

ב"ה

Written and Directed by: G-d*

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Question

Where does the concept of Hashgacha pratis originate from in the Torah & how has the concept evolved?

The concept of *hashgacha pratis* – G-d overseeing, guiding and protecting His creations, and His knowledge of them – is found in numerous verses throughout Tanach, although the actual terminology – *hashgacha pratis* – is of later origin. The concept is so fundamental in Torah that the Rambam counts it as one of the thirteen foundational principles of Judaism.¹ It is also mentioned explicitly in our daily morning prayers – “Blessed . . . Who directs the steps of man.”²

We will see that the concept of *hashgacha* as elaborated by sages preceding the Baal Shem Tov really includes three related concepts: G-d’s creation of the universe and His sustaining its existence and the natural order, including providing sustenance and nourishment for all creatures; G-d’s knowledge of all events, including man’s innermost thoughts; G-d’s sovereign guidance and control of events, including His intervention in events.

Part A of this essay will first present the definitive sources and views of the concept in historical progression. Part B will discuss the ramifications of the idea and the disagreements among the authorities up until the time of the Baal Shem Tov. Part C will present the view of the Baal Shem Tov and Chassidus.

(1) הקדמת הרמב"ם לפירוש המשנה (סנהדרין פ' חלק, עיקר יו"ד): "כי הוא, השם יתברך, יודע מעשיהם של בני אדם ואינו מעלים עינו מהם. לא כדעת מי שאמר 'עזוב ה' את הארץ'. אלא כמו שנאמר (ירמיה לב, יט) 'גְדַל הַעֲצָה וְרַב הָעֲלִילָה אֲשֶׁר עֵינֶיךָ פְּקָחוֹת עַל כָּל דְּרָכֵי בְנֵי אָדָם [לְתֵת לְאִישׁ פְּדָרְכָיו וְכַפְרֵי מַעַלְלָיו]'; 'וַיֵּרָא ה' כִּי רַבָּה רַעַת הָאָדָם בְּאָרֶץ' (בראשית ו, ה); ונאמר 'זַעֲקַת סֹדֶם וְעַמּוֹרָה כִּי רַבָּה' (שם יח, כ).

או בנוסח 'אני מאמין': "אני מאמין בְּאֱמוּנָה שְׁלֵמָה. שֶׁהַבּוֹרָא יִתְבַּרְךְ שָׂמוּ יוֹדֵעַ כָּל מַעֲשֵׂה בְנֵי אָדָם וְכָל מַחֲשׁוֹבוֹתָם. שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר 'הִיְצִיר יַחַד לָכֶם הַמַּבִּין אֶל כָּל מַעֲשֵׂיהֶם' (תהילים לג, טו)."

(2) נוסח ברכות השחר: "בא"י אמ"ה המכין מצעדי גבר" (ברכות ט, ב) – "כי מסגי לימא 'ברוך המכין מצעדי גבר'".

