward and punishment, resurrection, eternity of the *Torah*, Mosaic prophecy, the revelatory ability of the *Urim*

R. Crescas begins his argument by substituting Ramban's analogical and textual reasoning with a logical analysis. R. Crescas asserts that "the root of the principles of the divine Law is the belief in the existence of God, may He be blessed."¹¹ Belief in the existence of God is a necessary condition for a divine Law since "the Law is composed and commanded by a composer and commander, and the signification of its being 'divine' is nothing other than that the composer and the commander is God, my He be Blessed."¹² A divine law is therefore *by definition* divine since its composer and commander is divine. It follows that to speak of a divine law, one would have to presuppose divinity; if God did not exist no law could be divine. Now this divine commander could not command belief in Himself since to do so "we would have to have posited a belief in the existence of God prior in knowledge to the belief in the existence of God!" However, if we were to posit a belief in the existence of God prior to the belief in the existence of God, we would require an additional commandment for this belief as well for "if we were to posit also that the prior belief in the existence of God is a commandment, it again would be necessitated that there be a prior belief in the existence of God, and so *ad infinitum*. And it would follow that the belief in the existence of God would be an infinite [number of] commandments! Now this is utterly absurd."¹³ The commandment to believe in God logically leads to an infinite regress. This leads R. Crescas to conclude that "he¹⁴ committed a notorious error when he counted as a positive commandment to believe in the existence of God, may He be blessed."¹⁵

ve-Tummim, the Messiah, that God answers prayers and the priestly blessings, the efficacy of repentance, and that the Day of Atonement and the other holiday arouse us to worship God. The fourth level involve beliefs regarding which the tradition is silent. They include the following questions:

- (1) Is the world eternal *a parte post*?
- (2) Can another world, or worlds, exist?
- (3) Are the spheres living and rational?
- (4) Do the movements of the heavenly bodies influence the fates of men? Do amulets and charms have effects on the activities of men?
- (5) concerning demons;
- (7) Can a human soul move? This is what one school of scholars calls transmigration.
- (8) Is the soul of an uneducated youth immortal?
- (9) concerning paradise and hell;
- (10) Does *Ma'aseh Bereishit* refer to physics and does *Ma'aseh ha-Merkavah* refer to metaphysics, as some of the scholars of our people have held?
- (11) Are the intellect, the intellectually cognizing subject, and intellectually cognized object identical or not?
- (12) concerning the Prime Mover;
- (13) concerning the impossibility of knowing God's essence. (R. Hasdai Crescas, *The Light of the Lord* (Vienna, 1859/60) p. 85a translated by Kellner, p. 116.)

¹¹ R. Hasdai Crescas, *The Light of the Lord*, Preface translated in Harvey 1973, p. 223.

¹² *ibid.*

¹³ *ibid.* p. 224.

¹⁴ Don Isaac Abravanel takes this as referring to Rambam. See Kellner, p. 264.

¹⁵ R. Hasdai Crescas, *The Light of the Lord*, Preface translated in Harvey 1973, p. 223.

R. Crescas summarizes this argument in simpler language by stating that “inasmuch as it is evident that this belief is the root and principle of the entirety of the commandments, if we count it among the commandments, it will follow that it is its own principle. This is utterly absurd.”¹⁶ The assertion that a principle is categorically different than what it serves as a justification for is Aristotelian in origin. According to Aristotle, the principle of a science cannot be something proved in that science and the principle of motion must be stationary.¹⁷ Likewise, the principle of the commandments cannot itself be commanded.

At this point R. Crescas has simply reiterated the Ramban’s interpretation of the *Halakhot Gedolot*, albeit in a slightly more sophisticated language. In order to move beyond the *Halakhot Gedolot*, R. Crescas must rethink what a commandment is and why beliefs cannot be commanded. According to R. Crescas “it will be seen from the signification and definition of the term ‘commandment’ that it does not pertain except to things which involve will and choice. Consequently, if beliefs and opinions do not involve will and choice, it will follow that the signification of the term ‘commandment’ will not pertain to them.”¹⁸ The concept “commandment,” according to R. Crescas, governs only beliefs or actions in which human will and choice play a role. If a belief or action is brought upon by a “feeling of compulsion or constraint,”¹⁹ then it does not “involve will and choice” and such an action or belief cannot be categorized as a commandment. R. Crescas did not believe that beliefs are open to “will and choice” for several reasons, one of which will concern us here.²⁰ Warren Zev Harvey has given the following definition of belief and the consequences of belief in R. Crescas’ epistemology. According to Harvey, a belief is

the affirmation that a thing is extramentally as it is the soul, [therefore a belief] must be ultimately determined by the extramental thing. Thus, he who believes something is *coerced* into believing it, and he has no escape from believing it; he does not have the choice to accept it or reject it, for the proofs, whether they be demonstrative or only probable, do not arise in his soul but extramentally. To put it another way: we cannot change our belief that $1+1=2$ by willing to believe that $1+1=3$.²¹

¹⁶ *ibid.* p. 224.

¹⁷ Harvey 1973, p. 225.

¹⁸ R. Hasdai Crescas, *The Light of the Lord*, Preface translated in Harvey 1973, p. 225.

¹⁹ R. Hasdai Crescas, *The Light of the Lord*, II, 5, 3. translated in Warren Zev Harvey, *Physics and Metaphysics in Hasdai Crescas* (Amsterdam Studies in Jewish Thought; Amsterdam, 1998) (henceforth Harvey 1998), p. 151.

²⁰ R. Crescas gives two other reasons: if beliefs were dependent on will then one could will oneself to believe in contradictory propositions thereby violating the law of non-contradiction and if beliefs were dependent on will, then the will would be the grounds for belief. However one could will oneself to believe in many things such as horses with wings. Therefore all beliefs would be somewhat suspect. See Harvey 1973, p. 225-226.

Beliefs, according to R. Crescas, are impressed upon the mind of the believer extra-mentally or from the outside. Once a proof is offered, the believer is compelled to believe it. For example, once someone learns the rules of mathematics, he cannot will himself to believe that $1+1=3$. Since beliefs are always accompanied by a “feeling of compulsion or constraint,” and are not subject to “will and choice” then, *categorically*, beliefs cannot be commanded. While R. Crescas thought that actions, like beliefs, were casually determined,²² actions differ from beliefs in that actions are performed “in such a way that the agent does not feel any restraint or compulsion, and this is the secret of choice and will.”²³ Since actions are performed voluntarily and are not accompanied by “compulsion or restraint” only actions, and not beliefs, can be commanded. And since God is just, only commandments, and not beliefs, merit reward and punishment.²⁴

²¹ Harvey 1973, p. 226.

²² According to R. Crescas all actions are casual in the sense that there are conscious and unconscious causes which determine our actions. Harvey writes that “everything has causes; and when these causes are present, their effects are necessary. But the causes also have causes, and those causes too have causes, and so on until the First Cause. Therefore all is causes, i.e., all is necessary.” (Harvey 1998, p. 140) According to R. Crescas, these causes can be decisive in a case in which “a man by virtue of his essence has the possibility of willing either of two alternatives equally, were it not for a *cause* that that necessitates his willing one of them.” (R. Hasdai Crescas, *The Light of the Lord*, II, 5, 3 translated in Harvey 1998, p. 151).

²³ R. Hasdai Crescas, *The Light of the Lord*, II, 5, 3 translated in Harvey 1998, p. 151

²⁴ “But as for acts performed under compulsion or restraint, that is, if an individual acts while compelled or restraint, and does not perform them voluntarily, then since he is not acting in accordance with the agreement of his appetitive and imaginative faculties [i.e. the will], it is not an action of his soul, and it is not proper that punishment accrue to it.” (R. Hasdai Crescas, *The Light of the Lord*, II, 5, 3 translated in Harvey 1998, p. 151) It follows from this thought that since one is only rewarded or punished for those actions or beliefs for which he is commanded, and beliefs are never commanded, it follows that one is never rewarded or punished for erroneous or deviant beliefs. R. Crescas modifies this thought by saying that although one is never punished for erroneous or deviant beliefs, he is rewarded for the joy he feels in holding proper beliefs and the anguish he feels for entertaining erroneous beliefs since joy and anguish are dispositions freely chosen by the will and can therefore be subject to reward and punishment. However this raises the following difficulty: if belief in the existence of God is the principle of the Law, and if this belief is not open for human will and choice to determine but is in fact casually determined, and if it is the Law which informs Jews that they are rewarded and punished for their choices which are the actions that they perform and the dispositions such as a joy in having correct beliefs or anguish which they feel, then what is the motivation for someone who does not believe in God’s existence to feel anguish over this fact. Either he realizes his beliefs are erroneous and, realizing his error, accepts belief in God or he will not believe that the Law is divine, since a Law is divine only if its giver is divine. Since the Law informs us that one receives reward or punishment over dispositions such as joy or anguish this person who rejects the divine nature of the Law is no longer commanded to feel anguish over this fact. Likewise, according to R. Crescas,

In separating beliefs from the Law, R' Crescas has demonstrated that the Law does not legislate beliefs and the purpose of the Law cannot be the perfection of belief. While philosophy might be prior to the Law, the Law itself is silent on issues of knowledge or dogma. In understanding the function of the Law this manner, R' Crescas not only challenges Rambam's opinion that belief in God is a positive commandment but several of the underlying premises of Maimonidian philosophy.

According to Rambam, intellect is the form of humanity.²⁵ It is on account of the human capacity for intellectual apprehension that it is written that "in the image of God created He him."²⁶ Humans are born with only the *hylic* intellect. That is, they only have an intellect *in potentia*.²⁷ In order to realize their humanity, it is necessary to actualize the *hylic* intellect and thereby acquire the acquired intellect. This is done through studying physics and metaphysics in which one can, perhaps, gain knowledge of the intelligibles.²⁸ Ultimate human perfection is achieved with "the conception of intelligibles, which teach true opinions concerning the divine things. This is the true reality the ultimate end; this is what gives the individual true perfection, a perfection belonging to him alone; and it gives him permanent perdurance; through it man is man."²⁹ The purpose of the Law, according to Rambam, is to bring us to "the soundness of the beliefs and the giving of correct opinions through which ultimate perfection [perfection of the soul] is achieved."³⁰ It is the attention given to matters of cor-

he should not be punished for failing to feel anguish since the commandment to feel anguish is commanded by the Law which is grounded in belief in existence of God a belief which he fails to believe in through no fault of his own.

²⁵ Moses Maimonides, *Guide*, trans. Shlomo Pines (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963) 1:1, p. 22. All citations from the *Guide of the Perplexed* are from this edition.

²⁶ Genesis 1:27.

²⁷ Moses Maimonides, *Guide*, 1:68, p. 165.

²⁸ Moses Maimonides, *Guide*, Introduction to the first part, p. 6. Whether Rambam thought that it was possible for humans to gain knowledge of the intelligibles is one of the most obscure and debated subjects in Maimonidian philosophy until this day. Shlomo Pines in "The Limitations of Human Knowledge According to Al-Farabi, Ibn Bajja, and Maimonides," in *Studies in Medieval Jewish History and Literature*, ed. I. Tews (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979) p. 82-109 claimed that knowledge of the intelligibles is ultimately outside the possibility of human cognition while Alexander Altmann in "Maimonides on the Intellect and the Scope of Metaphysics" in *Von der mitteralterlichen zur modernen Aufklärung: Studien zur jüdischen Geistesgeschichte* (Tubingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1987) p. 60-129 allowed for the possibility of some conjunction. It should be noted that R. Crescas doubted that Rambam's position allowed for any knowledge of the intelligibles. In explaining R. Crescas's interpretation of Rambam, Harvey writes "it is knowledge of incorporeal things which secures human immortality, and it is the incorporeal things alone which are humanly unknowable." Harvey, 1973 p. 60.

²⁹ Moses Maimonides, *Guide*, 3:54, p. 635.

³⁰ Moses Maimonides, *Guide*, 3:27, p.511.

rect belief which make any given law code divine.³¹ It so happens that the true Law is the Law of *Moses our Master*.³²

Humans, however, are not purely or primarily intellect. They are composed of skin and blood, of wants and emotions. This material beingness is governed by the sensitive, appetitive, and imaginative faculties. Prior to reaching ultimate perfection, this human materialness must be overcome. The second purpose of the Law is to help humans transcend their embodiedness. This is accomplished by observing the majority of the commandments whose end is “the welfare of the states of people in their relations with one another through the abolition of reciprocal wrongdoing and through the acquisition of a noble and excellent character.”³³ It emerges from Rambam’s discussion that all but a small minority of commandments are functional; they are “not intended for its own sake, but for the sake of something else, as if this were a ruse invented for our benefit by God in order to achieve His first intention.”³⁴

Belief or knowledge of God is not a functional commandment; its fulfillment leads to human perfection.³⁵ As a commandment which is not-for-another but for-itself, it is the *telos* of the other commandments and by extension the *telos* of the Law as a whole. In placing the belief and knowledge of God as the first positive commandment in the *Sefer Hamitzvot* as well as at the beginning of the *Mishneh Torah*, Rambam was applying what he wrote elsewhere about God: “He puts the ultimate perfection first because of its nobility; for, as we have explained, it is the ultimate end. It is referred to in the dictum: ‘For our good always.’”³⁶⁻³⁷

³¹ Moses Maimonides, *Guide*, 2:40, p. 384. Shlomo Pines raises the following intriguing observation: in the *Guide* 2:39, Rambam categorically states the Judaism is the only possible divine law. However, in 2:40 Rambam gives the criteria for a divine Law as “inculcating correct opinions with regard to God, may He be exalted, and with regard the angels, and that desires to make him wise . . . that Law is divine.” (Moses Maimonides, *Guide* 2:40, p. 384). Now while Moses was the only possible law *giver* and that all other law givers are plagiarists, other law *codes* such as the Koran and the New Testament might be considered divine if they inculcate correct beliefs. See Shlomo Pines, “Translator’s Introduction: The Philosophical Sources of *The Guide of the Perplexed*,” in his translation of the *Guide*, p. xc.

³² Moses Maimonides, *Guide*, 3:27, p. 511.

³³ Moses Maimonides, *Guide*, 3:27, p. 511.

³⁴ *ibid.* p. 527.

³⁵ Rambam formulates this commandment differently in different place. In *Sefer ha-Mitzvot* 1:1, Rambam uses the word belief. In *Mishneh Torah* “*Yesodei Torah*” 1:1, Rambam writes that the commandment is to know God. There are several possible answers to this contradiction including the possibility that Rambam might have changed his mind after he completed the *Sefer ha-Mitzvot*, it could be that the Arabic term for belief that Rambam used in writing *Sefer ha-Mitzvot* is synonymous with knowledge, or it could be that they are two different commandments. See Harvey 1973, p. 221.

³⁶ Deuteronomy 6:24.

³⁷ Moses Maimonides, *Guide*, 3:27, p. 511.

Although R. Crescas claims that the Law is silent about philosophy, he himself hardly is. Throughout his writings, R. Crescas emphatically rejects the Maimonidian identification of the soul which survives death with the acquired intellect.³⁸ While R. Crescas agreed with Rambam “that the soul of man, which is his form, is a spiritual substance, disposed to intellectual cognition,” he disagreed that it is not “intellectually cognizing *in actu per se* [i.e. the acquired intellect].”³⁹ Rather, according to R. Crescas “the soul has an essence other than intellectual cognation, even though its quiddity is inscrutable to us.” It follows that R. Crescas would replace belief or knowledge of God with the voluntarily performance of the commandments as the true *telos* of the Law. In this vein, R. Crescas writes that:

According to what appears in the words of our Rabbis of blessed memory, the teleological element is the practical element. Thus, it appears in their discourses that some of them said “practice is greater [than study];” but in the end they voted and concluded that “study is greater in that study brings one to practice.”⁴⁰ Thus, they reckoned the practical element to be the final cause of the theoretical.⁴¹

As expected, in this passage R. Crescas substitutes the practical life for the theoretical life as the true purpose of the Law. In this scheme, it is knowledge and beliefs which are functional; they are necessary in as much as they serve as a foundation for the commandments.

However when discussing the “true happiness of the soul”⁴² which is the ultimate human end, R. Crescas not only requires the performance of the commandments, he requires that they be performed with love. It is this “passionate love and the joy” which is “the desired purpose in acts of divine service and in good deeds.” By performing the commandments with love, the believer is serving God with the *will*, the human faculty which humans have the most control over and which, unlike beliefs, is always freely engaged. It is this “pleasure of the will in doing the good” which allow for the believer to conjoin with God which is human perfection.⁴³

³⁸ On the Maimonidean identification of the human immortal soul with the acquired intellect see Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah* “*Yesodei Torah*” 4:7-8, 7:1, “*Teshuvah*” 8:1-3, *Guide of the Perplexed* 1:68 p. 165-166, 1:72 p.193, 2:4 p. 257-258, and 3:54 p. 635. See also Shlomo Pines, “Translator’s Introduction: The Philosophical Sources of *The Guide of the Perplexed*,” in his translation of the *Guide*, p. lxi-cxxiv as well as Altmann 1987. According to Harvey, R. Crescas produces eight arguments against this thesis, four based on tradition and four based on philosophy. See Harvey, 1973 p. 104-204.

³⁹ R. Hasdai Crescas, *The Light of the Lord*, II, 6, 1 translated in Harvey, 1973, p. 187.

⁴⁰ Kiddushin 40b.

⁴¹ R. Hasdai Crescas, *The Light of the Lord*, Introduction translated in Harvey, 1990, p. 60.

⁴² This phrase is Harvey’s. See Harvey 1990, p. 61.

⁴³ R. Hasdai Crescas, *The Light of the Lord*, II, 5, 5 translated in Harvey, 1998, p. 154.

What emerges from the disagreement over whether there is a commandment to believe in God is a meditation on the Law and its commandments: are all the commandments intrinsically valuable or are some of primary value while others are only secondarily important. Motivating this debate is a more fundamental disagreement about the *telos* of the Law and what constitutes the ultimate human perfection: is God reached through knowing Him or by serving Him with love and joy?