

Certainly, Bahya would not want to say that one's mind should be absent when one is sitting in a *sukkah*. But it is not realistic to aim for presence of mind throughout the action. In contrast, with regard to prayer, the heart must be present throughout, as is the case in teaching the Law, reading the Torah, and commanding the good. The category he calls here duties of the limbs—which he also qualifies as the integrated category—requires one form of intention but not another. It requires the intention to obey the will of the Creator: if one dedicates the action to God at the beginning of the action, one's intention carries throughout its performance. What is not obligatory in duties of the limbs is the mindfulness needed throughout the enactment of duties of the heart. What is essential is intention to fulfill the will of the Creator; what is not required is continuous concentration of heart and mind.

This discussion of intention in prayer in VIII:3, the ninth way, leads us to the meditation of the Eighth Gate that we explored in Chapter 2. In VIII:3 (9), we have seen that discussion of intention in prayer and commandments introduces the image of a king. The image is drawn upon in the next section, VIII:3, the tenth way, to which we now turn.

Chapter 10 Awareness, Love, and Reverence (*Murāqaba, Maḥabba, Ḥayba/Yir'ah*)

The Ten Gates: Love and Reverence

We began this study by noting that, like many Sufi manuals, Bahya's book is divided into gates, each of which describes a state of awareness, a quality, or a virtue that the seeker wishes to embody, or a stage on the spiritual journey. In the final stage of this investigation, we return to a theme that runs throughout the gates: the goal of heightened awareness (*murāqaba*) and the related nexus of love and reverence. We will look at Bahya's discussion of this nexus in the Tenth Gate, on love (*maḥabba*), and then return to the discussion in the Eighth Gate, on self-accounting (*muhāsaba*). God's contemplation of a person invites a personal response. Within one's heart arises an ever-growing awareness of God's presence; this awakens a heightened awareness of one's own inner state and outer conduct, guided by love and reverence for God.

The Bible closely associates love (*ahavah*) and reverence (*yir'ah*), especially the Book of Deuteronomy. Deuteronomy does not draw a clear distinction between love and reverence; the two appear together in key passages: "What does the Lord your God demand of you? Only this: to revere the Lord your God, to walk only in his paths, to love him, and to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and soul, keeping the Lord's commandments and laws, which I enjoin upon you today, for your good" (Deut. 10:12; cf. 13:4-5). Love and reverence are not portrayed as feelings alone, but involve action; they are closely bound with walking in God's ways and obeying God's commandments. The Bible thus moves seamlessly from declaring God's oneness (Deut. 6:4) to enjoying exclusive devotion. Since the Lord alone is God, one must serve God with undivided loyalty and dedication—with heart, soul, and everything one has.¹

Rabbinic tradition addresses the nexus of love and reverence with multiple voices. Some thinkers describe the two virtues as intertwined or complementary; others portray a hierarchy of value or a progression. Some rabbinic thinkers depict reverence as a higher degree of

worship—as more effective in motivating action. However, the dominant voice seems to value love over reverence as a more enduring expression of loyalty. In times of suffering and crisis, who is more likely to remain faithful: the servant of love or the servant of fear?²

Sometimes the worshiper from awe—whose paradigm is Job—is contrasted to the worshiper from love, whose paradigm is Abraham. However, other texts suggest that this is not the correct way to frame the question—that the tension in rabbinic thought is not between love and awe, but rather between unconditional love and conditional love. The servant from conditional love is motivated by desire for reward or fear of punishment. The genuine lover of God serves God for God's own sake, recognizing that the Deity is unconditionally worthy of love and reverence. This is the view that Bahya develops.

The relationship between awe and love informs Bahya's ordering of the gates of his book. While he does not in practice follow a strict order of mystical stages and states, Bahya does set forth in his introduction two paradigms of the progression of gates. A review of these paradigms will be useful as we arrive at their culmination in love.

Bahya tells us that the ten gates represent ten root principles, under which we can find all the duties of the heart, whose number is potentially unlimited. While he does mention in the course of the book duties between human beings, the ten root principles are all devoted to the relationship between human beings and God. In his first paradigm in the introduction, he suggests that there is a logical progression to the gates; ultimately, all can be traced back to the First Gate, whose subject is pure affirmation of the unity of God (*ikhhlās al-tawhīd*). God is the only being who is essential unity and can be described neither by substance nor accident. Thus Bahya develops a negative theology, arguing that God cannot be known in essence but only by way of action, that is, through his creation. Bahya's Second Gate is thus devoted to contemplation of the works of creation (*ʿtibār*), which point to the wisdom of the Creator. The first two duties of the heart thus have a strong intellectual component.³

Bahya then argues that the unique, sovereign God establishes that creatures are obligated to obey him; his Third Gate is devoted to proving the obligation of obedience to God (*iltizāmu ʾāʿati llāhi*; translated by Ibn Tibbon as *ʾavodat ha-shem*). Since this One governs all and is responsible for all reward and punishment, his Fourth Gate argues for absolute reliance on God (*tawakkul*) and total surrender to him (*istislām*). God's unity also means that all action should be devoted purely to God; his Fifth Gate is the duty of purity or sincerity of action (*ikhhlās al-ʾamal*). God's Oneness means that he is deserving of praise, glorification, and absolute humility (*tawāḍuʿ*), which forms the subject of the Sixth Gate.

Given that we human beings are prone to neglect obedience to God, he establishes repentance (*tauba*) as the Seventh Gate, a way to correct errors and failures. In order to enable one to fully actualize obligation to God, he establishes self-examination, calling oneself to account (*muhāsaba*) as the Eighth Gate, a way to urge our soul to fulfill its obligation to God. Returning to meditate upon God's Oneness, he argues that pure affirmation of God's unity cannot be achieved as long as one is still in love with this world. Only by emptying one's heart from desires of this world can the soul dedicate itself fully to God. Thus asceticism (*zuhd*) is the Ninth Gate. Finally, he argues that to love and please God is the highest wish and greatest happiness, and establishes love (*mahabbā*) as the Tenth Gate. Bahya argues that all the duties of the heart are included under these ten root principles.⁴

As Vajda points out, this list is somewhat artificial; in practice, each of the duties entails the others, and we find abundant intertextual references. While from one point of view, love is the culminating virtue or synthesis of all duties of the heart, it is also true that each duty both entails and mirrors the others.

In particular, there is something significant in the relationship between the Ninth and Tenth Gates. In an earlier list in the introduction,⁵ Bahya does not use the term asceticism (*zuhd*) to describe the topic of the Ninth Gate but rather speaks of holding fast to fear of God, observing God (*murāqaba lahu*), and modesty or shame because of God's observation (*iṭīla*) of our outer and inner being.⁶ In the opening of the Tenth Gate, Bahya tells us that all the other virtues are stages and stepping-stones⁷ toward love for God, which is the highest rank for those who obey. Specifically, fear (*khauf*) and awe (*hayba*) must precede love, and this is why he places the Gate of Asceticism before love. One has to free one's heart from love of this world in order to establish in the heart true love for God.⁸ Fear or awe and their relationship to love are in fact an underlying theme that pervades the work as a whole and provides a key to Bahya's view of relationship to the divine. At the heart of this relationship is the Sufi concept of *murāqaba*. Let us look at the way the concept arises in the Tenth Gate and then return to its exposition in the Eighth.

Meditation on the Shema

In his introduction to the Tenth Gate, Bahya points out that all the other duties of the heart lead to the goal of love for God, which is why the Torah connects pure acknowledgment of God's unity (*khhlās al-tawhīd*) with love. The Torah achieves this by joining the first statement of the Shema (Deut. 6:4), which speaks about the Oneness of God, with

the second (Deut. 6:5), which enjoins love for the Lord.⁹ The fruit of realizing God's unity is the ability to love God with all one's heart. We can only achieve undivided love if we fully realize God's unity; we achieve this by refining our concept of what it is to be truly one (*Hidaya* I:8-9). Thus while modern Biblical scholars tend to interpret the term *ehad* in Deut. 6:4 as a term of loyalty—the Lord *alone* is our God—Bahya's interpretation is metaphysical: the Torah wants us to realize what it is for God to be truly One.

Bahya's Tenth Gate thus traces back to the First Gate, on unity, and brings the book full circle: both are meditations on the Shema. The two are linked terminologically as well. The subject of the First Gate is not simply acknowledgment of God's unity (*tawhīd*), but purification of acknowledging divine unity (*ikhhlās al-tawhīd*) while the subject of the Tenth Gate is truthfulness in love for God (*ṣidq al-mahabbah*). *Ikhhlās* and *ṣidq* are corresponding virtues in Sufi thought: both connote spiritual integrity.

Bahya connects Sufi language of spiritual integrity with the Biblical language of clinging (*devequt*), a term that becomes prominent in later Jewish mysticism.¹⁰ Bahya explains that when the Torah declares that one should love and cling to God, clinging (*deveqa*) means true and pure love (*ṣidq al-mahabbah wa-khālīṣihā*), as we find in Proverbs 18:24: "There is a lover who is closer than a brother [*ve-yesh ohev daveq me-ah*]." ¹¹ Later, in the Gate of Love (section 2), he cites the same verse and relates it to the love between David and Jonathan. He distinguishes three kinds of friends; the most sincere kind of friend is one who will volunteer property, body, and soul to please his beloved companion (*mahbūb*), because of the strength of his abundant love for him (*shiddat ifrāt mahabbatihī fi-hi*), as in Prov. 18:24, "And there is a friend that clings closer than a brother."¹²

Bahya thus extends rabbinic commentary on the Shema by bringing out its human dimension. The Rabbis describe what it is to love God with heart, soul, and all one has. Bahya emphasizes that Deut. 6:4-10 is depicting love for God on the model of human love. The call to love God with all aspects of one's being expresses an understanding of human friendship; there are some companions for whom one will not risk much, others for whom one will sacrifice all. One should behave toward God as one would toward one's most beloved companion. Maimonides extends the metaphor to erotic love and interiorizes it: just as when one is in love with a woman, one can think of little else, so should one be knit with the love of God.¹³

Bahya himself refrains from the overt erotic metaphor. He instead introduces a euphemism: the phrase abundant or excessive love (*ifrāt al-mahabbah*), which is a standard definition of a key Sufi term, *'ishq*, or

passionate love. For example, *'ishq* is defined in this way by the tenth-century Muslim humanist Miskawayh, who bases himself on Aristotle. The definition is found in the commentary to Song of Songs of the Egyptian Jewish pietist Abraham he-Hasid, who asserts that the subtitle Song "leads to the spiritual realm through the practice of inward and outward holiness as well as through abundant love [*ifrāt al-mahabbah*] of God."¹⁴ As I noted in Chapter 1, perhaps Bahya uses the definition of *'ishq* while avoiding the term itself because of its sensuous connotations. While retaining the language of love for God, he shies away from sensuous, erotic love. This is in direct contrast to Maimonides, who accentuates the erotic metaphor of Song of Songs but insists that this passion for God is intellectual, surpassing any physical pleasure.

Bahya also inherits certain dimensions of the language of love from Sa'adya. There is an interesting parallel passage to Bahya in Sa'adya's *Kitāb al-amānāt*; Sa'adya also discusses loving God in complete sincerity (*mahabbatihī 'alā al-ikhhlās al-īamm*) (II:12: 112). Sa'adya, too, intertwines the themes of love and awe; like Bahya, he declares that one will arrive at a stage at which one loves those who love God and hates those who hate him—although in context, Sa'adya's words have a more polemical sting. Sa'adya asserts that what gives rise to this fierce love is the process of purifying the idea of God from all anthropomorphism; he travels through the Aristotelian categories of quantity, quality, space, and time and offers the correct interpretation of scriptural phrases that might confuse or mislead the reader.¹⁵ Steven Harvey has thus contrasted Sa'adya's concept of love for God—which he characterizes as intellectual in origin—with Bahya's, which he characterizes as spiritual.¹⁶ We should note, however, that while Bahya's concept of love is spiritual, it does include an important intellectual component. Each of Bahya's duties of the heart has an intellectual as well as a spiritual dimension; for Bahya, heart and mind cannot be separated.

For example, we saw above that Bahya emphasizes assertion of God's unity (*tawhīd*) in the introduction to the Gate of Love. He returns to this theme in X:3, where he asserts that the prerequisites of love for God include two forms of sincerity (*ikhhlās*), two forms of humility, two forms of accounting, and two forms of contemplation (*i'tibār*). One form of *ikhhlās* is recognizing God's oneness (*ikhhlās al-tawhīd*); the second is dedication of action (*ikhhlās al-'amal*) to God.¹⁷ As we saw in Chapter 7, sincerity in action is the practical application of its theoretical counterpart, recognizing God's Oneness. How can one be exclusively devoted to God if one's God is fragmented? Bahya and Sa'adya are therefore rather close here: correct theoretical understanding of God is an indispensable dimension of purity in love.

Bahya also connects the two forms of *ikhilās* with *murāqaba*. In the same passage in X:3, Bahya suggests that through the process of undertaking the two forms of purification (*ikhilās*), humility, self-accounting, and meditation, the seeker becomes ready for purifying love of God (*ikhilās al-mahabbah li-llāhi*), genuine purification of one's soul to God (*ṣidq ṣafā nafsīhi lahu*) and longing for the divine (*tashawwūq ilāhi*). One of the strongest means to reach this level of love is through awe of God and God's commandments. He enjoins a meditative practice to achieve this awe: one should imagine God always watching over one (*ittilā'*). The goal of this practice is that one will always feel God's friendship, compassion, and benevolence: "Do not associate your love for him with your love of anything else, so that he shall not observe you [*yuṭṭali'u*] in any fear other than the fear of him. Let him not be absent from your thoughts, and let him always be before your eyes. May he be your companion in your moments of solitude, and may he sit beside you in your moments of loneliness."¹⁸

Bahya's description of this meditative practice echoes the meditation we saw in above in Chapter 2. The Sufi concept of *murāqaba* and the term *ittilā'* link the two passages.

Murāqaba and *Ittilā'*

The term *ittilā'* is the eighth-form verbal noun from the root *tala'a*, to ascend, as the sun ascends or rises. The eighth form *ittilā'a* signifies to look down from above upon something, and hence to receive sight or knowledge, to know, or become thoroughly acquainted with. Most specifically, it signifies to know the inward or intrinsic state or circumstance of something. A synonym is *ashrafā*, which also connotes viewing from above and, by extension, thorough acquaintance.¹⁹ In the divine-human relationship, the subject of *ittilā'* is usually God;²⁰ God is thoroughly acquainted with human affairs and with every aspect of the human being, inward and outward.

To see how Sufis develop this concept, it will be useful to return to the explication in Qushayrī, which we briefly visited in Chapter 2. We recall that the concept of *murāqaba* has its origin in the Qur'ān. In Sūrat al-Ahzāb (33:52), we read that God is watchful over all things (*wa kāna llāhu 'alā kulli shay'in raqīb*). The verse appears in a legal context discussing marriage. In the previous verse, we hear that God knows what is in our hearts (*wa-llāhu ya'lam mā fi qulūbikum*); that God is ever knowing (*'alīm*) and forbearing (*ḥalīm*). In the next verse, we hear that God is *raqīb*, watchful over all human doings, inner and outer.

Qushayrī opens by quoting the Qur'ānic phrase: God is over all things *raqīb*. He then quotes a well-known *ḥadīth* that defines *ihṣān*, the ultimate

level of piety in a triad that includes *īmān* (belief or faith), and *islām* (surrender). *Ihṣān*, the Prophet tells Gabriel, is to worship God as if you see him, for if you don't see him, yet he sees you.²¹ Qushayrī comments: "The saying of the Prophet, 'For if you do not see Him, yet he sees you,' is an indication of the state of heightened awareness [*murāqaba*], because heightened awareness is the servant's knowledge of the Lord's constant awareness [*ittilā'*] of him, and his constancy in this knowledge is *murāqaba* of his Lord, and this is the source of all good for him."²²

Murāqaba is thus the human being's heightened awareness of God's loving perception of him. God has intimate knowledge of the human heart; God is always observing, constantly aware. What the servant must do is develop ongoing attention to God's awareness of him or her. When the Qur'ān tells us that God is all-knowing, this an incentive to both correct behavior and correct motivation of the heart. The concept of *murāqaba* turns to focus upon the human response to God's omniscience: Sufis teach that human awareness of God can be cultivated and made ever more constant.

Qushayrī describes something of this process. The servant comes to this level by fully calling oneself to account²³ for the past, making right one's state in the present, keeping firmly to the path of truth, making good one's relationship with God by compliance of the heart, and guarding one's breaths against forgetfulness of God, observing (*rāqaba*) God in all one's states. Then the seeker knows that God is watchful (*raqīb*) over him or her and that God is near to one's heart. The seeker realizes that God knows one's states, words, and deeds. The one who is heedless of all this is distant from the beginning of attainment, and all the more so from the inner truths of nearness (*qurb*).²⁴

Qushayrī tells us here that self-accounting (*muhāsaba*) is a prerequisite to *murāqaba*. By taking stock of oneself and making good one's relationship with God, one becomes aware of God through all states, presumably through all states of consciousness—waking or dreaming, elated or melancholy—and perhaps through all external conditions. One is thus able to realize that God is near to one's heart. The more one is watchful (*rāqaba*) of God, the more one knows that God is always *raqīb*—the morphology of the word indicates an intrinsic, absolute quality (*ḥaṭī'*) of the divine.

The process that Qushayrī describes is an interiorization of what may at first seem to be an external awareness. One begins with the knowledge of God's *ittilā'*. God's watching over oneself. As one develops constancy in this knowledge, as one becomes more and more aware (*rāqaba*), one realizes that God is indeed *raqīb*, watchful in an inner way, and God comes to be present in one's own consciousness, which corresponds to the Sufi state of *mushahada*, the witness of God within one's heart.

An important point to note here is the Sufi distinction between stages and states. Stages or stations (*maqāmāt*) are stable and enduring; they can be arrived at through one's own training and effort. States (*ahwāl*; *sing.*, *hāl*), in contrast, are only granted by the grace of God; they pass away and disappear. They are a gift from the divine; they give the seeker a foretaste of the divine light even before he or she has earned it. Stages can be motivating forces along the path. Stations, in contrast, must be fully acquired; a station can only be surpassed if it has become one's own and all its conditions are fulfilled. There is a clear hierarchical order. Once a person possesses a *maqām*, it is his or hers for life; one does not lose it upon ascending to the next level.²⁵ Thus Qushayrī tells us that we must fully possess *muhāsaba* before we can ascend to *murāqaba*; we must make a complete accounting with ourselves before we can turn full attention to God.

Qushayrī writes in his introduction to the *Risāla* that he will begin by elucidating stations and after that will turn to states. *Murāqaba* may be the turning point, the last of the stations he enumerates.²⁶ What is important to note is that this sense of a systematic training process, a path of hierarchical ascent, is not inherent in the Qur'ān. The Qur'ān proclaims God's overwhelming, observing presence; Sufis teach a path of ascent to constant awareness of that presence. Bahya retains a remnant of the connection we see in Qushayrī. Although he does not adopt a clear curriculum, a systematic path of stages and states, Bahya does tie *murāqaba* to *muhāsaba*.²⁷

Bahya on *Itīlā'* and *Murāqaba*

Bahya, like Qushayrī, ties *murāqaba* with the human being's process of self-accounting; the passage in which he touches most extensively on *murāqaba* is in the Eighth Gate. One of the duties of the heart is to undergo a full inner accounting with respect to various truths about God and the spiritual life. One of the concepts with which one must come to terms is God's complete awareness of our inner and outer self, and its implications for the way we are to lead our life:

The tenth way of self-reckoning is a person's calling himself to account with respect to the Creator's observing [*itīlā'*] him in both his outward nature and his inner being, God's watching over [*nazar*] him, taking detailed account [*hifz*] of all his actions and every thought that crosses his mind, whether praiseworthy or blameworthy. He must therefore ever be heedful, vigilant [*'ala ruqba*]²⁸ and wish to improve his outer and inner life, for the sake of God. He should draw an analogy of a human being who is watching over [*itīlā'a*] him and observes [*yartaqib*] his movements all the time. Would it be fitting to indulge in doing something that this observing human [*murtaqib*] hates—especially if the person

has done him some favor, or benefited him in some way. All the more so, if it is his master, and even greater if it is his Creator watching over [*mu'talā'*] him. How much is he obliged to be modest, bashful, and ashamed before him, and be on his guard [*taḥaffuẓ*] not to disobey him, and should hasten to his obedience, and to things that cause his satisfaction and love.²⁹

The first implication of God's *itīlā'* is that one must be ever vigilant (*'ala ruqba*). Realization of God's *itīlā'* may not at first be experienced as an actual perception of God; rather—as the *ḥadīth* suggests—one should begin by worshipping God *as if* one sees him; knowing that even if one does not yet perceive God, nevertheless God is intimately present, observing not only one's every action, but every thought, intention, and emotion. God is intimately present in one's being, even if one does not yet see God there. This realization makes one cautious, guarding one's thoughts as well as behavior.³⁰

Note that the intellect, far from being the enemy of religion, is presented as a tool of spiritual development. Both intellect and imagination help one develop a gradual realization that deepens into an actual experience. Bahya thus draws an analogy, a parable: if one would realize that a human being was watching him all the time, and especially if that person was one's benefactor, he would not want to do anything that person would find offensive. This is all the more true if the person is his Creator, to whom one owes one's very existence as well as numerous blessings. One would not want to do anything that would displease him or her. However, while a human benefactor or king can only see one's external appearance, the divine king sees into the heart as well.

This image is well known in Islamic preaching; Muḥāsibī develops it at length in a small treatise on the understanding of prayer. He writes that in this world when we stand in front of a king, we are in a state of humility and submission (*yakhshā'u wa-yakhḍā'u*) out of awe and fear. This is true, even though a human king does not really know whether there is true humility in our hearts. We are not simply putting on a show; we are genuinely awestruck by kingship itself. How much the more so will this be true when one knows one is standing before the most sublime king who sees into one's inner being (*al-mu'talā' bil-damā'ir*). This is especially true at the moment of prayer, when we address God with God's own words.³¹ Whether or not Bahya drew the image specifically from Muḥāsibī, its presence in this passage attests that the image was well known in pietistic preaching encouraging devotion in prayer.³²

Bahya points out that it is customary for us to adorn ourselves with the best clothing we can find for our appearance when we meet with kings, rulers, and the nobles of our generation, because of their observing

(*ittilā'*) our outward appearance and behavior. Just so, we are obliged to adorn ourselves with obedience to God in our outward and inward lives, because of God's observing (*ittilā'*) them equally and constantly. If we were to imagine these kings observing (*ittilā'*) our hidden, inner nature (*bāṭin ḍamīrinā*) as they observe our outward bodily appearance, we would hasten to adorn our inner nature (*ḍamīr*) according to what would be appropriate to what they would desire from us. With respect to the Creator on high, we are more bound and obliged to adorn ourselves in obeying him in our inner being (*ḍamā'ir*), heart (*qulūb*), and limbs, for he is constantly aware (*ittilā'*) of them all and witnessing (*mushāhadā*) them always, and he is not preoccupied with one more than the other, as it is said, "I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins" (Jer. 17:10); "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, keeping watch upon the evil and the good" (Prov. 15:3); and as it says about God's watching (or: watching God; *murāqabat Allah*), "Be not rash with your mouth, and let not your heart be hasty to utter a word before God; for God is in heaven, and you are upon earth (therefore let your words be few) (Eccles. 5:1); "The Lord looked forth from heaven upon the children of men (to see if there were any man of understanding, that did seek after God)" (Ps. 14:2).

Bahya has thus made an interpretive move similar to that of the Sufi thinkers. The Biblical verses suggest that God is ever watchful of the deeds of humankind and is even aware of one's inward states, as in the verse from Jeremiah; God searches the heart and tries the inward being (the kidneys, which Biblical Hebrew uses to describe the seat of emotions and affections). But notice how the Sufi context intensifies the Biblical verses. We saw that, building upon the Qur'an's assertion of God's omniscience, Sufi thinkers developed a path of spiritual training to develop a constant awareness of God's knowing presence. In a parallel move, Bahya interprets these verses in light of the human being's response to this knowledge. If God is ever present, ever aware of our inner states, then we must adorn our inner being with obedience to God, just as we adorn our outward nature with noble raiment and best behavior in the presence of a human king. Once again, we see that duties of the heart extend the scope of obedience from outward action to inner thoughts, emotions, and intentions.

The concept of duties of the heart might be thought to be antinomian: a stress on inner belief, faith, and intention as more important than action. In contrast, Bahya himself sees his work as adding to the realm of obligation, not subtracting from it. Not only must we obey God in our behavior; we are obligated to cultivate inner devotion, absolute reliance, surrender, and love for the Almighty. To know that

God is present in our inward being can motivate the seeker to integrate and purify the inner life of piety. He has thus added to the realm of obligation both intellectual duties—to fully comprehend and prove for oneself the oneness of God—and emotional, spiritual duties, to cultivate inner emotions, attitudes, and even spiritual states.

Sa'adya had already paved the way for Bahya in his Arabic translation and commentary to some of these verses. In his Arabic rendering of Prov. 15:3, "the eyes of the Lord are in every place, keeping watch upon the evil and the good," he translates the verb keeping watch (*tsorof*) as *tutāh'u*, the fifth form of the verb *talā'a*.³³ Qafih notes that in most cases, Sa'adya translates the eyes of God (*'eynei Hashem*) with the Arabic term for providence, watching over, taking care (*'ināya*), removing the anthropomorphic sting of the image of God's eyes. However, in rendering this verse in Proverbs, where he translates literally the "eyes of God" (*ayna llāhi*), Sa'adya feels compelled to explain in his commentary that the eyes of God really mean God's knowledge (*ma'nā dhālika 'imuhu*).³⁴

In contrast to Sa'adya, Bahya's focus is not affirmation of God's knowledge but cultivation of the human response, an ongoing discipline that can gradually flower into a pervasive experience. God's *murāqaba*—the subject of the verse in Ecclesiastes, according to Bahya—can lead to the believer's own constant apprehension of God. As in the Sufi state of *murāqaba*, we have here a kind of *imitatio dei*; human beings imitate or participate in God's watchful presence.

This leads to what we might call one of the most mystical passages in Bahya, as he describes the ultimate result of such intensification. We have looked at this passage in Chapter 1. Bahya asserts that as the believer constantly calls himself to account (*ḥasaba nafsahu*) regarding God's *ittilā'*,

God will always be present³⁵ with him in his consciousness [*ḍamīr*]. [The seeker] will see God with the eyes of his intellect and will never cease to fear God, glorify God [or: his command, *amr*], contemplate his works, reflect upon his actions in governing his creatures, which testify to his majesty, greatness, wisdom, and pervasive power. If he continues to do this, God will soothe him and give him company [*anasa*] in his fearful loneliness, acquaint him [*atila'ahu*; related to *ittilā'*] with the secrets of his wisdom, and open the door of knowing him. He will take it as his task [*tawallā*] to manage and direct him, not leaving him alone to himself [*yukhalthi ilā nafsīhi*] and to his own devices, as it is said in the psalm of David, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want" (Ps. 23:1), to the end of the psalm. And he will become in the highest ranks of the pious friends of God, and in the most exalted of the levels of the pure; he will see with no eye, hear with no ear, converse with no tongue, feel things with no senses, and sense these things with no need of logic [*lpyās*]. He will not love one thing over another and will not prefer a condition other than that which God

has chosen for him. For he has tied his contentment to God's contentment, and connected his love to God's love. The loved is what God loves for him, and the hated is what God hates for him. Of him the pious one said, "Happy is the man who listens to me, for he who finds me finds life." (Prov. 8:34–35)

Like Qushayrī and other Sufi thinkers, Bahya asserts that the recognition of God constantly watching one can become a realization of God in one's inner being or consciousness, one's *damīr*. But we can also detect a Neoplatonic ring to Bahya's words: the servant, says Bahya, will see God with the eye of his intellect (*ʿayn ʿaqlihi*). This expression recalls a passage found in a treatise of the Ikhwān al-ṣafāʾ, whose philosophical encyclopedia shows a marked Neoplatonic direction. They write: "Believers, wise ones, and prophets witness [*shāhadāt*] the spiritual world with the eyes of their hearts and the light of their intellects [*bi-ʿayn qulūbihim wa-nūr ʿuqūlūhim*], just as inhabitants of this world witness things with their senses."³⁶

Neoplatonic thinkers do not make a sharp division between the intellect and the heart; spiritual witness is both an intellectual and an intuitive process. Hebrew poets such as Moses and Abraham Ibn Ezra and Judah Halevi likewise speak interchangeably about the eye of the intellect (*ʿayn ha-sekhele*) and the eye of the heart (*ʿayn ha-lev*).³⁷

For Bahya, God's seeing into the believer's heart is like a mirror: it awakens in the human being the ability to see God with the eye of the intellect. This seeing is, of course, metaphorical; Bahya's negative theology eschews talk of any physical form or image. The seeker is aware that God is present in his or her inner being. The response is one of fear or awe, glorifying God, contemplating God's wisdom manifest in creation. This in turn intensifies experience of God. The believer will know God not just as an awesome or fearful observer before whom one must be on constant best behavior, but as a comforting inner companion.

There is a dual aspect to the realization that one has a constant inner witness, aware of every thought and feeling, from the most sublime to the most abhorrent. The realization can be terrifying or comforting. The immediate response, Bahya suggests, is fear or awe. As the bond becomes more stable, more intimate, the constant witness becomes a companion, comforter, and real personal presence³⁸ who soothes the aching loneliness of the human condition. God stills a person's inner terror and befriends him; God keeps him company in his fear. And now God shares some of his own *ittilāʾ* with the believer: he acquaints him (*atlaʾahu*) with secrets of his wisdom and opens the door to knowing him.

Parallel in Sarrāj, *Kitāb al-Lumaʾ*

The next stage in Bahya's typology arrives at a concept we find in another Sufi source, the *Kitāb al-lumaʾ* of Sarrāj (c. 988), one of the first synthetic compendia of Sufi thought.³⁹ Sarrāj outlines several levels of *murāqaba*:

The third state is the state of the magnificent among the people of *murāqaba*. They observe [*yurāqibūna*] God on high and ask that he protect and take care of them. For God has distinguished his select, in that he does not leave or entrust them [*yakīlūhum*] in any of their conditions [*ahwāl*] to themselves or to anyone other than him, for he takes upon himself responsibility to take care of their concerns. He, the mighty and exalted, said, "He is the one who takes as his task to take care of [*yatawalla*]; protects, befriends] the righteous." (Qurʾān 7:195)⁴⁰

Sarrāj develops from this verse the notion of absolute reliance (*tawakkul*). God does not leave the righteous to themselves; he does not entrust them (*lā yakīlūhum*, from the verb *wakala*, related to *tawakkul*) to themselves, but takes upon himself (*yatawalla*) their concern or matter (*amr*). The fifth form of the verb *waliya*—which we often see translated as to "protect" or "befriend"—can also have the sense of undertaking, taking as one's task, taking upon oneself a responsibility.

The response of the servant will then be *tawakkul*: total reliance upon God. When one attains full awareness of God's *murāqaba*, one can receive the blessing that God take responsibility for all one's affairs. This is a gift with which God distinguishes the select. When a person is fully aware of God's watching over him or her, God will take upon himself all one's affairs; God does not leave or entrust the human servant to him- or herself or to any other human agent.

Likewise, Bahya writes here that God takes upon himself to manage and direct the servant. Whereas Sarrāj says that God does not entrust him to himself (*yakīlūhum*), in a poignant use of language, Bahya suggests that God does not leave him alone to himself; Bahya uses the verb *yukhallithi ilā nafsīhi*—he does not *abandon* him to his own self and to his own devices (*hīlatihi*). One gets the sense of the loneliness of the human condition, the existential task of being abandoned by God to make one's own decisions and manage one's own affairs. However, Bahya also quotes Psalm 23 as a Biblical statement of God as constant, providential provider of the believer.

Bahya describes four levels in this practice. His first level is the adornment of our inner life with constant obedience to God, just as we would for a human king who witnesses our external actions. Second, God becomes a comforting inner companion: not just a king to fear

and obey but a friend and protector, who offers companionship and banishes loneliness. Next, God takes upon himself our concerns, so that not only is God our companion; God guides all our actions and manages our affairs.

Finally, one arrives at a fourth, ultimate level: God seems to inhabit our own subjectivity. The person becomes a friend or protected one of God; one is among the highest ranks of God's companions (*awliyā'*). We saw in Chapter 1 that this passage is highly reminiscent of a *ḥadīth qudsī*, a tradition in which God affirms that he becomes the seer and hearer, the very consciousness of the servant. When God loves his servant, God becomes the very subjectivity of the believer. For Bahya, too, the person's subjectivity is subordinated to that of God. The rational mind is transcended; we can perceive or sense (*shā'ara*) without need for logic (*qiyās*). The response is total quietism and surrender; we gratefully accept whatever God delivers to us, for we love what God loves and hate what God hates. We transcend ordinary ways of knowing and allow God to inhabit our inner life. We surrender our own subjectivity to that of God.

For Bahya, then, recognition of God's omniscience initially brings an overwhelming sense of fear, shame, and awe before the pervasive divine presence. This initial response gradually gives way to love, companionship, and a kind of intersubjectivity, if not union. God is not only an overwhelming presence but a friendly, benevolent one. In shame, the human being keeps God at a respectful distance; in love, a person allows God's inner presence to be one of comforting intimacy, rather than fearsome or judging observation. At first, one is always on guard (*'alā ruqba*). Eventually, one is soothed and comforted; one surrenders to what God has chosen for oneself and finds peace in that surrender. Whatever makes God content makes the servant content; whatever God loves, he or she finds beloved. God will direct and manage all his or her affairs; the lover of God needn't be afraid of falling or being abandoned.

We might take as a parallel different models of human relationship. In one model, a person experiences the witnessing other as a harsh judge, ever critical of our faults—a taskmaster with a ledger book. The response is fear and terror. The second model finds a witnessing presence comforting. The observing other does not judge but soothes our loneliness; he or she joins us as a partner in the task of being human, a silent witness to our joy as well as pain. This kind of comforting companionship can lead to true intimacy (*qurb*), which is among the most elevated states in the Sufi path.

This passage can also help us understand the Sufi concept of *riḍā*, a term that occurs with some frequency in Bahya. We have translated it

as God's satisfaction or contentment, an intrinsically valuable state of affairs, in contrast to desire for human reward. Ibn Tibbon translates *riḍā* with its Hebrew cognate *raison*, the will of God. It can also be translated as acceptance. The Sufi concept of *riḍā*, like *murāqaba*, expresses a kind of *imitatio dei*. The god-servant finds contentment in that which makes God content; his or her soul becomes a polished mirror to reflect God's state of being.

Sarrāj in *Kitāb al-luma'* outlines three levels of *riḍā*. There are those who work toward the silencing of anxiety until they achieve equanimity in God in whatever misfortunes, comforts, deprivations, or bounties are allotted to them by divine decree. A second group are those who give up seeing their acceptance (*riḍā*) of God in favor of seeing God's acceptance of them, according to the divine word: "May God be accepting of them and they of him" (Qur'ān 5:119). They do not affirm for themselves any priority in acceptance, even if they have attained the ability to view misfortune, prosperity, deprivation, and bounty as all the same for them.

Finally, the most elevated group are those who surpass that and give up seeing God's acceptance of them and their acceptance of God in favor of the acceptance that God has preordained for his creatures. In this regard, Abū Sulaymān al-Darānī said, "The acts of the creature are nothing to cause acceptance or displeasure, but rather he accepts a people and employs in them the action of the people of acceptance, and he is displeased with others and employs in them the action of the people of displeasure."⁴¹

Bahya, as is his wont, is less systematic in his conception of *riḍā*, but he continually returns to the spirit of quietism this doctrine evokes. When we have become a faithful friend of God, we love what God loves, accept God's decrees, and find contentment in that which God wills.⁴²

Maimonidean Parallels: Awareness, Love, and Awe (Guide III:52)

Maimonides' teaching on awe and love are expressed in two famous passages: one in the *Mishneh Torah*, *Hilkhot Yesode ha-Torah*, chapter 2; and a second in *Guide* III:52. Both have roots in Bahya. Maimonides opens *Guide* III:52 by asserting:

The sitting, movement, and activities of a person are not the same when he is alone in his house as they are when he is in the presence of a great king: nor are his speech and easygoing, unreserved manner when he is with his family and relatives like his speech when he is in the chamber of the king. Thus one who is keen on achieving human perfection and becoming a man of God in truth should awaken [*yatanabbah*] and know that the great king who