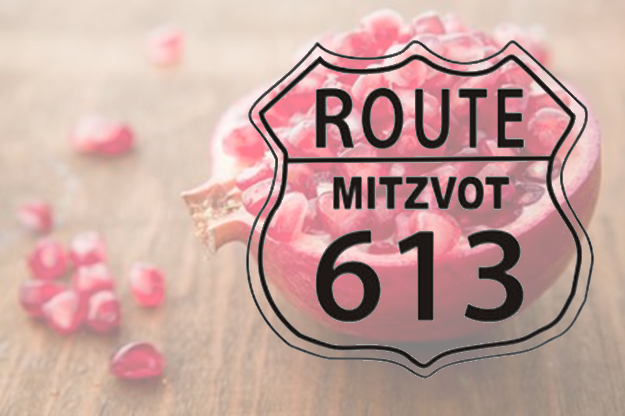
What, there are 613 of them



﻿**Talmud Makkos 23-24**

ר' חנניא בן עקשיא אומר רצה הקב"ה לזכות את ישראל לפיכך הרבה להם תורה ומצות שנאמר "ה' חפץ למען צדקו יגדיל תורה ויאדיר".

Rabbi Chananya ben Akashya says: The Holy One, Blessed be He, sought to confer merit upon the Jewish people; therefore, He increased for them Torah and mitzvot, as each mitzva increases merit, as it is stated: “It pleased the Lord for the sake of His righteousness to make the Torah great and glorious”. God sought to make the Torah great and glorious by means of the proliferation of mitzvot.

דרש רבי שמלאי שש מאות ושלש עשרה מצות נאמרו לו למשה שלש מאות וששים וחמש לאוין כמנין ימות החמה ומאתים וארבעים ושמונה עשה כנגד איבריו של אדם אמר רב המנונא מאי קרא (דברים לג, ד) תורה צוה לנו משה מורשה תורה בגימטריא שית מאה וחד סרי הוי אנכי ולא יהיה לך מפי הגבורה שמענום.

Rabbi Simlai taught: There were 613 mitzvot stated to Moses in the Torah, consisting of 365 prohibitions corresponding to the number of days in the solar year, and 248 positive mitzvot corresponding to the number of a person’s limbs. Rav Hamnuna said: What is the verse that alludes to this? It is written: “Moses commanded to us the Torah, an inheritance of the congregation of Jacob” (Deuteronomy 34:4). The word Torah, in terms of its numerical value [gimatriya], is 611, the number of mitzvot that were received and taught by Moses our teacher. In addition, there are two mitzvot: “I am the Lord your God” and: “You shall have no other gods” (Exodus 20:2, 3), the first two of the Ten Commandments, that we heard from the mouth of the Almighty, for a total of 613.

בא דוד והעמידן על אחת עשרה דכתיב (תהלים טו, א) מזמור לדוד [ה'] מי יגור באהלך מי ישכון בהר קדשך הולך תמים ופועל צדק ודובר אמת בלבבו לא רגל על לשונו לא עשה לרעהו רעה וחרפה לא נשא על קרובו נבזה בעיניו נמאס ואת יראי ה' יכבד נשבע להרע ולא ימיר כספו לא נתן בנשך ושוחד על נקי לא לקח עושה אלה לא ימוט לעולם.

Rabbi Simlai continued: King David came and established the 613 mitzvot upon eleven mitzvot, as it is written: “A Psalm of David. Lord, who shall sojourn in Your Tabernacle? Who shall dwell upon Your sacred mountain? He who walks wholeheartedly, and works righteousness, and speaks truth in his heart. Who has no slander upon his tongue, nor does evil to his neighbor, nor takes up reproach against his relative. In whose eyes a vile person is despised, and he honors those who fear the Lord; he takes an oath to his own detriment, and changes not. He neither gives his money with interest, nor takes a bribe against the innocent. He who performs these shall never be moved” (Psalms, chapter 15). Eleven attributes that facilitate one’s entry into the World-to-Come appear on this list.

…

בא ישעיהו והעמידן על שש דכתיב (ישעיהו לג, טו) הולך צדקות ודובר מישרים מואס בבצע מעשקות נוער כפיו מתמוך בשוחד אוטם אזנו משמוע דמים ועוצם עיניו מראות ברע.

Isaiah came and established the 613 mitzvot upon six, as it is written: “He who walks righteously, and speaks uprightly; he who despises the gain of oppressions, who shakes his hands from holding of bribes, who stops his ears from hearing blood, and shuts his eyes from looking upon evil” (Isaiah 33:15).

….

בא מיכה והעמידן על שלש דכתיב (מיכה ו, ח) הגיד לך אדם מה טוב ומה ה' דורש ממך כי אם עשות משפט ואהבת חסד והצנע לכת עם (ה') אלקיך.

Micah came and established the 613 mitzvot upon three, as it is written: “It has been told to you, O man, what is good, and what the Lord does require of you; only to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God” (Micah 6:8).

….

חזר ישעיהו והעמידן על שתים שנאמר (ישעיהו נו, א) כה אמר ה' שמרו משפט ועשו צדקה

Isaiah then established the 613 mitzvot upon two, as it is stated: “So says the Lord: Observe justice and perform righteous-ness” (Isaiah 56:1).

…

בא חבקוק והעמידן על אחת שנאמר (חבקוק ב, ד) וצדיק באמונתו יחיה

Habakkuk came and established the 613 mitzvot upon one, as it is stated: “But the righteous person shall live by his faith” (Habakkuk 2:4).

**Rambam in Commentary on the Mishnayos:**

“Rabbi Chananiah ben Akshiah teaches, ‘The Holy One Blessed Be He wanted to merit the Jewish people, therefore he increased for them the Torah and commandments, as it says, “ The Lord wants on accounts of His righteousness, so He increased the Torah and glorified it.” Makkos 3 16

From the fundamentals of faith of the Torah, when a person fulfills a mitzvah of any of the 613 mitzvot appropriately and correctly, without any trace of any foreign intention, rather he does the commandment altruistically out of love, he has now merited the world to come, and on this principle Rabbi Chananiah is telling us, that as there are so many mitzvoth, it is impossible that during one’s life that one will not do one perfectly in its completion, and in doing that mitzvah, his soul will live forever.

**Medrash Song of Songs**

“Like the slice of a pomegranate is you your temple” (Song of Songs 5 3) even the empty amongst your nation is coated with mitzvoth like this pomegranate, you can only speculate about the sincere and not showy amongst you. (4 1)

May it be Your Will Lord our God and the God of our fathers, that may our merits be multiple like a pomegranate.

“When you happen upon a bird’s nest before you, you shall send the mother and take the eggs, in order to lengthen your days. … Rav Adda explained that there are 248 positive commandments in the Torah as to the number of limbs in the body, and each day they “scream out” to him saying, “perform our corresponding Mitzvah so that we may live in in their merit long days”. And there are 365 prohibitions as the days of the solar year, and as each day that the sun rises and sets, the day “screams out”, “I am beseeching you, since you are alive today, please do not be careful on today’s sin, so that you do not tilt yourself and the world to being in a negative state.” … Of the easiest commandment is to send away the mother bird, and what is the reward, “So it shall go well for you and you shall live a long life.” … If so, imagine a commandment that requires one to spend his money, toil and involves saving lives, how much more so must its reward be.” (Tanchuma Ki Teiztei 2)

Counters of Mitzvot:

* Rabbi Saadiah Goan (882 – 942, Egypt & Israel)  
  [Discuss Azharos]
* Rabbi Shimon Kaira (8th Century Babylon)
* Rabbi Moshe ben Yaakov of Coucy (13th Century, France)
* Rabbi Yitzchak ben Yoseph of Corbeil (d.1280, France)
* Eliezer ben Samuel of Metz (died 1175, France)
* Rabbi Menachem ben Benyamin Recanati (1250-1310, Italy)  
  …

**Rambam’s Count**

**Introduction**

1. Do not count Rabbinic Commandments in this list.
2. Do not include laws which are derived from one of the Thirteen Principles of Torah Exegesis.
3. Do not count mitzvot which are not binding on all generations.
4. We do not include "encompassing" directives in the count.
5. The reason for a mitzvah is not counted on its own.
6. A mitzvah that has both negative and positive components is counted as two.
7. The different applications of a mitzvah are not individually counted.
8. Do not count a negative statement amongst the prohibitions.
9. Do not count the number of times a commandment is mentioned in the Torah, only the act which is prohibited or commanded.
10. Do not count a preparatory act as an independent mitzvah.
11. If a mitzvah is comprised of a number of elements, do not count them separately.
12. When commanded to do a certain action, do not count each part of the action separately.
13. We do not count the amount of days a mitzvah is performed.
14. We do not count the punishment administered for each transgression.

(more details can be found at http://rabbikaganoff.com/make-our-mitzvos-count/)

**Rambam Counting of Mitzvot**

**1.** The first *mitzvah* is that we are commanded to acquire knowledge of the nature of G‑d's existence, i.e. to understand that He is the Original cause and Source of existence Who brings all creations into being.

The source of this commandment is G‑d's statement (exalted be He), "I am G‑d your Lord."

[We see that this commandment is included in the total of 613 from] the end of the tractate Makkos, which states, "613 commandments were given to Moshe at Sinai. From which verse do we see this? — 'The Torah which was commanded to us by Moshe.' " This indicates [that the number of *mitzvos* which Moshe commanded us equals] the numerical value of the word *Torah.* The Gemara than asks, "But is this the proper numerical value? It only totals 611!" The answer was given, "The two commandments 'I am G‑d your Lord' and 'Do not have any other gods' were heard from G‑d directly" [and not through Moshe. They are therefore not alluded to in the word *Torah* in this verse, which refers only to those 611 *mitzvos* which were given through Moshe. It is included, however, in the total of 613.]

It is clear from this passage that "I am G‑d your Lord," i.e. knowledge of G‑d, as explained above, is counted as one of the 613 *mitzvos*.

**2.** The 2nd *mitzvah* is that we are commanded to acquire knowledge of the nature of G‑d's Unity, i.e. to understand that the Original Creator and Source of all existence is One.

The source of this commandment is G‑d's statement (exalted be He), "Hear [i.e. "understand"] O Israel, G‑d is our Lord, G‑d is One."

In most Midrashim you will find this *mitzvah* described [in the context of G‑d's statement that a certain kindness was done to the Jewish people,] "on condition that they unify My Name," "on condition that they unite Me," or a similar expression. They mean to say that G‑d took us out of bondage and heaped kindness upon us upon condition that we have His Unity firmly fixed in our minds — since we are *required* to do so. [From this we see that knowledge of His unity is an actual requirement, and is therefore counted as one of the 613 commandments.]

In many places the expression is used, "the *mitzvah* of His Unity" [the word *"mitzvah"* also indicating that this counts as one of the 613 commandments.]

Our Sages also called this *mitzvah* "Kingdom," saying that [the paragraph *Shema* is read before *V'haya*] "in order to accept upon oneself the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven," i.e. to acknowledge and comprehend His Unity.

**3.** The 3rd mitzva is that we are commanded to love G‑d (exalted be He), i.e. to meditate upon and closely examine His *mitzvos*, His commandments, and His works, in order to understand Him; and through this understanding to achieve a feeling of ecstasy. This is the goal of the commandment to love G‑d.

[We can see that meditation is the way to create this feeling of love from] the *Sifri:* "From the statement, 'You shall love G‑d your Lord', can I know how to love G‑d? The Torah therefore says, 'and these words which I command you today shall be upon your heart'; i.e. that through this [meditation about His commandments] you will understand the nature of 'the One Who spoke, and thereby brought the world into being.' "

From this it is clear that meditation will lead to understanding, and then a feeling of enjoyment and love will follow automatically [since the second verse explains the way to reach the goal of the previous verse.]

Our Sages also said that this *mitzvah* includes calling out to all mankind to serve G‑d (exalted be He) and to believe in Him. This is because when you love a person, for example, you praise him and call out to others to draw close to him. So too, if you truly love G‑d — through your understanding and realization of His true existence — you will certainly spread this true knowledge that you know to the ignorant and the foolish.

[We see that this *mitzvah* includes spreading love for G‑d to others from] the Sifri: " 'You shall love G‑d,' i.e. make Him beloved among the creatures as your father Avraham did, as it is written, 'The souls that he made in Charan.'"

The meaning of this Sifri: Avraham, as a result of his deep understanding of G‑d, acquired love for G‑d, as the verse testifies, "Avraham, who loved Me". This powerful love therefore caused him to call out to all mankind to believe in G‑d. So too, you shall love Him to the extent that you draw others to Him.

**4.** The 4th *mitzvah* is that we are commanded to establish in our minds fear and dread of G‑d (exalted be He); that we not be calm and nonchalant, but be constantly concerned of imminent punishment [for misdeeds.]

The biblical source of this commandment is G‑d's statement (exalted be He), "You shall fear G‑d your Lord."

At the end of tractate *Sanhedrin*, there is a discussion of G‑d's statement (exalted be He), "Anyone who is *nokev* (curses) G‑d's Name shall be put to death." [The Talmud asks:] "Perhaps the word *nokev* means, 'utters,' as in the verse, 'Who were mentioned *(nikvu)* by name'; the prohibition being the verse, 'You shall fear G‑d your Lord.' "

The meaning of this question: "Perhaps the verse, '*nokev* G‑d's Name' means merely uttering G‑d's Name even without a curse. And if one wonders 'What prohibition can there be in this?', it is [the prohibition not] to erase one's fear of G‑d; because included in fear of G‑d is not mentioning His Name in vain."

The Talmud answers this question and rejects this approach as follows: "First of all, [in order to be punishable by death,] the person must have used 'one Name against another,' i.e. cursed one of G‑d's Names with another of G‑d's Names, as in the saying, 'Let Yosi strike Yosi,' and [if he merely mentioned G‑d's Name in vain,] he did not fulfill this condition."

[The Talmud continues:] "Furthermore, this prohibition is stated as a positive commandment, and cannot technically serve as a prohibition."

This means that the suggestion, "the prohibition is from the verse, 'You shall fear G‑d,' " is incorrect, because this verse is a *positive* commandment, and a punishment can never be based on a positive commandment.

This passage clearly indicates that "You shall fear G‑d," is a positive commandment.

**5.** The 5th *mitzvah* is that we are commanded to serve G‑d (blessed be He). This commandment is repeated many times: And you shall serve G‑d, your L‑rd"; "And you shall serve Him";  "And to serve Him."

Although this commandment is of a general nature,  as explained in the Fourth Principle,  [and apparently should not be included in the count of the 613 *mitzvos*,] nevertheless it has a specific quality, since it is the commandment to pray.

[We see that "service" is not just a general command from the following statements:] The *Sifri* says, "The verse, 'And to serve Him' means prayer." The Sages also said, "The verse, 'And to serve Him' means Torah study.

In the Mishnah of Rabbi Eliezer, the son of Rabbi Yosi HaG'lili,  the Sages said, "What is the biblical source to include prayer among the *mitzvos*? From the verse, 'You shall fear G‑d, your L‑rd, and you shall serve Him.' "

They also said,  "Serve Him through His Torah; serve Him in His Temple." This [statement, 'serve Him in His Temple,'] means that one's goal should be to pray in the Temple or in the direction of the Temple, as King Solomon explained.

**6.** The 6th *mitzvah* is that we are commanded to be close to the wise and to associate with them. We should constantly be close to them and to be with them in all possible ways of friendship, such as eating, drinking and doing business, in order to thereby succeed in emulating their actions and knowing from their words the true way of looking at things.

The source of this commandment is G‑d's statement (exalted be He),  "And cling to Him." This commandment is repeated,  "To Him you shall cling," and is explained in the words of the *Sifri:* "Cleave to the Sages and their students."

Our Sages also derived from the verse, "To Him you shall cling," that one must marry the daughter of a *talmid chacham*, marry one's daughter to a *talmid chacham*, give benefits to *talmidei chachamim* and to do business with them. Our Sages say  "Is it possible for a person to cling to the Divine Presence, when the verse says,  'G‑d your Lord is [like] a consuming fire'?! Rather, whoever marries the daughter of a *talmid chacham* [is considered to have cleaved to the Divine Presence]."

**7.** The 7th *mitzvah* is that we are commanded to swear in G‑d's name whenever necessary — whether to insure something be done or to prevent ourselves from doing something. [We are required to swear in His name] because it exalts, glorifies, and magnifies G‑d.

The source of this commandment is G‑d's statement,  "And swear in His name."

Our Sages said explicitly,  "The Torah tells us 'swear in His name' and 'do not swear.' " This means that just as one may not make an unnecessary oath, which is a prohibition, one is commanded to make a necessary oath, which is a positive commandment.

Therefore, one may not swear in the name of any other creation, such as angels or stars. An exception is where the subject [i.e. G‑d] is obviously omitted, such as one who swears in "the truth of the sun," but means "the true G‑d of [i.e. Who created] the sun." It is in this manner that our nation swears in the name of Moshe — in order to gain honor through [mentioning] his name. It is as if the person uttered the oath, "in the G‑d of Moshe," or "in the One Who sent Moshe." However, when the person uttering the oath does not have this in mind, and swears in the name of a created being having in mind that this object is so true that he can swear on it, he has transgressed, and has "placed an object on the same level as G‑d." The Oral Tradition  explains that "one who 'places an object on the same level as G‑d' is uprooted from the world."

This is the intention of the verse, "swear in His name," i.e. keep in mind that He alone is the True Existence that it is proper to swear by. In the first chapter of T'murah  our Sages say, "what is the source that one may take an oath to fulfill a *mitzvah*? The verse, 'And swear in His name.' "

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**Ramban** on the Seventh Mitzvah of Swearing in God’s name (loose translation);

I am amazed at how the Rambam understood the Talmud in Temurah, as the Talmud appears to be learnt differently. … It is understood from here that when the Torah wrote, “You shall swear in His name”, when necessary is not a commandment. Rather the Torah is giving permission that when applicable (and in court) one has permission to swear in Hashem’s name. … Even if we are to understand this saying as a commandment to swear in Hashem’s name as opposed to any other foreign god’s name, still this is an inference of a mitzvah which is not included in the counting of the 613.

[Raavid in his annotation]

Ramban on the “forgotten” Positive Mitzvot, Mitzvah 4.

The fourth Mitzvah that we were commanded was to inherit the land that the Lord gave to our fathers, Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov, and we should not leave it in the hands of another nation nor to desolation. This was commanded to them in Numbers 33, “And you shall prevail in the land and settle in it, for to you I have given the land to inhabit it, and you shall pass the land as an inheritance.” … I will further explain that when the Talmud amplifies the importance of the Mitzvah of living in Israel … it is included in this Mitzvah. …

[If there is time discuss the Mitzvah to build the Aron.]

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**Sefer Chareidim -**

Chapter 12 – Positive Biblical Mitzvot dependent on the voice that one can perform every day:

(Mitzvah 1 & 2): The fifth of the Ten Commandments – Honor your father and mother. We are commanded to honor them in our words, that we should speak to them with pleasantness and soft words and respect as we would to our master, the way that we would speak to a king. This is the basic understanding of the Torah. And we learn from inclusion that the Torah also commands us to honor them with our actions and monies, to feed them, give them to drink, dress them and provide all of their needs as a servant. …

Chapter 9 – Positive Mitzvot incumbent on our heart that one can perform every day:

(Mitzvah 17): To pray every day with devotion and meaning from the heart, as the Torah commands, “And Hashem you shall serve” and “You shall serve Him with all your hearts”. Even though this commandment is a generic commandment for all of the commandments, as we are His servants, as he redeemed us from Egypt from being slaves, and in place of the back breaking work with bricks and mortar, he transferred it to His service … still through the Transmittion this was explained to be service from the heart which is prayer. The SM”K counts this amongst commandments dependent on the heart, since the Lord wrote it a commandment incumbent on the heart. Therefore, if one were not to have any intention or understanding when he prays he would have not fulfilled this mitzvah.

[If there is time discuss Multi-facetted Mitzvos, such as p37 (to mourn), p205 (to rebuke), Mitzvah n195 (to not eat over life).]

…

* Sefer ha-Chinnuch (Possibly Rabbi Aharon Halevi of Barcelona)
* Rabbi Elazar ben Moshe Azikri (1533–1600, Spain, Tzefat)
* Rabbi Yisroel Meir Kagan
* Artscroll

**Duties of the Heart Rabbi Bachya ben Yoseph ibn Pakuda (1040)**

#1 Shaar HaYichud - Unity of God

#2 Shaar Bechina - Gate of Examination

#3 Shaar Avodas HaElokim - Gate of Service of God

#4 Shaar HaBitachon - Gate of Trust in God

#5 Shaar Yichud HaMaase - Gate of Devotion

#6 Shaar HaKnia - Gate of Submission

#7 Shaar HaTeshuva- Gate of Repentance

#8 Shaar Cheshbon Hanefesh - Spiritual Accounting

#9 Shaar HaPerishus - Gate of Abstinence

#10 Shaar Ahavas Hashem - Gate of Love of God

Gate 3 Chapter III.

Definition of the Service of G-d; exposition of its parts; the merits of each of these parts.

Service may be defined as a beneficiary's submission to his benefactor, expressed in rendering some benefit within his power to the latter in return for the favor received. This submission is of two kinds. The first is submission induced by fear, hope, necessity or compulsion. The second is submission arising from a sense of duty, from the conviction that it is right to aggrandize and exalt the person to whom submission is rendered.

Of the first kind is that submission to G-d which has been induced by an external stimulus, as we have mentioned, and the obligation of which arises from expectation of reward or fear of punishment in this world and the next. But the second kind is the submission which arises from an inward urge in the mind, innate in the nature of a human being in whom body and soul are joined together. Both kinds of submission are praiseworthy and lead to salvation in the life hereafter, the world of eternal rest. But one of these leads to the other and is a step by which we ascend to it. The former is the submission induced by the study of the Torah. The submission which is induced by the urge of the understanding and based on rational demonstrations is nearer to G-d and more acceptable on seven grounds: First, The service (of G-d) induced by study of the Torah may be entirely devotional and directed to the Supreme. It may, however, be hypocritical; the aim may possibly be to obtain praise for it and honor among one's fellow-men, since the service is rooted in, and founded on, hope (of reward) and fear (of punishment).

But the service of G-d induced by the intellectual urge is wholly and solely devoted to G-d. No hypocrisy is mingled with it, nor any false pretense for the sake of self-glorification, since this service it not founded on hope or fear, but is based on wisdom and knowledge of what service a creature owes to the Creator. Secondly, service of G-d induced by the Torah is only rendered as the result of hope of reward or fear of punishment; but the service urged by the understanding comes from willingness of the soul and its desire to strive with all its might to serve its G-d for His own sake, as a result of knowledge and comprehension. For the soul will freely give all it has, provided it is convinced that what it gives is exceeded in value by what it receives in exchange, and this [boon] is that G-d is pleased with it.

Third, the service due to the urge of the Torah is manifested in external good deeds rather than in inward thoughts and feelings, hidden in the heart. But in the service prompted by the understanding, that which is hidden in the heart is many times as much as what is seen in the external activity of the bodily limbs. This service includes the duties of the heart. Fourth, the service prompted by Torah is to be regarded as an introduction to the service prompted by the understanding. The former is like seed planted in the ground. The study of the Torah is as tillage is to the soil - ploughing and clearing it. The aid that comes from G-d is like the rain that waters the field. And the fruit that is produced and brought, forth is what remains in the heart - the service of G-d for His sake only, and not prompted by hope (of reward) or fear (of punishment). So our wise men have exhorted us, "Be not like servants who minister to their master upon the condition of receiving a reward . . . and let the fear of Heaven be upon you." (Ethics of the Fathers 1:3).

Fifth, the commandments of the Torah are limited. They are a known number, 613 precepts. But the duties imposed by the understanding are almost infinite, for a person daily increases his knowledge of them; and the more his faculty of perception develops and the more he comprehends G-d's beneficences, mighty power and sovereignty, the more will a man humble himself before Him. Hence you find that David (peace be upon him) ,besought G-d to arouse him to the knowledge of these duties and remove the curtain of folly from his eyes; as it is said, "Open Thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law." (Ps. 119:18); "Teach me, O L-ord, the way of Thy statutes . . ." (ibid. 119:33); "Incline my heart unto Thy testimonies, and not to covetousness" (ibid. 119:36). Furthermore t is said "To all perfection have I seen an end; but Thy commandment is exceedingly broad" (ibid. 119:96); that is to say, our obligation of service to Thee for Thy continual benefits to us is without limit because there is no limit to the varieties of Thy bounties to us. It is also related of some ascetics that they spent the whole of their lives in penitence. Each day they were moved to renewed repentance, because every day their recognition of G-d's greatness increased, and they realized how much they had fallen short in the fulfillment of their obligation of service in the past, as David said, "Day communicates knowledge unto day" (Ps. 19:2). Furthermore, it is said, "Streams of water run down mine eyes, because they keep not Thy laws." (Ps. 119:136). Sixth, the service enjoined by the Torah is within the range of a human being's capacity. Provided he is intent upon it and sets about it, it is not withheld from any one who seeks to fulfill it. But the service prompted by the understanding can only be performed by one who makes a great effort and with the help of G-d, since human power is insufficient to attain it.

Hence you find that David repeatedly supplicates G-d in Psalm 119 to give him this aid. Seventh, when service is only derived from the Torah, a person can never be sure that he will not stumble. For in that kind of service, the force of evil passion is always lurking in ambush, waiting for the time when he will neglect it. But when the service is prompted by the understanding, a man can be sure that he will not stumble and sin, for the soul is attracted to service of G-d only after physical lust has been overcome and the intellect has obtained the victory over it, and controls it according to the soul's will and desire. Hence, this type of service affords a guarantee against stumbling, and one who has attained it, is guarded from sin, as Scripture says, "There shall no evil happen to the righteous" (Prov. 12:21).

It is necessary, however, that I should expound some of the advantages of instruction in the Torah, as these occur to me. The grounds that necessitate the urge of the Torah to service of G-d are also seven. First, man is composed of soul and body. Among his tendencies there are some that tempt him to surrender himself to physical pleasures, indulge in low desires, and break the restraining bonds of reason. There are also other tendencies that will make him abhor the world and renounce society, because of reverses that he has sustained and continued troubles and sorrows that have befallen him, and so he would turn to the higher spiritual life.

Neither of these plans is commendable. The latter (if generally followed) would bring about destruction of the social order. The former would lead to his ruin in this world and in the next. The exalted Creator, in His compassion and infinite goodness to man, favored him with a means by which he may improve his condition and direct aright his ways, leading to happiness here and hereafter. This means, which points out the middle road between reason and physical desire, is the Torah which is faithful, preserves righteousness outwardly and inwardly, keeps man away from his lusts in this world and reserves for him his recompense at his latter end, as Scripture says, "Incline thine ear and hear the words of the wise ... for it is a pleasant thing if thou keep them within thee . . . That thy trust may be in the L-ord, I have made known to thee . . . Have I not written for thee excellent things in counsels and knowledge, that I might make thee know the certainty of the words of truth, that thou mightest answer the words of truth to them that send [enquiries] unto thee" (Prov. 22:17-21). Second, the intellectual urge to the service of G-d does not lead to the recognition of active obligations such as prayer, fasting, alms-giving, tithing, deeds of benevolence. Nor does one thereby attain knowledge of the terms of punishments incurred by one who is negligent in service. In all this, there is need of a stand and definiteness in the way set forth by the Torah and the prophet's instruction, so that by their combination (i.e. The urge of Torah and of the intellect, or of the Torah and instruction of the prophets) the Divine purpose may be achieved in orderly fashion - that purpose being the service of G-d (exalted be He), as it is said, "And G-d made it, so that man should fear before Him" (Eccles. 3:14) ; that is to say, G-d gave us a law to teach us His service.

Third, the intellectual urge cannot comprehend equally all who are under the obligation of service, because some human beings are of limited intelligence, while some are superior in apprehension. But the urge of the Torah applies equally to all who have reached the status subjecting them to this service, even though they vary in their understanding of it, as we have noted at the close of the first treatise of this book. It sometimes also happens that a person falls short in some duties and exceeds in others. The intellectual stimulus varies in different individuals in accordance with their capacity of apprehension. But the urge of the Torah is not subject to variation. Its obligation is the same for the child, the youth, one advanced in years and the old man, the wise and the foolish, even though the resulting practice varies in different classes of individuals. And so Scripture says in regard to the comprehensive character of the instruction of the Torah for all the people, "Gather the people together, men and women, and children, and the stranger that is within thy gate, (that they may hear and that they may learn and fear the L-ord your G-d . . .)" (Deut. 31:12). Further, it is said, ". . . thou shalt read this law before all Israel in their hearing." (Deut. 31:11).

Fourth, it is recognized that the obligations of human beings to render service are proportionate to the degrees of benefits conferred upon them. In every period there have been events which occasioned one people to be singled out from all other peoples for special benefits that G-d bestowed on it. It follows that individuals belonging to that people are on that account under special obligation to render additional service to the Creator beyond that required of other peoples. There is no way of determining by the intellect alone what this service should be. Thus G-d chose us from among other nations by bringing us out of the land of Egypt, dividing the Red Sea and conferring other benefits subsequently, too well known to be mentioned. Furthermore, the exalted Creator specially distinguished us from all other nations by giving us a religion for which we are under an obligation of gratitude to Him; and, in return for our acceptance of this religion, He has assured us a recompense in this world and in the next, - an abundance of grace and goodness, emanating from Him, that is indescribable. All this can only be clearly made known to us by the Torah, as Scripture says, "Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians and how I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. Now, therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, (then ye shall be a treasure unto me above all people) and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Ex. 19:4-6). . .

Fifth, the stimulus of the Torah is a preparation for, and introduction to that of the intellect, the reason being that a man in his youth needs training and guidance, and restraint from yielding to his passions, till the time comes when his understanding has become strong and firm. So, too some women and frivolous men do not follow the intellectual lead, because its control over them is weak and loose. This condition made it necessary to provide guidance of a medium character which they can endure and which will not be impossible for them to stand. Hence, the instructions of the Torah turn about hope and fear - the poles of its axis. Whoever does not fall short in fulfilling the obligations of this service belongs to the class of the truly pious and is worthy of reward in this world and in the next. But one who rises from this stage to the service of G-d, induced by reason, reaches the degree of the prophets and the elect of the Supreme - the saints. His recompense here on earth is joy in the sweetness of the service of the L-ord, as the prophet said, "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart; for I am called by Thy name, O L-ord G-d of hosts" (Jeremiah 15-16); furthermore, "The righteous shall be glad in the L-ord and trust in Him; and all the upright in heart shall glory" (Ps. 64:11) ; furthermore, "light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart" (Ps. 97:11). His reward in the world to come will consist in his attaining the highest illumination which we are unable to describe or picture, as it is said, "If thou wilt walk in my ways and if thou wilt keep my charge ... I will give thee a place to walk among these that stand by" (Zachariah 3:7); further, "How great is Thy goodness which Thou hast laid up for them that fear Thee, which Thou hast wrought for them that trust in Thee before the children of men" (Ps. 31:20). Furthermore, "Eye hath not seen, O G-d, beside Thee, what He will do for one that waiteth for Him" (Isaiah 64:3). .

Sixth, the Torah includes prescriptions, the obligation of which reason cannot explain, namely, those precepts which we obey on the ground of traditional authority as also certain principles that lie at the root of rational precepts. This is because the people to whom the Torah was given were at that period in such a condition that animal lusts dominated them and were too weak in their knowledge and perceptive faculties to apprehend many of the rational precepts. The Torah, therefore, used one method only for the rational precepts and for those resting on authority. The people were exhorted in the same way in regard to both classes of duties. An individual whose understanding and perception are strong, will exert himself and undertake the obligation of fulfilling them on both grounds that they are rational and authoritative. And one whose intellect is too weak to perceive their rational ground will accept them because the Torah exhorts him, and will treat them as authoritative precepts. Thus all classes will be benefited, as it is said, "Its ways are ways of pleasantness, and all its paths are peace" (Prov. 3:17).

Seventh, we come to the Torah through a human intermediary (Moses) by whom were shown signs and demonstrations equally perceived by all the people with their senses, the evidence of which they could not deny. Hence, the message which he brought with him in the name of G-d was demonstrated to them through the senses as well as the intellect. The demonstration through the senses was an addition to the intellectual stimulus which human beings naturally possess. Whoever considers G-d's bounties, bestowed upon him, in common with all other human beings, will faithfully accept the obligation of the service of G-d in the ways indicated by his intellect. Whoever reflects on the Creator's special bounties to him by which his people has been distinguished from other peoples, will faithfully accept the special obligation to obey the precepts that are binding on his people, on the authority of the Torah and are not binding on other peoples.

And when one considers G-d's bounties to him, by which his tribe has been distinguished from the remaining tribes of his people, such as, priesthood or the Levitical degree, he will faithfully accept the obligation to fulfill precepts by which G-d has distinguished his class. Hence you find twenty four priestly ordinances corresponding to twenty-four special benefits which the Creator bestowed upon the priests. These are the twenty-four priestly dues.

Analogously, anyone whom G-d has distinguished by special favors beyond those enjoyed by other human beings, should undertake a special service not incumbent on them, striving at the same time, according to his capacity and conception, to fulfill the duties in the obligation of which he is included with them and thanking G-d, blessed be He, for the bounty with which G-d specially favored him. Thus will he insure its continuance and increase, and will also receive his reward in the world to come. A person should not behave like the one of whom it is said, "And silver I gave her in abundance and gold which they prepared for Baal" (Hosea 2:10).

One who falls short in the special service which he has to render for the bounty with which he has been specially favored, will be induced to fall short in the service specially incumbent upon his tribe and afterwards in that incumbent upon his people, and at last he will renounce the Torah altogether. Not accepting the Torah, he will not even accept the obligation of the precepts that reason dictates. If he does not accept the obligation enjoined by the faculty of reason with which he is endowed, and its monition, he loses the character of a rational creature; and the cattle understand how to improve their condition better than he does, as it is said, "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know; my people doth not consider" (Isaiah 1:3). Such a person's fate will be like that of one, concerning whom it is said, "But the wicked shall perish; and the enemies of the L-ord shall be as the fat of lambs, they shall be consumed; into smoke shall they be utterly consumed" (Psalm 37:20).

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[End with Story of Rabbi Weinberg]

**Short Biographies** (from Wikipedia and Encyclopedia.com)

**Rabbi Sa'adiah ben Yosef Gaon** (רבי סעדיה בן יוסף אלפיומי גאון; alternative English Names: Rabbeinu Sa'adiah Gaon ("our Rabbi [the] Saadia Gaon"), often abbreviated RSG (RaSaG), 882/892 – 942) was a prominent rabbi, Jewish philosopher, and exegete of the Geonic period who was active in the Abbasid Caliphate.

The first important rabbinic figure to write extensively in Arabic, he is considered the founder of Judeo-Arabic literature. Known for his works on Hebrew linguistics, Halakha, and Jewish philosophy, he was one of the more sophisticated practitioners of the philosophical school known as the "Jewish Kalam" (Stroumsa 2003). In this capacity, his philosophical work The Book of Beliefs and Opinions represents the first systematic attempt to integrate Jewish theology with components of Greek philosophy. Saadia was also very active in opposition to Karaism, in defense of rabbinic Judaism.

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**Rabbi Moses ben Jacob of Coucy**, also known as Moses Mikkotsi (Hebrew: משה בן יעקב מקוצי; Latin: Moses Kotsensis), was a French Tosafist and authority on Halakha (Jewish law). He is best known as the author of one of the earliest codifications of Halakha, the Sefer Mitzvot Gadol.

Moses of Coucy lived in the first half of the thirteenth century. His name suggests he was born or raised in Coucy in Northern France. He was a descendant of a family of distinguished scholars. He was the brother-in-law of Tosafist Shimshon of Sens and Shimshon of Coucy (HaSar MiCoucy).[1]

He studied under Judah of Paris, and Yehudah HaChasid. Following in the latter's footsteps he traveled through Provence and Spain to strengthen religiosity among the Jews and teaching them the way to serve God.

In 1240 he was one of the four rabbis who were required to defend the Talmud, in a public disputation in Paris, and it is likely that the need for a work like the Sefer Mitzvot Gadol was driven by the decrees against the Talmud which had been promulgated in France, and had led to the confiscation and burning of all Talmud manuscripts in 1242.

The Sefer Mitzvot Gadol (in Hebrew: ספר מצוות גדול) (in English: The Great Book of Commandments; abbreviated סמ"ג "SeMaG"), completed in 1247,[2] deals with the 365 negative commandments and the 248 positive commandments, separately discussing each of them according to the Talmud and the decisions of the Rabbis. "SeMaG" also contains much non-legal, moralistic teaching. References to the "SeMaG" are by section (positive or negative commandments) and a number for each commandment within its section.

Rabbi Moses' arrangement and presentation are heavily influenced by Maimonides' discussion of the commandments in the Sefer Hamitzvot and by his codification of the Halakha in the Mishneh Torah. However, unlike Maimonides, Rabbi Moses presents lengthy discussions of the different interpretations and legal opinions. He also makes extensive use of other codes, and particularly of the commentaries of Rashi and the Tosafot, usually favouring these Ashkenazi traditions over Maimonides.

**Rabbi Isaac ben Joseph of Corbeil** (died 1280) (Hebrew: יצחק בן יוסף מקורבי"ל‎) was a French rabbi and Tosafist who flourished in the second half of the thirteenth century. he is best known as the author of Sefer Mitzvot Katan.

He was the son-in-law of R. Jehiel ben Joseph of Paris, whose yeshiva he attended, and the pupil of the "Great Men of Évreux," notably Samuel of Évreux, whom he calls "the Prince" (שר) of Évreux. Isaac's conspicuous piety drew toward him many disciples, the best known of whom were Perez ben Elijah of Corbeil (Rabbeinu Perez), Baruch Ḥayyim ben Menahem of Niort, and his fellow citizen Joseph ben Abraham.

In 1277 – encouraged by his pupils – he published Sefer Mitzvot Katan (ספר מצוות קטן - "Small book of commandments"; generally called "Semak" from the initials סמ"ק), an abridgment of Moses ben Jacob of Coucy's Sefer Mitzvot Gadol (called "Semag" from its initials סמ"ג). The work is officially under the title Ammude ha-Golah. It is divided into 7 "pillars" as he says, "seven pillars corresponding the seven days of the week, and I have asked every man to read one piller each day." It includes (contemporary) Halacha along with Aggadic stories and mussar. Although based on the Sefer Mitzvot Gadol the work does not delve into the argument behind the legal decision.[1] "Semaḳ" was "most favorably received" by the Ashkenazi communities (France and Germany), and has often been edited and annotated.

Isaac also published Liḳḳuṭim (collectanea), and several small compilations containing his ritual decisions. The Kol Bo (No. 128) contains a long fragment of a Talmudic work of R. Isaac, with this superscription: קצת דינים מה"ר יצחק ז"ל.

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**Rabbi Aaron ha-Levi of Barcelona** (also known as Aaron ben Joseph Sason) was a Spanish Talmudist of the end of the thirteenth century; author of the first book of religious instruction among the Jews of the Middle Ages. Though his work the Sefer ha-Chinuch (Book of Education) was well known, having been repeatedly commented on and republished in more than a dozen editions, it was reserved for Rosin to discover anything accurate concerning the personality of the author. The book itself is anonymous; and the statement by Gedaliah ibn Yaḥyah (dating from the middle of the sixteenth century), that its author was the celebrated Talmudist Aaron ben Joseph ha-Levi, has been generally accepted. It is now, however, certain that the author was a Spanish instructor of youth, of modest position, one who had contented himself with but the faintest allusion to his own identity in symbolically applying to himself the verse Mal. ii. 5, at the end of the prefatory letter to the book; in an old Midrash (Sifra, Shemini, ed. Weiss, i. 45d) this verse is referred to Aaron. He lays no claim to original research. The book was simply intended to impart to Jewish youth a knowledge of the Law, and to present in simple form the principles of Judaism to the unlearned layman. The writer seems to have had this lay-public always before him; and his work is in this respect different from that of his predecessors, Maimonides, Naḥmanides, and Moses of Coucy, from whose works he liberally draws. The Sefer ha-Chinuch is an enumeration of the six hundred and thirteen affirmative and negative precepts of the Mosaic Law, arranged in the order of the weekly lessons (parashot), with their ethical and halakic aspects, based upon rabbinical tradition of the Talmudic and post-Talmudic periods, for which latter feature he relies upon Alfasi, Maimonides, and Naḥmanides as main authorities. His chief and original merit is displayed in the ingenuity and religious fervor with which he dwells upon the ethical side of the Law, avoiding most admirably all abstruse philosophical and mystical theories, such as are only too abundant in his guides, Maimonides and Naḥmanides.

**Rabbi Eliezer Ben Samuel Of Metz** (c. 1115–c. 1198), tosafist and halakhic authority. Eliezer was a pupil of Rabbi Jacob Tam (see Sefer ha-Yashar, ed. by F. Rosenthal (1898), 128 n. 57), as well as of Rabbib Samuel b. Meir, and Ḥayyim Cohen of Paris. Among his disciples were some of the greatest German rabbis, such as Rabbi Eliezer b. Joel ha-Levi and Rabbi Eleazar b. Judah of Worms, author of the Roke'aḥ. He thus served as an intermediary between the centers of study in France and those in Germany. Rabbi Eliezer obtained his livelihood by moneylending, and was in charge of the distribution of charity. His daughters died during his lifetime. Little else is known of him. Eliezer's most important work is his Sefer Yere'im, written between 1171 and 1179, a work on the 613 precepts according to the enumeration of the Halakhot Gedolot. It was abridged by Benjamin b. Abraham Anav, who divided it into 12 "Pillars," in which form it was published in Venice in 1566, and in many later editions. The complete book (464 paragraphs) was published from a Paris manuscript in Vilna (1892–1902) by Abraham Abba Schiff who added a commentary entitled To'afot Re'em. Other commentaries have also been written. Although essentially a halakhic work, Sefer Yere'im includes ethical maxims and homilies on the true service of God. Halakhic discussions are sometimes preceded by rhymed introductions. The rulings of Sefer Yere'im as well as those in Eliezer's commentaries on the Talmud were accepted as authoritative by the rishonim. Eliezer is also an author of tosafot and novellae. Mention is made of his commentary to Berakhot, Shabbat, Zevaḥim, and Nedarim. Rabbi Chayyim Joseph David Azulai was in possession of a manuscript by him on Chullin. Very few of his responsa have been preserved.

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**Rabbi Elazar ben Moshe Azikri** was a kabbalist, preacher and poet of the Land of Israel. He lived and taught in Tzfat during its zenith in the 16th century. He came from a family that had been expelled from Spain. He was one of a handful of rabbis to receive the renewed rabbinic semichah initiated by Rabbi Yaakov Berav. In 1588, he launched an effort called Sukkat Shalom, which sought to rouse many people to the penitence needed to hurry the redemption. His famous work Sefer Charedim was a part of that effort. The book blends a halachic enumeration of the mitzvot with Kabbalist ethics, and is one of the central works of it genre. His poem Yedid Nefesh, published in Sefer Charedim, is one of the most wellknown and beloved Hebrew poems. He also wrote talmudic commentaries.