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MIDRASH IN THE MOREH NEVUCHIM

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INTRODUCTION

In each section, and each chapter of the Moreh Nevuchim, a plethora of topics are covered. But throughout the entire book there are two themes that constantly appear. The first is that words are equivocal. That must be viewed in light of the fact that Maimonides feels that the Bible must be viewed as equivocal. That is to say, there is an external and an internal meaning to the text. The external meaning is aimed at the masses, for whom Maimonides has little if any respect. The internal meaning must be sought out (as in the word ענין). To do this he uses Midrash as one of his techniques. As will be shown, sometimes Maimonides will treat a Midrash as the Sages treated the text upon which their drash was based, and sometimes he uses the Midrash as a seemingly heretical statement that needs to be explained. In all cases he is willing to take the Midrash out of context and turn it around with reinterpretations of his own. This is to be expected. What is less expected is the number of times that he does not need to change anything around, leave anything out, or even reinterpret a single word.

The second concept is that the true meaning of the Bible is not for everyone. It is not for the masses, whom Maimonides calls "animals," or the "vulgar." It is not even for the Rabbis who know only how to play with words, and call that science. The true meaning is attainable by

who "considers them (the teachings of the Bible) with what is truly the intellect after one has acquired perfection in the demonstrative sciences and knowledge of the secrets of the Prophets."¹

Maimonides claims that the reason for this view is that the masses will misinterpret what is being taught and go astray. He seems to feel that the Rabbis are the ones doing the leading, and that they do not know anything of value to teach. He calls them "the wretched preachers and commentators who think that a knowledge of words is science and in whose opinion wordiness and length of speech add to perfection."²

Maimonides is not referring to the Sages who were responsible for the Midrashim he uses. Indeed, they are used as proofs for the many points that he wishes to make clearer.

By using the Midrashim as a Table of Contents one can determine the areas of importance in the Moreh Nevuchim. The area of Creation has been chosen as the subject of this thesis. Within that area there are several subsections that need be viewed and discussed. By using the Midrashim as the organizational basis, Maimonides' view of creation becomes clearer.

The subsections of Creation are:

I) Eternality

a) Aparte Post

b) Aparte Ante

II) Matter and Form within the "order of nature"

a) The changeability of form

b) The unchangeability of Matter

c) Prime Matter

d) "Miracles"

What follows is a comparison of structure between the Midrashim and the use of the Midrashim by Maimonides in proving his own beliefs. In addition, there is an analysis of the content of the Midrashim and a comparison to that content which Maimonides would have the knowledgeable reader find in those Midrashim.

The conclusion will attempt to bring together the outstanding differences and similarities between the Midrashim and Maimonides' purposes regarding the subject of creation.

MOREH NEVUCHIM

1. 2:29
2. 2:29 (9:1)
3. 2:28
4. 2:30 (3:7)
5. 2:30 (4:2)
6. 2:26 (12:11)
7. 3:10 (51:3)
8. 1:67
9. 2:30 (16:5)
10. 2:30 (8:1)
11. 2:30 (15:6)
12. 2:29 (5:5)

(Note: Parentheses note Midrashim when different parts of same chapter of Moreh Nevuchim are covered.)

Moreh Nevuchim 2: 29

Genesis Rabbah 1

Maimonides'
Structure
of
Proof

I) Introduction:

- A) Explanation of "non-understanding" of language
- B) Language of Prophets is like another language
and is not understood by the masses
- C) Examples of metaphoric language of Prophets

II) Statement:

- A) No evidence that any Prophet disagrees with אין חילוק
- B) No evidence that Sages disagree with אין חילוק

III) Proof of (II):

- A) Example of metaphoric language of sages
- B) Proof text from the Bible (and claim that it is
the basis of all proof in this area)
- C) Example of how the Midrash uses the proof text
for those who take everything literally
- D) Explanation of example and proof text.

Section 2, Chapter 29 of the Moreh Nevuchim begins with Maimonides' first theme. That theme is that language has different meanings to different people. In this particular case the example is given of a person speaking in a language that is different than the language of the listener. There are two possible results in this situation. Firstly, the listener will know that a language is being spoken, yet not understand what is being said. Secondly, the listener will hear a word that resembles a word in his own language that means something entirely different than what is meant by the speaker. Maimonides likens this to the speech of a Prophet. The masses, when hearing a Prophet, will either not understand him at all, or will misunderstand what he is trying to say. The Prophet speaks in language all his own, one that the masses will either not understand, or misunderstand.

After this premise has been stated, Maimonides presents some examples. The first of which is Isaiah's statements regarding the destruction of the world. He claims that Isaiah's statements are equivocal. That in reality, Isaiah is referring to the destruction of a nation. Maimonides seems to be claiming that the Prophets were using poetic license.

Maimonides continues with more specific examples. He starts off with Isaiah 13:10, in which Isaiah speaks of the destruction of Babylon in terms of God shaking the heavens, and the stars being put out. Maimonides points out that none of these things happened when Babylonia was destroyed. He gives further examples from Isaiah 24:17-20, in which

Isaiah claims, regarding the conquest of Judah, that the "terror, the pit, and the trap," are for all the inhabitants of earth. And further, he says that the "earth is broken... the earth trembles and totters..."

Through these and a series of other examples Maimonides seeks to prove that the language of the Prophet is equivocal, and therefore must be interpreted. That is the necessary premise to Maimonides' point in this chapter (indeed to everything in the Moreh Nevuchim).

Maimonides' point in this chapter is that the Prophets never alluded to the passing away of the world. This is important to his belief system which does not accept the possibility of changes in matter. Not only do the Prophets never refer to the destruction of the world, except in metaphoric terms referring to some city or nation, but the same holds true for the sages as well.

In the same way that Maimonides proves that the prophets never refer to the destruction of the world, he now attempts to prove that the sages never allude to the destruction of the world. But this he does not do. Instead he uses the Midrash in בראשית רבא to prove that nothing new is being created, that "there is nothing new under the sun". Maimonides is really trying to prove that matter can change form, but it cannot be created or destroyed. This chapter is merely one step in the process.

In proving that the sages never allude to new things being created Maimonides follows the same process as with the Prophets. He begins by quoting statements that seem

to prove just the opposite, and explaining them away. Then he takes a quote from the Bible that will be used as a proof text for a Midrash (in this case something from קוהל) and explains it. He explains it to mean that there will be nothing created new by any cause. Since he defines God as the "Prime Cause" it is clear that he refers to God not creating anything new in the world. As a proof for this statement he goes back to בראשית רבה and in turn to the quote from Kohelet. He posits, along with, in his view, בראשית רבה that any promised changes in the world already have been created in the six days of creation and are merely waiting for the appropriate time to appear. By doing so he has rid himself of the problem of change in the future, and his theory of יצחק stands.

Moreh Nevuchim 2:29

Genesis Rabbah 9:1

Maimonides'
Structure
of
Proof

I) Introduction:

A) Purpose: to explain the "account of the Beginning"

B) Two preambles

1) Don't take everything in its external sense
because it leads to:

- a) corruption of the imagination
- b) giving vent to evil opinions of the deity
- c) denial of action of the deity
- d) disbelief in the foundation of the Law

II) Statement:

A) Non-philosophers should refrain from considering
texts with merely the imagination

B) It is obligatory to look at texts with intellect
acquired through demonstrated sciences and the
knowledge of the secrets of the Prophets

III) Point:

If you understand it do not divulge it

IV) Proof: (Genesis Rabbah 9:1)

"...conceal the thing."

In this part of Section 2, Chapter 29, Maimonides is giving the reader one of two preambles to a discussion of "The Account of the Beginning." It is that nothing should be taken in its external sense. Interpretation is necessary to understand what is meant in the passage being examined.

Accepting the external sense of a passage is evil in that it is a mistake (because the *language* of the Bible is equivocal.) According to Maimonides it leads to a number of evils. It can lead to the "corruption of the imagination", as well as giving vent to evil ideas about God. Even worse, it can lead to a denial of the action of God and to a denial of the foundation of the Law.

Therefore, if one has not prepared properly, one should refrain from examining the text with one's imagination. The proper preparation, to which Maimonides is referring, is the knowledge of sciences. At this point he attacks those preachers and commentators who use only the interpretation of words to understand a text.

On the other hand, one who has studied demonstrative sciences, and the knowledge of the secrets of the Prophets, should use his intellect to consider the texts truly. And furthermore, if one does truly understand the text, by using intellect (not imagination), one should not divulge the knowledge acquired.

The concept of not revealing refers, it seems, only to the knowledge of the "Accounts of Creation". His proof text leads one to that conclusion. It is taken from the Midrash³ which states "As from the beginning of the book (Genesis) up to

here (the end of the story of creation), the glory of God requires to conceal the thing."

But there remains a problem. According to his philosophy, if a person has acquired knowledge he must allow it to overflow to others. Yet one should not reveal secrets. Maimonides' answer is to reveal in "flashes" without being too explicit. "Understand this."

Moreh Nevuchim 2:28

Leviticus Rabbah 28:1

Maimonides'
Structure
of
Proof

I) Introduction:

- A) Some people believe that Solomon believed in the eternity of the world.
- B) If this is an abandoning of the Law, why did no Sage or Prophet attack him?

II) Statement:

- A) Leviticus Rabbah 28:1, and Ecclesiastes Rabbah 1.2:1 say "People wanted to suppress the book of Ecclesiastes because its words incline one to those of the heretic"
- B) External sense of the passage could lead one to "foreign opinions"

III) Point:

- A) The passage needs to be understood in figurative way.
- B) There is no statement anywhere that indicates that Solomon believed in eternality aparte ante
- C) He did believe in eternality aparte poste

IV) Proof:

- A) Ecclesiastes 1:4 "The earth abides forever (לעולם ועד)"
- B) Psalms 104:5: Who did establish the earth upon its foundations that it should not be moved forever and ever."

In Chapter 28 of Section 2, Maimonides begins with the statement that there are those who believe that Solomon believed in the eternality of the world. At this point he neither denies nor confirms this statement. Rather, he asks that, if Solomon was abandoning the opinion of the Law, why didn't the Prophets or sages condemn him as they did regarding his taste in alien women?

At his point he brings in the quote from Leviticus Rabbah⁴ "The Sages wanted to suppress the book of Ecclesiastes because its words incline to those of heretics." Maimonides agrees, but only if the words are understood in their external sense. Again, this is Maimonides' refrain. There is an internal meaning, that must be understood.

The point he seems to be making is that Solomon believed in the eternality of the world *aparte post*, but did not believe in the eternality of the world *aparte ante*. According to the words of Maimonides, Solomon did believe in the creation of the world in time. His proof text is taken from Ecclesiastes⁵ "and the earth abides forever (וְהָאֲרֶץ לְעֹלָם)" But that is the second half of the verse. The first half states "One generation passes away and another comes..." which is a proof for Maimonides' belief that the universal "personness" is eternal. The individual passes away, that is to say the matter that takes on the form of human changes that form allowing for the continuation of the concept "personness".

His next proof text comes from Genesis⁶ "yet all the days of the earth..." Some people, says Maimonides, believe

that this means that the earth will last a predetermined amount of time. This is incorrect according to Maimonides. The second half of the verse, which he does not quote, seems to point to a correlation between the eternality of the world and time. "While the earth remains, ... summer and winter, day and night shall not cease." The world will last as long as time, or time is a function of the earth's movement. This is a topic with which he has dealt extensively in Section 2, Chapter 30. It seems that here is the proof for what he states in 2:30 that time is a function of motion of a sphere.

Maimonides now makes a connection between the deity and the earth. The first step is to show that the world is eternal because it says in Psalms⁷ "...who did establish the earth upon its foundations that it should not be moved for ever and ever (לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד)" The term לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד must refer to eternality. If it did not, then God also is finite in time, for it says⁸ "The Lord shall reign forever and ever (לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד)"

לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד does not mean eternality unless the word וָעֶד is joined to it either before it or after it, says Maimonides. The result of this point is, on the surface, that David speaks of eternality but it is questionable as to whether Solomon refers to eternality of any kind. But deeper meaning can be sought. Is Maimonides differentiating between eternality aparte post לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד and aparte ante וָעֶד לְעוֹלָם? For he adds another quote⁹ "He has established them לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד" which implies that the "establishment" was eternally there. The quote continues "He has made a statute which shall not be trans-

gressed." This statute refers according to Maimonides, to the eternality of "heaven and earth".¹⁰ That quote also attaches the statutes to the seed of Israel. The image of the seed is, for Maimonides, the concept of eternality of matter, both *aparte ante* and *aparte post*. The seed changes form, but it is always existent. Of course, Maimonides, ends the duscussion saying that the statutes were created (in time) but will never depart.

Moreh Nevuchim 2:30

Genesis Rabbah 3:7

Maimonides'
Structure
of
Proof

I) Introduction:

- A) Difference between התחלה (principle) and ראשון (first)
- B) Similarity of the two words

II) Statement:

- A) Both התחלה and ראשון can relate to time
- B) ראשון does not relate to time

III) Point:

- A) The world was not created in a temporal beginning.
- B) ראשון means only in principle

IV) Proof:

- A) Sages say that time existed before creation of the world
- B) Sages have a problem with the concept of time before the creation of the sun
- C) Questions meaning of Midrash
 - 1) Is time eternal aparte ante?
 - 2) Does God continually create new worlds?
- D) The world was created without a temporal beginning because time is created as a consequence of the motion of a sphere.

Section 2, Chapter 30 begins in a very confusing way. It seems that Maimonides is comparing ראשון to התחלה. ראשון, he tells us, means first in the temporal form of the word, while התחלה refers to the principle or most important aspect of a thing, but not necessarily the first aspect. As an example of התחלה, he states that the heart is התחלה in the body though it is not the first element of life. ראשון is the first element, though it is not necessarily a cause of the rest. His example is that of a house. Someone who lived in the house ראשון is not the cause of the next person who lives in it. At this point he brings in the word ראשית which can only mean the principle element. Using the example of the body again, he says that the head ראש is the ראשית of the body. Therefore the ראשית in בראשית ברא,¹¹ does not refer to a temporal beginning.

If בראשית does not refer to a temporal beginning, then to what does it refer? For Maimonides it means "with principle" meaning that the world was never created. He uses the ב not as "in" rather as "with" (the Pines translation to the contrary).

At this point he remarks that the interpretation of the sages, which states that time existed before the creation of the world, sounds very much like something Aristotle would say. It implies that time is eternal, which is a reprehensible statement. Their mistake seems to come from the statements in the text, as understood in their external sense, which say "one day"¹² and "a second day".¹³ This leads the sages to

claim,¹⁴ "... there existed before that an order of time. ...Hence we learn that the Holy One, may His name be blessed, used to create worlds and destroy them again." Maimonides repeats that the sages' view is contrary to the view of the Law. He states rather cryptically that this statement is a counterpart to the statement of Rabbi Eliezer¹⁵ (which has been discussed in the treatment of Genesis Rabbah 12:11 in Moreh Nevuchim 2:26) regarding the matter used in creating Heaven and earth.

He sums up this discussion by reaffirming that the world was created, by God, out of nothing, without a temporal beginning. For time, he says is the result of motion on a sphere.

Moreh Nevuchim 2: 30

Genesis Rabbah 4: 2

Maimonides'
Structure
of
Proof

I) Introduction:

A) Dividing waters refers to more than just placement.

II) Statement:

A) There is a difference in the nature of the water.

B) First water is not the same form as seas (it is
above the air).

III) Point:

A) First water, though it is separated into two forms,
comes from the same matter

B) The same holds true of the division of light and
darkness

IV) Proof:

Midrash comes to prove that the waters of the firm-
ament changed form (i.e., they congealed or solidified).

In Chapter 30 of Section 2 one of the matters that Maimonides discusses is the meaning of the phrase "And He divided between the waters..."¹⁶ Maimonides posits that the division spoken of is not merely a division of space but also a division in the nature of the water. In other words Maimonides is stating that primal water was given different forms as well as places, and that the forms relate to the positioning of the waters. Specifically, the water that is above the firmament is of the same matter, but of different form from the Seas.

He begins his proof by comparing the phrase "And the gathering of the waters He called seas"¹⁷ to "And He divided between the waters". By this comparison he establishes that the water is divided into what we know to be the waters on the earth, and the waters which are above the firmament. They are both called water, but one takes on the form of sea. At this point, he throws in an analogous phrase regarding light and darkness. This is another example of the division in form of primal matter, in this case fire.

Maimonides furthers his proof with a quote from the Midrash,¹⁸ "The middle group congealed". The Midrash gives several opinions as to the form of the firmament. But not one of the forms is comparable to what we know as water from experience.

He continues by adding the "Heavens" to list of equivocal terms. The Heavens mentioned in the account of creation is not what we generally call Heaven. He shows how Heaven does

not mean firmament though it is sometimes referred to as such.

He states further that the moon, the sun, and the stars are situated within the sphere. His proof is the statement¹⁹ "And God set them in the firmament of Heaven." According to Maimonides, since it says, "in" and not "on" that the luminaries are withing the sphere.

Maimonides has divided the primal water into three areas. The first is the water that anyone can verify, that is the waters on earth. The second form which the primal water takes is called firmament. The third is called the water above the firmament. The last is beyond the sphere of the moon, sun, stars and earth. With regard to the last form of water Maimonides claims that the term "water" is totally equivocal. His proof is a quote from the Talmud,²⁰ "When you come to the stone of pure marble, do not say, Water, Water, for it is written: 'He that speaks falsely shall not be established before my eyes.'"

At this point Maimonides abruptly ends the discussion, hinting that there is more to it, and that if one studies "Meteorologica" (a work by Aristotle) and reflects on his interpretations certain things will be made clear.

Moreh Nevuchim 2:26

Genesis Rabbah 12:11

Maimonides'
Structure
of
Proof

I) Proof: (Genesis Rabbah 12:11)

Rabbi Eleizer said that everything that is in Heaven
was created in Heaven and everything that is on
earth was created from the earth

II) Point:

Everything that is under the sphere of the moon comes
from one common matter

(Note: He continues to reinforce another point regarding
the perfection of matter close to God, and the
imperfection of matter further away from God)

Maimonides begins Section 2 Chapter 26 with a quote from the chapters of Rabbi Eliezer,²¹ which states that the Heavens were created from the light of God's garment, and that the earth was created from the snow under the thorn of glory. Maimonides regards this as a very strange statement. He then goes about trying to understand what Rabbi Eliezer was saying. He offers two possible explanations, both of which, according to Maimonides, are unacceptable. The first interpretation is that nothing can be made from nothing. He asks if the sage really believed that it was necessary for a God to make the Heavens and the Earth out of something that already existed. If so, the question arises; from what were the garment and the snow created? On the other hand, if neither of these were created things Eliezer would seem to be proving the eternity of the world, as believed by Plato. Maimonides is interpreting the snow to be Prime Matter. Plato considers Prime Matter as uncreated matter that always existed. This Prime Matter has no form. Color is considered a form, therefore Prime Matter does not have any color. Maimonides has taken this belief of Plato and overlayed it on the Midrash using snow as that Prime Matter. Therefore snow equals Prime Matter which is formless. If earth is made from this Prime Matter, then the earth is indestructable, proving eternity.

Regarding the throne, which rests upon the snow, he states that the sages agree that it was created. But they state it in a strange manner. They say that it was created before the creation of the world. Furthermore, he states that the throne is eternal *aparte post*. His proof is taken from Lamentations,²²

which states, "You, Oh Lord sit for all eternity, Your throne is from all generation to generation." If Eliezer thought that the throne was eternal *aparte ante*, then it must have been, according to Maimonides, an attribute of God. How, he asks, can an attribute create. Lastly, he shares his confusion over the garment of God. For this problem he has no solution. Therefore the only useable element in Rabbi Eliezer's statement is the separation between the matter used in creating the Heavens and the matter used in creating the earth.

Though Maimonides evidenced some confusion as to Rabbi Eliezer's statement, he does use it in interpreting creation. For Maimonides the "light of His garment refers to primal matter that is without defect, matter that is close to God. The other, the "snow under the throne of glory" is imperfect first matter with which the Earth was created.

His proof for this thought is found in the Midrash.²³ Rabbi Eliezer is quoted as saying, "The creation of everything that is in the Heavens derives from the Heavens, and the creation of everything that is in the earth derives from the earth."

Therefore, everything that is on earth, and here Maimonides interprets "everything that is under the sphere of the moon" comes from one common matter. Furthermore, according to Maimonides, everything that is in the Heavens (i.e., above the sphere of the moon) derives from a different matter. Lastly, he feels that Rabbi Eliezer intimates that the matter that was used to create the Heavens is not defective, while the matter used to create the earth contains imperfections.

Moreh Nevuchim 3:10

Genesis Rabbah 9:5, 51:3

Maimonides'
Structure
of
Proof

I) Introduction:

A) Mutakallimum believe that God creates privations

1) one who removes an impediment to action,
causes that action

2) one who removes habitus produces the corres-
ponding privation

B) God creates people who are blind or deaf or other-
wise impaired.

God brings being into existence without certain
habitus

II) Statement:

A) God does not create privation, He does create
habitus which results in privation

B) Evil is only evil in relation to something.

Ergo: Evil is a privation

C) Examples of privations

1) death

2) illness

III) Point:

A) God doesn't create evil in an essential act

B) God brought matter into existence with its nature

C) Matter is concomitant with privations

Moreh Nevuchim 3:10

Genesis Rabbah 9:5, 51:3

IV) Proof:

A) (Genesis Rabbah 9:5)

"...Behold it was good" -- death was good.

B) (Genesis Rabbah 51:3)

"Nothing that is evil descends from Heaven.

Maimonides begins Section 3 Chapter 10 with an explanation of what the Mutakallimun believe. They believe that God creates habitus and privation. He gives the example of sight and blindness, and warm and cold. If it is warm and one removes that which makes it warm it will become cold. If one removes someone's eyes that person will be causing blindness. Therefore, God creates not only habitus, but by removing habitus God creates privations. It is similar to a person who sees a rock on a hill. The only thing stopping that rock from rolling down the hill is a smaller rock lodged in front of the larg rock in question. If that person removes the smaller rock the larger one will roll down the hill. That person's removal of the smaller rock is said to be the cause of the larger rock rolling down the hill.

Maimonides disagrees, in that he states that privations are non-existent things. His first step in proving this is the quote from Isaiah,²⁴ "who forms light and creates darkness, who makes peace and creates evil." Both evil and darkness are privations and therefore, according to Maimonides the word "make" does not apply. On the other hand "create" does apply, because it has a connection with privation. His proof is taken from the beginning of Genesis.²⁵ "In the beginning God created..." The connection is that God created out of non-being, that is privation. On the surface this argument sounds weak. But Maimonides seems to be proving that God created from privation to habitus. Therefore the privation is that non-existant that was there before creation. God did not make

privation, rather He eliminated some privations. Those which were not eliminated, or not totally eliminated are to be recognized in the world.

Therefore, according to Maimonides an agent can be said to have produced a privation only by accident, and not through an essential act. But hidden under the surface argument is the whole meaning of the word creation. The concealed point is that since in the Isaiah text 'בְּרָא' does not mean ex-nihilo then it stands to reason that in other cases it does not necessarily refer to creation out of nothing either. Proof for this can be found in Section 2 Chapter 29. In that chapter Maimonides demonstrates how 'בְּרָא' does not mean create. Again, he is quoting Isaiah.²⁶ The text "quotes" God saying that He creates new worlds, and that God is creating Jerusalem. Maimonides has already shown that God does not create new worlds. Furthermore Jerusalem is already in existence.

בְּרָא must be an equivocal term. The translation of בְּרָא שֵׁת בְּרָא אֱלֹהִים is now rendered "In principle God exists."

All of the above has been an introduction to the matter that Maimonides wishes to examine. That matter is the concept of evil. He begins this argument with the statement that evil is relational. Something is only evil in relationship to something else, it is a privation. He offers several examples. Death is evil, for it is the privation of being. Illness is the privation of health, ignorance is the privation of knowledge. Therefore, evil, since it is a privation, could not have been made by an essential act of God. God only creates what is good, that is, habitus. God brought

matter into existence with its nature. Its nature is concomitant with privation of that existence. Therefore, God brought into being only that which is good. His proof is taken from the text, "And God saw everything that He had made, and behold it was very good." Even the existence of matter whose nature requires the privation of death is good, for it is part of the permanence of succession. That is how Maimonides understands the Midrash,²⁷ "And behold it was very good וְיָשָׁן equals and Behold death, וְיָמָן was good." It seems that Maimonides is translating וְיָשָׁן as being, and וְיָמָן as death. This is not to say that the destruction of the universal "personness" is possible, only the destruction of individual human beings. Their matter takes on different forms. Indeed that very process of death and birth is the basis for the eternality of "humanity." The individual human is born, gives birth to others and dies. Humanity can therefore continue. He quotes the Midrash²⁸ further, "Nothing that is evil descends from above."

Moreh Nevuchim 1:67

Genesis Rabbah 10:9

Maimonides'
Structure
of
Proof

I) Introduction:

"God rested on the 7th day" (Exodus 20:11)

II) Statement:

Sages and commentators use שבת as a transitive verb (שבת)

III) Proof: (Genesis Rabbah 10:9)

"He let His world repose on the 7th day."

IV) Point:

A) The word קבע can be used to mean "He established."

B) Before the 7th day the permanent nature of the world had not been established

V) Examples:

A) Zechariah 5:11

B) II Samuel 21:10

C) Habakkuk 3:16

D) Exodus 31:17

In Section 1 Chapter 67, Maimonides begins by making the connection between rest, שבת and the Sabbath, שבת. He makes the attachment to the word אכירה. To refrain from speaking is to rest. He uses the quote from Job,²⁹ "And these men ישבתו to answer Job," to make the attachment.

His next step is to make the same type of attachment to נח. He quotes Samuel³⁰ "They spoke to ... and then נח." His point is that neither שבת nor נח need refer to actual rest, but rather a cessation of action.

Having built a foundation for his interpretation of what God did on the seventh day, he offers an interpretation by the sages. They said³¹ that God caused the world to rest on the seventh day. This interpretation is based on using the Hif'il form of the verb "to rest." Maimonides takes the process to slightly different conclusions. The verb נח in the Hif'il form can also mean to establish. That is the point to which Maimonides has been building. Therefore, he reads the verse,³² "He established existence," or "He caused its nature to be established by the seventh day". His point seems to be that after the seven days of creation, everything was established and was unchangeable.

Moreh Nevuchim 2:30

Genesis Rabbah 16:5

Maimonides'
Structure
of
Proof

I) Proof: (Genesis Rabbah 16:5)

"And the Lord God took man -- (raised him up) -- and
put him into the Garden of Eden (that is) He gave
him rest."

II) Statement:

The statement in Genesis Rabbah does not mean that
God moved Adam from one place to another.

III) Point:

It does mean that God raised the status of man in
existence and established him in a certain state.

One of the many issues dealt with by Maimonides in Chapter 30 of Section 2 is the placement of Adam in the Garden of Eden. His point is that God did not move Adam physically like a chess piece, rather that God raised Adam's level of existence, while keeping him in the realm of those that come into being and pass away.

His proof is taken from the Midrash.³³ The Midrash interprets, "And the Lord took the man, and put him in the Garden of Eden" as "And the Lord took the man (that is -- raised him) and put him into the Garden of Eden (that is -- He gave him rest).

Maimonides states through the use of this Midrash that the concept of rest is involved in the raising of existence. What separates the human from the animal is his ability to or rather his right to rest.

But it seems that Maimonides is pointing to the Activated Intellect as evidence of the raising of man's level of existence. Man can know what is. Man does not have to work all the time, man can spend time on learning. For Maimonides, learning refers to the demonstrative sciences. Adam's level of existence was raised when he was given the knowledge of "what is".

Moreh Nevuchim 2:30

Genesis Rabbah 8:1

Maimonides'
Structure
of
Proof

I) Introduction:

- A) God created Man and woman during the six days of Creation
- B) The story of the Tree of Life, and Tree of Knowledge and the serpent begins a new part

II) Statement:

The Sages all agree that these events took place on Friday.

III) Point:

These things took place before a permanent nature had been established.

IV) Proof: Genesis Rabbah 8:1

- A) The Midrash speaks of Adam in many different forms
 - 1) Siamese twins
 - 2) A lifeless mass covering the whole world
 - 3) Filling up the space between Heaven and earth

Maimonides begins this section of Part 2, Chapter 30 with the comment and proof that God created man and woman on the sixth day of creation. His proof is taken right from the text.³⁴

Though the text of Genesis 2 seems to imply that the events concerning the Tree of Knowledge happened after Creation ended, Maimonides points out that the sages believed that the entire Garden of Eden episode took place on the sixth day.

Maimonides says that the sages have made it clear regarding the creation, and the events within the Garden of Eden. He states further, that he will not reveal any secrets, but if one follows his pointers, and the pointers of the sages, one will understand what is really being said.

One of the pointers to which he refers is the statement in the Midrash³⁵ that Adam and Eve were joined at the side, and that "rib" refers to side. The proof text used by the sages was the reference to a "rib of the Tabernacle."³⁶

He continues by saying that Man and Woman were two in certain respects and one in other respects. He proves his point through the verse,³⁷ "...bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh" and gives additional proof through the term וְהָיָה which comes from the term וְהָיָה. His last proof is taken from the text as well,³⁸ "...And shall cleave to his wife and they shall be one flesh."

Therefore, for Maimonides, the Midrash is not referring to specific people but to the genus, human.

Moreh Nevuchim 2: 30

Genesis Rabbah 15: 6

Maimonides'
Structure
of
Proof

I) Introduction

A) Sages say Tree of Life = walk of 500 years

B) Sages say all the waters "of the Beginning" spring
from it

II) Statement:

The Sages are referring to the trunk

III) Point:

None stated

IV) Proof:

Second half of Genesis Rabbah 15:6

One of the many things with which Maimonides deals in Chapter 30 of Section 2 is the Tree of Life. He begins the matter with a quote from the Midrash³⁹ regarding the size of the Tree of Life and the waters that flow from it. There are many questions that arise from this passage. (first of which is "who cares???") Why is this brought up at all? What does Maimonides hope to prove with this passage? Why is it important to Maimonides that the Tree of Life is the distance of a 500 year journey. Why does he emphasize that the Sages were referring to the size of the trunk, and not its limbs?

First it should be understood that the notion of 500 years refers to the journey around the earth, and that is equivocal. In this case it refers to the distance around the entire world. It is plausible that Maimonides is saying that the trunk of the Tree really means the world, as the מקור חיים from which everything on earth emanates. The Tree of Life extends life to all things. If it is in the nature of a being, he can learn anything that is in this world. The branches extend past the world, and like the branches of a tall tree are impossible to reach. The branches would therefore refer to the body of knowledge that is beyond the reach of man, that body about which man can only speculate. Maimonides ends this discussion with הנה כבר התבאר בזה

Moreh Nevuchim 2:29

Genesis Rabbah 5:5

Maimonides'
Structure
of
Proof

I) Introduction:

- A) Nothing can permanently change its nature
- B) Miracles are temporary changes

II) Statement:

- A) Since the change is not permanent, it did not take on a different nature
- B) During Creation God put "miracles" into the nature of certain things
- C) A Prophet was privy to the time for which miracles were scheduled during Creation

III) Point:

Nature does not change after Creation

IV) Proof:

Genesis Rabbah 5:5

In Maimonides' continuing proof of eternity, he includes a caveat concerning miracles. He states that things do not permanently change their nature, which means that there is no new creation. He is, as he admits, being cautious. He gives three examples of temporary changes; the rod turning into a serpent, the water turning to blood, and Moses' hand turning "white" (some form of skin disease). In each case, as in all miracles according to Maimonides, the changes in nature were temporary. Further, he quotes the Talmud,⁴⁰ "The world goes its customary way. He seems to be saying that it was indeed part of the nature of the objects involved to change temporarily at a given time.

He notes a "strange statement" by the sages⁴¹ which he quotes further on, that backs his point, that the changes were temporary and arranged at a fixed time. The miracles are part of nature.

This view ties in with his statement that Prophets are privy to the timetable of a miracle so that they will announce it before it happens. He points out that the sages believed, with great insight, that a nature cannot be changed after the time of creation. Furthermore, they say, according to Maimonides, that no other volition can supervene after the nature of a thing is established. As an example he states that, water as part of its nature flows downwards, except at the time of the crossing of the Red Sea. It was part of the nature of the water to divide at that time and to reunite around the Egyptians.

The sages, he feels, agree with that point and in order to deny the coming-into-being of anything new stated⁴² Rabbi Jonathon said: 'The Holy one Blessed be He, has posed conditions to the sea: that it should divide before Israel' ... Rabbi Jeremiah, b. Elazer said, 'The Holy One Blessed be He, has posed conditions not only to the sea, but to all that has been created in the six days of the Beginning.'" Maimonides ends by saying that his statements refer to all miracles.

GENESIS RABBAH

1. 1:13
2. 4:2
3. 3:7
4. 12:11
5. 51:3
6. 5:5
7. 15:6
8. 8:1
9. 16:5
10. 9:5
11. 10:9
12. Leviticus Rabbah 28:1
13. 9:1

The Sages'
Structure
of
Proof

- I) Introduction
 - A) Man as a builder
 - B) God as a builder
- II) Statement
 - A) God built "the" heaven
 - B) Explanation of importance of "the"
- III) Proof of (II)
 - A) Problematic text used as an example
 - B) Use of proof text to solve problem

This section of Genesis Rabbah 1:13 begins with a comparison between God and Man as builders. When man builds a building he must stop and decide if it is strong enough to widen the upper floors. But God built the Heaven and earth as originally planned, without having to test the structure. Rabbi Huna in the name of Rabbi Eliezer b. Rabbi Jose points to a disturbing passage.⁴³ "For, behold, I create new Heavens ... "How does this jibe with the above statement? His answer comes in the form of a quote from Isaiah.⁴⁴ "For as the new heavens ... remain before me ..." He interprets "the new" to mean the new Heavens that were created in potential at the beginning of creation.

Here too, as in Genesis Rabbah 3:7 the implied point is that God will not allow change. The world continues in its present form, with no change from the original blueprints.

There is another implied point, and that is that the Heavens are larger than the earth. Hence God, the builder of the universe, put the larger part of His "building", the Heavens, on the lower part, the earth. But this leads one to speculate as to whether the Sages were implying that the earth is the foundation of the universe?

Moreh Nevuchim 2:30

Genesis Rabbah 4:2

Sages
Structure
of
Proof

I) Introduction:

"Let there be a firmament in the midst of the Heavens"

A) The waters congealed immediately

B) The waters congealed on the second day

II) Statement:

The firmament was made strong

III) Point:

A) Fire came from God to dry up and solidify the
heavens, and separate them from earth

B) Fire comes from God at times of revelation. It
separated between humans and the divine

IV) Proof:

A) Isaiah 64:1

B) Implies a division

C) When did fire divide between upper and lower?

1) At time of Revelation (maybe separating Jews
from others)

2) At the time of creation (between the upper and
lower waters)

The Sages are trying to understand, in Genesis Rabbah 4:2, what is meant by "Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters."⁴⁵ The Sages seem to agree that the firmament and the waters were originally of the same matter. They said, "The middle layer of the water was solidified, and the nether heavens and the uppermost heavens were formed." Rab interprets "Let there be a firmament"⁴⁶ to mean "Let the firmament be made strong." By this he means that the first day everything that God created was fluid in form, but on the second day it was congealed. In other words the matter changed form. Rabbi Judah agrees. He uses the word רָקִיעַ and makes a parallel to וַיִּרְקַע in the verse "And they beat (וַיִּרְקַעוּ) the gold into thin plates..."⁴⁷ In other words, God flattened out a section of the water and made it a dividing point between the waters. That dividing point was called firmament. Rabbi Hannina and Rabbi Jochanon go into more detail as to how God made the dividing firmament. They say that God made it with fire. They use the verse "By His breath (which they interpret to mean fire) the Heavens were made serene (which they interpret to mean smooth)"⁴⁸

At this point Rabbi Berekiah and Rabbi Jacob b. Rabbi Abina in the name of Rabbi Abba b. Kahana change gear. They relate this passage to the Revelation at Sinai. They quote "As when fire burns through into parts."⁴⁹ They use this verse in relation to the one before it in which it says

that God would rend the Heavens apart and appear. They state that at only two times did God do such a thing. The first at creation, and the second at the time of revelation at Sinai. This could be interpreted as meaning that the only times that God ever disturbed the natural order of the world was when He was creating that natural order, and at Mount Sinai, for the Jewish people. And that there would not be another disturbance until the end of time.

Moreh Nevuchim 2:30

Genesis Rabbah 3:7

Sages'
Structure
of
Proof

I) Introduction:

God did not create evening (in Genesis)

II) Statement:

Time existed before Creation

III) Point:

God created many worlds and destroyed them until
He created this one.

IV) Proof:

God saw everything that He had made and Behold it was
good. (וַיַּבְהִי refers to this world as opposed to
previously created worlds)

In Chapter 3:7 of Genesis Rabbah the Sages struggle with the interpretation of "And there was evening."⁵⁰ The implied question is; why does it not say that God created the evening? Rabbi Judah b. Rabbi Simon answers that this passage implies that time existed before the creation of the world. God did not create evening in Genesis because He had already created it. Rabbi Abbahu interprets this to mean that God had been creating and destroying worlds until He found one that He liked. Rabbi Phinehas gives a proof text for Rabbi Abbahu's statement "And God saw everything that He had made, and behold it was very good."⁵¹ In other words, God looked at all the worlds that He had created and found that this one was very good.

There seems to be two purposes underlying this discussion. The first is that time existed before the creation of this world, since it is not the first world to be created. The second purpose seems to be that this is the best of all possible worlds. If this is the best of all possible worlds, then it stands to reason that there will be no change in the world as it is, and, of course this world, which is the one with which God was pleased, will never be destroyed. The worlds with which God was not pleased He destroyed. But being pleased with this world, He will allow it to exist eternally.

Moreh Nevuchim 2:27

Genesis Rabbah 12:11

Sages'
Structure
of
Proof

I) Introduction:

Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Joshua disagree

II) Point: Rabbi Eliezer --

Everything that is in Heaven was created from
Heaven and everything on earth was created from
earth

III) Proof: (Psalm 148:1)

"Praise Him all you angels...moon...sun...

Praise the Lord (you who were created) from the
earth

IV) Point: Rabbi Joshua --

Everything in Heaven and earth were created from
Heaven

V) Proof: (Job 37:6)

"For He says to the snow 'be you on earth.'"

VI) Point: Rabbi Huna in the name of Rabbi Joseph --

Everything that is found in the Heaven and on the
earth was created from the earth

VII) Proof: (Isaiah 55:10)

"Just as the rain comes down and the snow from the Heaven"
This means that just as rain is a creation of the earth
so is everything else

Genesis Rabbah 12:11 begins with a disagreement between Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Joshua. Rabbi Eliezer believes that everything that is in the heavens was created out of heaven and everything that is on earth was created out of the earth. For his proof text he quotes Psalms⁵² which shows a dichotomy between Heaven and earth. Both are told separately to praise God. If both were created from the same matter, then the quote would be redundant. Since they are not from the same matter, it is necessary to order each individually to praise God.

Rabbi Joshua disagrees. Everything that is on earth as well as everything that is in Heaven comes from Heaven. His proof text comes from Job⁵³ "For He has said to the snow 'Be you on the earth!'" If one looks back to v. 3 one can see more clearly the origin of his proof "He sends it forth under the Heaven."

Next Rabbi Huna in the name of Rabbi Joseph posits that everything that is in Heaven and everything that is on earth originates on earth. His proof text comes from Isaiah.⁵⁴ "For as the rain comes down and the snow from heaven..." This text alone would seem to prove Rabbi Joshua's point. to clarify Rabbi Judan adds,⁵⁵ "All go to one place and all are dust." But still it is not clear. Rabbi Nahum clarifies further,⁵⁶ "Who commanded the sun וְהַיָּרֵחַ and it rises not." There is a play on the word וְהַיָּרֵחַ which is equated to וְהַיָּרֵחַ which means a potsherd. The potsherd clearly comes from earth.

The connection in all of these opinions, though they seem to disagree, is that there is an order to nature that was created by God at the beginning. They are all arguing against the concept of a chaotic universe, as well as a universe that is changeable.

Moreh Nevuchim 2:10

Genesis Rabbah 51:3

Sages'
Structure
of
Proof

I) Introduction:

A) "Nothing evil descends from above."

B) The sages disagreed (Psalms 148:8) "Fire and hail..."

II) Statement:

But it was only a stormy wind which fulfills the word
of God

III) Point:

God does^{not} cause evil to descend

One might think that the Sages in Genesis Rabbah 51:3 are discussing whether or not God creates evil. Rabbi Hanina b. Pazzi feels that "nothing evil descends from above." God is not responsible for the evil that befalls humankind.

It is more probable that he is saying that anything evil that befalls humankind comes from the earth, and not from Heaven. This seems more likely in light of the texts that are used to disprove Rabbi Hanina's point. The Sages could have countered the position that God does not create evil by using the story of Noah in which God destroys the entire world with a flood. They could have cited the passage of the crossing of the Red Sea or a number of others. Instead their proof texts describe what descends from the Heavens.

The first of these proofs is taken from the books of Psalms.⁵⁷ "Fire and hail, snow and vapor, stormy winds, fulfill His word." Rabbi Hanina's response is further proof that he was talking about evil descending from Heaven. He accepts only the stormy winds as fulfilling God's word, admitting that evil does exist, and that it is created by God, but negating that it descends from Heaven. In addition, the word רוח referring to wind is the only example mentioned which is ever referred to as belonging to God, as in⁵⁸ רוח אלוהים כרחפת על המים. But even if his point is that nothing evil ever descends from the Heavens, Rabbi Simon b. Lakish disproves it with a quote from Deuteronomy.⁵⁹ "The Lord will open up to you His good treasure" which goes on to include rain, which Rabbi Hanina negated in the first proof

text. And further on in that same chapter⁶⁰ of Deuteronomy God speaks of the "bad treasure" as Rabbi Simon b. Lakish intimates.

Moreh Nevuchim 2:29

Genesis Rabbah 5:5

Sages'
Structure
of
Proof

I) Introduction:

Genesis 1:9

II) Statement:

A) God made a stipulation with the sea to divide before
Israel

B) "And the sea returned לַיָּם" read "לַיָּם"

III) Point:

God made a stipulation with everything that He
created during the six days of Creation.

IV) Proof:

A) Isaiah 45:12:

"...and all their host have I commanded!"

B) Deuteronomy 32:1

C) Examples of Miracles

- 1) the sun standing still for Joshua
- 2) the ravens feeding Elijah
- 3) stopping the lions from harming Daniel

Rabbi Jochanon begins the discussion in Genesis Rabbah 5:5 with the statement that God made a stipulation with the sea, that it should divide before the Israelites. His proof is based on his interpretation of the quote in Exodus,⁶¹ "and the sea returned to its strength (וַיָּחַזְק)". He interprets וַיָּחַזְק to be כְּכֹחַ meaning "according to its agreement." The purpose of the interpretation is to show that God, when He created the waters made certain stipulations. Rabbi Jerimiah b. Eleazar took it one step further. According to him God made stipulations on everything that He created in the six days of creation. His proof text is taken from Isaiah,⁶² "I, even My hands, have stretched out the Heavens, and all their host have I commanded..." By this he means that God gave certain orders to all things in creation. He gives several examples, the dividing of the Red Sea, the Heavens being quiet while Moses spoke,⁶³ the sun and moon remaining still for Joshua, the ravens feeding Elijah, the fire not to hurt Hananiah, Michael and Azariah, and the lions not to hurt Daniel, the heavens to open up for Ezekiel and the fish to vomit out Jonah.

The purpose of this discussion seems to be that nothing that happens on earth is unplanned. Everything was planned from creation. There is no new order of the universe, and even miracles are part of the divine plan from the very beginning of time. Therefore anyone who preaches that God is now making changes, with the original plan is a false Prophet. Furthermore the discussion proves that there is an order to everything that happens. God has a plan, and therefore

there is no chaos in the universe.

Moreh Nevuchim 2: 30

Genesis Rabbah 15: 6

Sages
Structure
of
Proof

I) Introduction:

Genesis 2:9

II) Statement:

A) Tree spread over all living things

B) Tree of Life covered a journey of 500 years

C) Primeval waters flowed out from under it

III) Point:

The Trunk of the tree covered a journey of 500
years.

IV) Proof:

None stated.

This paragraph in Genesis Rabbah 15:6 discusses the Tree of Life. The sages seem to be saying that the Tree of Life was the center of the world, indeed the universe.

Their first statement is that the Tree of Life spread out over everything that lives. Rabbi Judah b. Rabbi Illia'i said that it spread over a 500 years' journey. The figure mentioned is used to mean the entire earth. But he goes further. The primeval waters, which are the source of life on the earth, spread out from under the Tree of Life.

Rabbi Judan added in the name of Rabbi Judah b. Rabbi Illia'i that it was the trunk of the Tree of Life that was as wide as the entire world. The implication is that the limbs extended on into the universe.

Sages
Structure
of
Proof

I) Introduction

A) Genesis 1:26 "Let us make man..."

B) Psalms 139:5 "You have formed me before and behind..."

II) Statement

A) If a man is worthy He will enjoy both worlds (Proof text: Psalms 139:8)

B) Adam was created as Siamese twins, joined at the side (Genesis 5:2)

C) God created Adam as a lifeless mass filling the world (Psalms 139:16)

D) Man was the latest world of creation in the last day, and he was the first work on the last day (same)

E) Man was the latest work on the last day and the first work on the first day (Genesis 1:2)

F) Man was the last work in creation and the first to be punished.

III) Point: Placing Man on a higher level than animals

IV) Proof: (see parenthesis II)

The problem under discussion in Genesis Rabbah 8:1 is the use of the singular "man" when it states that God created man and woman. Rabbi Jocanon interprets the quote⁶⁸ to refer to this world and the world to come. The plural, then, means man in this world, and man in the world to come. He begins his proof with a quote from Psalms,⁶⁹ "You have hemmed me in (צָרַתִּי) in front and behind." He interprets the word צָרַתִּי as צָרַתִּי meaning "You have formed me..." He interprets אֶחָד and אֶחָד as "earlier and later (worlds)." The implication is that God created Man for this world and the world to come (בְּרֵאשִׁית אֶחָד).

Rabbi Jeremiah b. Leazar interpreted it differently. For him the meaning⁷⁰ is that God created Adam and Eve as siamese twins.⁷¹ His proof text is "Male and female He created them and called their name Adam."⁷² Rabbi Samuel b. Nahman makes a similar statement to which the Sages object bringing in the statement "And He took one of his ribs..."⁷³ which implies that the woman was a separate creation. But Rabbi Samuel responds interpreting מִצַּלְעוֹתָי as side rather than rib. His proof is taken from the statement in Exodus "and for the second side (וְלַצֵּד) of the Tabernacle..." In other words, God created a pair of siamese twins joined at the sides and therefore the singular is used. Later, God separates the two, changing their form to that of man and woman.

Moreh Nevuchim 2:30

Genesis Rabbah 16:5

Sages'
Structure
of
Proof

I) Introduction:

Rabbi Judan and Rabbi Berekiah interpreted "and He put him into the Garden..."

II) Statement:

Rabbi Judan said that God put man into the Garden in order to delight him with the trees in the Garden

III) Point:

Rabbi Berekiah said that God gave man the precept of rest, the Shabbat

IV) Proof:

"וַיָּנוּחַ" is parallel to "וַיִּנְחַל" meaning "and He rested."

Genesis Rabbah 16:5 examines the verse "And the Lord took the Man and put him into the Garden of Eden,"⁷⁴ It is broken down into two sections. The first half of the verse is discussed by Rabbi Judah and Rabbi Nehumiah.

Rabbi Judah explains the verse as meaning that God exalted Adam. God took Adam and exalted him, that is raised him to his rightful place. The proof text⁷⁵ "And the peoples shall take them, and bring them to their place..." refers to the Prophecy of Isaiah. In that prophecy he envisions the people being freed from their captivity, and taking their captors slaves. They would be redeemed from the punishment that God had levelled on them, and be returned to former glory, and their former land, that of Israel. In that way, the text in Genesis is a promise of things to come for the Jewish people.

Rabbi Nehemiah interprets the verse differently. He views the text as saying that God persuaded man to enter the Garden. His proof text,⁷⁶ though, refers to the repentance of the Jews. In it Hosea is admonishing the people to return to the ways of God and ask forgiveness. Rabbi Nehemiah is using the pericope text as a prophecy of what will happen to the Jewish people. For, though Adam is coaxed into "entering the Garden of Repentance" he would eventually be thrown out (again).

The second half of the text is discussed by Rabbi Judan and Rabbi Berekiah. Both seem to be arguing that God gave to Adam the precepts of Shabbat. Rabbi Judan says that Adam was actually given Shabbat rest daily, rather than on only one day. Rabbi Berekiah says that Adam was given the precepts

of Shabbat. Rabbi Judan says that Adam was actually given Shabbat rest daily, rather than on only one day. Rabbi Berekiah says that Adam was given the precepts of Shabbat, but never had a chance to enjoy it in the Garden, because of his sin. Therefore Shabbat rest became the counterpart to the six days of labor. His proof text is taken from the decalogue which would be a support for this argument.

Moreh Nevuchim 2:10

Genesis Rabbah 9:5,

Sages'
Structure
of
Proof

I) Introduction:

A) Rabbi Meir's Torah said:

"Behold it was good" "and behold death was good"

B) Rabbi Simeon Rabbi Eleazar said in Rabbi Meir's
name:

"Behold it was good. And behold death was good"

II) Statement:

A) Adam deserved to be spared the experience of death.

B) Why did Adam die?

C) Adam died because God saw that Hiram and
Nebuchadnezzar would call themselves gods.

III) Point:

A) Why then did not only the wicked die?

B) So that the wicked would not fraudulently repent,
with ulterior motives (i.e., to save their lives)

IV) Proof: (Genesis 1:31)

"Behold it was good" "behold death was good"

The discussion in Genesis Rabbah 9:5 is about death. It begins with the verse in Genesis⁷⁷ "and Behold it was good." The comment that in Rabbi Meir's Torah Scroll it was written "and behold death was good" is confusing. It is not clear whether the statement was in the margins or whether there was a scribal error in the text. At any rate, it is the stepping off point for the discussion.

There are two questions being raised, that tie in together. Firstly; why is there death in the world, especially for the righteous? Secondly; how is death good? The Sages deal with the former question first.

Rabbi Hama b. Rabbi Hanina states that Adam should not have suffered death. He asks why then was it decreed against him. His answer was that since there would come into being men who called themselves gods, there had to be a clear cut distinction between them and God. That distinction was mortality. Nebuchadnezzar called himself a god as did Antiochus and many Roman Emperors. Those whose call themselves gods can be easily proven wrong. That proof is death. Jesus therefore could not be a god because he was killed. An inference from that statement could be that anyone who calls himself a god should be killed as proof that he is not. This seems to be a way of showing that there are no changes on earth. The world is as it is. God will not descend to this world to change it. Jews must have faith in their God and the Laws of Torah as interpreted by the Sages. Miracles and the like happened but no more, not until the "end of time."

Rabbi Jonathon does not feel that that answers the question of Adam's death. If God wanted to stop humans from likening themselves to gods, why not just destroy those wicked people? He answers his own question by saying that if that were the case the wicked would falsely repent in order to live. (This is somewhat like a boy scout who does good deeds in order to receive a merit badge).

But this answer is not completely satisfactory. Rabbi Jochanan feels that, for the wicked, death is a punishment because they anger God. He quotes⁷⁸ "You have wearied the Lord with your words," and,⁷⁹ "There the wicked ceased from raging" which he interprets as enraging God. For the righteous death is a reward of rest. His proof text is,⁸⁰ "And the weary are at rest." which is interpreted to mean that the righteous die as a rest from fighting with their evil desires.

Rabbi Simoen b. Lakish goes further. It is not merely a reward for the righteous, and punishment for the wicked, but rather a double punishment and a double reward. The double punishment is justified because the wicked not only anger God but they are also responsible for death coming to the righteous. The double reward for the righteous is because not only do they fight off their evil desires, but they also accept death, even though they do not deserve to die.

Their arguments seem to say that there is no reward and punishment that is discernable in this world. It also offers comfort to the mourners of righteous people. The struggle is over and death is the reward. This answers the question of how is death good?

Moreh Nevuchim 1:67

Genesis Rabbah 10:9

Sages'
Structure
of
Proof

I) Introduction:

- A) It says that on the 7th day God rested from all His work.
- B) God did not create the world with labor or work.

II) Statement:

"...and He rested from all His work" was written in order to punish the wicked who destroy the world, and to reward the righteous who uphold the world.

III) Point:

God did not stop creating on the 7th day. Rather God created rest and tranquility.

IV) Proof:

"...and God gave rest (שבת) on the 7th day," using שבת in the פסוק.

In Genesis Rabbah 10:9 the Sages attempt to understand the quote,⁸¹ "And on the seventh day God finished His work which He had made..." Does this mean that God worked on the seventh day, when it clearly states⁸² that God rested on the seventh day.

In order to understand the passage the Sages made several interpretations. Rabbi Ishmael b. Rabbi Jose explains it by saying that God finished at the last possible second on the sixth day, just as it was becoming the seventh day. Rabbi Simon b. Yohai agrees. God can know the exact second that the seventh day begins, can enter it by a "hair's breath." Genibah continues the argument by saying that during that hair's breath God created the only thing missing from the world, Shabbat. Genibah compares it to a King who builds a bridal chamber, and once finished waits for the final touch, that is a bride. The sages compare it to a ring that is completed except for the signet.

At this point there is a confusing statement. "This is one of the texts that was changed for King Ptolemy (or more correctly a Philosopher) to read 'And He finished on the sixth day and rested on the seventh.'" Are the sages saying that since there are some people who would misunderstand the external sense of the passage it was changed to avoid that misunderstanding? The next statement ties in with this interpretation. "A philosopher asked the elders in Rome: 'In how many days did the Holy One create the world?' They replied, 'In six days and since then Gehena has been burning

for the wicked.'" This statement implies that if you misinterpret the text and use it to argue against the Law, Gehenna is waiting.

The next problem that is addressed is that of Labor.⁸³ Rabbi Berekiah in the name of Rabbi Judah b. Simon said, "God did not create the world with labor..." They say that the word labor was stated in order to punish the wicked who destroy the world which was created with toil, and to reward the righteous who uphold the world. By God resting on the seventh day He was creating Shabbat and all the things attached to it, such as tranquility, and ease, peace and quiet. Rabbi Levi in the name of Rabbi Jose b. Nehorai clarifies the statement by adding that as long as God was creating, the world was expanding, but when God stopped He was creating rest for the world He quotes Exodus⁸⁴ "He gave rest (וַיַּשְׁכֵּחַ) (to the world) on the seventh day." The term וַיַּשְׁכֵּחַ is being used in the לְהַפְעִיז to cause rest.

Moreh Nevuchim 2:28

Leviticus Rabbah 28:1

Ecclesiastes Rabbah 13:1

Sages'
Structure
of
Proof

I) Introduction:

A) Quote from Genesis 23:10:

"...bring the sheaf of the first fruits of your harvest to the Priest" in contradistinction to...

B) Ecclesiastes 1:3:

"What profit has a man of all his labor wherein he labors under the sun?"

II) Statement:

A) Rabbi Benjamin B. Levi said:

"The sages wanted to suppress the book of Ecclesiastes because they found in it that it leaned to heresy

B) Problem:

"...let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth"
(Ecclesiastes 11:9)

vs

C) "Go not after your own heart" (Numbers 15:39)

D) Problem:

"Walk in the ways of your heart and your eyes"
(Ecclesiastes 11:9)

E) Is Solomon saying that there is no restraint or

Moreh Nevuchim 2:28

Leviticus Rabbah 28:1

Ecclesiastes Rabbah 13:1

judgement, and that there is no God (judge)

III) Point:

"They said that Solomon had spoken well"

IV) Proof:

Since it says (in Ecclesiastes 11:9) "But know that
for all these things God will bring you into judgement".

V) Repetition of question II A:

Problem: (Ecclesiastes 1:3)

"What profit has a man of all his labor"

VI) Point:

The labor referred to is the labor of the field, not
the labor of the study of Torah

VII) Proof:

"...his labor," is said, not all labor.

The Sages begin their discussion of Leviticus 23:10 with a comparison to Ecclesiastes 1:3. They state that the Sages wanted to suppress the book of Ecclesiastes for they found ideas that seem to lead to heresy. They ask how could Solomon say⁸⁵ "Rejoice young man in your youth; and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth." And further "Walk in the ways of your heart and in the sight of your eyes." These statements are compared to those of Moses⁸⁶ "Go not about after your own heart, and your own eyes." They ask if Solomon is saying that there is no restraint, because there is no judgment, which means that there is no judge (God). But they find in Ecclesiastes⁸⁷ the answer which shows that Solomon was not denying God's existence. "But know you that for all these things God will bring you to judgment."

Nevertheless, they ask the question again, should Ecclesiastes be suppressed. This time they quote "Solomon"⁸⁸ "What profit has a man for all his labor." This might imply, they feel, that one should not study Torah. But, since it states "his labor," and not merely "all labor" the implication is work, and not the study of Torah. For them, this is the deeper sense of the passage. Therefore Solomon is not negating the Law. Furthermore they interpret the second half of the verse "...under the sun" to mean several acceptable ideas. It could be interpreted to mean that the profit comes "over the sun" meaning in heaven. It could mean that the profit of study is the fact that the world continues for the sake of those people who study Torah. The people

to whom they are referring are (surprise!) the sages themselves. For who else studied the Law? Their proof is taken from Ecclesiastes⁸⁹ "The sun also rises and the sun goes down." Since this follows the quote "what profit..." they interpret it to be the answer.

Moreh Nevuchim 2:29

Genesis Rabbah 9:1

Sages'
Structure
of
Proof

I) Introduction: (Proverbs 25:2)

"It is the glory of God to conceal a thing, and the
glory of kings to search it out."

II) Statement:

A) From the beginning of Creation to the end it is
concealed

B) "The glory of kings" refers to the glory of Torah

III) Point:

Torah is to be studied and understood except for
Creation which must be left to speculation.

IV) Proof: (Genesis 1:32)

"...it was good." (to study Torah from this point
onwards)

In Genesis Rabbah 9:1 the Sages seem to be saying that one should not try to understand the first chapter of Genesis. The pericope text is "...it was very good."⁹⁰ They make a parallel to the passage in Proverbs⁹¹ "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing and the glory of kings to search out a matter." The glory of God refers to the creation, while the glory of kings refer to the rest of Torah. Their proof text is "By me, do kings reign..."⁹² In the verse preceding the proof text it states that through God can be found understanding and wisdom.

This seems to be a warning on the part of the Rabbis. They are saying that it is not wise to speculate about creation. It suggests that to search out the knowledge of the Torah is the duty of all who would attain wisdom. But, to speculate about creation is to go against God's wishes.

On the other hand the verse before the verse used for their proof text seems to say the opposite. To unravel the secrets of God is to acquire understanding and wisdom as it says "Council is mine and sound wisdom, I am understanding."⁹³

CONCLUSION

Every section of the Moreh Nevuchim that has dealt with creation, and has used Midrash for proof texts, has been examined and discussed. Certain conclusions can now be made with reference to Maimonides' view of creation.

The same outline that was used in the introduction can be used again for making conclusions based on the material covered in the Moreh Nevuchim. That outline is:

- I) Eternality
 - A) Aparte-post
 - B) Aparte Ante
- II) Matter and form within the "Order of Nature"
 - A) The changeability of form
 - B) The unchangeability of Matter
 - C) Prime Matter
 - D) "Miracles"

Maimonides has given evidence of the eternality, aparte-post, of the earth. His evidence, based upon the interpretation of Midrash, tends to try and prove that the concept has been discussed before, and that there is a general agreement that it is so. In Section 2, Chapter 28, he begins his discussion with the statement that Solomon believed in the eternality of the earth (aparte-post). Based upon that supposition he states that the sages must have believed that Solomon was right. Nowhere does one find an attack against him in this area, as one does regarding his marriage to foreign women. In fact, Maimonides cites an example where the Rabbis vindicate the Book of Ecclesiastes, which is attributed to Solomon. In that book, Maimonides finds the proof for the belief in the eternality of the world aparte post, using the words וְעוֹלָם וָעוֹלָם.

When Maimonides finds terms that could be used to prove the finiteness of the world, he interprets them equivocally. If one of the Prophets speaks of the coming destruction of the world, Maimonides shows that the words were meant to be taken metaphorically. Here is another use of Midrash. By interpreting the interpretations of the sages, Maimonides proves that the words of the Bible are not to be taken at face value. They have a deeper meaning ... his.

Maimonides spends little time proving through Midrash the eternality of the world aparte-post. But he spends more time hinting at its eternality aparte-ante. He uses Midrash to help in this endeavor in a number of ways. In Section 2,

Chapter 30 he shows that בראשית does not mean "In the beginning" but rather "With Principle". In Chapter 10 of Section 3 he demonstrates that ברא does not mean "create" rather it means "existence of non-created things." By this, he means that which exists forever. He also attaches the existence of God to the existence of the world. He does this in Chapter 28 of Section 2. By showing how the term לעולם ועד is used in reference to the earth, and in reference to God. In both cases it refers to eternity.

At this point, by putting together the many places in which Maimonides has spread out and hidden his views, a person could translate the first verse in Genesis (בראשית ברא) (אלוהים את השמים ואת הארץ) as "In principle, God always exists with the Heavens and Earth." He could prove the above statement by using Rabbi Eliezer's statement, which Maimonides quotes in Section 2 Chapter 26. In explaining that statement, he proves that, though one can approach Rabbi Eliezer's statement from different angles, the results are always the same. Rabbi Eliezer was speaking of eternity *aparte-ante*.

Even his use of לעולם ועד in Section 2 Chapter 28 aims at a belief in eternity *aparte-ante*. Though seemingly trying to prove eternity *aparte-post*, he gives strong evidence of eternity *aparte-ante* through the placement of the word עד in relationship to the word לעולם. When it appears afterwards it points to eternity *aparte-post*, and when it is placed before . . .

A final point that shows what Maimonides is trying to

prove. He states in Section 2, Chapter 29 that one should not study the creation epic in Genesis. Again, he uses Midrash to show that one should not examine creation too closely. But right before that discourse he states clearly that the study of some parts of Bible should not be attempted by the masses and even the Rabbis. It should only be attempted by those who have activated their intellects through the study of Physics, Metaphysics and the secrets of the Prophets.

Matter is of prime concern to Maimonides' proofs. He must show that matter never is created or destroyed. It merely changes form. If that is true then it follows that there must exist a "Prime Matter" which is formless in itself, but has been given many different forms. There are four excellent proofs in which he uses Midrash to prove that there is such a thing as Prime Matter. Three of these proofs use what he calls equivocal terms. The first proof involves the term water. He attempts to prove that the water is prime matter. By skillful use of the text and the Midrash in Section 2 Chapter 30 he shows how the water was used to create Heavens and earth and the firmament that divides them.

In another part of Section 2, Chapter 30 he follows the interpretation of the Midrash that suggests that the Tree of Life is an equivocal term for the earth. Therefore the "primal waters" (quote from the Midrash) which flow from that Tree are the basis for all life, ergo; "Prime Matter".

Snow, like water, is an equivocal term for Maimonides. In Section 2 Chapter 26 Maimonides uses Rabbi Eliezer's quote to express his own view of eternality of the Prime Matter.

As long as it is written that something existed before the world, Maimonides can prove eternity. If, on the one hand, it is argued that pre-existent thing was used in the making of the world, then Maimonides can claim that

ה' עולם never could have happened. Something must have been there out of which to make the world. On the other hand, if it is argued that the pre-existent was always there, then, by definition, it is Prime Matter.

If, as Maimonides wishes to prove; matter is not destroyed or created, and form is the only change, then it follows that there is a logical order to nature. Form will continually change, without affecting matter. A cycle, or pattern will be evident. How, then, does Maimonides explain breaks in the pattern. How does he explain miracles.

Maimonides does not seem to stray far from the intent of the Midrash in his explanation, in Section 2 Chapter 29. The Sages said that God put certain conditions, or attributes into each thing that was created. The condition, or attribute called for a specific creation, or object that would come from a creation, to act in a manner contradictory to normal. Therefore, for the Sages, nothing has changed since the creation of the world. For Maimonides, this meant that it really was in the nature of a thing to act in any given way. Therefore, miracles did not exist.

Maimonides has proven that; the world always existed, and always will exist, nothing changes in the world, there are no miracles, only matter constantly changing form.

Only the proofs that were taken from the Midrash were

expounded upon in this thesis. For the purposes of this thesis Maimonides has proven all that he set out to prove, using only Midrash, and the midrashic process.

The next question that needs addressing is, how close to the לוו of the לוו was he.

It is clear that some of the Sages were influenced by Greek philosophy. The question is how much were they influenced? Were they playing the same game as Maimonides, a type of philosophical "hide and seek?" If they were influenced, how far did they go, at what point did they stop, and why?

They seem to have agreed with Maimonides' view of the eternality of the world *aparte-post*. Genesis Rabbah 1:13 shows that the world was created in one time period, without any change being allowed. As opposed to Maimonides, who states that there will be no change, the Sages admit change, but put that change into the scheme of creation. Even the "new heavens" were planned out at the beginning of time. In other words there will be no change, that has not been planned from the beginning of creation.

Further proof can be found in Genesis Rabbah 5:5. In that section the Sages include miracles in the scheme of nature. God ordained that all the miracles should happen, yet it was ordained from the beginning. Again the Sages are saying that there will be no surprises for God. Indeed they go further by stating that other worlds existed before this one. They are explaining why evening was not created. The implication is that the evening is all that is left of the other worlds that God created before this one. On the other hand,

one need not try to read anything else into the statement. But, if one were to label evening as some form of matter that was used to create the world, then not only is eternality *aparte-post* proven, but also eternality *aparte-ante*. For that would be admitting that something, that was used in the creation of the world, is eternal, therefore the world is eternal.

This leads to the next consideration, that of Prime Matter. Maimonides did not have to reinterpret the Sages who are responsible for Genesis Rabbah 4:2. They speak of water as being pre-existent to the world. They state clearly that the waters were used to create the Heavens, the waters on the earth and the firmament that divides them. They stop short of saying that the earth itself was created out of the water. But they do say that the water can change form. The water is hammered into something solid, and used for the firmament. There is even a statement that everything that God created was fluid and changeable until the second day. What follows this discussion is most enlightening.

The Sages tie creation to revelation. It seems that they are saying that at only two times was the firmament not in place. The first time was during creation, and the second time was at the revelation at Sinai. This speaks against any "new order" whether it is in nature or morality. Both events are in the past, and given their belief that the world does not change, revelation will not come again. This discourse is part of a more pressing point. The Sages wished to discourage anything that would disagree with the structure of the Jewish community, and indeed their position in it.

In Genesis Rabbah 9:5, while discussing death, they state that death is one of the proofs that there is a God and that that God does not walk the Earth. God is, of course, the only authority. If anyone on earth claims to have authority, without the backing of the "word of God" then they are "false prophets" and should be dealt with as such. In Leviticus Rabbah 28:1 they claim that the study of Torah is the only endeavor of lasting worth. Indeed the world exists only for those who study the Law. Therefore, the Sages are the highest authority on earth, for they get their authority from God, and they study God's ways.

Furthermore it is dangerous to allow the Torah to fall into the hands of those who will not understand it. It is even permissible, as it says in Genesis Rabbah 10:9, to change a text before reading it to people who are devoid of the special wisdom that has been given to the Sages, through the study of Torah. This holds true especially in regard to creation.

It seems clear that the Sages knew the philosophical concept of eternality *aparte ante*, and from whence it came. They did not want philosophers to use their tools to change the "intended" meaning of the text to prove it. They even go so far as to attempt to dissuade others from the study of the text to prove it. They even go so far as to attempt to dissuade others from the study of the account of creation. This can be seen in Genesis Rabbah 9:1. They state clearly that the first seven days of the world's existence should not be examined. Yet that is what they do. But since their

proof text⁹³ states that through God can wisdom be found, there is an implication that the Sages, who study the word of God, can understand creation.

There are many similarities between Maimonides' views and those of the Sages. Both Maimonides and the Sages consider themselves on a higher realm than the masses. Both were influenced by Greek philosophy. Both seem to believe in the eternality of the world *aparte-post*. Both seem to have a concept of Prime Matter. Yet the Sages stop short of stating that the world is eternal *aparte-ante*. Maimonides "proves" it. They believe in a God that can be in action, and in potential. For Maimonides that is an impossibility. Furthermore they believe in revelation (though only in the past). For Maimonides, revelation is continuous and of a different nature. It is available only to philosophers who have been trained in demonstrative sciences.

There are some other differences that must be mentioned. Firstly, the Sages included many people, with differing views. Maimonides, in the מורה נבוכים is not engaging in a dialogue. He is setting forth his views. Another difference is the time period. There is at least an 800 year span of time from that of the Sages to that of Maimonides. Lastly, Maimonides has picked and chosen between hundreds of Midrashim to find the ones that fit his belief system. The Sages were dealing with a single text, from which flew the "sparks" of their Midrash. The "flashes" of Maimonides' were expressed by juxtaposing his belief system over the Midrashim that he chose.

NOTES

1. Moreh Nevuchim 2:29
2. Moreh Nevuchim 2:29
3. Genesis Rabbah 9:1
4. Leviticus Rabbah 28:1
5. Ecclesiastes Rabbah
6. Genesis 8:22
7. Psalms 104:5
8. Exodus 15:18
9. Psalms 148:5,6
10. Jeremiah 33:25
11. Genesis 1:1
12. Genesis 1:5
13. Genesis 1:8
14. Genesis Rabbah 3:7
15. Pirkei de Rebbe Eliezer 3
16. Genesis 1:7
17. Genesis 1:10
18. Genesis Rabbah 4:2
19. Genesis 1:17
20. Babylonian Talmud Hagigah 146
21. Pirkei de Rebbe Eliezer 2
22. Lamentations 5:19
23. Genesis Rabbah 12:11
24. Isaiah 45:7
25. Genesis 1:1
26. Isaiah 65:15-19

27. Genesis Rabbah 9:5
28. Genesis Rabbah 51:3
29. Job 32:1
30. I Sam 25:9
31. Genesis Rabbah 10:9
32. Exodus 20:11
33. Genesis Rabbah 16:5
34. Genesis 1:27
35. Genesis 8:1
36. Exodus 26:20
37. Genesis 2:23
38. Genesis 2:24
39. Genesis Rabbah 15:6
40. Babylonian Talmud: Arodah Zarah, 546
41. Genesis Rabbah 5:5
42. Genesis Rabbah 5:5
43. Isaiah 65:17
44. Isaiah 66:22
45. Genesis 1:6
46. Genesis 1:6
47. Exodus 39:3
48. Job 26:13
49. Isaiah 64:1
50. Genesis 1:5
51. Genesis 1:31
52. Psalms 148:1-4; 7-11
53. Job 37:6
54. Isaiah 65:10

55. Ecclesiastes 3:20
56. Job 9:7
57. Psalms 148:8
58. Genesis 1:2
59. Deuteronomy 28:12
60. Deuteronomy 28:15-68
61. Exodus 14:27
62. Isaiah 45:12
63. Deuteronomy 32:1
64. Genesis 2:15
65. Isaiah 14:2
66. Hosea 14:3
67. Exodus 20:11
68. Genesis 1:27
69. Psalms 139:5
70. Genesis 1:27
71. אֶחָד usually means Hermaphrodite. Here
it is better translated as siamese twins
72. Genesis 5:2
73. Genesis 2:21
74. Genesis 2:15
75. Isaiah 14:2
76. Hosea 14:3
77. Genesis 1:31
78. Malachi 2:17
79. Job 3:17
80. Job 3:17

81. Genesis 2:2
82. Genesis 2:2
83. Genesis 2:2
84. Exodus 20:11
85. Ecclesiastes 1:3
86. Numbers 15:39
87. Ecclesiastes 11:9
88. Ecclesiastes 1:3
89. Ecclesiastes 1:5
90. Genesis 1:31
91. Proverbs 25:2
92. Proverbs 8:15
93. Proverbs 8:14

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