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A STUDY OF CONTENTLESS LANGUAGE

IN JUDAH HALEVI'S <u>SEFER HAKUZARI</u>

ACCORDING TO THE COMMENTARIES OF

JUDAH MOSCATO AND ISRAEL ZAMOSZ

STEVEN ROSS CHATINOVER

Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of
Requirements for Ordination

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

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INTRODUCTION

Over the years, almost all scholars have
interpreted Judah Halevi's Sefer Hakuzari (hereafter,
the Kuzari) to be a "defense of the despised faith."[1]
This interpretation is based largely on Halevi's attack
(in the person of the חבר , the Rabbi) on
philosophy. Upon closer examination of the text,
especially as seen through the eyes of Judah Aryeh ben
Joseph Moscato (author of the commentary Qol Yehudah)
and Israel ben Moses Halevi Zamosz[2] (author of the
commentary Otsar Neḥmad), the Kuzari may not prove to
be the unyielding anti-philosophical tract it has been
thought to have been. To clarify this point, one must
try to understand the problems inherent in a philosophi-
cal analysis of Judaism and the subsequent problem of
"contentless language."

If one wishes to understand the Kuzari, or any
other work of Jewish philosophy, I contend that one must
first deal with the notion of an interface between
philosophical and religious thought. Is such a
interface possible? For argument's sake, let us answer
the question in the affirmative. The unstated assumption
throughout Jewish intellectual history has been that

the philosophical enterprise is not a problematic one.
Indeed, no conflict between philosophy and Judaism has
been presupposed; quite the opposite, in fact. All
Jewish philosophers predicate their writings on the
notion that Judaism and philosophy contain something in
common which can be dealt with in the languages of both,
without one doing violence to the other.

Let us return to the question and examine the
implication of an answer in the negative. Perhaps
Jewish philosophy is an oxymoron. What is, after all,
the goal of philosophy? Philosophy, an amoral science,
is concerned chiefly with the knowledge of the existant.
The philosopher must pursue this knowledge. Indeed,
one should strive to know so much of the workings of
the universe that one knows the difference between
veracity and falsity. One strives to always be

צודק (correct). Maimonides underscores this
notion when he characterizes the human animal in the
language of the philosophers. That is, we are each a

ח' אומר (rational animal), who may yet activate
his rational potential.[3] Judaism however deals with
notions of good and evil and the messianic "ought-to-be".
The system of mitzvot (commandments) are geared to
enabling a specific faith community to live out its
belief through specific acts. The goal of the truly
religious Jew is to be a   צדיק   (righteous one;
who lives according to the will of God).

The difference between philosophy and Judaism might best be seen in their differing opinions over the phrase da'at Adonai. For the philosopher, against whom Halevi speaks, da'at Adonai is the knowledge of God. One gains this knowledge by studing the realia of the universe. Once one has fully comprehended all that one has studied of the universe, the "knowledge of God" has been achieved. The Jewish notion of da'at Adonai is best expressed in Proverbs 1:7: " ‏ראשית ‏יהוה ‏יראת ‏דעת ‏ראשית ‏/ The fear of the Lord is the beginning of da'at," which can be best translated by the word obedience (similarly Isaiah 12:2, Hosea 4:1). One "knows" God through God's deeds and through observing the covenant, which expresses the will of God.

It is my contention that the interface between philosophy and Judaism is a problematic one, i.e., that the truth claims of philosophy of and by necessity deny the truth claims of Judaism. Halevi solves this problem by his use of contentless language. What, exactly, is contentless language? In fine, it is the phenomenon resulting from a process of equivocation, by which words or phrases which were thought to have universally understood meanings are emptied of those meanings. Or, if not emptied outright, the meanings have been radically altered. For example, when I say "God," I wish to convey the notion of a transcendant supremely powerful Other, possessed of a will, who acts in history.

Another person using the same word may conceptualize a universal ethical ideal; and so on. We all use the same term, but having no universally accepted meaning, it is a term devoid of content save what we, individually, give to it. To quote the Red Queen of Alice in Wonderland: "Words mean what I want them to mean." This privitization of language renders the word or phrase (and perhaps the related topic) unintelligible to all but those who accept your definition. Having reached that stage, for all intents and purposes, the language is contentless.[4]

The question arises that if the language is contentless, by the aforementioned definition, is this then a deliberate attempt on the part of the author to empty the language of meaning for no other purpose than that? Has the author emptied the language of one kind of meaning (in the Kuzari, religious meaning) in order to surreptitiously replace it with another kind of meaning (perhaps philosophy)? Or, perhaps, as was mentioned before, is the phenomenon of contentless language a necessary one when one attempts to speak of Judaism in the language of philosophy (without prejudice as to the author's design)?

It is the contention of this author that there are many instances of contentless language in Halevi's Kuzari. The passages to be cited will be quoted, translated and analyzed according to the interpretations of Moscato (Qol Yehudah) and Zamosz (Otsar Nehmad).

The analysis of contentless language will center on Chapter Two, Section Two, wherein Halevi deals with the topic of the attributes of God.

CHAPTER I

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES

Judah Moscato (Qol Yehudah)

Judah Aryeh b. Joseph Moscato, Italian rabbi, poet and philosopher, and one of the most important preachers of the Italian Jewish Renaissance, was born (circa) 1530 in the Italian city of Osimo, near Ancona. After the expulsion of Jews from the pontifical states,[5] he moved to the home of a relative in Mantua (where he lived until his death). Mantua was then one of the great centers of Jewish culture and scholarship in Italy. There he learned from the "foremost Jews of his time": the brothers Moses, David and Judah Provençal and Azariah dei Rossi. Sometime in the early 1570's, he became the official preacher of the Mantua community and in 1587, he was nominated to the post of chief rabbi of that city. He died there (circa) 1593.

Moscato was a true child of the Renaissance. His range of learning and knowledge extended over all fields of cultural interest (particularly philosophy, classical languages and the sciences) and he was better versed in them than most of his contemporaries. He was

steeped in traditional Jewish culture and in the rabbinic
and aggadic literatures. While being philosophic in his
outlook (being an advocate of Plato and of the medieval
neoplatonists and Arab philosophers and an admirer of
Judah Halevi and Maimonides), he was at the same time
an enthusiastic student of the Qabbalah, which had become
popular in the late 16th century and had begun to
influence Italian Jewish intellectuals. Like many of
his contemporaries, Moscato believed that ancient
civilization and all the languages of culture were
derived from Judaism and that it was the duty of all
Jews to acquire these branches of knowledge. He posited
that all the great philosophers had been disciples of
ancient Jewish kings and prophets. He argued that
philosophy was a Jewish science and had been part of
Israel's ancient culture and that it had been lost
during the long period of exile and was preserved only
in the writings of the non-Jewish students of Jewish
teachers (cf Nefutsot Yehudah, his book of sermons;
sermon #1).

His major literary endeavor was the aforemen-
tioned Nefutsot Yehudah (Lemberg 1859; Venice c. 1588).
This work was composed of sermons preached in Mantua
on the major holidays, on the special Sabbaths, at
weddings and at funerals. Scholars agree that his
sermons were a revolutionary innovation. Indeed, they
inaugurated a new epoch in homilectic literature.[6]

Delivered in Hebrew or Italian (though the collection in
Nefutsot Yehudah is entirely in Hebrew), they were, if
you will, exercises in rhetoric, designed to give
aesthetic pleasure to his listeners. He drew on his
vast knowledge of philosophy and of the Qabbalah in order
to develop ethical ideas and interpret them in a new
way; one acceptable to Jewish culture in Renaissance
Italy. Moscato's commentary to the Kuzari, Qol Yehudah,
reflected the new interest in Halevi in 16th century
Italy (and elsewhere). It appeared in an edition of
the Kuzari, posthumously (Venice, 1594).

Moscato also wrote some poetry, a prayer to be
used at a time of drought (1590) and several elegies on
the deaths of friends and scholars (most notably for
R. Joseph Caro and for the Duchess Margerita of Savoy).

Israel Zamosz (Ostar Neḥmad)

Israel b. Moses Halevi Zamosz, Polish talmudist,
mathematician and one of the early Haskalah writers,
was born (circa) 1700 in Bobrka, Galicia and was raised
in Zamosz. There, he studied at the yeshivah and was
appointed one of its lecturers. At the same time, he
took up the study of the secular sciences, particularly
mathematics. While in Zamosz, he wrote many notes on
the Y'sod Olam of Isaac Israeli and on the Elim of
Joseph Delmadigo, and Arubbot ha-Shamayim, a work on
descriptive geometry and astronomy. In this work, he

explains many haggadot relating to cosmogony and attempts
to vindicate their accuracy. In 1740, he went to Germany
and there published his Netsah Yisrael (Frankfurt on the
Oder, 1741), one of the first attempts to use secular
knowledge in interpreting biblical and talmudic litera-
ture. After the publication of Netsah Yisrael (about
1742), Zamosz lived in Berlin under the patronage of
Daniel Itzig (Jaffe), one of the founders of the
Haskalah movement. Among his pupils was Moses
Mendelssohn, whom he instructed in astronomy, mathematics
and logic. Through Mendelssohn he met non-Jewish
writers and scholars (including Gotthold Lessing). His
dedication to the Haskalah movement aroused the ire of
Jewish religious fanatics. He was compelled to
frequently move in Germany. He settled, finally, in
Brody, where he died on 20 April 1772.

Zamosz was a versatile writer, his knowledge
comprising rabbinics, religious philosophy and secular
sciences. He also published a commentary to Judah ibn
Tibbon's Sefer Ruah Hen (Jessnitz, 1744), on the
philosophical terms and foreign words in Maimonides'
Moreh N'vukhim. Most of his works were published
posthumously. These include: Nezed[7] ha-Dema (Dyhern-
furth, 1774; Lych, 1862), a work in poetical prose on
man's desire for luxury; Otsar Nehmad (Vienna, 1796), his
commentary on the Kuzari and Tuv ha-L'vanon (Vienna
1809), a commentary on Bachya ibn Paquda's Hovvot

ha-L'vavot. He also authored Even Yisrael, a collection
of responsa. This work like the aforementioned Arubbot
ha-Shamayim, are, as yet, unpublished.

CHAPTER II

WHAT IS GOD?

The two major problems posed by the issue of
contentless language in the Kuzari are those of what is
God and the will of God. The former shall center on the
issues of essence vs. attribute (including a discussion
on the essence of God) and the corollary issue of God-
language and attributes. The latter shall be dealt with
by examining the mashal (homily) of the judge and by
examining the issue of will and intermittancy in God,
and its implications.

In trying to come to an understanding of what
God actually is in the Kuzari, one first needs to
understand the argument of essence versus attribute.
Halevi begins Chapter II, Section Two by saying that

שאות הגוון כולם תוֹ מהמשורע
יימ את ותהנ'ות ספ'ות נלקחות
מהפע'ות הקרוא'ק לו כפי לפ'רותין
ונאמר [8]

All names[9] of God, save the tetragrammaton,
represent ethical qualities and relative attributes
derived from the way His creatures are affected by
His decrees and His actions.

This passage raises several questions pertinent

to our inquiry. What is the difference between the
tetragrammaton and the other names of God? Are there
distinctions between the middot (ethical qualities) and
tavniyot t'feiliyot (relative attributes) or are they,
in effect, synonymous? The answers to these questions
will lead to further analysis which will help to flesh
out the argument of contentless language.

Moscato (Qol Yehudah) begins to deal with the
distinction between the tetragrammaton and all the other
names of God, as he comments on the aforementioned
pericope.

> כי השמות מורים על המדות מן
> מהם המפורש כי מאד נעלה על כל השמות וגם
> מורה על מהרים ומדות כלל ופיקר.

> ...for the names of God teach of ethical qualities
> with the exception of tetragrammaton, which is
> greatly elevated above all the names of God; and,
> it doesn't teach of attributes or ethical qualities
> in either a general concept or in actuality.[10]

For Moscato, the tetragrammaton does not teach
us about God's qualities. He views it as ivvut lashon
(a perversion of language) to draw the artificial
distinction between the names of God and His attributes.
Let us persue this so as to see the clear distinction
between the tetragrammaton and the middot and tavniyot
t'feiliyot.

To hearken back to an earlier question, are there
three distinct categories, or, as Moscato implied, two
broad categories (i.e. the tetragrammaton and attributes
of God)? Moscato blurs the distinction between the

middot and the tavniyot t'feiliyot.

ולשון מדות בהכן יהב' יוכן על
דרך מאמר המורה פ' נ"ד מהראשון ח"ל הדרכים
לבי בקך היפתם (כ"ל מרפ"ה) והודיעו אותם הם
הפעולות הבאות ממט יה' והחכמים יקראום מדות
והמעין הנה איט שהוא בעל מדות אבל פעל פעולות
דומה לפעולות **הבאות** מאתנו ממדות, ר"ל מהתכונות נפשיות ||

And the language of 'ethical qualities' with
reference to Him, may He be blessed, should be
understood as it is in the Guide (for the Perplexed)
I:54 and this teaches[12] the Knowledge of the ways
which he seeks, that is Moses our teacher,[13] may
peace be upon him, and He told him of them which
are the deeds which proceed from Him, may He be
blessed; and the sages refer to these as ethical
qualities...The issue is not that God is possessed
of ethical qualities, rather that He does deeds
similar to the deeds which come from us due to
ethical qualities; meaning, personal qualities.

Here, Moscato sees the link between ethical
qualities and acts. Ethical qualities are not a category
which can be understood in a framework of moral
objectively. Rather, they are linked to actions which
we ascribe with the nomenclature "ethical qualities".
Zamosz sees the tavniyot t'feiliyot in a similar light.

תארים ותאורים נסמלים לאבורא ית'. ולשון בא שא דבר המדבק
כדבר באתו מעינ ודבקן באקרלי ולהיב ולאט במקר ני.
וכדמיון אה הם השמות אשר הזותק מתיר נו נטאנ כהנורא
ית' שטות המגיעים מן פעולותיו כפי זה הטעט כלט מבינים
מכלאות יצירתיו **H**

Characteristics and descriptions which are
attributed to the Creator, may He be blessed. The
language 'relation' refers to something which is
attached to something which is not from it[15] and its
being attached is by chance and haphazard and is
not related to Him. Similar to this are the names
which necessity[16] permits us to attribute to the
Creator, may He be blessed; names which come into
being from His acts from the little that we under-
stand of the wonders of His creations.

14

Moscato has a similar interpretation for the tavniyot
t'feiliyot.

וכאמרו הכנוום   בפליווני, רמז אל יחר התאלרים הנעפעים
ונבמכים אליו יחב' אשר להם התלות ודמיון בנבראוים בחיוב
א   בשליוה כמו שינאר נממוך כחלוקתו המשולשת

> In his (i.e. Halevi) saying the attributive
> descriptions, it is a hint to all the other attri-
> butes which are related and attached to Him, may He
> be blessed, which contain in them dependence and
> imagination in His creatures in the positive or in
> the negative as he will explain shortly in his
> tripartite argument.[17]

Both Moscato and Zamos? view the middot and the
tavniyot t'feiliyot as being derived from God's acts.
It is clear, then, that this distinguishes them from the
tetragrammaton (with which we shall deal later). It also,
however, raises an interesting point concerning the
middot and the tavniyot t'feiliyot. Although they are
divided into two groups, it is an artificial division.
The commentators treat them as being basically the same
thing: our interpretation of God's actions. Moscato
even says in reference to the middot:

הו הן התבנ'ות השלי'ות
שכבר נאמרו

> These are the relative attributes which he (Halevi)
> mentioned above.[18]

This is important becuase it means that these attributes
(to use a general term for the middot and tavniyot

t'feiliyot) are not objectively true. We view reality
and we see "the hand of God" (cf Exodus 8:15). In
addition to this quantification of reality, God as
m'khadeysh b'khol yom tamid ma'asei v'reishet (daily
renewing the acts of Creation), we add a level of quali-
fication to it, God as rahum, hanun (merciful, gracious).
It must be stressed, however, that this is a subjective
view of reality. Simply because we attribute certain
things to God does not mean that they are necessarily
true (nor, incidentally, does it prove that God exists).
At its basic level, the notion of attributes points to
a faith in God and not a proof of a God. I bring this
point to the fore so that one may see more clearly how
the commentators will structure their approach:
separate essence (etsem) from attribute, so that the
language of attributes may be equivocated. One of the
means of equivocation of attributes is to move it into
the realm of subjectivity (and thereby question the
existence of God as traditionally understood). Another
is, in dealing with nature of the attributes themselves,
to empty the attributes of meaning by the system of
"negative attributes".

This equating of middot and tavniyot t'feiliyot
allows the commentators to drive a wedge between God's
etsem (essence) and all of God's to'arim (attributes).
Commenting on our aforementioned pericope from the
Kuzari, Moscato makes a clear separation:

ר"ל כ' שאות,כלם חוץ
מהמורה על צאותו הם אורים
על מדות והבנ'ות שכל'ות [19]

This means that all the names of the Creator, with
the exception of that which instructs us as to His
essence [referring to the tetragrammaton], teaches
about ethical qualities and relative attributes.[20]

Moscato sees middot as not being linked to God's essence.

אמר זה כעד המדות השכליות
בזה המתבדש פיעלה זכרם בסמוך , כי להיותן הכויזה
ב מבלי מלוסיס פכטייס אמר היותן דבקות אל פלס כבודו

He said this in opposition to those ethical quali-
ties which are connected to the tetragrammaton,
which will be mentioned shortly, for their being
connected to Him without natural intermediaries
[it was as if] he said that they were attached to
the essence of His being.[21]

Zamosz echoes this view in commenting on the phrase

einam d'veiqot el etsem k'vodo (they are not connected

to the essence of His glory).

אינם שמות דמקים בו יתב' ביורו כל משמשותם אינב ענין בעלם כמוח
כמו שהם בשמות בעצמים כמתנלים לנו , אבל אינם מורים כלום ואינם רק
נמנול הסתך , ומה שיתהייג לעלם כמוח אין בם כח וסעלומות
לקראל לו פה כלל ולל

They are not names which are attached to Him, may
He be blessed, which, in their meaning, teach some
matter concerning the essence of His being just
as the corporeal names which are familiar to us,
but they do not teach anything. They only negate
their opposite and what is necessitated by the
essence of His being, we haven't the force or
strength to call Him at all.[22]

Clearly, the commentators have a notion that only

God's essence is the true expression of God's quiddity.

Our attempts to describe God are merely attributive and

cannot approach the true reality. Zamosz sums up the
point quite neatly in his opening comment on II:2.

> כלומר השמות שאנחנו הנבראים
> נקרא בהם את הבורא אשר ברא אותנו
> הנבדל ממנו בבדל עצום ואין אנו מכירים אותו רק מפעולותיו
> ומעשיו והוא יוצר הכל, ולכן כל השמות הם מדות שאנו
> מדמים ומציירים בשכלנו את כמותו בהם, ונם נזכיר שם
> בעת צרכנו לזכר מלבד שם המצורף כמו שיתבאר : זולת
> המצטמצרת . הוא לדעת הרמב"ם שם של יהו"ה, וכן הוא לדעת
> המורה פ"ח פרק א' מאמר ל', וכשהוא נקרא כמכתיבו נקרא שם
> המצרף, והוא מורה על עצם ית' שהיה והוה ויהיה
> ומחויב המציאות מבלתי צירוף לשום דבר שברא, שאלו לא
> ברא שום דבר והיה לבדו הוא נקרא בשם זה, להוציא שם
> אדני שאנו קורין ומכנים בו שם יהו"ה הוא בנירוף אל הנבראים,
> שאלולא נברא האדם וצבאות השמים העומדים לשמשו לא היה
> בשם אדון, כי שם אדון מצטרף אל שם עבד ואם אין מי
> שעבדו לא יקרא בשם אדון, וכן כל שאר השמות כולם בדרך
> זה : הם מדות . תשלום כדלהלן, מלשון אגני מדות, ר"ל
> שאנו מגדילים בהם כבורא
> 23

That is to say, the names which we, the ones who
are created, will use to call the Creator who
created us; who is separated from us by a great
separation and we do not know Him except through
His deeds and acts; that He creates all. Therefore,
all the names are ethical qualities which we
imagine and using our intellect, we ascribe them
to Him. With them, we will mention His name at a
time of our needs to mention only the tetragrammaton
as it will be explained. WITH THE EXCEPTION OF
THE TETRAGRAMMATON: According to the Rabbi's
opinion, this is the name of יהו"ה
and so it is according to the opinion of the Guide
[for the perplexed] I:61, and when it is spoken of[24]
according to its writing, it is called the tetra-
grammaton; and it teaches of the essence of God,
may He be blessed, who was, is and will be; whose
existence is necessary without any connection to
anything which He created.[25] For even if He had
created nothing and He alone was, He would be
called by the name [i.e. the tetragrammaton],
thereby excluding the name Adonai the pronunciation
of which we use for[26] יהו"ה which is
connected to the ones who are created for were it
not for God's having created man and the hosts of
heaven who serve Him, He would not be called Adon
[master, lord], because the word Adon is relative
to the word eved [slave, servant], for if there is
no one to serve Him, He would not be called Adon.
So it is in this fashion with all the rest of the
names. THEY ARE ETHICAL QUALITIES... this means
to say that with them we magnify the Creator.

For the commentators, the tetragrammaton describes essence; the attributes merely verbalize our meager perception. Let us examine the doctrine of attributes to see how this argument further plays itself out. Let us remember, however, that when we examine the categories of attributes, the only categorical distinctions which have any meaning are the ones which Halevi brings here and not, as we have seen, between middot and tavniyot t'feiliyot.

Halevi sees God's attributes as being divided into three categories. The first category is ma'asiyot (creative attributes). Halevi uses the examples of morish (one who impoverishes) and ma'ashir (one who makes another rich). Zamosz notes that:

אין אלו מן שאות הבורא, |הזוה| אלא ר'ל
שהפעולות ה'ואות מאתו 'ת'

These are not from among the names of the Creator, but (rather) it means the deeds which proceed from Him, may He be blessed...[27]

Moscato comments similarly.

וכמ תאר' הבעולות שראוי' לתאר בהם
הבורה| 'תארק כמו אתמ המורה בהואן 6 נ"ב

These are the descriptions of the deeds, with which it is proper to describe the Creator, may He be blessed as the Moreh wrote in I:52.[28]

Moscato offers another salient remark as he comments on the phrase: nilqahot meirom'mot ham'dabrim lo (they are borrowed from the reverence given to Him by mankind).[29]

המדות הנו כמוך ומתוך
מהולל וט' נלקחות נו ממה שימתך אליו יתננך מנד
המדברים לרוממו ולהדר שמו בקדש הלולים . פי
מהיותם מברכים אותו בדברים נקרא ברוך ומתוך,
ומהיותנו מהללים אותו נקרא מהולל . וכן כל התארים
היתחסיים קדוש רם ונשא ודומיהם . וכלם נקראו
כפניות ביחוד , להיותן מדות ותארים נפנות ונסמכים
אליו בהרחת שפתינו ממה בנמשך אליו מאתנו כמו
הגירוף באמור 30

These ethical qualities, barukh u'm'vorakh
m'hullal [blessed, the One who is blessed and
praised] etc., are expressed concerning Him from
what is connected to Him, may He be blessed, from
the standpoint of those who speak to extol Him
and glorify His name in the holiness of praises.
For from our being, those who bless Him with
our words, He is called barukh u'm'vorakh, and
from our being those who praise Him, He is called
m'hullal. So it is with all the relative attri-
butes: qadosh [holy], ram v'nissah [high and
exalted], and the like. They are all singularly
called relative for their being ethical qualities
and attributes which are related and joined to
Him in the offering of our lips[31] from what
connected to Him by us by comparison (relation)
as it is said.

For both of the commentators, the ma'asiyot are
attributive. It is only (!) our perception (or belief,
if you will) that one person's becoming rich or
another's becoming impoverished in some way originates
from God. Moreover, God is not blessed because of
something pertaining to the Holy One but rather only
because we bless God.

The second category of attributes is t'feiliyot
(relative attributes). Halevi uses examples such as
barukh u'm'vorakh (blessed; the One who is blessed),
qadosh (holy) and ram v'nissah (high and exalted).
Zamosz offers a lengthy comment on such praise:

הנה הנבראים ברצונם לחלל אותו

ולהיות כי יש מרחק בלתי תכלית בין מעלת הנבראים להבורא יתבלי ובאין כח ביד נברא שידע שום דבר מה לשבח את
בוראו , אך מצד הכרחת מניא שכל'ש בוער משובעד לחלל את יולדו , אנו מהללים אותו במה שנוכל לנסא בפה ולשון כפי
כמובן לבני אדם שהו הנקרא שבח ותהלה , אמנם הנני באין כלמון האדם כח לדבר יותר מבנתים והלולים המורגלים בין
הנבראים לשבח זה את זה ולגדל מעלת בני אדם והלולם , יולת זה אין לנו תלות וסיבות מצות על שבח וכבוד רק אלו התהלות
פה שבני אדם מבנתים זה את זה , וכתנונות אלו אנו מתירים לשוננו בלשי הבורא לשבחו כהם , מפני שא'א בשון אחר ,

ולולא זה היה השבח הזה גנאי בערך הבורא ית' , כמו שאילו
שבחנו את האדם בשבחים שמשבחים בהם את בעלי חיים כסוס
כפרד וזולתם כמו סיה השבח הזה לגראב בערך בני אדם ,
עאכו'ו שבחו בני אדם שם אינם נתפסים בהילול בערכו ית' ,
אך מפני שמכל'ש צריכים אנחנו לרמו אליו ית' ולעבד אותו
בתודה , אנו פוזקין לו איזה מין שם וקורין אותו בם מזין
ומכונך מהולל , שאוו מורה על שם פנין שם רק שהוא מזין
ומהולל , וכן קדוש שוא לשון ריתוק וכבול , וכל דבר הנבדל
ומרוחק הקרא קדוש כין לנכח בין לנשי הקרא קדושה
ואנו רולים לומר שכב'ו נבדל ומרוחק

ממנו כמדרגת מעלה , וכן רם ובשא כמונה שמדרגתו יתב'
מרוממת ובשא ממנו , ואם אמנם כבודו מלא שלם 32

Him, some characteristic name, and call Him by the
name barukh u'm'vorakh, m'hullal, which does not
instruct as to a characteristic name, only that
He is barukh u'm'hullal; and so it is [for the
attribute] qadosh, which is the language of
distance and difference. Everything which is
different and distanced is called qadosh, whether
for praise or for disrepute it is called q'dushah...
We want to say that God, may He be blessed, is
separated and distanced from us by a superior
rank(ing) and so [it] is [with] ram v'nissah
[whose] intention is that His rank, may He be
blessed, is elevated and exalted above us [as] if
it is true that His presence fill the world.

Zamosz sees these relative attributes as
reflecting the shallowness of descriptive character of
human language. Because we can't truly priase God, we
must resort to the language of praise which we use in
relationship to each other. More telling, however, is
his analogy of praise language: the language of praise
for animals is to the praises due man as the language
of praise of man is to the praise due God. It is
hopelessly inadequate. In addition, our praises reflect
our subjective need, not the objective truth about God.
Another point should be made here. What does it mean
to say that God is blessed because we bless Him?
"Being blessed" is not part of God's being but only
what we ascribe to Him. Therefore, is an objective
sense, it is not true that God's very being is blessed.
If that is the case then the attribute blessed has no
meaning for each one of us can see God as being blessed
in a myriad of ways perhaps even in mutually exclusive
ways. We shall return to this later.

The third category of attributes is the shol'liyot (negative attributes). Halevi, as examples, cites ḥai (living), eḥad (one, and rishon va'aḥaron (first and last). This category, more than the first two, points to the problem of contentless language. Halevi sees their purpose lishlol mimennu hafakham, to negate their opposite.[35] Zamosz elaborates on this:

לא שכוונתו לשבח אותו יתב׳ נמס שים כו אלו מהזום , רק
השנה הוא מה שה אין בו הסך מאתו כמדה שלאמנו מהאריים
אופו , וכמו שיתבאר

> It is not his intention to praise Him, may He be blessed from among these ethical qualities, rather the praise is what is not in Him [that is] the opposite from the ethical quality with which we describe Him, as it will be explained.[36]

These "praises" of God are not really that. Rather, they are negations of that which one shouldn't say about God, or that which is felt that one shouldn't say about God. The former reasoning implies an objective truth. God is alive; therefore you can't say that God is dead. The latter implies an uncertainty as to the objective truth: Heaven forbid that we even think that God is not alive; therefore we must say that God is alive. It begs the question as to whether God in truth is alive. Why is God not dead? Moscato offers the first part of an answer as he comments on the phrase:

ואת שמואל שלף ה׳ ולוה׳ם ח״ם וכו׳

And that which says that "God lives" and "the living God" etc.[37]

כי למדנו עליו שהוא הי הטוגה
לשנול ממנו הלר המות, לו שיאמר עליו היים לא
כהיותנו. ומקה היסיף נבאר כי לא הוצרכט לכל זה
לא אמרו לל הי ולהיים היים, כי הי וחיים הלא
בם הכדל לקל ולהיים וחבדיל בין קדש נחול כפד
מדה אלהי שובדי לגיליב הנקראים גם הם לאהים

By our saying about Him that He lives, the intent is to negate the attribute of death from Him, or that one might say about Him "living [though] not like our being alive. Now, he will further explain that we didn't need all this concerning ones saying "God lives" and "the living God"; for hai and hayyim, don't they (indicate) a difference between sacred and profane, as opposed to the attribute of the gods of idolators who are also called elohim?[38]

Moscato proceeds to quote several passages from the Torah and the Prophetic books showing that the gods of idolaters are always described as being dead. This distinguishes them from the God of the Israelites. Why, then, are they described as being dead? Zamosz, commentating on the phrase: Elohim meitim lo yih'yeh meihem ma'aseh (Dead gods; no act proceeds from them)[39] and explains:

כל הנעשה מן הפעולות והנפלאות
שנפעלות הכל מפעולות האלהים חיים אשר אנו עובדים אותם,
ואין אלהים עמו שולא ממנו שוב פעולה מבלי אשר יכן אתאת
ב׳

Everything which is made from the wonderful deeds in the worlds (?), all is from the deeds of the living God whom we serve. There is no God with Him from whom issued any deed without his having consulted God about it.[40]

Potential problems of polytheism aside, for
Zamosz the key criterion defining life in God is the
ability to perform deeds at will. Yet, as we have seen
before, God's doing deeds are something which we ascribe
unto Him and are not ontalogically true. "God's deeds"
are our subjective view of reality. What if everything
which occurs in the world has a naturalistic explana-
tion? One could then describe God as the ilah rishonah
(the Prime Cause). In saying this, one should recognize
that the entity called God, as existing and as being
in actu, has become superadded to the natural workings
of the world. God, as traditionally understood, is
no longer necessary to the structure of reality. The
word "God," as traditionally understood, either has no
meaning or has a new meaning which we have yet to
discover.

What, then could hayyim mean? Halevi says:
lo k'hayyoteinu hi kavvanato (not like our life, is its
meaning).[41] Zamosz says that the adjective hayyim intends
to convey no specific notion of life, only that God
exists (lo nitkavvein al eileh hahayyim raq al
m'tsiuto).[42] He adds that as for saying that God is
hayyim, we might as well say that we don't know what to
say (aval be'emet harei k'ilu anu omrim lo neida mah) [43]

The question of <u>elohim hayyim</u> elicits another
telling comment from Zamosz. He comments[44] that certain
attributes are ascribed to God because of the limited
understanding of most of the people. This is especially
true concerning the concepts of "living" and "death".
To the masses, says Zamosz <u>mah she'eino hai, hu met</u>[45]
(Whatever is not alive is dead). Here, Zamosz touches
on the notion, later delineated by Maimonides,[46] of
necessary truths (i.e. those ideas and beliefs which
are expounded as needing to be true in order for
society's structures and order to be maintained). An
example of this would be, God gets angry when you break
the law. The believer fears Divine wrath and strives
to observe the law.

However, <u>hayyim</u> is not the only example of a
negative attribute. Let us examine the notion of God's
oneness. In commenting on the phrase: <u>v'al derekh</u>
<u>hazeh nomar ehad</u> (and by this reasoning we say "one,"
etc.),[47] Zamosz quotes Maimonides[48] and Gersonides[49] in
saying that oneness is not an accident[50] superadded to
God's essence. God is one, but not through the attribute
of oneness. Let us examine this matter more closely
and see if the commentators can clarify this. What is
oneness? The commentators try to explain oneness by
saying what it is not. Zamosz in commenting on the
phrase: <u>ki ha-ehad etsleinu mah shenidbaqu helqav</u>
(because the [concept of] one according to us is that

which has its parts connected)[51] says:

כלומר
אין אנלנו שום דנר שהוא אחד באמת, כי כל דנר המוק
אנלנו והסא יוכל לדנר שהוא אחד איש רק דנר גשמי שיש
לו אורך ורוחב ונהסם במקום

> It is as if to say that we have nothing which is
> truly one, for everything which is understood by
> us and about which our mouths can say 'It is one'
> is only something corporeal which has length, width,
> and is situated somewhere.[52]

He then goes into a proof, as it were, offered by the
ba'alei m'didah (geometricians) that God's oneness is
special. He argues that were God corporeal, that is,
"one" as we understand it, God could be divided into an
infinite number of parts. Moscato is not particularly
helpful here either. He cites Ibn Ezra's explanation
on Job 23:13, wherein he explains the phrase: v'hu
v'ehad umi y'shivenu (He is one; who can dissuade Him?)[53]
by saying that v'ehad is a sod gadol (great secret).
Zamosz, in commenting on the phrase v'yad ehad (and one
hand)[54] says that numbers can be used only for things of
which there are many ein zeh ne'emar raq al inyanim
shehem nimtsaim harbeh kamohu.[55] The commentators, like
Halevi, are also quick to deny the possibility of God's
multiplicity lest He not be "one". The same problem
engendered by אחד is carried over to the word

ראשון . Zamosz comments on the phrase: v'kheyn
rishon lishlol hitaḥarut (and so it is with "first";
to negate the [being of others] coming after [God]).[56]

ר"ל מה שׁאמ' אני (ראשון וכו' א', 'ב), 'והאוהן אמנן אהו'(ראשון,
מבן' אשׁר, 'כך הונה השׁאן כל 'אומ ,רן של הבר שׁאם' 1ל
התחלה אֵיך 'אשׁ (רכו) לאון) הבשׁו') קום אוחר1'

This refers to that which is said 'I am (the)
first, etc. It is not understood from this
that He is the first, because 'first' is not used
in human language except for something which has
a beginning, as if He is first (before) those
who come after Him...[57]

He finds it unthinkable that anyone might seriously

think that another could come after God.

One might well to be tempted to ask: If the

characterization of God as "one" leads to nothing else

but negation, why then does Halevi insist upon it?

Zamosz in a long comment on the phrase vatomar bizman

derekh hadimyon b'guf hamitdabeq (You will speak about

time by means of imagining a continuous body)[58] says:

כלומר במן שעמו הלק אחד בא אחר
סוד חלק סקדוס לו , והרמי כשיהרוני הליץ נכוח זו אחר
סוד זו , אך כשׁאנו חדמין כנצמט קבוץ כרכב חלקי זמון זו
אחר זו אנו קורים לקבון הב ד"מ יום אחד או שנה אחה .
בנו לסברת הוכר שם אהדות שנה אללנו על ענין מקובן
ומחובר מהרנכ חלקים ותבטב אהד , והתאחדות סוה מקרא
אחד מאחר שאין דבר נבמי כשׁולם שיסיה אחד , ומה שאנו
קרין ד"מ מין אחד מהו שׁאחר מין כמוד אהד מאני שׁהכעירס
ומחוׁתב של כל אחד ואחר דומה או נוב, כמין הב נקרא אחד
מאני שׁמרקב כל קדמים וסיו נבמר אהד , כדמין זו נקרא
כל כמין אחד . ואין נומר מי שׁב אחד סורס בל שׁאין נמלא
חנגמט ואין חומה לו , שׁלב מחסין לאחר כסמנה סיס וחלי
שׁאחר יחד , ומשׁולב לא נאמר מלה אחד רק בל דבר שׁיס
חנגמטו רק שׁהוא נברד ממט , וכמו ד"מ לא יסיב לו כך
מסנסות כל מסנע לבדס מקראת אחד כסוד שׁהיא נמרדה
מן הרבון שׁהוא ד"מ מלה מסנסות , ואב סמיך נכל ותבטב
בוינס כסף סוד בל המחוסב מקראת אחד , וכך על זה ממן,
ספורב: כטוח סרבנ מד שׁיסיב יום לב שׁנב

That is to say of time whose essence is one part
coming after another separate part which preceeded
it. . . When we think to ourselves (lit. 'imagine
in our souls') of the collection of many sections
of time, this after this, we call this collection,
allegorically, one day or one year. So it is
according to the explanation of the Rabbi [in the
Kuzari] that the word 'unity' is used by us for
that which is collected and connected from many
parts and made one; and this union is called

'one' since there is no corporeal thing in this
world which will be one and just as we
allegorically call [something] one type as you
would say 'one of the species of oxen' because
the nature and essence of each and every one are
similar to each other. This species is called
one because if one collected all of the ones
like them and they were of the flesh, in this
way of picturing it, we would call the entire
species one. One would not say that the noun
'one' teaches that one of its same example
don't and that there are none like it, for it
is intended to convey this meaning, it would be
proper that we would say 'singular'. The word
'one' is never said only concerning something
which has another example like it, rather that
it is separate from it, and like that, allegor-
ically, if you were to have a basket of coins,
each coin by itself is called 'one' since it is
separated from the collection which is, hypo-
thetically, 100 coins. If you melted them all
and made one piece of money, each piece would be
called 'one'. This is an analogy to time; one
connects many spans of time until they become a
day or a year.[59]

Zamosz is aware of the problem of the word "one". He

realizes that to call God "one" could imply plurality

within God, or polytheism, or God's finitude (i.e.

problem of rishon). Yet, with all the problems inherent

in this attribute, Zamosz (and Moscato) don't try to

explain it away. Instead, Zamosz, perhaps unintention-

ally, gives us a deeper insight. He says that for a

"one-of-a-kind" existant, the word yaḥid (singular)

should be used. Why then is this word not used to

describe God? I would conjecture that this fits into

the pattern of contentless language. The word "one"

can be equivocated ad infinitum, as the commentators

have done. If we examine how "one" has been interpreted,

what can we correctly say is its meaning? It is much

more difficult to equivocate concerning the meaning of "singular".

After having examined Halevi's doctrine of attributes it appears that the only things which we can say in (objective) truth about God are that God exists and that God's oneness (whatever that means) is part of God's essence. Anything else which we might say arises from a context of a subjective view of reality and not from an objectively known truth.

Up to now, we have dealt with God's attributes, which are all characterized as being "relative"; true only in the subjective reality of relationship. What can be said truthfully about God in an objective context? What then, is God's "essence"?

As mentioned before, Zamosz comments that the tetragrammaton teaches us of _etsem haShem Yitbarakh_ (the essence of God, may He be blessed).[60] More importantly he says (later on in the same comment) that even if God had not created anything and was alone [in the universe], He would be called by the name י-ה-ו-ה . Moscato adds to this and says:

שאמר הָאָצְלִו כ' הזו צֿ(ל)p 34
הַחכְמַה ולֹ| חכַם סֿבֿ אֵצֿ|ל sֿ

> It is said concerning His essence that He is
> the essence of wisdom and that 'wise of heart'
> is not an ethical quality of his.[61]

Zamosz echoes Moscato's words.

כי' החכמה את תאר לו ית'
כובל הול אצא החכמה

Wisdom is an attribute of His, may He be blessed;
He is the essence of wisdom.[62]

Moscato subtly emphasizes the point in a comment

on the verse from Job (9:4): Hakham leivav v'amits koah:

"He is wise in heart; mighty in strength," while citing

Maimonides as a prooftext.[63]

היעלה לינט נחלה לטורא בבחינת עלמו, שהוא לא
חבל כו עלמו, אבל הוא התר בבחינה יהב ביט ובין
בחוסו כמוכר למעלה

Power (referring to amits koah) does not exist in
the Creator on its own account [i.e. it is super-
added to God's essence] for He is not powerful
per se. Rather it is an attribute from the
viewpoint of relation between Him and His creatures
as mentioned above.[64]

If power is an attribute, and not essence, does

that mean that wisdom (or being wise) is also an

attribute? Moscato goes on to say, in the aforementioned

comment, that amits koah is analogous to the name el

shaddai (God Almighty). Moscato says that in saying

el shaddai, one refers to:

סול והמציאות הפעולות בחאצ"ם
הבצ'ע

The creational attributes which are done by natural
intermediaries.[65]

In his immediately prior comment, Moscato states that

qualities which are related to Him:

מאון מאורים גבו"א אמר
הי'ותא פהקנות אלא 38 מ
כסוסו

without natural intermediaries one could say
that they are inherent in His very essence.[66]

As hakcham leivav (wise in heart) is not an attribute, it

is not described as being a parallel of amits koah nor

has it been described as having natural intermediaries,

one could conclude that it tells us of (a part of?)

God's essence.   Zamosz states it more frankly:

חכם לבב הכונה הה אהגו
יתברק מקור החכאה

'wise of heart'; the intent of it is that He,
may He be blessed, is the source of wisdom.[67]

The commentators both agree that wisdom is part (if not

all) of God's essence.   What, then, is the wisdom which

comprises God?   Zamosz answers the question with a

deeply profound comment.

כ' אומ פן ותואר אום פבר
החכאה מא פן ג'עת ה'

Nothing, in truth, has been described in wisdom
except the knowledge of God.[68]

What is the wisdom which comprises God's essence?

It is the knowledge that God is; that is true wisdom.

As we have seen from the discussion of attributes and

from the aforementioned quotes, all that we can say about
God's essence is that "God is."[69]

We have shown that God's essence is wisdom. Is
there anything else which can be described as being
God's essence? Moscato, in a comment on the phrase

אל פרק שאונתן מבג'ם אוותו וכו'

in the way in which we understand Him, etc.[70]
says that God is etsem hahayyot (the essence of life).
Yet, later in the same comment, he says that life is
defined by hargashah u't'nuah (feeling and movement).
Both of these, however, are corporeal properties. Since
God is incorporeal, God cannot be the essence of life.
Life (or alive) is, therefore, an attribute of God, which
we have seen to be subjectively true and not objectively
true.

What of light? Halevi makes an interesting
statement concerning light:

אבל אם ישאל השיאל אותנו הישנו העצם ההוא אור או חשך, היינו
אומרים על דרך העברה אור, מיראתנו שיקדים למחשבה שמה שאינו אור הוא
חשך

But if one were to ask us if His essence is
light or darkness, we would metaphorically say
light, for fear that it will introduce the
thought that if it isn't light, it is darkness.[71]

Given what we have seen so far, one might think
that if we say one so as to negate its opposite, that
we are in the realm of attributes, not essence. In
addition, Zamosz comments that if we respond to such
a stupid question saying darkness instead of light,

פ'ו/ לפבק הספר התשואבה אמרה
באומ פא'בו'בו ואור

it is no great loss in the answer even if we
say [that] it is not light.[72]

Further on he comments that we should answer light
because it is more inclusive than darkness.[73]

Thus far, it appears that only wisdom is God's
essence. There is, in my opinion, another aspect to
God's essence. Let us return to the question of God's
"oneness". Zamosz, as noted before, quotes both
Maimonides and Gersonides, in their agreement that
aḥdut (oneness) is not an accident superadded to God's
essence. One must therefore assume, as do Moscato and
Zamosz, that "oneness" is indeed an essence of God.
Yet, just as with God's existence, we cannot describe
this oneness. For in so doing, we encounter the
phenomenon of contentless language.

As we have seen thus far from careful analysis,
God's attributes do not reveal to us an objective
reality about God, but rather a subjective reality as
to how we perceive God. God's attributes may be "true"
in a religious sense, but not in an empirical one (i.e.,
one cannot prove them to be true). God's essence can
be described with two declarative statements: God
exists (a paraphrase of the first of the Ten Command-
ments) and God is "one" (inferred from the second of

the Ten Commandments). As Halevi, as seen through the
eyes of Moscato and Zamosz, has emptied God-language of
any objectively-identifiable content, these two (afore-
mentioned) declarative statements are the only means by
which we can truthfully talk about God.

CHAPTER III

WILL IN GOD

Having analyzed the question of "What is God?",
I now wish to consider the problem of the will of God.
Based upon the commentators' remarks, I shall also
attempt to deal with several corollary issues. Halevi
gives a focus to the question of will in God with the
mashal (allegory) of the judge.

הוא שופט צדק גזר בריש אדם אחד ועושר אדם אחר מבלי שישתנה בעצמותו,
ולא ירחם על אחד ולא יבעוס על אחר. ואנחנו רואים כזה בשופטי בני אדם,
בששואלין אותם בדינין ודנין במה שמחייבת התורה ויהיו אנשים זוכים בדין ואחרים
חייבים, והכל תלוי מניב השופט ודינו בלי השתנות בי שיניי. וכן הש"י פעם יקרא
אל רחום וחנון ופעם יקרא אל קנוא ונוקם, והוא יתברך איננו משתנה במדה אל מדה

. . .[God] is a just judge, ordaining the poverty
of one individual and the wealth of another. His
nature remains quite unaffected by it. He has no
sympathy for one, nor against another. We see
the same in human judges to whom questions are
put. They decide according to the law: some will
be acquitted, some will be found guilty. It all
depends on the utterance of the judge. His
judgement results without any change occurring in
him. So it is with God, may He be blessed.
Sometimes He is called a 'merciful and compassion-
ate God' (Exodus 34:6), sometimes 'a jealous and
revengeful god' (Nahum 1:2) while He, may He be
blessed, never changes from one attribute to
another.[74]

Halevi's allegory fits quite well into the philosophical
framework which sees God as being eino mitpa'el
(unaffected). How do the commentators understand this
passage? Moscato underscores the notion that the judge

has no feelings one way or another toward the defendant

(as he quotes from Maimonides' Mishneh Torah):

> כד חמרו כד טיטוב כמרסה
> לרב ותא כלתי טובב ולא קולף עליו ולא מיתב טו,
> אבל כפי מה פירלתו מהתחייבו בו ויבב מר בתבטל
> הפטולה הלאם מן התוטלת הטטומה במס רב

. . .until he [Maimonides] says that 'up till
[and including when] he will command death by
fire, he is without anger and doesn't become
angry with [the defendant] and doesn't despise
him, even though they have shown him [the judge]
that which incriminates him [the defendant].
[Rather], he [the judge] will take note of what
this act will bring for the greater benefit of
a vast nation, etc.[75]

If the judge thinks about anything, according to Mos-
cato, it is the benefit to society which will be
obtained by seeing that the punishments for disobeying
the law are correctly meted out. Zamosz sees the human
judge as exercising some judgment.

> כמון מה,
> ותא טילי מנביי פתיו מיינב נטה לתד ומויד דין ושטס
> סתם את, ותא לים במתות מחמיס כפח הרלטן וכמתח מטבב נבה כבי ואתו מטבוב בול, רק מויב סן פאי טולתב טו
> אכ מיבר וטמסטמ

Like this matter. That which comes from Him
are of grace at one time and matters of punish-
ment at another. This is not in the quality of
mercy in the first instance and in the quality
of anger in the second instance, and He does not
change at all. He commands only thusly because
it appears to him that his is righteousness and
judgment.[76]

However, Zamosz takes a less affective view of
the "Judge of all the Earth."[77]

> לא פצוה בצר ותב טתא כרחמים כוטן טמטיב לתכח, ונכטס כטח טמלכו ומלמר אותו.
> וקן אב ד'מ יבות אתד אתו כיוב ותא סוב נב וינקט מטט טוכנו כל אבי ואמר לו יטבב,
> ואם אמר יבות אתו לפאב ותא אי מתתבר בחב כטבי וטולמו נברבב מתד מלא יכבר
> בי, כרי טוב הרלטן קצל טטוב כיב טוכתו וקטמי ראב רטמ מחמח רטתו, והרמלא לא ותמוב
> בטת מן הטתיס, במלט אתי מ' לא בירי (טולתי ג')

It is not like the ethical quality of mortal
beings (lit. 'flesh and blood'). At a time when
one, mercifully, does good for one's fellow, and,
in anger, at a time when he beats him and causes
him pain. So it is, allegorically, when one comes
to God on a given day, and he has a good heart and
requests from God His goodness, God will do for
him all that he requests. If another comes before
God the day after, one who is just the opposite,
due to his great anger and his sorrow; with such
a request, wouldn't God rebuke him? Behold, the
first one received goodness on the day of his
goodness and the second saw evil because of his
evilness and the Holy One, blessed be He, will
not change in one instance from amongst all (such)
instances, as it is written: For I am the Lord--
I have not changed (Malachi 3:6).[78]

Zamosz is saying that the recompense for our deeds
is according only to those deeds. This implies that the
Jewish notion of s'khar v'onesh (reward and punishment)
is an automatic process. There need not be a God in
the process. The process is not unlike feeding informa-
tion into a programmed computer: information in,
information out. We put information cards with our
deeds into the computer and receive "reward cards" or
"punishment cards." The origin of the computer and
its having been programmed could be likened to God
having established ordering principles for the universe,
and then ceasing to act. Why, then, refer to God as
judge? Doesn't "judge" imply that our actions are
quantified and qualified by one who will make decisions
about us based upon those actions? The term "judge" is
used because of its traditional connotations in Judaism.
Yet, as we have seen, it is a term whose traditional
meaning has been emptied of content. In this context,

it is not surprising that Halevi analogizes the judge to
a rock, for this analogy hints at a favorite verse used
by Jewish philosophers (e.g. Mainimonides in the Guide
I:16, II:28; III:12, 17, 24, 25, 49, 53 as well as
Halevi, himself, III:11): Hatsur tamim po'alo ki khol
d'rakhav mishpat [The Rock! His deeds are perfect; Yea,
all His ways are just (Deut. 32:4)].   God, the judge of
all, has no accidents added to His essence. His deeds
are perfect because He follows a known pattern: God
rewards the righteous (i.e. legal) deed and punishes the
sinful (i.e. illegal) deed. This is why all His ways
are just. They do not vary with time, or from instance
to instance. His judgements are rendered with
equanimity.[80]

In examining the allegory of the judge, we have
seen that the recompense for our deeds is defined by an
automatic process and not as tradition views it.[81]
This however, bespeaks a larger problem. Halevi, as
well as Moscato and Zamosz, have been quick to point out
in all their arguments that God is incorporeal. Yet,
will, according to the philosophers which Halevi cites
(and to whose opinion others such as Maimonides and
Gersonides subscribe) is a corporeal function. Will
implies that a body moves from a state of being in
potentia to a state of being in actu. Corporeal bodies
are sometimes in act and sometimes potentially in act
(or, "at rest"). Will is, therefore, intermittant.

If God is incorporeal, then God cannot possess a will for
that implies God's corporeality and God's intermittancy
of action. Let us couple our conclusions concerning will
in God and our previous discussion on the allegory of
the judge. How then should we understand the notion of
God's providence? Is it individual or national? Is it
particular or universal? Is it even as we understand it?
Zamosz states that God's hesed (lovingkindness) never
ceases from us, and that that which is due someone by
virtue of their deeds will accrue to them only by
virtue of God's providence. This righteous, or correct,
recompense is brought about because gazrah hokhmato
(God's wisdom decreed it) or by means of g'zeirat
hokhmato (the decree of God's wisdom).[82]

What is this hokhmah of which Halevi speaks? If
it is only our actions which determine whether we are
requited for good or for evil, then hokhmah can only be
the governing principle which so structures the universe.
Could not this governing principle be the laws of the
divinely-given Torah? This brings us back to the problem
of will. If God can not act intermittantly, then God
cannot reveal at one time and not at another.[83] What-
ever the Torah is, it therefore cannot be divinely-
revealed law. If not divinely-revealed, then Torah is
just what its literal translation conveys--a teaching.
If this teaching is the governing principle of the
universe, then it is mortal man who has "revealed" this

truth.

We are rapidly running out traditional concepts.
What of creation? Whatever else we can't say, surely
Halevi must unequiviocally support the notion of ḥidush
(creation) and deny qadmut (eternality). Commenting on
the phrase: va'asah im Moshe v'Yisrael (And so God did
with Moses and Israel, etc.,[84] Zamosz says that wonders
done by God for Moses and the Israelites would be:[85]

יאלר סאק בלב העם שזה היוצר וזוא הבורא ולא הקצר ידו מנגרחא בריאה חדשה כבל הצורך , והרי זה כא נלמד ונמצא למד
ומתבדר להם שברוחא חדש השולם מאין , וזאח שות האמונג ולאם הסורה
, נאמן לא

> So that no doubt would remain in the nation's
> heart that He is the Fashioner, He is the
> Creator and He will not be powerless to create
> a new creation if the need arises. Surely, this
> comes to teach and exists to teach and it will
> be clarified to them that the Creator created
> ex nihilo and this is the pinnacle of faith and
> the chief point of the Torah.

The cornerstone of the Torah is known only as an act of
faith and not as an objective reality. Zamosz says that
the divine essence (the Inyan haElohi or IE) is that
God is HaYotzeir v'ha'M'ḥayeh et Kulam (The Creator and
Giver of life to all).[86]

Creation is a temporal act (that is, done at one
time and not at another). God, being an incorporeal
being, must be perpetually in actu. He cannot move from
potency to act. God cannot, therefore, move from poten-
tial Creator to Creator in actu. The only conclusion
which one can draw from this is that the term "Creator,"
too, moves into the realm of contentless language, and

that the notion of a _creatio ex nihilo_ by God, as under-
stood by the commentators, seems impossible.

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CONCLUSION

When one examines Halevi's concept of God, the essence of God and the will of God, one is led to the conclusion that much of the language which we use conveys no objectively true content. In fact, all that we can say which carries unequivocated content is that God is and that God is one. There seems to be universal agreement that these two simple declarative statements inform us of God's essence. Traditional God-attribute language, of all three varieties: creative, relative and negative, can be very easily emptied of any objective content. They reflect the subjective reality of human percpetion but not an objective (that is, universally-knowable) reality. Once analyzed, in Halevi's system, traditional concepts such as hashgaḥah (providence), hi'galut (revelation) and ḥiddush (creation) no longer convey the content with which Jewish tradition has invested them. Unquestionably, contentless language is an integral part of Halevi's system of "God-language."

What of Halevi's intent? Did Halevi wish to empty God-language of content or was this unavoidable given his choice to make an anti-philosophical argument conform to certain basic tenets of philosophy?[87]

In the beginning of the Kuzari (I:1), the
philosopher lays out his argument:

הָאֱלוֹהַּ אֵין לְפָנָיו לֹא רָצוֹן וְלֹא שִׂנְאָה, כִּי הוּא יִתְ' מְרוֹמָם מֵעַל כָּל
רָצוֹן וְכַוָּנָה, שֶׁהֲרֵי הַכַּוָּנָה מוֹרָה עַל הֱיוֹת הַמִּכַוֵּן חָפֵץ בְּדָבָר הֶחָסֵר לוֹ וְרַק
בְּבוֹא הַחֵפֶץ יַגִּיעַ לִשְׁלֵמוּת, וְכָל עוֹד לֹא יָבוֹא זֶה – הַחֶסְרוֹן בְּעֵינוֹ עוֹמֵד.
וּבְכֵן מְרוֹמָם הוּא הָאֱלוֹהַּ, לְדַעַת הַפִּילוֹסוֹפִים, מֵעַל יְדִיעַת הַפְּרָטִים,
כִּי הַפְּרָטִים מִשְׁתַּנִּים מִרֶגַע לָרֶגַע. אוּלָם כִּידִיעַת הָאֱלוֹהַּ לֹא יִתָּכֵן כָּל שִׁנּוּי.
נִמְצָא שֶׁאֵין הָאֱלוֹהַּ מַכִּיר אוֹתְךָ, וְעַל אַחַת כַּמָּה וְכַמָּה אֵינוֹ יוֹדֵעַ כַּוָּנָתְךָ
יְמַעֲשֶׂיךָ, וְכָל שֶׁכֵּן אֵינוֹ שׁוֹמֵעַ תְּפִלָּתְךָ וְלֹא רוֹאֶה תְּנוּעוֹתֶיךָ, וְאִם אָמְנָם
יֹאמְרוּ הַפִּילוֹסוֹפִים כִּי הָאֱלוֹהַּ בְּרָאֶךָ – אֵין מַאֲמָרָם זֶהכִי אִם עַל דֶּרֶךְ
הַהַשְׁאָלָה: כִּי הָאֱלוֹהַּ הוּא אָמְנָם עִלַּת הָעִלּוֹתִי בְּהִתְהַוּוֹת כָּל נִבְרָא, אַךְ
הַנִּבְרָא לֹא בְּכַוָּנָה מֵאֵת הָאֱלוֹהַּ נִתְהַוָּה.

וּמֵעוֹלָם לֹא בָּרָא הָאֱלוֹהַּ אָדָם, כִּי הָעוֹלָם קַדְמוֹן; וּמֵאָז מֵעוֹלָם נוֹלַד
כָּל אָדָם מֵאָדָם שֶׁקָּדַם לוֹ, וְהֻרְכְּבוּ בוֹ. צוּרוֹת וּתְכוּנוֹת מֵזְנִיּוֹת וּמִדּוֹת
מֵאָבִיו וּמֵאִמּוֹ וּמִשְּׁאָר קְרוֹבָיו, וְאֵיכְיוֹת הַתְּלוּיוֹת בָּאַקְלִים וּבָאָרֶץ
הַמּוֹלֶדֶת, בַּמְּזוֹנוֹת וּבַמַּיִם, וּבְכֹחוֹת הַגַּלְגַּלִּים וּקְבוּצוֹת הַכּוֹכָבִים וְהַמַּזָּלוֹת
כְּפִי מַעֲרָדָם בַּמַּעֲרָכָה. **88**

There is no favour or dislike in [the] nature
of] God, because He is above desire and inten-
tion. A desire intimates a want in the person
who feels it, and not till it is satisfied does
he become (so to speak) complete. If it remains
unfulfilled, he lacks completion. In a similar
way He is, in the opinion of philosophers, above
the knowledge of individuals, because the latter
change with the times, whilst there is no change
in God's knowledge. He, therefore, does not
know thee, much less thy thoughts and actions,
nor does He listen to thy prayers, or see thy
movements. If philosophers say that He created
thee, they only use a metaphor, because He is
the Cause of causes in the creation of all
creatures, but not because this was His intention
from the beginning. He never created man. For
the world is without beginning, and there never
arose a man otherwise than through one who came
into existence before him, in whom were united
forms, gifts, and characteristics inherited
from father, mother, and other relations, besides
the influences of climate, countries, foods and
water, spheres, stars and constellations. [89]

In fine, the philosopher speaks of a God who lacks desire

and is unaffected (or, alternatively, has no will) and

who did not create the world (that is, an entailment of
denial of will in God). Although he criticizes the
philosopher, Halevi in effect, supports the basic tenets
of philosophy mentioned in the pericope. This returns
us to our question: were the conclusions which have
been drawn here from Halevi's argument intended, acciden-
tal or unavoidable? It is my conclusion that if one
chooses to speak about religion, while trying to uphold
certain basic tenets of philosophy, one has embarked
upon a losing venture. It seems that Halevi has become
trapped in what Dr. Eugene Borowitz, a noted theologian,
has called a "category error."[90] A "category error" is
the (ultimately unsuccessful) attempt to make the
arguments of one world applicable to the arguments of
another world. Philosophy sees the world as a struc-
tured order of phenomena. The arguments of philosophy
will not conclude that God performs miracles, or reveals
at one time and not at another, or takes note of indi-
viduals qua individuals and not in a collective, univer-
sal fashion. It is my firm contention that Halevi did
not willfully intend to render God-language contentless.
There is none of Maimonides' concealed lucidity[91] in
Halevi's thought; none of Maimonides' hidden doctrine.[92]
Halevi, unintentionally, was the model precursor to
Maimonides and Gersonides in trying to synthesize, as
it were, philosophy and theology. If the study of
contentless language in the Kuzari has shown anything,

it is that the enterprise of Jewish philosophy is a risky
one for the traditional Jewish thinker. If one seeks the
God of traditional Judaism in such a synthesis, such a
God is not likely to be found save in hollow words and
contentless language.

לך דומ'ה תהלת

To you, silence is praise.[93]

FOOTNOTES

[1]Paraphrase from The Kuzari I:1.

[2]I'm following the spelling here of Max Seligsohn
(Jewish Encyclopedia, vol. XII, p. 633) as opposed to
that of Getzel Kressel (Encyclopedia Judaica, vol. 16,
p. 929).

[3]Maimonides' ‎לשכל ‎הפועל /The Active Intellect or AI;
of Guide I:68, II:4, 6, 18, 36.

[4]This nomenclature assumes a "Webster Dictionary"
system of languages; i.e., that words have universally
accepted meanings, not arbitrary ones.

[5]There is a question as to whether it was the edict
of expulsion of Pope Paul IV in 1554 (Ismar Elbogen,
Jewish Encyclopedia, vol. IX, p. 38) or that of Pope
Pious V in 1569 (Joseph Dan, Encyclopedia Judaica, vol. 12,
p. 357).

[6]For a more thorough analysis of Moscato's place
historically in the development of Jewish preaching,
one should read Israel Bettan, Studies on Jewish Preach-
ing (1939), 192-225; idem, in: HUAC, 6(1929), 297-326.

[7]Nezed, according to Getzel Kressel (op. cit.);
Nezer, according to Max Seligsohn (op. cit.).

[8]Literally "are."

[9]Kuzari II:2, p. 5.

[10]II:2, p. 5.

[11]Ibid.

[12]Using ♪5 as zeh lomeyd and not zeh l'shono.

[13]Who sought to know the ways of God (cf Exodus 33:13).

[14]II:2 p. 5, 6.

[15]i.e., has no connection with its being.

[16]Lit. "that which forces me".

[17]II:2, p. 6.

[18]II:2, p. 8.

[19]II:2, p. 6.

[20]Which we have previously seen are the same things.

[21]II:2, p. 13-14.

[22]II:2, p. 13.

[23]II:2, p. 5.

[24]Lit. "called".

[25]i.e. His existence is not dependent upon anything that He created.

[26]Free sense translation of a difficult Hebrew passage.

[27]II:2, p. 8.

[28]Ibid.

[29]II:2, p. 8.

[30]Ibid.

[31]Hint to "Shofar Service" in High Holy Day liturgy of Gates of Repentance, New York: CCAR 1978, 143 et. al.

[32]II:2, p.8-9.

[33]I am treating b'feh v'lashon as a hendiadys.

[34]I am treating milot v'teivot as a hendiadys.

[35]II:2, p. 9.

[36]Ibid.

[37]II:2, p. 11.

[38]Ibid.

[39]II:2, p. 11-12.

[40]Ibid.

[41]II:2, p. 11.

[42]Ibid.

[43]Ibid.

[44]II:2, p. 10.

[45]II:2, p. 10.

[46]The Guide for the Perplexed III:27, 28.

[47]II:2, p. 12.

[48]The Guide for the Perplexed I:57.

[49]The Wars of the Lord Treatise 5, Chapter 3,
Section 12.

[50]Accident in the sense of "a nonessential quality"
(Webster's Seventh Collegiate Dictionary, G&C Merriam Co.,
Springfield, Mass., 1970).

[51]II: 2, p. 12.

[52]Ibid.

[53]Ibid.

[54]Ibid.

[55]Ibid.

[56] II:2, p. 13.

[57] Ibid.

[58] II:2, p. 12, 13.

[59] II:2, p. 13.

[60] II:2, p. 5.

[61] II:2, p. 6.

[62] II:2, p. 15.

[63] The Guide to the Perplexed I:53.

[64] II:2, p. 15.

[65] II:2, p. 14.

[66] II:2, p. 13.

[67] II:2, p. 15.

[68] Ibid.

[69] The implication of this statement will be discussed in the conclusion.

[70] II:2, p. 9.

[71] II:2, p. 10.

[72] Ibid.

[73] II:2, p. 10, 11.

[74] II:2, p. 7, 8.

[75] Ibid.

[76] II:2, p. 7.

[77] Genesis 18:25.

[78] II:2, p. 7.

[79] II:2, p. 10.

[80] This interpretation is quite similar to the comments of Ibn Ezra and Nahmanides on the verse.

[81] Cf Rosh haShanah I:2, or the U'n'tanef Tokef prayer's imagery of our each passing before God in judgment; cf Gates of Repentance, op. cit., p. 312.

[82] II:2, p. 7.

[83] An incorporeal being, such as God, is, in the words of the philosophers, perpetually in actu.

[84] II:2, p. 14.

[85] Ibid.

[86] II:2, p. 10.

[87] E.g. intermittancy of action assumes will, and therefore corporeality; incorporeal beings cannot be affected by external stimuli.

[88] Halevi, Judah, Sefer Hakuzari, Tel Aviv: Dvir Pub. Co. Ltd., 1972. |c

[89] Hirschfeld, Hartwig (tr.), The Kuzari, New York: Schocken Books, 1964, p. 36.

[90] Heard in a study group led by Dr. Borowitz on February 24, 1981 during a colloquium on "Jewish-Christian Relations" held at HUC-JIR (New York).

[91] Kravitz, Leonard, "The Revealed and the Concealed--Providence, Prophecy, Miracles and Creation in the Guide," CCAR Journal, October 1969, Vol. XVI, No. 4, pp. 3-20, 78.

[92] I use this oxymoron purposefully to convey the notion that his argument is a highly-structured one but one not immediately visible to the untrained eye.

[93]Psalm 65:2; interpretation of Rashi, Ibn Ezra, M'tsudat David and M'tsudat Zion.

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