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Waging God's War:

Gersonides' Rhetorical Offensive

On Miracles

by

Dena Alisa Feingold

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for Ordination.

at the

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Thesis Referee: Rabbi Barry S. Kogan, Ph.D.

In memory of my father,
Leon Feingold

May his memory be for a blessing.

DIGEST

This thesis is a study of the philosophy and exegesis of Levi ben Gerson (1288-1344) on the subject of miracles. Its methodology is that of rhetorical cricicism. Rhetorical criticism is the discipline by which works of rhetoric are described, interpreted, and evaluated in terms of the persuasive techniques they employ to evoke agreement from the audience. Thus, in this thesis, Gersonides' philosophical work, Milḥamot Adonai, and one of his exegetical works, the Perush al Hatorah, are examined primarily as works of a persuasive nature.

Since Gersonides was both a philosopher and a devoted Jew, he encountered a disparity between the religious tradition with which he was raised and the modern disciplines of science and philosophy. Both his philosophical work and his commentary on the Bible seem to have been, in some sense, aimed at resolving this disparity. It may be a result of Gersonides' perceiving this disparity as generating outright conflict, that he chose to name his philosophical work Wars of the Lord. Indeed, in this thesis, Gersonides' entire rhetorical task has been illustrated by use of this war metaphor, which has been expanded into an extended metaphor in which the subject of miracles

is one "offensive" of that "war," fought with various types of persuasive "strategy" and "arsenal." In other words, Gersonides' treatment of the subject of miracles is studied as one example of how Gersonides executed the rhetorical task of resolving the perceived conflict between reason and revelation.

In both of these works of rhetoric, Gersonides begins with the assumption that both reason and revelation represent the same "truth" and that there can ultimately be only one "truth." But, he is also aware that these two bodies of knowledge portray that "truth" in different ways, which often appear to be contradictory. Thus, in both the Milḥamot and the Perush, Gersonides attempts to harmonize the contradictory "appearances" of these two traditions. But, his approach in the two works is somewhat different. As a rhetor, Gersonides seems to have been aware that the audiences reading these two works would not be exactly identical. He therefore varied his presentation of his concept of miracles in order to appeal to the respective audience that would be reading each work. Thus, the Milḥamot was prepared for an audience with a stronger philosophical interest and the Perush for an audience with a stronger religious interest in the subject. That is, in the Milḥamot, he tends to "rationalize" the theological aspects of miracles, and, in the Perush, he tends to "theologize" the scientific and philosophical aspects of miracles.

This study of Gersonides' rhetorical task with respect to the subject of miracles is developed in three major areas. Chapter I is an in-depth description of the war metaphor. Included in this discussion is a description of the historical and philosophical setting in which Gersonides lived and wrote. Chapter II is a study of Gersonides' fundamental position on miracles as it is expressed in Milḥamot Adonai. This involves the examination of several strategies and techniques of persuasion Gersonides employs in order to convince his readers that the Biblical miracles can be understood to conform to a rational conception of the universe. Chapter III examines Gersonides' adaptation of his position on miracles for use in his commentary on the Torah. While his fundamental concepts remain unchanged, this chapter demonstrates the significance of the differences in persuasive strategy and technique between Gersonides' argumentation in Milḥamot Adonai and the Perush al Hatorah. In the Perush, Gersonides aims his efforts at demonstrating how rational concepts of the universe can be seen to conform with traditional religious concepts, instead of the reverse. Finally, the Conclusion of the thesis evaluates both of Gersonides' approaches to the concept of miracles and makes some effort at determining whether he could be said to have won the "offensive" on miracles.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE

Like many of the medieval thinkers of Christianity, Islam, and Judaism, Levi ben Gerson faced an inescapable conflict between the religious tradition with which he was raised and the modern disciplines of science and philosophy. Most of the research about Levi ben Gerson that has been carried out up to this point has concerned itself primarily with the concepts Gersonides set forward in confronting this conflict. Very little effort has been made in these studies to examine the manner in which these concepts were presented. That is, the rhetorical side of Gersonides' writings has not been the primary focus of any study of his works. Gersonides was indeed both a thinker and a rhetor. Not only did he study the Bible, Rabbinic literature, the sciences, and Greek, Muslim, and Jewish philosophy; he chose to set down in writing his observations about the conflict this pursuit raised. In his writings, Gersonides employed methods of argumentation in order to persuade his readers that his perspective on the various issues in the conflict was the proper one to use in dealing with them. Therefore, I have chosen to study Gersonides as a rhetor and his writings as pieces of rhetoric.

I have undertaken the study of Gersonides' rhetoric by examining one of the issues raised by the aforementioned conflict--the problem of miracles. This study has been carried out in a number of stages. First of all, I have translated that portion of Gersonides' philosophical work, Milḥamot Adonai, which deals specifically with miracles: Treatise VI, Part 2, Chapters 9-14. I have also translated sections of Gersonides' commentary on the Torah that deal with the Pentateuchal miracles, primarily the ones he mentions specifically in Milḥamot Adonai. In the paper, I have used only certain portions of the material I have translated--portions that illustrate particular points I make in my presentation. I have not reproduced the translations in full. Secondly, I have consulted secondary sources on Gersonides' philosophy and on ancient Greek and other medieval philosophy in order to gain an understanding of the currents of thought that influenced Gersonides and an understanding of his philosophy as a whole. Thirdly, I have examined biographical and historical material on the life of Gersonides and the period of time and circumstances in which he lived. These second two pursuits have been of great import in arriving at some image of Gersonides' rhetorical situation and his world view. Finally, I have employed the methodology of rhetorical criticism as a tool for synthesizing the results of the above three pursuits.

Rhetorical criticism is the process by which works of rhetoric are described, interpreted, and evaluated as to their degree of success in evoking agreement from the audience. In this paper, therefore, I will attempt to describe accurately Gersonides' position on miracles as it is presented in the argumentation in both Milḥamot Adonai and in the Perush al Hatorah. I will interpret the significance of the differences in the rhetoric Gersonides employs in his discussion of miracles in these two works and try to determine what those differences teach us about Gersonides and about his audience. Finally, I will evaluate the efficacy of these arguments and positions with respect to Gersonides' projected audience, to the extent that this is possible.

I have not made an attempt herein to be complete in describing Gersonides' life and thought, nor have I sought to accomplish any major comparisons of his philosophy with others of the same period. Rather, my task has been to become an authority only about the argumentation Gersonides uses to explain his concept of miracles. I have utilized information about his life and thought and the thought of others only insofar as this would enhance and augment the study of Gersonides' rhetoric on miracles. It is my hope that this unique method of looking at a Jewish medieval philosopher's work from a rhetorical perspective will cast a new light on this genre of literature

and that we may gain new insights about Levi ben Gerson from this approach.

My thanks go to Rabbi Barry S. Kogan, my thesis advisor, for his guidance, support, and superb pedagogy throughout the various phases of this undertaking and for his unselfish giving of friendship, concern, and wisdom during my years in rabbinical school. Thanks go also to my mother for helping me with the sources written in French.

INTRODUCTION

Levi ben Gerson (1288-1344) was a mathematician, astronomer, philosopher, and religious scholar of some renown in the medieval world. In the history of Jewish philosophy, he was the most important Aristotelian philosopher following Maimonides.[1] He has also been called the "boldest" of all the Jewish philosophers because of his close adherence to Aristotelian principles of thought.[2] Before he was thirty years of age, Gersonides commenced to write his philosophical masterpiece, Milḥamot Adonai,[3] in which he laid out in detail what he considered to be the most serious philosophical dilemmas facing Judaism in his day. Among the several topics that Gersonides takes up in Milḥamot Adonai is the topic of miracles. This particular topic has been chosen as the focus of this thesis both because the subject of miracles is still of interest today to students of the Bible and because it is one of the most central issues to the reason/revelation conflict which all of the medieval Jewish philosophers faced.

Even though our knowledge of science and the physical structure of the universe has advanced to a great degree since Gersonides time, miracles are still today

the subject of much interest to many rationalists who study the Jewish religious tradition. Today many Jewish philosophers grapple with the question of miracles. Such modern Jewish thinkers as Franz Rosenzweig, Martin Buber, Abraham Heschel, and Mordecai Kaplan have struggled with the issue.[4] But, even more significant, the average modern Jew confronts this issue as well. Children learning Bible stories and adults studying the Torah portion of the week in our synagogues often want to know what we are supposed to believe about the miracles in the Bible. If we say that the narratives containing miracles exist only to teach a moral or practical lesson, we thereby satisfy certain inquirers. But, for many, the question still looms: If these tales are recorded only to teach a lesson, would not the lesson have been more effective if the story were more believable? Why would our forebears make up such preposterous stories which confound our natural reasoning processes? Perhaps there really is some truth to these stories and there is some kind of Divine significance attached to them. Perhaps we ought to try to understand how such a thing might have <u>really</u> happened by some fluke of nature or scientific rarity. These types of questions and hypotheses continue to make for lively debate in Jewish classrooms today. The problem of underatanding a miraculous occurrence in a world governed, by and large, by rational thought is still a significant topic.

In order to understand the prominence of the subject of miracles in the reason/revelation conflict and, therefore, its importance as a focus for the study of Gersonides' rhetoric, it is necessary to begin by examining some of the major points of the reason/revelation conflict itself. From the documents available to us today, it seems reasonable to think of Jewish philosophical activity beginning around the 9th century when Jews first encountered and began to consider seriously the works of the Greek philosophers. As a result of their study of philosophy, Jews who had even a slight exposure to the secular disciplines needed to be convinced of the validity of Judaism, whose concepts of the universe were at odds with what philosophy taught.[5] Eventually, the influence of Greek philosophy subtly permeated even the most traditional circles of Jewish thinkers, and not only those who delved into philosophy, but those who clung to traditional beliefs, found themselves combatting these philosophical ideas as well. Philosopher Leo Strauss made some important observations about the conflict between reason and revelation which will be helpful to us in understanding more clearly what constituted the clash of these two bodies of knowledge.

Strauss noted that that which causes the meeting of philosophy and Judaism to be a conflict is that any attempt to refute revelation, like attempts initiated by the claims of philosophy, presupposes the impossibility

of revelation whereas any refutation of philosophy presupposes belief in revelation.[6] In other words, belief in revelation is based upon people's experiences of God as recorded in the Bible and passed on from generation to generation as a "reliable tradition" whereas philosophical claims are based on reasoning and sense perception.[7] Neither of these methods of arriving at the "truth" can be refuted by the other because their assumptions about how one arrives at the truth are, according to Strauss, mutually exclusive. This appears to leave no room for any kind of meeting of the minds when Jews and philosophers convene. Although Strauss' observation is helpful in understanding the tension between reason and revelation, it appears to deny the possibility of there ever existing such an entity as Jewish philosophy or such individuals as philosophers who were also practicing Jews. However, ever since this conflict developed in the middle ages and up to the present, there have always been devoted Jews who considered themselves philosophers and who strove to somehow synthesize, harmonize, or bring into meaningful relation these two traditions. Each of the different camps of Jewish philosophers in each period of time developed its own means of dealing with this conflict. Indeed, Strauss suggests that the entire history of Western civilization is a "doomed" attempt by such individuals to harmonize the "mutually exclusive" realms of Scripture and Greek philosophy.[8]

We say that the topic of miracles is central to this reason/revelation conflict for several reasons. Up until the time that the scientific discoveries of ancient Greece and the study of philosophy influenced Jewish theology, miracles were considered to be the proof for the veracity of revelation. The questions of whether miracles actually existed or how miracles came to be were not discussed by the Biblical writers. In the Bible, the miracle was seen as an act of Divine will and God was seen as having the ability to do absolutely anything toward the end of exercising providence.[9] By the rabbinic period, the miracle was an essential and unquestionable element of Jewish faith. The questions of the individual meaning of each miracle, its implication for humanity, and sometimes even its specific cause were open to debate, but not the question of the existence of miracles per se. This was still an unchallenged principle of faith.[10]

However, by the medieval period, when the effect of the Greek advances in thinking began to be felt in Jewish circles, the subject of miracles came to be one of the most problematic issues for medieval Judaism. Science could not explain the miracles of the Bible as they were traditionally understood. Greek philosophy denied the possibility of creation ex nihilo--that miracle of all miracles. Although Greek philosophy did not deal with the Biblical miracles themselves, it did deny the existence of Divine providence for individuals which is the

raison d'être for all miracles as far as Scripture and rabbinic literature are concerned.[11] When science and philosophy, carrying with them the conviction that miracles are not demonstrable, became prominent influences on the religious world, miracles could no longer serve as any kind of proof for the revelatory tradition upon which the entire Jewish religion was based.[12] There are a number of fundamental concepts in Greek philosophy that directly contradict the very underpinnings of the Biblical miracle concept. For example, as we implied before, both the Bible and Aristotle considered the question of the "beginnings" of things to be central in demonstrating the veracity of their positions.[13] But the "truth" about the "beginnings" for Aristotle was diametrically opposed to the Bible which saw creation as a miracle. Furthermore, "nature" was a crucial concept in both science and philosophy. Almost every system of thought in the medieval period, except those which held traditional religious thought to be in some sense valid, either reinterpreted miracles as allegories or somehow included miracles into the category of "nature." Including miracles as part of nature usually involved an attempt to demonstrate how the events known as "miracles" could actually be understood as unusual or unexpected natural events if reexamined with the proper scientific knowledge. The Bible, on the other hand, does not even have a word for "nature" and, therefore, is able to consider the miracle as something

totally apart from what philosophy and science came to call "nature."[14]

Just as we said about the reason/revelation conflict as a whole, so it is with the particular issue of miracles--that each group of Jewish thinkers in each time period had its own peculiar way of attempting to bring the Biblical concept of miracles into harmony with modern scientific and philosophical thought about what is possible in nature. Each of these efforts was influenced by the study of science and Greek philosophy, by the thought of Jewish predecessors, and often by the philosophers of Islam as well. Hence, whether we are dealing with Saadia Gaon, for whom miracles are events that contradict the natural order and therefore confirm revelation,[15] or whether miracles are seen as an interference of a higher supernatural order into the natural order, as for the neoplatonists,[16] or any number of other views, each concept of miracles represents a crucial point in that particular philosopher's confrontation with the parallel claims to "truth" by reason and revelation.

This is precisely the case with Levi ben Gerson. He chose miracles as one of his main foci for explicating his particular position on the relationship between reason and revelation. As our study progresses, we shall observe that Gersonides thought of both reason and revelation as part and parcel of "the truth." Indeed, he speaks of this perception in the introduction to Milḥamot Adonai where

he makes such statements as: "Everything that is explained to us by way of theoretical inquiry is the opinion of our Torah."[17] But he also notes that many of his predecessors' opinions about this are at variance with his and that he therefore thinks it his duty to correct these incorrect conceptions of the situation. This, Gersonides says, is his "war." He writes:

> Accordingly, we have called this book Wars of the Lord because we have fought the wars of the Lord against the incorrect opinions that are found among those who came before in [their inquiries]. And the one who engages in theoretical inquiry should not think that the Torah will be a hindrance to us in verifying the truth of the matter in this book because it [the Torah] is the truth, in and of itself.[18]

The significance of this title has occasionally been noted by those who have studied Gersonides.[19] But, in a rhetorical study, such a title deserves more than fleeting attention. Indeed, the fact that Gersonides used a war metaphor for his title can be seen as an important key to understanding Gersonides' rhetoric and this can be demonstrated by studying his rhetoric on miracles. Gersonides was indeed trying to fight off ignorance and, as he himself suggested, he believed that his Milḥamot Adonai would accomplish this on the philosophical front of his "war." Yet, Gersonides' commentary on the Torah can also be illuminated by use of this metaphor. For the bet hamidrash, the religious house of study of his time, represented another front of this "war" where Gersonides hoped to conquer ignorance.

In his discussion on religion and philosophy, Leo Strauss also pointed out that the conflict between reason and revelation must manifest itself, to a great extent, as a conflict of arguments. The arguments come from two directions--from theologians who argue on behalf of the Bible and from philosophers who stand up for a philosophical viewpoint.[20] But as we have pointed out, in the middle ages many philosophers were also theologians. Levi ben Gerson certainly falls into this category. And his discussions on miracles both in his philosophical work and in his commentary on the Torah are arguments embracing both philosophy and theology which are clearly persuasive in nature. That is to say, we shall see as our discussion progresses that Gersonides does not merely state his position. He does so with the aim of convincing his readers that his position is indeed correct. He does this primarily by "rationalizing" the theological aspects of miracles when appealing to the philosophical side of his readers and by "theologizing" the scientific and philosophical aspects of miracles when appealing to the religious side of his readers. Not surprisingly, we shall observe that the former task is more apparent in Milḥamot Adonai, and the latter is more apparent in the Perush al Hatorah.

Gersonides thus created for himself an extremely difficult rhetorical task. He endeavored to use the claims of both religious tradition and philosophy in order to set

forth a convincing position on the significance of miracles in Jewish thought. He could not, as a philosopher, accept the miracles as presented in Scripture. But, as a Jew, he could not reject them.[21] Therefore, like the other medievals who faced this tension, he had to develop a new way of discussing and interrelating the claims of these two bodies of knowledge. This thesis is devoted to understanding and evaluating the method Gersonides developed in his effort to accomplish this.

The study of Gersonides' rhetorical task of banishing ignorance about the concept of miracles will be developed in three major areas. Chapter I is an in-depth description of the war metaphor Gersonides chose as the title of his philosophical work. Included in this discussion is a description of the historical and philosophical setting in which Gersonides lived and wrote. This information is used to help expand the war metaphor into an extended metaphor which illustrates Gersonides' rhetorical situation and his world view. Chapter II is a study of Gersonides' fundamental position on miracles as it is expressed in Milḥamot Adonai. This involves the examination of several strategies and techniques of persuasion Gersonides employs in the work in order to convince his readers that the Biblical miracles can be understood to conform with a rational conception of the universe. Chapter III examines Gersonides' adaptation of his basic philosophical position on miracles for use in his commentary

on the Torah. While his fundamental concepts remain unchanged, this chapter demonstrates the significance of the differences in persuasive strategy and technique between Gersonides' argumentation in Milḥamot Adonai and the Perush al Hatorah. Here we discover that, in the Perush, Gersonides aims his efforts at demonstrating how rational concepts of the universe can be seen to conform with traditional religious concepts, instead of the reverse. Finally, the Conclusion of the thesis will evaluate both of Gersonides' approaches to the concept of miracles and make some effort at determing whether he won the "war" he was waging with respect to the "offensive" on miracles.

CHAPTER I

The Rhetorical Significance of Gersonides' War Metaphor

Living in the region of Provence in southern France in the late thirteenth century and first half of the fourteenth century, Levi ben Gerson had every reason to perceive himself as being involved in a struggle for survival. At least as far as we can tell, Gersonides' life itself was not in peril as he wrote. But both his historical situation and his philosophical/religious environment presented constant threats to the survival of his way of thinking and the principles upon which he stood. For the Jews of France, these were perilous times. Jews were under suspicion and attack as a people from both secular and religious authorities in the area. For Jews like Gersonides, engaged in the study of philosophy, these times were difficult for an additional reason. The whole idea of the propriety of Jews studying Greek philosophy had been brought into question and was the subject of intense debate. Thus, it may well be that Gersonides chose to describe his philosophical work as a war on behalf of God because he found himself caught in the middle of these difficult situations. After all, a war is generally fought only as a last resort, after less risky methods of resolving

a conflict have been tried. Gersonides' choice of this metaphor as the title of his philosophical treatise may, therefore, indicate that he was, in a sense, waging his own personal war against the grave physical and intellectual threats to his survival and to that of his people. This "war," then, could be viewed as Gersonides' own particular response to the reason/revelation conflict described in the Introduction. As we have already noted, Gersonides himself speaks of this "war" as a response to his intellectual and religious environment. Let us therefore examine both the historical and the philosophical settings which may have contributed to Gersonides' choice of the war metaphor.

The period during which Gersonides lived was the zenith of the French Inquisition which preceded and anticipated the more virulent Spanish Inquisition.[1] The proceedings of this Inquisition were directed against all those who were suspected of being heretics and transgressors of the Christian faith. At first this included only Christians who deviated from the "true faith." Eventually, however, Jews were drawn into the proceedings as well. Every type of persecution, punishment, and torture (including forced conversion and expulsion) that we associate with the Spanish Inquisition existed during this earlier period in France, but with less severity.[2] Most religious and political leaders of the time were committed to Jewish persecution in one form or another. However, the political leaders

tended to limit their persecution to book burning, denial of civil rights, and occasionally expulsion. There were periods in which these two realms of authority were in conflict with each other which occasionally gave the Jews some relief, the attention being focused elsewhere. Another aid to the Jews was an occasional "benevolent" Pope or king or a particularly enterprising Pope or king who co-opted the Jews and saw their usefulness to his regime. This was the case, for example, with Philip the Fair (Philip IV) who reigned as king in France from 1285-1314. He wanted to limit the jurisdiction of the Inquisition so that he could have more authority in his kingdom.[3] He also found the Jews helpful to his economy.[4] However, even Philip the Fair dispossessed the Jews in the end and called for their expulsion in 1306.

Another "benevolent" ruler, King Louis X, brought the Jewish exiles back to France in 1315. But this reign proved to be another period of suffering for the Jews in spite of Louis X's efforts. This time, a peasant uprising known as the "Pastoureaux" was initiated against the Jewish community in southern France, in particular.[5] With the rise of this peasant movement, it became clear just how limited the king's benevolence was. Neither the king nor the Pope made a single effort to curb the maniacal plundering and slaughtering this group perpetrated as a response to fabricated blood libel and well-poisoning accusations and the like. By the time this movement was

finally halted in 1321 by Philip V[6], the Pastoureaux had "destroyed a substantial part of the communities of southern France."[7] It is clear that the general situation in France at that time was an extremely fearful one for the Jewish community.

Although we have noted that the Jews in southern France were included in this gloomy picture, it seems that the particular area in which Gersonides spent the whole of his life was spared from much of this activity. Those secular leaders who tended to ignore Church rulings seemed to be common in certain localities in southern France.[8] For example, the expulsion of 1306 was fairly thorough except for a few isolated provinces. One of these happened to be Provence--including the cities of Bagnols, Orange, Avignon, and Peripignan--cities which are most often identified as the places where Gersonides may have lived and written. This area tended to be ruled tolerantly by both the dukes and the Popes.[9] For example, Orange was ruled by the counts of Baux. This is where Charles Touati posits Gersonides did most of his writing. Touati argues that he may have stayed there from 1320 until his death because life was more pleasant for Jews there than other places might have been at the time.[10] Another count who seems to have treated the Jews, and perhaps Gersonides in particular, with kindness at a later period, around 1340, was Robert d'Anjou, king of Naples and count of Provence.[11] The most notable example of a Pope who was favorably disposed

to the Jews in this region is Pope Clement VI who assumed the papacy in 1342, just two years before Gersonides' death. This particular Pope was noted for his favorable attitude toward the arts and scholarly pursuits and toward the Jews.[12] There is not a great deal of evidence to enlighten us as to why this particular area was different or how its leaders were able to maintain their independent views on the fair treatment of Jews. However, if what little we know of Gersonides' life and work is any indication, it must be true that this region provided a better life for Jews than most of the other regions.

The most definite statement that can be made about Gersonides' life is that we know relatively little about it. The information we do have seems to point to a life fairly free of religious persecution. We presume, for example, that anyone who was even partially affected by the aforementioned persecutions could not have written so prolifically. Gersonides was also known to have associated with certain important Christians of the time[13] and to have cooperated with Christian scholars in some of his scientific endeavors.[14] As we have implied, there is ample evidence that Gersonides may have been very close to certain area rulers, most likely, Robert d'Anjou and Pope Clement VI. We find that this particular Pope made a special request that some of Gersonides' scientific work be translated for him to read and that Gersonides then dedicated the Latin version to the Pope. There is even some speculation that

that Gersonides might have used his favored position to try to help his fellow Jews who were suffering elsewhere in France. Indeed, one document that points to this is a letter to Gersonides from one Yiẓḥak ben Mordekhai who closed an halakhic inquiry to Gersonides with this remark:

> May He that dwells on High give you the strength and success with the greatest of kings so that it may go well with us all.[15]

A very similar salutation is found in a letter to Gersonides from Isaac Kimḥi as well.[16] All of this indicates that Gersonides must have lived in fairly congenial coexistence with Christians in the region of Provence.

In spite of Gersonides' good fortune to have lived in one of the few pockets of France free from severe persecution, we have evidence that he suffered to a certain degree as a result of the aforementioned crises facing French Jewry at the time. For instance, Gersonides makes reference, in a few places, to the fact that he has no Bible or Talmud at his disposal.[17] This is entirely logical since historical works of the period document frequent instances of burning Jewish books exactly during the period in which he was writing. He began to write Milḥamot Adonai around 1316. We have record of a great Talmud burning in November of 1319 in nearby Toulouse. In 1320, the Pope instituted a general search and burning of Talmuds, commentaries, and other writings.[18] From a statement made in his commentary, we also know that Gersonides was at least partially aware of what was happening to Jews else-

where in France. In that statement, he acknowledges the expulsion of 1306.[19] In other places he comments that he is having difficulty thinking and writing because of the tribulations of his people.[20] In this connection, we find that, in his commentaries, Gersonides speaks often of the rebuilding of the Temple and the coming of the Messiah.[21] This, too, may indicate that he thought the times were very bad for the Jews and would get even worse. There is one period in Gersonides' life, between 1330 and 1337, when he seems not to have written anything for the entire seven year stretch.[22] Although it is entirely possible that this could be due to illness or merely represent a non-creative period in his life, it is also possible that this could indicate a period of persecution or prohibition of some type on his writing. However, this is merely speculation. There is no specific evidence to support such a theory. Whether or not Gersonides actually experienced any severe persecution himself, it is certainly safe to say that he suffered some degree of discomfort over the situation of the Jewish community. This could have affected how he expressed himself in writing and influenced his perception of being "embattled."

Certainly the most important influence on the way Gersonides wrote and what he wrote is the philosophical setting in which he worked. The most important aspect of this philosophical setting which directly influenced Gersonides was, undoubtedly, the 1303-1306 controversy in

northern Spain and southern France over philosophical and scientific studies. Before the middle of the twelfth century, the studies of Jews in southern France were limited to the Bible and the rabbinic literature.[23] But, at this point, with the movement of some noted scholars such as the ibn Tibbon and Kimḥi families from northern Spain to southern France and their translating the works of Maimonides and other philosophers into Hebrew, the intellectual horizons of the Jews of southern France widened significantly. Naturally, these new intellectual developments did not arrive without some controversy. The first controversy was one that centered around the issue of whether or not it was appropriate to study Maimonides.[24]

But by the time Gersonides was studying and writing, that particular controversy had long since perished. By now, Maimonides was taken to be an authority by the majority of Jews,[25] and many of the concepts of Greek philosophy were slowly finding their way into the Biblical commentaries and even the sermons of the rabbis of southern France.[26] One particular group of traditionalists came to see these works of Jewish authors which incorporated much Greek thought to be far more dangerous to the Jewish community than the Greek works themselves.[27] They disliked the allegorical interpretation of Scripture and the philosophical abstraction of the Biblical events contained therein.[28] These opponents desired to forbid Jews from studying philosophy until the age of 25 or 30, to strictly monitor

and control what could be said in a public sermon, and to ban the use of Greek philosophy and the denial of the literal interpretation of Scripture in both sermons and written works.[29]

On the other end of the spectrum, of course, were those who thought philosophy to have an important role in the study of Judaism. This group, which had its focus in Montpellier, admitted that there were a few individuals who took the concept of philosophical interpretation of Scripture to an extreme. But, they felt that the effect of philosophy on Jewish culture and the Jewish community was, by and large, very positive. They could understand the desire to exercise some control over what was preached and written, but opposed vehemently the idea of a ban or limiting the study of this material to those over 25.[30]

Gersonides was between 15 and 18 when this controversy was taking place. He may well have already delved into the study of philosophy and science by this time. It is easy to understand how Gersonides came to perceive himself as being commander-in-chief of a war, given this philosophical background. He grew up directly in the line of fire of an ideological controversy over the very studies in which he was engaged. Hence, it seems from his choice of the title for his own philosophical treatise, that this image of a battle or war would be useful to him in expressing his own perception of the philosophical state of affairs.

When we say that Gersonides' choice and explanation

of his title demonstrates that he perceived himself to be fighting against the enemy of "incorrect opinions" or ignorance, we assume that he was appealing to his contemporaries who were about to be won over by the existing notions about the various topics he considered most crucial to a correct understanding of the universe. It was not simply that those for whom he was writing were ignorant of these philosophical issues altogether. On the contrary, the majority of his readers were undoubtedly familiar either with what the traditional Jewish texts had to say about these matters or with what science and philosophy and the Jewish texts had to say. However, it seems from what Gersonides tells us about combatting the opinions of those who came before him that what constituted "ignorance" was not merely lack of knowledge, but misinformation or erroneous ideas about important notions such as Divine providence, God's knowledge, the nature of prophecy, miracles, and so on.

As Gersonides seems to have viewed it, this ignorance could be obtained from many different sources. One might suspect, knowing Gersonides' philosophical bent, that he held that erroneous concepts derived only from the traditional religious texts and that what the philosophers set forth was essentially correct. But this is not the case. Gersonides actually saw ignorance as deriving from the misinterpretation of Scripture and the misuse of philosophy.[31] In his introductory remarks to Milḥamot Adonai

Gersonides tells us that the topics he chose as the foci of concern in Milḥamot Adonai are topics with which, in his estimation, the previous Jewish philosophers, most notably Maimonides, had not adequately dealt.[32] It is inconceivable that Gersonides could have meant by this statement that too little ink had been spent on these issues by the philosophers. There is plenty of evidence to the contrary. It is more reasonable to suppose that Gersonides thought that the explanations had been too vague or had relied too heavily on the traditional rabbinic concepts[33] or had not exhibited a great enough understanding of Aristotelian philosophy, to which Gersonides himself was strongly committed.[34]

Since Gersonides was probably brought up with a significant amount of training in the rational disciplines and particularly Aristotelian thought, it is logical that he came to see himself as commander-in-chief of the forces fighting against the enemy. His rhetorical task, then, was to be more specific and analytical than his predecessors and to rely less heavily on the traditional sources. Perhaps most significantly, Gersonides seems to have considered himself to be better versed in Aristotle's philosophy than Maimonides and the others had been since he was able to use the great commentary to Aristotle's works by Averroes. This may have given him the feeling that he could explain Aristotle better than any previous or current philosopher and therefore resolve the particular issues he

had chosen more clearly and cogently.

Yet, it is meaningless to speak of the commander-in-chief and enemy of a war without identifying the cause on behalf of which the commander is seeking to overcome the enemy. Gersonides' war is clearly on behalf of God and the continued respect of Jewish tradition. After all, if Gersonides' goal were only to convince more people of the correctness of Aristotelian philosophy, he would not have taken so much time and effort as to write commentaries on the Bible and Talmud and to include in his philosophical work many Biblical and rabbinic prooftexts. Even when he was writing straight philosophy, he wrote for Jews who were open to philosophical ideas. And these Jews, himself included, were committed to maintaining Jewish belief and practice. Yet, the philosophical setting in which they lived made it increasingly difficult to maintain respect for Jewish tradition. The basic tenets of Jewish faith were directly contradicted by Greek philosophy and science which had already made great inroads into the world view of the Christian society in which they lived. The Jewish proponents of the study of philosophy and science may have thus feared the mistrust of their Christian neighbors[35] and the loss of faith of some of their own people if efforts were not made to connect these disciplines to Jewish tradition. The medieval Jews who were sympathetic to the claims of philosophy did not want to give up their ancestral faith. Rather, they wanted to "reinforce" it by

giving it an "enlarged content."[36] They wanted it to be seen as compatible with modern thinking so that they could continue to maintain its beliefs and practices. If ignorance and erroneous ideas were allowed to flourish, surely this compatibility would never be attained. As D. W. Silverman commented about these Jews who were philosophically aware: "In every generation...the function of philosophers and scientists was to preserve this (religious) tradition inviolate and prevent its neglect."[37] By examining the rhetoric of Milḥamot Adonai and the Perush al Hatorah, we will find that Gersonides dedicated himself to this very cause in his particular generation.

This being the case, Gersonides lined up the following, perhaps unlikely, allies to combine forces against the enemy. He combined philosophy and science with the Bible and rabbinic tradition as allies on behalf of God's honor. Gersonides held that all of these were needed in order to uphold the cause and defeat the enemy. Gersonides followed the tradition of Maimonides in his basic thinking on the connection between philosophy and religious tradition. Like Maimonides, he took the modern sciences to be products of the religious tradition. The sciences were the result of Divine inspiration.[38] Gersonides even went so far as to say that the Bible actually suggested his philosophical views.[39] For example, Gersonides claimed that he did not have to force an interpretation onto Genesis in order to arrive at his concept of creation. Rather, the

text led him directly to it.[40]

Since it was a fundamental principle in Gersonides' system of thought that the religious tradition and the sciences were necessarily interrelated, it is easy to understand why he needed to combine several viewpoints in order to promote his cause. Because Gersonides accepted the principle that science, philosophy, the Bible, and rabbinic Judaism were all legitimate sources of truth and that, in fact, there could ultimately be only one truth,[41] he had to include all of these sources in order to argue persuasively the correctness of his position. If, in the process of proving a point, the "truth" as explicated in scientific tradition contradicted the "truth" as explicated in the Torah, the two had to be somehow harmonized in order to demonstrate that they were merely contradictory formulations of the same truth. As we shall see, for Gersonides this meant that Scripture would have to be interpreted to agree with the rational position.[42] Gersonides states this explicitly in his introduction to Milḥamot Adonai. We must accept the truths found in scientific experience, he posits, even if they differ significantly from statements found in the Torah. This is so because "(t)he Torah is not a code compelling us to believe falsehoods."[43] It is important to emphasize, however, that when Gersonides finds the Torah in contradiction to philosophy, he does not drop it as an ally in his cause. He needs to keep Jewish tradition as an ally--otherwise his cause is lost. He

portrays the religious tradition as part of an organic whole which can aid his "scientific" explanation of the universe.[44]

Upon reading his various works, it becomes apparent that Gersonides perceived two separate fronts where ignorance existed and had to be conquered by the allies. These were the classrooms in which Jewish philosophical study was pursued and the bet hamidrash, where Scripture and rabbinical material were studied with religious reverence and where little attention was paid to philosophical thought as such. That the philosophical realm was one important front for his war is obvious from his choice of the title Wars of the Lord for his philosophical treatise. It is possible that this title was selected to serve as a rhetorical device designed to persuade his audience of the gravity of the situation, as he perceived it. In fact, this title having been applied only to his philosophical work could easily lead us to the conclusion that the classroom of Jewish philosophical study was the only front on which this war was fought. However, a close reading of Gersonides' commentary on the Bible reveals that he was carrying out this war on another front as well. For many of the issues dealt with in the Milḥamot are covered, albeit sporadically, in this work as well.

In all probability, those who read Gersonides' commentaries were not exactly the same people who read Milḥamot Adonai. Undoubtedly, there was some overlap between

the two groups. But, from the different approaches to the same material we often observe in the Milḥamot and the Perush, it seems logical that these were two separate audiences who had little in common intellectually. We have the impression that the Jews who studied in the "houses of study," or rabbinic academies, in the middle ages had not been heavily exposed to the secular sciences. The Jews who had become strongly influenced by the study of philosophy were also well-versed in religious text study. But according to Norbert Samuelson, they were "informed and believing Aristotelians."[45] Therefore, they had to be dealt with on a different plane. Gersonides, being one of the latter, but knowing well the mind of the average student in the bet hamidrash, recognized the two different fronts for his war.

This implies that he recognized the need for two different strategies as well. Two separate audiences require two separate rhetorical approaches. The first strategic move that Gersonides made was the choice of what topics he would cover, that is, what offensives he would launch in an effort to win his war. Although the topics he chose are used as offensives on both fronts of the war, they are identified clearly only in Milḥamot Adonai. This is true of the other elements of Gersonides' strategy as well.

The battles within each offensive, which are the specific discussions within each topic, are clearly laid

out in a logical fashion in Milḥamot Adonai. These same battles also appear in the commentaries, but they are not always arranged together in an organized pattern. They are also modified so as to appeal better to the audience on the bet hamidrash front. This use of the same basic discussions in two different ways represents Gersonides' shift in strategy in moving from one front to the other.

A third element of Gersonides' strategy, the arsenal he chose to fight the various battles, corresponds to the persuasive techniques Gersonides used to express his arguments. These vary quite distinctly in the two works. This is not surprising. After all, the ultimate success of any rhetor's discourse relies most heavily on the skillful use of techniques of persuasion. If he cannot change his techniques in shifting from one type of audience to the next, he has lost his cause before he even begins.

Gersonides launched seven major offensives in his war on ignorance. This is very apparent in Milḥamot Adonai where he lists seven key topics upon which he intends to focus. These are the immortality of the soul, prophecy, God's knowledge, providence, heavenly bodies and their relationship to God, creation, and miracles. In the commentaries, of course, the topics are not so clearly delineated since the work is organized according to the order of the Bible itself. However, bits and pieces of each offensive can be found scattered throughout the work. In the war metaphor, these topics become the major offen-

sives of the war, each of which has its own chance for success or failure. Without a victory in the majority of these offensives, Gersonides' war could not be won. Although, as in a real war, all of the offensives are launched on behalf of the same cause, each offensive is, in a sense, independent. Each of them has its own specific rhetorical task.

In a real war, many smaller battles must be fought before the entire offensive can be won. So it is in a rhetorical offensive. The battles are specific discussions within each topic, replete with different types of arsenal--arguments and persuasive techniques specific to that particular discussion. In the discussion that follows, we shall examine in detail how one major offensive, the offensive on miracles, was carried out--what battles were fought and what arguments were used on the two separate fronts.

CHAPTER II

Basic Strategy for the Offensive on Miracles: The Approach of Milḥamot Adonai

Although Gersonides waged his rhetorical war on two fronts, the philosophical front is where he placed his emphasis. This is the only place in his writings where he identified his positions on the various topics in a precise and orderly fashion. He fleshed out his arguments there as completely as he possibly could. Hence, we must assume that the offensive on miracles in Milḥamot Adonai represents Gersonides' fundamental position on miracles and that his view on miracles in the commentaries to the Bible is merely an adaptation of this basic position.[1] We shall, therefore, turn our attention at this time to the rhetorical strategy Gersonides employed in Milḥamot Adonai with respect to the miracle offensive. This entails the study of how Gersonides' presentation of his concept of miracles fit in with his greater cause, what basic discussions were set up within the presentation on miracles, and what persuasive techniques were chosen to aid in the eradication of erroneous ideas existing among the students of Jewish philosophical study.

In order to understand fully Gersonides' position

on miracles and the rhetorical techniques he used to express it, it will be helpful, at the outset, to make some general observations about the writing style and approach to philosophy which characterize Milḥamot Adonai. What strikes the reader at first glance is Gersonides' great effort at organization and clarity. In the introduction to the work, he lists what will be contained therein, treatise by treatise, giving a brief description of the contents of each treatise. Then, in like fashion, at the beginning of each treatise, the individual chapters are outlined and described. In general, Gersonides keeps to this self-imposed structure very well, and, therefore, the work is easy to follow. The language he uses is usually concise and simple.

Within each treatise, the specific topics are discussed technically and in minute detail.[2] Yet, while he is precise and detailed in laying out his arguments, he often carries this to an extreme. He is repetitive. He becomes so carried away with presenting all the sides of an argument and then giving the supporting and opposing claims for each side that the reader can easily become frustrated by the abundance of information. While Gersonides uses no special devices intended to confound the reader,[3] as did Maimonides in his deliberate effort to conceal certain controversial points in the Guide of the Perplexed, he confuses and complicates the issues inadvertently by trying to represent them so comprehensively.

Often, it takes great concentration in order to determine the basic points in a given discussion. This problem is not unique to the reader whose native tongue is other than Hebrew. It is a matter of argument construction; not vocabulary or syntax. In fact, it has been noted from a reading of other philosophical works of Gersonides' time that even Gersonides' own contemporaries made errors in reading the Milḥamot and often did not understand his philosophy.[4]

As far as Gersonides' approach to philosophy is concerned, Milḥamot Adonai shows him to be, as Menachem Kellner has suggested, committed to the principles of empiricism.[5] That is, he held that one should always begin with personal experience or observable data, if available, before forming any kind of conceptualization or theory about a given problem.[6] Hence, at the beginning of every offensive in the Milḥamot, Gersonides begins by citing the empirical data. In the introduction to Milḥamot Adonai, Gersonides stresses the importance of asserting a sound philosophical position even if it opposes Jewish theology.[7] The basic foundation of his philosophy and much of its organization is Aristotelian although discussions on certain topics occasionally carry more of a Platonic than an Aristotelian bent. For the most part, he accepts Greek philosophy as he learned it and adds nothing new to it. What is innovative is how he uses the Aristotelian (and Platonic) material. His aim is to make Scripture conform with Aristotelianism.[8] Menachem Kellner has argued that while this "attempt to clothe

Judaism in the robes of Aristotelianism" was unsuccessful, it did represent a "fresh" and "ingenious" approach, the likes of which had not been evident in any of the other Jewish Peripatetics.[9]

With this basic description of the style and approach of the Milḥamot in mind, we may now focus on the rhetorical strategy Gersonides employs in his discussion of miracles. The goal of this discussion is to attempt to account for how the miracles related in Scripture could be understood as really possible but that they had to be conceptualized in a new framework in order to see their existence as being compatible with Aristotelian thought, as he understood it.

One very fundamental strategic move that Gersonides made is so obvious that it cannot be overlooked: He chose to place the subject of miracles at the very end of his philosophical work. This is significant for a number of reasons. It is not without some forethought that a rhetor places the subjects contained in his work in a certain order. If he is trying to persuade his audience of the truth of a certain position which he supposes they are ill-prepared to accept, he will want to set the stage for this subject's entrance. This is precisely what Gersonides accomplishes by making miracles the last subject of concern in Milḥamot Adonai. His philosophically astute audience would have been, at the outset, ill-prepared to accept Gersonides' position on miracles for one major reason: It had no

empirical evidence upon which to stand. No one could prove that any of the miracles described in the Bible had happened. Therefore, in keeping with his own principles of how one should proceed in writing a convincing philosophy, Gersonides left miracles to the end. The principle that called for this approach states:

> When the writer's view differs from the accepted notions of the reader, the topics of lesser divergence should be discussed before those of greater divergence, so as to keep the interest of the reader and to prepare him gradually for a change in his notions. [10]

Furthermore, understanding the mechanism behind the occurrence of a miracle entails an understanding of several other fundamental principles of how the universe functions. Thus, Gersonides was careful to place miracles at the end of Milḥamot Adonai--after he had presented his positions on prophecy, God's knowledge, and providence, all of which are referred to extensively in the discussions on miracles. It is obvious from this extensive cross-referral that the concept of miracles could not have been understood without first presenting convincing arguments in connection with these other subjects. It has also been noted by one authority that miracles needed to succeed creation in order to be comprehended.[11] In fact, miracles were even subsumed under the general topic of "creation"--the only major topic Gersonides considered which did not comprise a treatise in itself. In addition, although direct reference is not made to the fifth treatise in Gersonides' discussion of miracles,

its subject matter is often employed. This is the treatise that is concerned with the heavenly bodies and their relationship to God. Part of this treatise is a very detailed scientific discussion of Aristotelian astronomy which was published as a separate work and dropped from the Milḥamot even before its 1560 Riva di Trento edition was published.[12] However, some of this information becomes significant, especially in Gersonides' discussion of Joshua 10 and II Kings, Chapter 20, where miracles that affect the movement of the sun are related. Thus, at least five of the six topics which precede the discussion of miracles probably had to come first, in Gersonides' estimation, in order to prepare his readers for his argumentation on the subject of miracles.

There is also a certain rhetorical purpose apparent in the way Gersonides typically ordered his discussion within each topic. This is strategically significant, especially since Gersonides chose to throw out this organizational pattern when he came to the subject of miracles. It was a strategy which did not apply to and would not work for this particular discussion. In order for a persuasive discourse to be successful, we usually find that three "appeals" are necessary: the appeals of "logos," the rational and the logical, "ethos," credibility and authority, and "pathos," emotion. However, in a philosophical or scientific discourse, an emphasis on pathos would be undesirable. This is the case with the discussions included

in the treatises in Milḥamot Adonai. Gersonides seeks to persuade his readers primarily of the logic of his position and of his authority to discuss the issues. In each of the other treatises, then, he begins with an appeal to ethos by presenting the view of his predecessors on the matter at hand. Usually, these would include philosophers and rabbinic scholars. When he spoke of philosophers, he meant the Greek philosophers Alexander and Themistius and the Muslim philosophers Avicenna and Averroes, all of whom were Peripatetics.[13] Gersonides knew that, in the eyes of his philosophically astute audience, an alignment with the great Aristotelians would give him the needed authority to proceed with his own thoughts on the subject.

Once Gersonides has shown that he is well-versed in the thinking of the great Aristotelians and has thereby established his credibility, he proceeds to analyze their views critically. Herein lies his appeal to logos--to the rational and analytical demands of his audience. He needs to show himself capable of clear and logical argumentation before his own view will be accepted. His next step, then, is to present his own view. After this, he demonstrates that his view cannot be validly objected to by any of his predecessors. Finally, he concludes with an appeal to ethos of a different type. He aligns himself with the authority of the Torah itself, demonstrating that this view agrees with the Torah.[14]

It is not our purpose here to evaluate the efficacy

of the particular rhetorical approach just described. It is presented only as a basis upon which to compare Gersonides' presentation of his position on miracles, which does not follow this pattern at all. He begins with the same rhetorical purpose--to persuade his readers of the worth of his concept of miracles. But, for a number of reasons, he has to use a different strategy in discussing this subject. He has to set up a special pattern of discussions not used before. The most obvious problem, as we have already noted, is that even though Gersonides is committed to the notion that one should always begin with experience, there is no true "experience" in the case of miracles. In order to establish any kind of even vaguely "empirical" approach, Gersonides has to go first to the religious tradition wherein are located the only accounts of miracles we have. This is the closest he can come to an empirical approach.[15] Furthermore, the predecessors with which he usually begins his argumentation did not discuss miracles per se. So, Gersonides cannot rely upon them for support. In the first five books of the work, Gersonides discusses the topics largely on philosophical grounds. In the sixth book, both in the discussion on creation and in the discussion on miracles, he must rely heavily on the evidence of the religious tradition.[16] Hence, he must find a totally different organizing pattern for the discussion on miracles. In the remainder of this chapter, we will examine what that pattern is and what rhetorical devices Gersonides employs

throughout the presentation.

It seems that Gersonides was aware that his sudden change in approach might present some problems for his readers. In the first paragraph of his presentation on miracles, he seems to indicate to his readers that he knows they might be skeptical about his inclusion of miracles as a topic for discussion. After enumerating what questions about the concept of miracles he is going to answer in the first chapter, he writes: "For when we have grasped [the answers to these questions] from the notion of miracles, we will know what is so desirable about the knowledge of their essence."[17] Presumably, Gersonides realized it would not be clear to all of his readers why miracles should be covered at all until these questions had been answered.

And so he begins by showing his philosopher readers that he is ready to meet them on their own ground. It is clear that Gersonides has made a deliberate effort here to describe miracles in a scientific and empirical fashion in order to convince his scientifically-oriented audience that miracles are worth their consideration. He wants to show them that he can apply their own techniques and requirements to the study of miracles. This is evident from Gersonides' statement:

> It is clearly appropriate that we begin here, with what is publicly known of the subject of miracles from the narrative of the Torah and the narrative of the books of the prophets in order to take evidence

> from them concerning what we want to investigate about it from this, just as one begins in speculative matters with what is attainable through the senses with respect to those matters about which the inquiry is conducted, in order to make them the beginning of a demonstration....[18]

The use of the word "demonstration," mofet, is important. Gersonides wants to present miracles in such a way that the information will be almost empirical so that he can produce something akin to a true philosophical "demonstration" from this information. As we mentioned before, he realizes that it is impossible to develop a truly empirical approach since we have no first-hand evidence on miracles.[19] However, he asserts that when such evidence is not available, a very good alternative is to use the testimony of first-hand witnesses whom we trust, by which he means those whose reports of such events were recorded in Scripture. On the one hand this shows the seriousness with which he is willing to use Jewish tradition. On the other hand, this method gives him philosophical credibility. He asserts: "...since we cannot apprehend anything about them through the senses, we will be able to make from [what was apprehended by the ancients] the beginning of the demonstration of this inquiry." (nukhal la'asot mimenu hatḥalat mofet bezot haḥakirah).[20]

But Gersonides' rhetoric in this section seems to indicate he knows he is standing on shaky ground here. He is trying to make a philosophical demonstration with no real empirical data. Therefore, he brings in some well-

respected philosophers to help establish his credibility. He uses Aristotle and Ptolemy as authorities to support the use of evidence from Scripture as an acceptable "empirical" method. He points out that they, too, had to resort to such a method when no empirical data was available. When evidence is not available through the senses, Gersonides insists:

> ...an individual will necessarily be aided with respect to those matters by what was perceived by the senses alone (with respect to those things) by others who are reliable, as the Philosopher [Aristotle] did in connection to the species of animals and as in the case of Ptolemy in the observations of the stars which took much from the ancients, owing to the difficulty of sense perception attaining what is necessary....[21] (emphasis mine)

Gersonides may have included this appeal to authority in order to supply himself with the necessary credibility to keep his audience with him as he proceeded to make his "demonstration" about miracles. Here, he initiates the first major discussion in the presentation on miracles.

At this point, instead of merely recounting some of the Scriptural narratives of miracles, which would have served the purpose of "beginning with those matters about which the inquiry is conducted," Gersonides employs an important part of his persuasive "arsenal." In good Aristotelian fashion, he carefully sets up a classification system into which he can place each and every Biblical miracle. This approach, he must have thought, would be very appealing to the audience and would convince them to follow

his argument. After all, if Aristotle had chosen to consider miracles as a topic of concern, he would have approached the subject in precisely this fashion.

The first classification suggests that all mircales can be divided into miracles that entail changes of substance and miracles that entail changes of accident. Changes of substance are situations where one existent becomes a totally different type of existent, such as the staff becoming a serpent in Exodus 7:10. The changes of accident are changes of an accompanying quality of an existent where the existent itself remains the same. An example given by Gersonides of such a miracle is when Moses' hand becomes leprous in Exodus 4:6.[22] The hand is still a hand. Only its texture and appearance change.

A second classification category takes up the connection of the prophet to the miracle. Gersonides asserts that <u>all</u> miracles are connected to a prophet in some way.[23] But, in some cases, the prophet received prior knowledge about the miracle, and, in other cases, he did not. Moses received knowledge in advance of all the miracles that occurred with respect to the plagues in Egypt. But no prior knowledge was given to Elisha when he prayed for sudden blindness to strike his enemies in II Kings 6:18 and witnessed the miracle for which he prayed. Nor was prior information received by Elijah before he decreed in II Kings 1:10 that fire would go forth from heaven to devour a whole group of people and which did, in fact, occur,

according to Scripture. There are, then, two categories of miracles that occur without the prophet having prior knowledge of what would occur: miracles for which the prophet prayed and miracles the prophet decreed.[24] Using this schema, one could set up a very organized chart, like Aristotle might have made for his taxonomy of animals, and place into the proper category every miracle found in Scripture. This approach would have greatly enhanced the philosophers' willingness to see miracles as a proper subject for philosophical study. It was a crucial element in his strategy.

After classifying some of the miracles that are described in Scripture and thereby providing evidence that they exist, Gersonides initiates another major discussion. He needs to tackle the question of why they occur at all. It is the next logical question in our own minds. But, even more important, it was the next logical question in the Aristotelian-trained philosophical mind. For, in the Aristotelian system, everything that exists must have a purpose and that purpose, or "final cause," must be named.[25] Once Gersonides felt he had demonstrated that Scripture's evidence proved miracles existed, if he wanted to continue in Aristotelian fashion, he had to demonstrate that they existed for some express purpose. Since he also wanted to maintain a position that would be compatible with a Jewish view, they would have to exist for some <u>good</u> purpose, since God, who is in Scripture their cause, is good. This

is the only section in Gersonides' discussion on miracles where he appeals to the emotions of his audience. By arguing that every single scriptural miracle could be construed to exist for the end of "well-being, favor, and providence,"[26] Gersonides attempts to maintain a view that satisfies both the philosophical and religious, the rational and the emotional, needs of his audience.

Again, Gersonides shows how all miracles are directed toward a good end by dividing them into categories. Some miracles secure proper faith, that is, belief in God, for those who witness them. Some procure for them a physical good, like relief from hunger as in the case of the manna. And others rescue those present from evil--be it spiritual or physical. Even miracles that may seem to the unenlightened reader of Scripture to be for none of these purposes, are shown to be directed toward a good end. He cites as an example the case of Korah and his company being swallowed up by the earth. (Numbers 16) Even thought it might not appear to be aimed toward a good end, in fact it occurred "for the sake of well-being and providence for Israel in order that they would all humble themselves to hear the words of God,...."[27] Gersonides teaches the "ignorant" reader that this event was meant to procure for Israel faith in God.

It is easy to understand how this explanation of the purpose of miracles would have appealed to the Jewish loyalties in his readers' psyches. It was designed to put

them at ease about their faith to know that all miracles, even ones that might have had destructive or evil appearances, were actually aimed toward a positive goal. But on rational grounds they may have still been skeptical. For up to this point, Gersonides has made no effort to demonstrate philosophically that miracles were aimed toward the good. This, he leaves to the end of the discussion on their theological significance. Again he falls back upon an Aristotelian notion with which he assumes his audience is well-acquainted. Aristotle held that when any "process of becoming" was being analyzed, an important step in that analysis was to distinguish between form and matter which are "components in every determinate thing."[28] This form/matter distinction was very useful in demonstrating that miracles must be for a good purpose. Aristotelian metaphysics, as it was interpreted by the medievals, teaches that all evil comes from matter and only good can derive from form. Gersonides asserts that miracles must derive from form because in some miracles a change in substance is produced which can only be caused by a Separate Intellect, which is a form.[29] Therefore, since all miracles must have the same cause, they must all derive from form and must all be good.[30] This argument is presented in a very abbreviated fashion with the closing remark: "as we explained previously." This implies that in some earlier treatises, like the ones on prophecy and providence, this was more fully explained. Gersonides also assumes a common

knowledge of the form/matter distinction on the part of his readers and of the idea of Separate Intellects which were created by God and which rule certain domains.

This introduction to the idea that miracles must be created by some type of intellect led Gersonides nicely into his next major discussion in the presentation on miracles: the discussion of who is the cause or agent of miracles. He has just stated that it must be an intellect, but this was asserted without any proof whatsoever. Hence, the entire succeeding chapter of the Milḥamot is devoted to this question: Who is the agent of miracles? The answer to this question is really the axis upon which his entire demonstration turns. For we shall see that Gersonides' basic assertion that the Active Intellect is the agent is the key factor allowing him to state that miracles happened, but were not beyond the realm of philosophical and scientific explanation.

The organizational pattern of this chapter is based, again, upon an Aristotelian framework which, in this case, Gersonides himself acknowledges. That is, since we cannot find any proof from his predecessors concerning who is the agent of miracles, it is necessary to begin by examining the possibilities which naturally come to mind. This is followed by examining the refutation of each possibility. Gersonides notes that this is a method that Aristotle established in The Topics for "distinguishing the correct from the incorrect."[31] By virtue of this method, Gersonides

organizes the discussion on the agency of miracles according to three possibilities that naturally come to mind: The agent of miracles has to be either God, the Active Intellect, or a human being. Therefore, Gersonides examines each of these alternatives and then its refutation. The only agent which survives this rigid scrutiny is the Active Intellect, not having been, like the others, totally destroyed in the process of refutation.

Before we go into an in-depth study of this argumentation, it is appropriate to backtrack briefly in order to understand how Gersonides demonstrated that there must be a cause for miracles at all and how he came to these three possibilities. If miracles were not caused, they would happen by chance. But Gersonides points out three reasons why this is impossible. First of all, anything that is aimed at some end must be caused by something capable of having an aim or goal. Chance has no aim or goal. Therefore, miracles cannot be chance occurrences and must be caused. Secondly, we find that living beings have been created by way of miracle. This could never have happened spontaneously by mere happenstance. Therefore, they must have been created by some cause. Thirdly, the prophet often has foreknowledge of a miracle's occurrence. If miracles did not have a cause and happened by chance, the prophet could never know of them in advance.[32]

Next Gersonides presents a syllogism about the agency of miracles. This is an important rational appeal with

which his readers must concur. This automatically sets up for him the three possibilities for who the agent of miracles is:

> Everything that is created in the sublunar world follows an established order.
> Miracles are created in the sublunar world.
> Therefore, miracles follow an established order.

If miracles always follow an established order, then their cause must have knowledge of that order. For instance, the serpent could not be created from a staff unless the agent of the miracle knew the physical arrangement and behavior of a serpent. This immediately eliminates one possibility in the Aristotelian scheme of intellects as an agent of miracles. None of the so-called "Separate Intellects" associated with the celestial spheres can be the agents because they have no knowledge of what happens in the sublunar world. But since the agent must have knowledge, it must be one of the intellects that exist in the universe. The only remaining choices are God, the Active Intellect, or the human being. All of them have some knowledge of the "established order of existents" in the sublunar world. And all of them show "aspects of plausibility" as candidates for being the agent of miracles.[33]

To say that each of these alternatives has aspects of plausibility and then to spend page after page examining those plausible aspects most obviously serves a scholastic purpose. It allows Gersonides to lay out clearly the details of all of the options so that he can

easily identify the parts that do or do not account for the causation of miracles. But the statement that all of them have aspects of plausibility also serves a special persuasive purpose. Perhaps some of his readers, as they studied the Milḥamot, believed God or the prophet to be the agent of miracles. Gersonides seems to want to keep these people with him as he proceeds to make his point about the Active Intellect being the true agent of miracles. He does not want to alienate anyone at the outset by insisting that only the Active Intellect can be the agent and immediately begin to dismantle views to the contrary. Instead, he gives his audience some credit for their current beliefs and respects them enough to examine those beliefs in detail. The audience may have felt complimented by this and had the impression that Gersonides was on its side. This is a good device for evoking agreement from the audience. However, as we shall presently see, all the while Gersonides is supposedly presenting the "pro" side of each possible position, he is covertly (and sometimes not so covertly) disarming the enemy of its own arsenal. In this way, he subtly begins to destroy erroneous ideas.

Gersonides begins his examination of the possible agents of miracles with God, the agent to whom the miracles were ascribed in Jewish tradition. He presents four arguments which support this view. The first two are philosophical/scientific arguments, and the other two arise from the religious tradition. First, he asserts that since

it is an already established fact that God is the agent of creation (established in the first part of treatise six of this work), it is logical to assume that God also created the miracles since they are a type of occurrence like creation. Secondly, it is a widely accepted principle that God originally set up the established order of existents, nimus hanimza'ot, which rules how existents are created and behave. Therefore, it is logical to assume that God would be the only one who could change that order to produce a miracle. Although this second argument is based upon a principle of logic, it is elaborated by use of a device borrowed from the rabbinic tradition--a king parable:

> ...this is the situation as in the case of the great king who ordains laws by which his ministers [must] conduct themselves and by which those under them [must] conduct themselves. From this, it is evident that not one of them has the power to change that law; rather, the one who has power concerning this is the king who ordains the law.[34]

Gersonides may have intentionally chosen this device for one of two reasons. One possibility is that he knew his readers would be familiar with this type of metaphor, and it would, therefore, facilitate the explanation of his point. A second, more likely possibility is that he wished to subtly disarm this argument in the eyes of his readers without ignoring it completely. By using a method of argumentation employed by the rabbis, which his philosophical readers would have found inadequate, Gersonides could covertly remove this argument's potency. His use of the

Torah and rabbinic tradition as the last two arguments for this position may have been included for the same reason--to show that the position is weak without saying so in so many words. If two out of four of the supporting arguments for God as the agent of miracles are that the Torah and the rabbis say it is so, then there cannot be much substance in the argument. Gersonides does not state this explicitly, but it would have been implicitly understood by his readers.

Now Gersonides turns to the "aspects of plausibility" for the Active Intellect being the agent of miracles. The method he uses to explicate this position is crucial since it is the position to which Gersonides truly adheres. Although several techniques may be involved in this argument, the overarching technique that unifies them all and which, therefore, deserves our utmost attention, is the method of the "dissociation of concepts" as described by rhetoricians Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca. It is appropriate to digress for a moment here to describe this technique of argumentation.

Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca have discovered that, in theology, philosophy, law, and other related areas, the basic problem often facing the rhetor in trying to set forth a new position is one of incompatibilities or contradictions between different solutions to the same dilemma. For example, in law a judge is often faced with having to uphold "the Law" or the "coherence (of) the juridical system"[35] when faced with two opposing proposed solutions, each of

which invokes certain rules and laws from within the legal system. The judge cannot "entirely neglect one of the two rules at the expense of the other."[36] Rather, in order to maintain the coherence of the juridical system, he has to somehow retain both rules, but interpret them in a new way. He must resolve the conflict and at the same time uphold the sanctity and internal logic of the system.

This is the same kind of dilemma that faces Gersonides in the discussion of miracles. He is, as Norbert Samuelson put it,

> committed to the thesis that there can be no conflict between religious and philosophical authority. All apparent contradictions can only be apparent, for both are sources of truth and there can only be one truth.[37]

Gersonides has thus placed himself in the same position as the judge. He maintains there is only one truth, which has a sanctity and internal logic that must not be violated. If the religious tradition says miracles exist and philosophy denies the possibility of something like this existing, then we must not be seeing the situation clearly enough. For there is only one reality. In the rhetoric of the "dissociation of concepts," if there appear to be contradictions within the system, then the conception of reality must be remodeled so that the contradictions can be proved to be only apparent; not real.[38]

Therefore, Gersonides had to come up with some kind of "construction" of reality that would cause certain appearances which did not fit in with his system to be called

"erroneous" or "illusory."[39] He claims that miracles are part of reality. But certain appearances have caused their existence to be denied by philosophy and science. The "appearance" that God is the agent of miracles has come from the religious realm. The "appearance" that there can be nothing known as the miraculous has come from the philosophical/scientific realm. But Gersonides posits that neither of these ideas truly represent reality. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca wrote:

> The effect of determining reality is to dissociate those appearances that are deceptive from those that correspond to reality.[40]

The concept of the Active Intellect was something known and understood by philosophers of Gersonides' era. In case there was any doubt, he had made clear to his readers in the sixth chapter of the first treatise of Milḥamot Adonai just what he intended by the term "Active Intellect." His view was largely based on Islamic philosophers Al-Farabi and Avicenna's concepts which held the Active Intellect to be one of the Separate Intellects that had emanated from God's "overflow." This particular intellect had knowledge of and influence over the sublunar world only.[41] The Active Intellect was not only an emanation of God, but of all the other Separate Intellects combined. It was of a lesser status than the others but superior in knowledge of the sublunar world. That is, it had perfect knowledge of the sublunar world in terms of general laws that govern it; but not in terms of particulars.[42]

Gersonides begins his argument for identifying the Active Intellect as the agent of miracles by stating that we already know that the Active Intellect has knowledge of miracles because we know that prophecy comes from contact between the prophet's mind and the Active Intellect.[43] This was proved in the treatise on prophecy where the Active Intellect is described as constantly emanating information about the sublunar world, and it is up to the prophet merely to sharpen his intellect enough to have conjunction with the Active Intellect and obtain some of its constantly emanating knowledge.[44] If the prophet's information about miracles comes from the Active Intellect, then miracles themselves must also come from the Active Intellect. This is where the "dissociation of concepts" comes in. Scripture would have us believe that God is the direct agent of miracles. But by use of the concept of the Active Intellect, Gersonides is able to dissociate God from the sublunar realm where miracles occur. The notion that God is the agent of miracles is portrayed as an erroneous "appearance." The reality is that God has no knowledge of particular events in the sublunar world and has no ability to affect those events at will. Yet, by use of the Active Intellect, Gersonides can still find a place for miracles and God in a philosophical system. Philosophy insists upon an "appearance" in which there can be no miracles. By dissociating miracles from existents created outside of an "established order," Gersonides shows that, in reality,

they could exist, that their direct agent is the Active Intellect, and that God is indirectly responsible by having created the Active Intellect and its powers.

In the process of this effort at dissociation, we find that Gersonides must, necessarily, destroy the argument for God as the proximate agent of miracles as he develops the argument for the Active Intellect as the agent. While his stated strategy at this point in the battle on agency is to present the aspects of plausibility for each position, his unstated strategy is obvious. He is disarming the opponents all the while he is stocking supplies for his own position. If God were the agent of miracles, he asserts, then the Active Intellect could not have any knowledge of them to give to the prophet. This is so because the nature of the Active Intellect is to know only that which occurs within the context of an established order of existents. If God created miracles at will and outside of an established order, as Scripture has it, then the Active Intellect could not know of them.

> ...if the creation of these miracles were ascribed to God alone, praised be He, by way of His will, it would not have been possible for knowledge of them to reach the Active Intellect since their creation would not have any rule or order about which it [the Active Intellect] could possibly have knowledge.[45]

Yet, if such an order exists (as it surely must because of the existence of prophecy), then God's special will cannot be involved. Thus, the Active Intellect must be the agent. The proof for this position is also aided by the fact that,

in the fourth treatise, the Active Intellect was established to be the source of all providence in the sublunar world. Since miracles are always aimed at providence, they must be caused by the Active Intellect.[46]

Next, Gersonides lists a few arguments for the prophet as the agent of miracles. Although, to the modern day reader, this might seem like an unlikely position for anyone to take, it should be noted that Gersonides had to take this quite seriously since one of the major Islamic philosophers who influenced Gersonides, Avicenna, took precisely this stance. Avicenna held that the prophet could so perfect his intellect, or "purify his soul," that his "soul" could actually effect changes in the "intelligible world" and in the physical world.[47] This was thought to be done through contact with the Active Intellect and to constitute a "fulfillment of nature as created by God."[48] Nevertheless, the "proximate efficient cause" of miracles was the prophet himself.

Gersonides notes that a surface reading of Scripture could support this view. This is the source from which the plausibility of the prophet as agent derives. The accounts of miracles in Scripture seem to show each one to be a separate act of volition. It is logical that there would be some kind of "will" that initiates the creation of a miracle. It would be impossible, says Gersonides, for this "will," which "is itself created [originated]...to be attributed to God, praised be He, or to the Active Intellect.

But it would be possible that this created will be attributed to the human being."[49] After all, Gersonides has already shown that both God and the Active Intellect are incapable of producing individual acts at will. They can only have an effect in a general way, through constant emanation of their respective intellects. But the human being does have new and individual acts of volition and, through conjunction with the Active Intellect, could, conceivably, produce a miracle in a manner similar to Avicenna's conception. Gersonides uses an analogy to further his explanation of how this could be possible. He likens the prophet's ability to cause miracles to the soul's ability to produce blushing when an individual is embarrassed. Both situation are examples of matter responding to form. Just as the soul's embarrassment causes blood to rush to the face, so could the prophet's "form encompass these sublunar existents in some way that [miracles] would be performed by him in whatever way he wishes."[50]

Further support for this view from Scripture is that prophets are always involved in some way in the occurrence of miracles, and the greater the prophet, the greater the miracles associated with him. If miracles never occur where prophets are not involved and if there is a direct relationship between the greatness of the prophet and the miracle performed, it seems logical that the prophet would be the agent.[51] For extra-Biblical support for this view, Gersonides brings in the commentary of Abraham Ibn Ezra.[52]

Note that the only support given for this position is Biblical and rabbinic. Although Ibn Ezra did have philosophical credentials, there is no effort to bring carefully argued philosophical proof for this position. This automatically disarms the possibility of the prophet being the agent, even though he is ostensibly giving credit to the position by presenting the arguments for it. Gersonides also uses very tentative language throughout the section, implying that this is not a position to which one should really adhere. He is constantly using the terms efshar, "it is possible," and yidmeh, "it seems," when he is giving the strongest arguments which support the position. This is noticeably different from his phraseology in discussing the Active Intellect as the agent. There he begins most arguments with hu mevu'ar, "it is clear."

Following this, Gersonides turns to the refutations for each position. In the refutation of both God and the human being as the direct or proximate efficient cause of miracles, Gersonides employs the same primary persuasive technique. He reduces each position to absurdity so that it cannot be taken seriously. According to Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, one of the strongest objections that can be made to a position in argumentation is that its consequences are "ridiculous."[53] The ridiculous person can be

> ...anyone who sets forth principles whose unforseen consequences put him in opposition to ideas which are accepted in a given

> society, and which he himself would not dare to contravene.[54]

No one wants to be in this position. Hence, if the rhetor can demonstrate that his opponent's position leads to absurd and unthinkable consequences, he will have destroyed that opponent's position. Gersonides thus demonstrates that if either God or the human being were the direct agent of miracles, a whole range of unthinkable absurdities would necessarily follow.

There are five absurdities that follow from God being the proximate efficient cause of miracles. If God were the direct agent, the activity of the Active Intellect would be nobler than God's activity in two ways. First of all, the Active Intellect's activity of maintaining the established order of existents would always be good in essence whereas God's activity could sometimes be good only by accident. That is, we would not say that a staff becoming a serpent or a hand becoming leprous are good acts, in and of themselves. But, by the accident of people acquiring proper faith after seeing this event, they are good. Thus, the Active Intellect's activity would be nobler than God's because it would be essentially good, in and of itself. That the Active Intellect could be nobler than God, who created it, is absurd. Secondly, the Active Intellect's activity would be nobler because its activity would be constant while God's activity would be intermittent, creating miracles only on rare occasion. That God's activity could be limited and the Active Intel-

lect's unlimited in such a fashion, says Gersonides, "is exceedingly absurd."[55] Thirdly, if God were the proximate cause of miracles, the prophet would have no foreknowledge of them because, as we learned in the treatise on prophecy, the prophet's knowledge comes only from the Active Intellect. But, we know that the prophet had foreknowledge in many cases of the Scriptural accounts of miracles. From this standpoint too, then, it is ridiculous to think of God as the direct agent.[56]

The fourth absurdity is somewhat more complicated. Essentially, it states that God's direct agency of these events would make the prophet's presence superfluous; or imply that God's will could sometimes entail the willing of evil things to happen, like the Egyptians chasing the Israelites to the Red Sea; or everything that happened in association with a miracle would happen by necessity and there would be no free will; or God's activity might seem to be directed toward no particular end. All of these are utterly absurd.[57] Fifthly, in the case of God as the direct agent, God is actually identified with the established order of existents, presumably through his being one with it in knowledge. But miracles would be exceptions to that law, and, thus, God would be the creator of something not governed by His own laws. This is absurd.[58] These last two objections that lead to absurdities are also applied to the Active Intellect as direct agent. Obviously, Gersonides will have to correct this problem later.

Four absurdities are listed that follow from the human being as the direct agent and thus make this position "ridiculous" to maintain. First, if the prophet willed miracles himself, there would be no need for prophecy. But we know prophecy occurred. Second, although a person can know something of the established order of existents, he cannot know everything about it, which would be necessary for him to be the proximate cause of miracles. Thirdly, even if it were possible for a human being to have such complete knowledge, it would involve him separating his intellect entirely from his body, which would, in fact, make him a "separate intellect." This would mean that, in the creation of a miracle, a new volition was created by an intellect totally separate from and unconnected to matter, which is impossible. Furthermore, the whole reason for considering the prophet as the agent of miracles is because of his conjunction with matter. Finally, if the prophet were the proximate efficient cause of miracles, he would be able to change his own nature and make of himself a totally new essence. Not only did this never occur in Scripture, but it is unthinkable that it could ever occur. There are many more absurdities that follow from maintaining this position, says Gersonides, but these four prove his point sufficiently.[59]

Having shown that maintaining the position that God or the human being is the direct agent of miracles is ridiculous, Gersonides now returns to clear up any remaining

problems about the Active Intellect as agent and to give his final arguments in favor of the Active Intellect as the agent of miracles. He begins by returning briefly to the arguments that support the prophet and God as the agent of miracles. This may seem superfluous since he already covertly and overtly destroyed these views. But, as we have noted, it is Gersonides' style to be extremely thorough and sometimes even repetitive. First, Gersonides casts off remaining doubts by returning to the argument about the prophet creating miracles compared to the soul creating blushing in the face. He points out that this analogy sets up a kind of fallacious inference whereby "proximity" equals "cause." This is known as a fallacy of "false cause." Just because one thing is in the vicinity of another, it might seem to cause an event, but does not in fact cause it. Rather, it only has a connection to the event. He writes:

> Not everything which has a connection to the performance of the matter is its agent, such as is found with respect to the soul which has a connection to the blush of embarrassment, but is not its agent. Rather, it receives [the blush].[60] (emphasis mine)

In order to make certain that all doubt is removed from the audience on the position of God as agent, Gersonides reemphasizes the "dissociation of concepts" approach in his dissociation of God's agency from miracles. He stresses here that God is only an indirect agent. Both the argument that the creation of miracles is an event like Creation and the argument that God is the only one that can

have power over His own existents are destroyed by this approach.[61] For if the creation of miracles emanated not directly from God but from the established order of existents, then prophecy can still occur. Furthermore, we can even find support for the notion that God is not the direct agent from Scripture:

> ...you will find that all created things are ascribed to God, praised be He, in Scripture--even those things whose origin was in human choice, as Scripture says: "Because Adonai has said to him 'Curse David.'" (II Samuel 16:10) Indeed, this is so since God, praised be He, is the origin of all created things, according to what has been explained about this matter. But, He is not the proximate efficient cause of them.[62]

Here, Scripture attributes to God an action we know was made by human choice. If it happened in this place, we can assume that in many places Scripture will attribute actions to God which He caused only indirectly by creating the established order of existents.

The Active Intellect must, therefore, be the proximate efficient cause of miracles. But one major problem remains in accepting that viewpoint. As was true for one of the objections to God as agent, so it is true for the Active Intellect that if it is the agent, the Active Intellect would seem to have a will or all miracles would seem to be preordained, which denies the possibility of human free will. Gersonides solves these two problems by saying there is a special established order which applies to miracles in which the Active Intellect can be the direct cause

in an "automatic" way which is dependent upon a human being's free choice. That is, as Menachem Kellner explained, the Active Intellect is like a blueprint of the sublunar world. If the prophet, of his own free will, perfects his intellect enough to attain conjunction with the Active Intellect and thereby receive its information, then the Active Intellect is the direct agent of that information being received, but does not consciously will it to occur. It is an automatic response. The miracle is in the prophet's prediction of the event on the basis of his knowledge at the particular moment in which Israel could benefit from it.[63] Thus, miracles happen by necessity to this type of individual in this type of situation--unless the free will of a different person or persons intervenes to break the pattern. In this way, the Active Intellect can be the direct agent of miracles without a new volition or new knowledge arising in it in each instance because the bestowing of a miracle upon a prophet who attained a sufficient degree of intellectual perfection is part of a universal order.[64] It is a miracle because it rarely occurs.

After this explanation, Gersonides' phraseology seems to indicate that he still has the feeling that he might not have covered all of his bases. He writes that the Active Intellect must be the agent unless something in his analysis of the problem is incorrect--an alternative he finds unthinkable:

> Thus, it is evidently impossible [that anything other than the Active Intellect be the

> agent] unless something included in this object is incorrect.... This being the case, would that I knew what the incorrect thing is![65]

He thus leaves the possibility open that he might be in error. But, by his tone, he clearly implies that he is right, and anyone who would contradict him must not be thinking as clearly as he.

Gersonides' final persuasive effort in his argument defending the Active Intellect as the proximate efficient cause of miracles is to demonstrate that the rabbis were in agreement with him on this point. As we noted before, Gersonides cannot afford to drop the rabbinic tradition as an "ally" in his "war." Although this ally may play a less prominent role in his discussions than philosophy and science, he still needs its help in order to convince the audience that the religious tradition represents the same "truth" as the philosophical position. Although, with respect to some topics in the Milḥamot, Gersonides says that the Bible actually led him to his own view, the best he can do here is to say that rabbinic tradition (and by association the Bible) agree with his view.

His tactic here is to show that when the rabbis used concepts such as "conditions" being created at the "twilight" of creation, it implies that this was when the self-perpetuating established order of existents (which actually is responsible for miracles) was created, as Gersonides has demonstrated in this chapter. He writes:

> It is apparent that what our rabbis, may their memory be for a blessing, said about the subject of miracles--that [their] 'conditions' were posed by God, praised be He, 'at twilight'--agrees with what has been explained about the miracles. ...that the creation of miracles has an established rule and order and this established rule was necessarily arranged at the creation of the world....[66]

And he sums this up by saying:

> ...you will find that our rabbis, may their memory be for a blessing, agreed that everything created in the sublunar world, God, praised by He, created through an intermediary--not that He is the proximate efficient cause.[67]

So, what Torah was really saying and what the rabbis understood it to say, if one looks carefully enough, is exactly what Gersonides has set forward in this chapter. This is the last "weapon" employed in the very lengthy and important discussion on the agency of miracles.

Undoubtedly the second most important major discussion in Gersonides' presentation on miracles is the battle involving the definition and characterization of miracles, which is contained in Chapter 12 of Part 2 of this sixth treatise. Gersonides' basic strategy in this discussion is to "minimize the out-landishness"[68] of miracles and to limit them so that their definition can conform comfortably with what he has already demonstrated about their existence and agency. For, as we shall see, if Gersonides did not take steps to limit miracles in this way, we would find certain scriptural miracles to go beyond the realm of the Active Intellect, which would destroy his position completely.

By using this strategy, Gersonides can simply reinterpret miracles that do not comply with the definition so that they do conform.

The first characterization of miracles given is that they are limited in duration. Gersonides posits that miracles cannot persist permanently because, if they did, it would imply an imperfection in God, which is impossible. How so? If the nature of any one existent required a permanent change for its improvement, this would imply that that thing, in its original created form, was not created perfectly, which would reflect, ultimately, God's lack of perfection. Therefore, no miracle, no matter how great it was, ever effected a permanent change. Scripture corroborates this view. None of the Scriptural miracles are intended to effect a permanent change. "For it is impossible that the permanent change of what is found in it [the world], which is [already] perfect and good in and of itself, be an improvement."[69] There are, however, differences in the length of duration of the miracles. This is significant. It teaches us about the greatness of the prophet associated with the miracles. Indeed, the miracles Moses performed lasted the longest, like manna and the pillar of fire and pillar of cloud which aided the Israelite people for almost forty years. But, no matter how great the prophet, the laws of existence that God originally established could never be permanently superceded.[70]

The second crucial limit to be made on miracles is that they cannot occur with respect to self-contradictory conceptions. This argument is very philosophical and scientific in nature. The examples Gersonides gives are completely hypothetical. It is the only place in the offensive on miracles where such hypotheticals are used in the place of actual Biblical examples because none of the Scriptural miracles are about self-contradictory conceptions. It may have been included to assure the philosophically astute readers that Gersonides was not willing to say that absolutely anything could happen if the prophet perfected his intellect enough. Or, it may have been included to prepare the reader for the succeeding section dealing with a scriptural miracle that directly contradicts modern day knowledge of science. Gersonides gives three examples of self-contradictory conceptions: Miracles could not cause opposites to converge in one subject simultaneously, like an object being black and white at the same time. It could not effect mathematical impossibilities, like "a right triangle...with angles [whose measures added together] are less than two right angles' [measures added together]."[71] For if this were so, it would no longer be a right triangle. Thirdly, miracles could not change an event that already occurred in the past.[72]

This leads Gersonides to a further limit or impossibility characteristic of miracles--the impossibility of their effecting changes in the celestial spheres. The

problem is that Scripture tells us in more than one instance that miracles which affected the sun did occur. This is a classic example of a case where Gersonides must reconcile philosophy and religion so that these events can still be called miracles, thereby supporting the religious tradition and at the same time conforming to a rational account of the universe. The primary example upon which he focuses in order to persuade the reader that miracles could be in accord with the current scientific understanding of the universe is the story of Joshua causing the sun to stand still in Joshua, Chapter 10.

He begins by reminding the audience that a proper understanding of the Active Intellect has taught us that it can only effect change in the sublunar world. Therefore, it would be impossible for a miracle affecting the heavenly bodies to occur. Furthermore, a change in the behavior of the heavenly bodies would cause sever destruction of the world, and we have already learned that whatever the Active Intellect does must be good, in and of itself.[73] These are the only two statements he makes about the situation which do not make extensive use and interpretation of the scriptural passage at hand. The pages following this are really the only place in the whole discussion of miracles where Gersonides weaves scientific knowledge and Scripture together to persuade his readers of his position. Using argumentation of this type is a difficult task because the science of astronomy

was quite advanced and its ideas widely accepted. This, too, was Gersonides' particular area of expertise in science. Therefore, this scriptural miracle might have been particularly difficult for him. But he had to succeed in this task. Otherwise, his readers would have concluded either that the Scriptural account was false or that scientific knowledge of the universe was mistaken. What Gersonides concentrated his discussion upon was the former. If he could not successfully explain how Joshua 10 could be interpreted in the light of scientific knowledge, his cause of saving God's honor and respect for Jewish tradition would be lost.

Gersonides' basic method here is to present an accepted scientific concept and then to change the definitions of certain concepts in the scriptural verse, or to revise the meaning of certain words and phrases, in order to comply with what science or philosophy teaches. For example, he begins with Scripture's statement: ...velo aẓ lavo keyom tamim, "...and [the sun] did not hasten to go down about a whole day." (Joshua 10:13) He emphasizes the use of the word aẓ which is translated as "hasten." If the verse is read with the emphasis on the word "hasten," then the sentence does not imply that the sun's movement was impeded. One does not use the word "hasten," he posits, about something that does not move at all. It is used for something that does not move quickly. This opens the door for Gersonides to assert that it merely looked

like the sun was not moving quickly, as is always the case at high noon. The miracle was in Joshua's forces winning the battle in the short time around high noon when the sun is moving so slowly that it appears not to be moving at all. Here is an example of how he uses this scientific explanation to change the meaning of the text:

> It is clear that the sun and the moon, moving in their typical movement, are found opposite a certain wide place for a certain amount of time, as in the situation at Gibeon and the valley of Aijalon. And that is what [Scripture] said: 'And the sun stood still and the moon stayed;' meaning that the sun already stood still at Gibeon and the moon at the valley of Aijalon until the vengeance against the nation's enemies was completed, as Joshua had requested--only Scripture is brief in the narrative, as is its custom. ... This has been explained by the science of astronomy which clearly explains that the sun, or any star when it is at its zenith in the sky, is such that its descent would not be clearly observable for about half an hour. Rather, its zenith would be near to one [hour]--from about half an hour before noon until half an hour after noon. This is clear when it is looked at at its zenith with one of the instruments made for this purpose, like the astrolabe and similar things.[74] (emphasis mine)

Another example is when Gersonides concentrates his attention on the phrase "keyom tamim," "like a complete day." This, he says, has a specific scientific meaning:

> It is clear that the cause of 'day' is the sun. Thus, until noon, the activity of the sun and its light is strongest. Then [at noon], the day is whole and complete, and afterward it becomes less so, little by little, until its light fades completely. This proceeds in a cycle. On account of this, it is evident that the completeness of the day is found when the sun is at its zenith of the sky.[75] (emphasis mine)

These are only two of several examples of his changing the

plain meaning of Joshua 10 in order to make it conform to established astronomical concepts.

Another persuasive technique Gersonides uses in this discussion to further support the contention about the nature of miracles, proved by his explanation of Joshua 10, is the use of rabbinic material. First of all, he points out that there is one profound area of disagreement between the rabbis and himself, which indicates that some of them did not understand the Joshua passage correctly. The rabbis knew full well that if we take Scripture at its word, it appears that Joshua, by making the sun stand still, "performed" a greater miracle than Moses ever did. This was, of course, impossible. So they concluded that Moses also must have performed this miracle; but it was never recorded.[76] Gersonides cannot concur. The rabbis were simply wrong about this, he says. But, according to Gersonides, the other rabbinic material shows very clear insight into what really happened at Gibeon. If read with Gersonides' interpretation, a passage from Sanhedrin 90a seems to show that the rabbis held exactly the same ideas as Gersonides. The passage reads: "Even if [the false prophet] made the sun stand still in the midst of the firmament, thou must not hearken unto him." For Gersonides, the crucial word is <u>hezi</u>, "midst." The rabbis' use of this term in describing an incident like that in Joshua 10 implies that they understood that, in such a case, the sun would be merely at its zenith and

that its movement would not be impeded. He writes:

> If their intention with respect to the standing still of the sun was that its movement was entirely stopped, then this statement 'in the midst of the firmament' would be superfluous since the miracle of the standing still of the sun in any place in the firmament would be unique all by itself. Rather, their statement 'in the midst of the firmament' is to show that the standing still was only on account of the sun being in the middle of the firmament. This means that in that place, it is possible for the sun to stay a long time without its descent or its ascent being perceived....[77] (emphasis mine)

Thus, Gersonides is able to draw support for his viewpoint from the rabbinic material, including it as an important ally in his discussion.

As is often his custom, Gersonides closes this discussion by taking different examples from Scripture which he supposes could be presented as objections and showing how they, too, can be defined in such a way as to support his view. These include the story of the shadow declining ten degrees in II Kings 20 and the story of Korah. Each can be explained as a basically natural phenomenon whose process was sped up or changed in some way but which was, in actuality, a natural event.

In the II Kings 20 example, the Scriptural account seems to describe a miracle in which the shadow on King Ahaz's sun dial went backward ten degrees, implying that the sun moved the opposite direction of its natural course at that point in time. But Gersonides demonstrates with scientific explanations how the shadow could have declined,

but the sun did nothing outside of its natural behavior.

> If someone raises an objection about the case of the miracle of the shadow which was performed for Hezekiah to the effect that it is impossible, according to what is [usually] thought, without the changing of the order of the movement of the sun, we would say to him that this miracle was not caused by the changing of the order of the movement of the sun. For if this were the case, this movement would not have been ascribed to the shadow. Rather, this movement would be ascribed to the sun because the movement of the shadow is something consequent to the movement of the sun....Thus, when the cloud was under the sun, the sun [i.e the sun's light] was affected by it. If the cloud moved in [its] course, it would happen that the sunbeams would move with it, and it [the cloud] would cause [the sunbeam] to appear to be out of its [proper] place [i.e. the cloud would refract the light] because it [the cloud] had already moved to some degree before this effect [the shadow produced by the sunbeam] was removed from it. In this way, you will see that [on account of the cloud under it] the beam of the sun appears to be out of its proper place.[78]

Hence, in this case, the shadow declining ten degrees was merely the result of the sun's rays being refracted by a cloud in such a way that the shadow on the sun dial did not move in its normal expected course. The sun did not change its movement at all.

The case of the earth opening up and swallowing Koraḥ and his company is a case of a natural occurrence which happened in an unusually short length of time. He explains how it happened in this way:

> ...It happens that the opening of the mouth of the earth comes about by reason of the smoking mist which is generated in the inward parts of the earth such

> that something similar to fire is generated from it. And the earth opened up in that place when the duration of this [process of] generation had grown lengthy. ...(T)here was not something absolutely new in this miracle because the existence of the opening of the earth in this manner is something that can possibly exist in the natural course of events. It was only new in the [short] length of time.[79]

Thus, the Korah incident was also explicable as a natural occurrence no matter how anomalous its description in Scripture may appear to be. By limiting, redefining, and rewording the scriptural miracles, Gersonides attempts to show that all of them are compatible with the philosophical view.

We might say that there is a fifth major discussion in this offensive. But, it is different than the others in that it is scattered throughout the text. This is the discussion that develops the importance of prophecy in the occurrence of miracles. We have found considerable reference to it already in Chapters 9, 10, and 12, which we have already covered. Chapters 11 and 13, which we have not covered, deal specifically with this aspect of the treatment of miracles. However, the support these lend, in addition to the mention of prophecy in the other chapters, is minimal. Hence, we will dispense with a discussion of the rhetorical devices in these two chapters.

Hence, in spite of Gersonides' long-winded and repetitive style, we can discern a very clear position on miracles in the offensive on the philosophical front. The position is expressed through a special pattern of

discussions developed specifically for the subject of miracles and several key persuasive techniques within these discussions. Although he cannot begin by citing the opinions of his philosophical predecessors, Gersonides does use their techniques in order to enhance his credibility at the outset of the offensive. And even though he cannot present the positions of his predecessors and then critically analyze them, he uses this same idea and applies it to the positions that naturally come to mind as possibilities in our own minds; first he looks at various aspects of each position's plausibility, and then he critically analyzes them. In the midst of all this, what Gersonides' own view actually is becomes clear. It also becomes clear that Gersonides is attempting to gradually and subtly persuade his readers to concur with his position through the use of various persuasive devices.

Indeed, Gersonides has set forth his arguments with an eye toward convincing his philosophically-oriented readers that, by accepting the concept of the Active Intellect as the proximate efficient cause of miracles, we can uphold Jewish tradition's insistence that miracles occurred and they they have genuine religious significance in that they bring those who witness them to faith in God. At the same time, they can be seen as conforming to a rational world view. The main focus of this effort is the "rationalizing" of the concept of miracles to make it palatable to the philosophers in his audience. By

dissociating God from direct influence on miracles, by portraying as "absurd" (or as Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca described it in rhetorical terms: "ridiculous") and without philosophical backing the possibilities of God and the prophet as agents, and by pointing out that Scripture and rabbinic material, if read in light of scientific knowledge, concur with this view, he is attempting to persuade as well as inform his audience about the details of his position.

That Gersonides has made an effort to fight strategically for his cause is thus evident. That he has combined unlikely allies in the support of his position and directed them against the enemy is also clear. Whether the specific arsenal he chose to wage the offensive on this front was appropriate and/or successful is an evaluation we shall leave to the Conclusion of our discussion.

CHAPTER III

On Another Front

Even a cursory survey of any section of Gersonides' Perush al Hatorah will reveal that many of the same subjects he discusses in the Milḥamot are treated in the commentaries as well. It is likely that in any given weekly Torah portion (particularly ones with large narrative sections), one could find reference to the problems of providence, prophecy, God's knowledge, and miracles. If we apply this observation to the war metaphor, we realize that Gersonides launched most, if not all, of his offensives on both of the fronts we have mentioned: the classroom of Jewish philosophical study and the bet hamidrash. In other words, he considered both environments legitimate battle-fields for his war against ignorance. However, his specific strategy for confronting that ignorance and the particular erroneous ideas upon which he concentrates his strategic efforts vary significantly in the two works. Thus, while the same cause is involved in both cases, that of upholding the value of Jewish tradition, the method of approaching the enemy is somewhat different.

After reading the discussion of miracles in the Milḥamot, we have a fairly clear idea of what Gersonides'

rhetorical task was in writing for those Jews who were engaged in the study of philosophy. These were people with a growing skepticism about the truth value of the revelatory tradition. His task was to eradicate their erroneous idea that miracles had no place in a philosophical system and replace it with an understanding of how these miracles could have occurred, had some religious significance, and still concur with a rational world view. In the Perush, his task was just the opposite although his overall conceptualization of the problem remained the same. Here his audience was basically skeptical about the discipline of philosophy--whether it had any legitimacy as a source of truth vis a vis the accepted truth of the revelatory tradition. Hence, his goal in the Perush must have been to eradicate the erroneous idea that philosophy had little or nothing to teach about miracles, this being a matter of faith and faith alone. Instead, he evidently wanted to convince them that philosophical ideas were fitting concepts to utilize in explicating Jewish tradition. Since Gersonides himself believed that philosophy was of utmost importance in understanding the universe, he wanted to convince other Jews of the usefulness of the rational disciplines. By including philosophical ideas in a Biblical commentary, he may have believed that he could "popularize" philosophy and thereby give it a wider audience.[1]

We know from Gersonides' introduction to the Perush that he is operating on the assumption that the Torah, in

and of itself, is the truth and that its proper study will bring the reader to true satisfaction and happiness. Although the Torah cannot be understood with perfection and completeness, it is "an established order which moves those who behave according to it perfectly, toward true felicity."[2] Therefore, the explication, elevation, and justification of the religious tradition is the fundamental rhetorical task of the Perush. This makes for a very different type of rhetorical discourse than the persuasive explication of a theory of metaphysics, which is the fundamental task of the Milḥamot. In this chapter we shall examine in what ways the Perush can be seen as including the same basic philosophical position on miracles as was present in the Milḥamot while at the same time engaging in a different rhetorical task. This includes the study of which discussions on the subject of miracles in the Milḥamot are presented here and how the style and persuasive strategy of their presentation varies from Milḥamot Adonai.

As we did with the Milḥamot, it is appropriate to begin the study of the Perush with some general observations about its content, organization, and literary style. The genre of literature itself places some automatic restrictions upon its content and organizational pattern. Since it is a commentary, it cannot and does not include the elaborate sequence of argumentation that appears in Milḥamot Adonai. Rather, what ever Gersonides has to say about any given topic must fit into the framework of

commenting on specific verses in the text. As is true of every commentary on the Bible, the sequence of the scriptural narrative determines how the Perush is organized. This was the expected format for a work which was to be included in the genre of Biblical commentary. But beyond this, it would not have suited Gersonides' own projected purposes to go into elaborate argumentation in the Perush. If his primary goal for this work was to embellish and explicate Scripture, it would not have been fitting for him to explain his philosophical positions in full detail. Even if he could have somehow arranged these discussions so that they seemed to explicate specific verses from the text, it would not have served the purpose he intended for the work.

Hence, the underlying organizational technique of the work is that of the typical Biblical commentary. Gersonides chooses from the parashah the verses he considers most significant and worthy of or in need of explication. He proceeds by commenting on the verses in their proper order. However, superimposed upon this foundation is a structure that is not typical of the genre of Biblical commentary. It is Gersonides' own organizational technique, indicative of both his inclination to categorize ideas (as we observed in the Milḥamot) and of his projected intention to present the work, first and foremost, as a document of religious value.

The structure follows this general pattern: First

of all, Gersonides divides each Torah portion into several parts, usually with an eye toward separating individual stories within each parashah from each other. But sometimes he includes several individual stories or discussions together in one division. This division may have been implemented in order to facilitate the second step in his structure. This is the subdivision of each division of the parashah into three categories. The first category is always bi'ur hamilot or bi'ur milot haparashah, which includes denotative and connotative definitions of words and phrases and rewording the text to make it more comprehensible. This first type of explication would facilitate comprehension of the second category of study of the same division of the parashah. This category is know as bi'ur divre haparashah or bi'ur divre hasipur. As one might expect, the commentary in this category focuses less on specific words and phrases and more on explaining and elaborating upon the meaning of the events of the narrative and their relationship to each other. Here Gersonides points out, more often than in the other section, the religious, moral, philosophical, and scientific significance of the narrative. The third category of explication is really a summation and elaboration of some of the concepts discussed in the first and second categories. This is the to'aliyot section. To'aliyot are the moral or practical "benefits," or lessons, that can be drawn from Scripture. For each division of each parashah, Gersonides lists a

number of these lessons which he further categorizes into four types of lessons. These are de'ot, religious doctrines, midot, ethical lessons, miẓvot, principles of ritual and ethical obligation, and yi'udim, prophetic promises.[3] If Gersonides had left the Torah portions whole before dividing them into the three major categories, the connections between these categories would have been difficult to follow.

The to'aliyot, in particular, demonstrate Gersonides' desire to present this work as a religious document. The great majority of them are midot, followed by de'ot. There are only a small number of miẓvot and yi'udim. And seldom do his philosophical teachings appear in the to'aliyot section. When they do, they are often subordinated to the moral teachings. Clearly, then, the emphasis of this part of the Perush is to glean from the Torah portions as many religious and moral teachings as possible and to present them in a concise, compact list at the end of each section for easy identification and reading. If a reader of Gersonides' commentary were not so inclined as to read the entire explanation of each parashah, he could easily turn to the end of each section and read the to'aliyot. This was probably Gersonides' purpose in separating out the to'aliyot for easy identification. In this connection, it is important to note that the to'aliyot have since been published as a separate work, independent of the Perush.[4]

The to'aliyot section is the most noted part of the Perush al Hatorah and is undoubtedly responsible for it being described as a work of "philosophical and moral tone,"[5] a work of "practical philosophy,"[6] and as being guided by Maimonides' principle that every Biblical narrative has as its foundation a philosophical or moral teaching.[7] In sharp contrast to the Milḥamot, it is evident from the structure of the Perush that Gersonides placed much more emphasis on giving a moral lesson here than on explicating his philosophical position. By placing these lessons at the end of each discussion, he always left his readers with thoughts about the moral and practical usefulness of the religious tradition. This is apparently what he wanted them to remember most clearly about the Biblical texts.

As to Gersonides' writing style, he is equally as verbose in the Perush as he was in Milḥamot Adonai, if not more so. Again, the main problem is that he is repetitive. He tries to be so thorough in his explication of certain verses he considers important that he sometimes mentions the points he wants to stress twice in one section, in both of the bi'ur sections, or in one of the bi'ur sections and again in the to'aliyot. Indeed, as we mentioned before, often the to'aliyot section is a reinforcement and reworking of ideas already presented. An example of this is in the discussion of Lot's wife looking back to see the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. In the bi'ur hamilot

section, Gersonides writes:

> 'And she became a pillar of salt.' (Gen. 19:26) This means that the land of Sodom and Gomorrah was like a great pillar of salt because, owing to the intensity of the burning, salt was created there, as Scripture states: '...and that the whole land thereof is brimstone and salt and a burning (like the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah)....' (Deut. 29:22) You should know that from burned earth salt is created, as was explained in [Aristotle's] Meteorology.[8]

Then, in the bi'ur divre hasipur section, the same explanation for Gen. 19:26 is given in two separate places:

> Thus, Lot's wife looked backward and was destroyed with them [the cities that were destroyed]. The earth was then like a pillar of salt, owing to the intensity of the burning that occurred there.[9] (emphasis mine)

In the second spot, a moral lesson is added to the explanation; nevertheless, the explanation is repeated for a third time:

> We also do not agree that Scripture's statement, 'and she became a pillar of salt,' refers to Lot's wife because God, exalted be He, only performs miracles for a practical benefit which will cause them to be fearful before Him. Now, there was no one there who saw this miracle. For this reason, it seems to us that Scripture's statement, 'and she became a pillar of salt,' refers to the land of Sodom and Gomorrah because, in that place being overthrown, brimstone and salt are seen in it. And for this reason it was like a pillar of salt....[10]

An example of an explication that appears in the bi'ur section and then again in the to'aliyot comes from Gersonides' commentary on the theophany of the burning bush. (Ex. 3:1-15) In bi'ur hamilot he comments:

> ...'put off they shoes from off thy feet....' (Ex. 3:5) He [the angel of Adonai] said this to him in order that he would be sensitive to what he was stepping into, as if he had said to him to concentrate on the vision which he saw which would arouse thought concerning the meaning, which was not at first comprehended by him.[11]

Then again in the seventh to'elet this explanation is given by way of a midah, an ethical lesson:

> It is fitting for a person to behave with holiness in the honored places. For this reason, Moses was commanded to remove his shoes from his feet since the place in which he was standing was holy and proper for the Divine emanation to conjoin with him.[12]

The original explication is elaborated here for a new purpose.

The prolixity apparent in the Perush al Hatorah does not create confusion as it did in Milḥamot Adonai. On the contrary, the argument construction in the Perush is quite simple and clear. This work is much more "readable" than the Milḥamot. Sometimes the prolixity can even be helpful to the reader as in the example above where repetition of the comment on Moses taking off his shoes is helped to make more explicit the ethical principle he was imparting. At other locations, the repetition is annoying, as in the example of Lot's wife looking backward. But rarely does Gersonides' thoroughness obscure the presentation, as is often the case in Milḥamot Adonai.

With this understanding of the general characteristics of Gersonides' style in the Perush al Hatorah, let us now examine his presentation of miracles in the text. We

have already seen several examples of how Gersonides discusses the Scriptural accounts of miracles in Milḥamot Adonai. The most elaborate account we examined in the previous chapter was that of Joshua 10. Gersonides' explanation of this miracle is undoubtedly the most paradigmatic example of how he treats a scriptural text in Milḥamot Adonai since it represents his most concentrated effort to explain Scripture in the section on miracles. The whole point of Gersonides' discussion of Joshua 10 in the Milḥamot is to convince the reader that the passage could be demonstrated to conform to a scientific/philosophical understanding of the universe. His major technique in accomplishing this was to interlace and reinterpret the scriptural verses with scientific notions, thereby demonstrating that the Bible actually described the very astronomical ideas accepted in Gersonides' day. Without an understanding of the difference in rhetorical approach between the Milḥamot and the Perush, it would be logical to expect the content of the Perush to be one scientific or philosophical explanation of a miracle passage after another, with the same goal and techniques employed as in the Milḥamot account of Joshua 10. This is, in fact, the case with Gersonides' commentary to Joshua 10 in the Perush. Although the two accounts are not exactly the same, he employs very similar phraseology and argumentation in the Perush as in the Milḥamot discussion of this miracle in a number of places in the Perush. The philosophical/scientific

explanation of the miracle is clearly the primary purpose of that particular section of commentary and is not subordinated to any other purpose, such as pointing out the miracle's religious value.[13]

However, as we have mentioned in the Preface, the focus of examination of Gersonides' Perush in our study has been limited to the Pentateuchal miracles alone. We have not, by any means, examined thoroughly Gersonides' commentary on all of the Pentateuchal miracles and have not even scratched the surface in examining the miracles found in the stories of the prophets. However, it is possible to make some observations about his rhetoric in the Torah commentary as compared to the commentary on Joshua 10 just described. These observations will lead us to a very tentative conclusion which we will use as a basis for comparing and contrasting Gersonides' commentary on the Pentateuchal miracles with his explanation of miracles in Milḥamot Adonai.

Although Gersonides does employ very similar arguments and techniques in the two Joshua 10 accounts, the commentary on the Pentateuchal miracles has some significant differences in approach. It seems that Gersonides must have had a different purpose in mind in writing the Torah commentary. If he wanted to inform the bet hamidrash audience that the Pentateuchal miracles were descriptions of scientific phenomena or examples of his concepts of metaphysics, this was done only as one small part of a

larger effort to enhance the ethical and religious value of the miracle passage. Indeed, naturalistic, scientific explanations of miracles and his philosophical concepts are often present in the Torah commentary, but they are subordinated to the other types of explication to such an extent that those who were not inclined to the philosophical way of thinking would not be concerned about their presence.

As we have noted, this is not at all the case in the commentary to Joshua 10. There the commentary explicitly focuses on the scientific explanation of the event that occurred at Gibeon. This observation about the difference between the Pentateuchal accounts of miracles and the Joshua 10 commentary may point to the possibility that Gersonides was more careful about how he included scientific and philosophical ideas in his writing when he wrote the Torah commentary than when he wrote commentary to the other books of the Bible. At least as far as the miracles examined for our study are concerned, in every case the philosophical/scientific concepts are deemphasized and the religious ideas emphasized instead. Although no trends can be discovered and no sound conclusions drawn by comparing these Pentateuchal miracles to only one miracle from the other books of the Bible, the difference we observe when comparing them to the Joshua 10 commentary is quite dramatic. It is possible to imagine that Gersonides might have determined that since the Torah was more

important to his bet hamidrash readers and more heavily studied by them, they would have been less willing to accept a commentary on the Torah that limited its explication to science and philosophy than a commentary of the same type on the other books of the Bible. He may have felt a compulsion to be more cautious and prudent to elevate the religious tradition above science and philosophy when writing the Torah commentary.

Since it is not the aim of our study to compare the commentary on the Pentateuchal miracles to the extra-Pentateuchal miracles, we shall not dwell on the consideration of this problem. But, we will use the tentative conclusion that Gersonides made an effort to be particularly prudent in expressing his philosophical ideas in the Torah commentary as a basis upon which to compare the discussion of miracles in the Perush to the discussion in Milḥamot Adonai. Thus, when we refer to the Perush henceforth, we mean only the Perush al Hatorah. We shall begin the study of how Gersonides explained miracles in the Perush by using his lengthy explanation of the parting of the Red Sea as a paradigmatic example of his approach.

The first characteristic about Gersonides' description of the Red Sea miracle which gains our attention is his seeming ascription of the agency of the miracle to God. This is surprising at first glance because the only place where the Red Sea miracle was mentioned in the Milḥamot was in an effort to prove the absurdity of God being the

agent of miracles.[14] On the other hand, we have stated that the purpose of the Perush[15] is not to persuade the audience of his philosophical views. So, to go into an explanation of the fact that God is only indirectly involved with events in the sublunar world and that, in fact, there is an intermediary called the Active Intellect would be not only problematic here, but unnecessary as well. This is not to say that Gersonides is purposely trying to hide this information from his readers. On the contrary, there are enough places elsewhere in the work where the Active Intellect and its role in prophecy, providence, miracles, and so forth are mentioned, that we can safely say that Gersonides is not being inconsistent or dishonest in his discussion of the Red Sea miracle. The Active Intellect is even mentioned in the introduction of the Perush. In the discussion of the Red Sea, Gersonides uses enough key ideas that relate to the concept of the Active Intellect (like Moses being "in conjunction" with God) to cue in the philosophically astute reader that he is now referring to the Active Intellect and its powers, as he explained them earlier in the Perush and in Milḥamot Adonai.

However, it would be correct to say that Gersonides is purposely equivocal in his occasional seeming reference to God as the agent of this miracle. That is, he hopes, first and foremost, to teach his readers the religious value of this passage. Specific mention of the philosophical arguments are unnecessary for this goal to be accomplished.

Furthermore, their use might alienate certain readers and thus keep them from appreciating the moral lessons the passage offers. So he employs concepts we know he does not accept intellectually and substitutes them for the concepts to which he truly adheres. He implies that they really refer to the philosophical ideas he actually holds. His use of these substitutions are usually accompanied by the qualifiers yitakhen, "it is possible," and yidmeh, "it seems." As we noted at one point in the discussion of the Milḥamot, these qualifiers are usually only included when Gersonides is citing an opinion with which he disagrees. In this way, no philosopher would become concerned about Gersonides' use of these substitutions, mistaking them as representative of his true thinking on the topic. For example, he begins the passage:

> 'Wherefore criest thou unto Me?' (Ex. 14:15) It is possible that Moses was crying to God, exalted be He, to save Israel from the hand of the Egyptians who were very near them, even though God, exalted be He, had already promised Moses that He would harden Pharaoh's heart and [that of] his whole army. Yet, in spite of all this, Moses did not refrain from praying to God, exalted be He, for this would be the instrument by which God, exalted be He, would create this particular miracle through him, owing to Moses' being in conjunction with God, exalted be He, then, at the time of prayer. And it seems that God, exalted be He, had said to Moses that it was not necessary for him to cry out to God to prepare himself for being in conjunction with God, exalted be He, in order that it be fitting that he perform this wondrous miracle through him [Moses] because he was always in conjunction with Him.[16] (emphasis mine)

We know from our study of Milḥamot Adonai that Ger-

onides does not actually believe, as this passage seems to imply, that God has particular knowledge of events that occur in the sublunar world or that He can effect changes in those events at will. On the contrary, Gersonides went to great efforts in the Milḥamot to dissociate God from the sublunar realm, insisting that the Active Intellect must be the agent of miracles. But then again, if one looks very carefully at the text, it could be read so as to agree with his real view. After all, one could say that indirectly Moses does have a kind of conjunction with God by having conjunction with the Active Intellect which emanates from God. It is, ultimately, God who creates the "instrument" by which this miracle occurs. For God set up the entire established order of existents by which the Active Intellect and the prophet are able to conjoin with each other and make Moses' foreknowledge of these events possible. It is not in what Gersonides says, but in what he does not say that may cause the reader unschooled in philosophy to think he is professing views in agreement with a traditional religious position.

Another example of what we take to be intentionally equivocal language is the section directly following this in which Gersonides speaks of the "emanating power of God" as being responsible for the miracle:

> 'And the angel of God who went before the camp of Israel.' (Ex. 14:19) It is possible that the emanating power of God, exalted be He, from which emanated this great wonder, was called 'the angel of God,' which means:

> the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire.[17] (emphasis mine)

Again, the average bet hamidrash reader, lacking in philosophical training, would read that God or God's power literally caused this miracle to occur. The passage is written in such a way that this interpretation is possible. But, for the philosophically educated reader, the emanating power of God is just that--an emanating power alone. And we know that this emanating power is responsible for the Active Intellect which, in turn, emanates its knowledge to the prophet who predicts the miracle, as we mentioned previously.

Gersonides seems to have understood that persuasion depends upon what gets through the audience's "filter." Since many of his bet hamidrash readers had psychological and intellectual barriers that would not allow obvious philosophical information to pass by, Gersonides intentionally did not dwell on the philosophical explanation. In order to teach the moral lesson he wished to impart, he needed to penetrate their "filters." The equivocally stated philosophical information is included only as supporting material for the religious teaching that prayer is always effacacious, even when the situation seems hopeless because, whether one realizes it or not, God is always acting providentially on Israel's behalf. If this lesson is not clear from the bi'ur hamilot section we have been examining, it is certainly apparent in the fifth to'elet which states that

> the performance of miracles by God, exalted be He, will occur through His prophet when he prays to Him that He perform that miracle at that [particular] time,....[18]

Whether one reads the bi'ur hamilot passage with knowledge of philosophy or not, the religious teaching is still the same.

This leads us into an examination of how the connection of the prophet to the miracle is dealt with in the description of the Red Sea miracle in the Perush. We understand from the to'elet already cited that Moses' "praying to God" had something to do with this miracle, but we have not yet discovered what the connection is precisely, according to the Perush. We know that in the Milḥamot Gersonides stresses the point that the prophet has influence on the miracle by predicting the occurrence of an unusual natural event or a normal natural event which could somehow benefit his people. He does this by perfecting his intellect enough to conjoin with the Active Intellect and thereby gain some of its constantly emanating knowledge. Gersonides' Red Sea commentary alludes to this concept at three separate points, but never does it state it explicitly.

First of all, the closing remark of the to'elet cited above is a vague allusion to this concept for those knowledgeable enough to understand its intent. It connects Moses' praying and receiving this miracle to the statement of the rabbis, used also in Milḥamot Adonai,

"that the Holy One Blessed be He posed 'conditions' at the work of Creation."[19] Although Gersonides does not repeat here his argument that by "conditions" the rabbis actually meant the "established order of existents" God set up at Creation, the reader familiar with the Milḥamot will immediately recognize it as an argument against the view that the prophet is the proximate efficient cause of miracles. Even the philosophically ignorant reader would understand from this that the prophet only has an "influence" on the creation of the miracle.

The other two statements accomplish the same thing. One refers the reader to the discussion on this in the sixth treatise of Milḥamot Adonai.[20] The other suggests that the prophet was "subject to greater providence, owing to the depth of his conjunction with God...."[21] He, therefore, knew in advance that he and his people would not be harmed by the Egyptians and placed himself at the back of the Israelite camp (that is, the front of the battle-line), which demonstrated this prior knowledge. All of this occurred to teach Israel a religious lesson:

> ...there was a practical benefit in this for Israel: that they would not fear Pharaoh and his people because the prophet placed himself in the place where the danger was greatest. For this reason, it is clear that he [Moses] undoubtedly knew that no injury would happen to them in this [situation].[22]

Hence, the prophet's foreknowledge of miracles is another crucial aspect of the overriding purpose of the recounting of this miracle--an understanding of how providence is

bestowed upon human beings. So, the role of the prophet is imbued with a religious as well as an intellectual significance.

In comparison to the Joshua 10 explanation in the Milḥamot, Gersonides not only reinterprets the preceding scriptural verses in the Perush; he draws connecting links between verses in the text as well, drawing out their religious significance. Even where Gersonides goes into a lengthy naturalistic explanation of the Red Sea miracle similar to the one concerning Joshua 10, it is with a different emphasis and intention than the Joshua 10 explanation in the Milḥamot. The verses of the Red Sea narrative are reinterpreted in the same basic style as the Joshua 10 verses are reinterpreted in the sixth treatise of Milḥamot Adonai. However, in the Red Sea account, the point is made that these unusual natural occurrences were happening while the Israelites were there, which resulted in the bestowal of providence upon the Israelites and the punishment of the Egyptians. The parting of the sea would have happened whether the Israelites were there or not, but Moses' being able to predict its occurrence resulted in this unusual combination of events benefiting them directly.[23] This is very different than the Joshua 10 explanation which stressed that the sun "standing still" was merely an example of a natural event which occurred every day at high noon at Gibeon. The Israelite army just happened to have a quick victory there at that time one day.

The speedy victory itself was the miracle. The natural event of the sun being at its zenith did not benefit them directly. It merely marked the short amount of time in which the victory occurred. The following are major excerpts from the naturalistic explanation of the Red Sea miracle which demonstrate how this unusual occurrence itself benefited Israel directly:

> 'And Adonai caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all the night....' (Ex. 14:21) You should know that when God performs the miracles, He tries to produce causes for them which will be a little less anomalous with respect to nature.... For this reason, God, exalted be He, miraculously brought forth the strong east wind which dried and moved the water toward the western side in a manner which created for them a bare place in the sea. And the waters were on the right and on the left because that place [that was bare] was higher. ...(T)here were high waters on the western side because the wind moved them there and continuously prevented them from flowing. And for this reason, Adonai caused 'a strong east wind all the night.' This is why the waters were called a wall. And even though the waters were not high [on the right and on the left], the Egyptians would only have been able to walk behind [Israel] since [the waters] prevented the Egyptians from coming upon them from their right and their left. But behind [Israel] there was a cloud as a wall between them.
>
> 'And Adonai looked forth upon the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of cloud and discomfited the host of the Egyptians.' (Ex. 14:24) It is possible that God, exalted be He, produced then among the host of the Egyptians to frighten them a cloud with a smoky mist descending from which was rain and lightning, which was how the bare place they were in was moistened from the sea. For this reason, the horses were unable to walk and they took off their chariot wheels [that is, they dismantled

> their chariots] in order to lighten [the burden] of the horses so that they could escape and get out of the sea. In spite of all this, it did not benefit them because they were already proceeding with difficulty in all the mud that was there in the sea....

He then gives an alternative naturalistic explanation for how the Egyptians might have drowned:

> Or, that God brought a cross-wind (to the first wind) which turned back onto the host of the Egyptians the water that came to the western side. Then the Egyptians took off the wheels of their chariots to escape. And this is what Scripture states after this: 'Stretch out thy hand over the sea that the waters may come back upon the Egyptians and upon their horsemen.' (Ex. 14:26) This was completely miraculous, for in the place where Israel was, the east wind was blowing, and in the place where the Egyptians were, the cross-wind was blowing until the salvation of Israel was completed in this manner at the same time that the Egyptians were drowning, as Scripture states after this: 'And the waters returned and covered the chariots and the horsemen, even all the host of the Pharaoh that went in after them into the sea. There remained not so much as one of them. But the children of Israel walked upon dry land in the midst of the sea,....' (Ex. 14:28-29) ... 'And Adonai overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea.' (Ex. 14:27) The meaning of this is that the wind that pushed [the Egyptians] confused them and overthrew them and caused them to walk toward the deep waters of the sea, owing to the great force that was there.[24] (emphasis mine)

Certain sections of this narrative have been underlined in order to stress the point that this "miraculous/natural" event itself benefited Israel directly once Moses had the foreknowledge to direct the Israelites to the right place at the right time. While in the Joshua 10 text the coincidence that the quick victory of the Israelites

occurred at high noon had nothing to do with the quickness and success of the battle itself, here the happy circumstance of the Red Sea parting while Israel was there is directly responsible for their good fortune. That is, the quick victory could have occurred anywhere at any time. But its having occurred at Gibeon at high noon, where the sun seems to stand still at high noon every day, simply made it clear just how speedy the victory was. The sun's course of movement did not actually help them win the battle. On the other hand, in the case of the Red Sea, the natural events that occurred were directly responsible for Israel's safety and the drowning of the Egyptians. It was coincidental that Israel happened to be there at that time. But their being there meant that those winds and cross-winds and "smoky mists" would affect the whole future of the Israelite people by making it possible for them to cross on dry land.

The winds and cross-winds were clearly not miraculous. They were unusual natural events. Certainly an important goal of the preceding commentary is to demonstrate this fact. Yet if the wind had not blown a certain way, there would not have been a bare place upon which the Israelites could walk. The cloud of "smoky mist" with rain and lightning made that same bare place wet for the Egyptians so that they would eventually drown. Or, alternatively, a cross-wind occurred which drowned the Egyptians with the same water that was blown out of the way for the

Israelites. If this cross-wind had not occurred, perhaps the Egyptians would have passed on dry land as well. Again, as we noted before, the text is supplied with enough equivocal statements that one could read these events as being caused by God directly or indirectly (having set up the established order of existents). It depends upon what penetrates the reader's "filter." But which ever way one is inclined to interpret this aspect of the text, it is apparent that this unusual event did benefit Israel and punish the Egyptians. The moral lesson that good is ultimately rewarded and evil punished remains the same. The Israelite people survived and the Egyptians perished.

Gersonides' commentary on the Red Sea narrative can be seen as a paradigmatic example of some of the most important ways in which Gersonides' approach toward miracles changes from Milḥamot Adonai to the Perush al Hatorah. Several of the major discussions used in the Milḥamot, like the agency of miracles, the relationship of the prophet to miracles, and the characteristics of miracles are brought to bear in this passage. But, as we have noted, they are altered quite significantly. They are stated in an equivocal fashion and are used, primarily, as reinforcement for the theological teaching that miracles are providential gifts of God whose physical occurrence directly benefited the Israelites present. This is indicative of the general demeanor of the entire Perush al Hatorah and serves to demonstrate that this

work has a much stronger focus on "pathos"--the emotional or psychological appeal in persuasion--than does Milḥamot Adonai. Whereas in the Milḥamot the focus of the persuasive techniques is in the area of "logos," the rational and the analytic, here logos is subordinated to pathos. There are also a few notable appeals to "ethos" which we shall examine shortly. But the overriding impression most discussions of miracles give, especially after reading the to'aliyot related to miracles, is that these things happened for the good of the Israelite people and their faith. This evokes an emotional response from the reader, who feels his religious tradition has thus been elevated by Gersonides' comments on the text.

Although the Red Sea material is a paradigmatic example which illustrates well the general emphasis and some of the key persuasive techniques Gersonides employs in the Perush, it does not give us the total picture. In order to understand as fully as possible the rhetorical approach of the Perush, it is appropriate to proceed in the remainder of our study of the commentary on miracles with a comparison of other discussions and techniques used in the Milḥamot and those employed in the Perush.

The first major technique Gersonides applied in Milḥamot Hashem was designed to establish his credibility among the philosophically-oriented audience. This was done by aligning himself with Aristotelian principles of empiricism and categorization and by using Aristotle and Ptolemy

as specific examples of respected scholars who used techniques like the ones he was employing. This approach is very noticeably absent in the Perush, and logically so. Here, Gersonides' audience is not interested, for the most part, in knowing that Gersonides is philosophically credible. If he wanted to make an appeal to ethos for this audience, the emphasis would be much better placed on establishing his religious credibility. Thus, the effort to categorize miracles and thereby establish a semi-empiricism of sorts, as we have noted he did at the outset of his presentation on miracles in Milḥamot Adonai, is not evident in the Perush. When he comments on the miracles of the staff becoming a serpent and Moses' hand becoming leprous in Exodus 4, for example, he does not make a point of differentiating between them as to one being a miracle of substance and the other being a miracle of accident.[25] This is somewhat surprising since in the Milḥamot Gersonides used these two miracles as the primary examples of how to categorize miracles as to substance and accident. There are, of course, plenty of examples in the commentaries where changes of accident and of substance are described. But, Gersonides does not make an effort to identify which is which. He does, however, refer to Aristotle or to his Meteorology in a few places in the miracle narratives studied. For example, in the narrative about the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, he refers the reader to the Meteorology in order to learn about the kind

of natural catastrophe Sodom and Gomorrah was and how salt was formed from the burned earth which resulted from this catastrophe.[26] But, in these cases, the citation is mainly for the purpose of instruction. Reading the Meteorology would better equip the reader to understand Gersonides' explication of the text.

On the other hand, efforts to present himself as religiously credible are not particularly apparent in the text either. He does use the rabbinic material more often in the Perush than he does in the Milḥamot. But it is not always quoted favorably. For example, in his explanation of how the great flood occurred, he speaks of how the rabbis dealt with miracles quite disparagingly:

> ...when it becomes necessary, by virtue of providence, to change this [established] order, it is thus appropriate that God, exalted be He, diverge from it as little as possible. For this reason, God, exalted be He, only performed these miracles through the least anomalous causes vis a vis those of nature. And for this reason, [God] only produced the flood by means of the wind and the deficiency of water by means of the rains. ... This is the opposite of what the scholars among the people of our religion thought. For they tried to explain the miracles in a manner that would be more anomalous toward nature, and they thought that this would magnify God, exalted be He. It is not sufficient to say that [this] does not magnify God, exalted be He. Rather, it is an imperfection [in God], and they did not realize it.[27]

Yet, there are many examples in the text where Gersonides treats the rabbinic material respectfully and uses it to support his own view as well. But given the negative attitude expressed in Parashat Noaḥ about how the rabbis

dealt with miracles in general, we can hardly say that Gersonides was using the rabbinic material to boost his credibility.

His strongest religious credibility appeal appears in the introduction to the Perush. Here, he speaks confidently and faithfully of the truth of the Torah and praises and hails God for the great providence He bestows upon the world:

> Levi ben Gerson says: May the Rock be blessed and exalted; the one who brings forth with His understanding and wisdom and knowledge the general established order that is in existents, from the wisdom and grace which none other than He, in his perfection, can possibly attain; may He be praised, the Creator who, by his love, treats the existents providentially and brings them from privation to an existence of perfection bestowed providentially on these sublunar existents and so raises up their existence level by level until it reaches the existence of the human being.[28]

This introductory statement of his religious conviction establishes the theme of providence evident in most of the miracle passages in the Perush. It gives him the necessary credibility for his audience to trust and respect him when he takes up a difficult issue, like the killing of Koraḥ and his company, and points out its providential aspects.[29] This is the extent of his efforts to enhance his theological credibility and authority.

Although limited in strength, the credibility Gersonides establishes for himself in the Perush gives him the authority to set forth his major appeal--that of pathos. This is similar to what he did in the Milḥamot,

where he established his philosophical credibility in order to set forth the logos appeal. As we have already demonstrated, there is definitely a certain degree of emphasis on the rational and the analytic in the discussion of miracles in the Perush as well, but it is subordinated to the emotional, psychological appeal of showing the theological significance of miracles. In our discussion of the Red Sea commentary, we focused on how some of the key philosophical ideas from the Milḥamot were altered for use in the Perush and how they were subordinated to the religious concept of providence. At this point, it will be useful to demonstrate more specifically and comprehensively how Gersonides developed this emotional/theological appeal in the Perush for the same miracles he uses to make his points in the Milḥamot.

It is important to note, at the outset, that Gersonides made a minor effort to appeal to his audience in this way in the Milḥamot as well. He spent one entire section and several other isolated passages emphasizing that all miracles are aimed toward the end of "well-being, favor, and providence." But, in the main section that focused on this in Chapter 9, the slant was still philosophical. The types of providence these miracles stood for could be scientifically categorized and, in fact, miracles could be proven philosophically to be aimed toward a good end by use of the form/matter distinction. This attempt at "rationalizing" the theological significance of miracles

is less obvious in the Perush. Rather, the tendency is for the rational concepts to be "theologized." This is Gersonides' primary method of destroying the audience's erroneous idea that philosophy and science have nothing to contribute to the traditional religious understanding of miracles.

Of primary importance are the miracles of the staff becoming a serpent and Moses' hand becoming leprous because these miracles are used time and again in the Milḥamot to help prove various philosophical and scientific concepts. For example, they are used in the Milḥamot to demonstrate the difference between miracles of substance and miracles of accident, the absurdity of God as the proximate efficient cause of miracles, and the fact that miracles can be shown to be within the natural order of events. If one did not know the theological leaning of the Perush, one might expect (after reading the Joshua 10 account in the Milḥamot and finding nothing like it for the serpent and Moses' hand) that the Perush would contain an elaborate explanation of how, for example, the staff became a serpent, scientifically. But we do not find this. The focus is on pathos over logos.

In Milḥamot Adonai, we have the statement that "the changing of the staff into a serpent was performed from nature in a wondrously [short] length of time,...."[30] If the focus of the Perush were the rational, analytic appeal, surely the mechanism of how this event took place would be

explained in some way. But this is all the text says about what happened at that moment:

> Thus, Moses threw his staff to the ground and it became a serpent in such a manner that Moses was afraid of it. And he rose up and fled from before it. And God, exalted be He, commanded him to take hold of it by its tail, and the serpent became a staff in his hand again. And He told him to perform this sign before the children of Israel in order that they believe that God, exalted be He, appeared to him.[31]

What specifically happened to the staff in its development into a serpent is totally absent. What is emphasized is that even though the staff becoming a serpent served no good purpose in and of itself, it would be used to bring the Israelite people the faith necessary to eventually allow their deliverance from Egypt. In light of this religious purpose of the miracle, the actual mechanism involved in its creation is made to seem unimportant. Indeed, the emphasis of the whole discussion of the serpent miracle in the Perush is on how the Israelites were convinced that Moses was really a prophet so that their faith would be strengthened. In this connection, Gersonides is even willing to go so far as to refer to the staff becoming a serpent and the hand becoming leprous as anomalies (zariot) which are "beyond nature" which we know he does not believe to be the case. But this terminology helps in in explaining how the Israelites would come to proper faith as a result of seeing these miracles:

> For it is surely not possible that anomalies like these be found together in this way by natural behavior. For this reason, [God]

> brought them to this to cause [them] to believe that they are things which are beyond nature, and knowledge of them could only be from a prophet....[32](emphasis mine)

Much the same emphasis is found in Gersonides' commentaries on the plagues in Egypt. The description of each individual plague is naturalistic, but, in the final analysis, what is stressed is what these plagues did for the people of Israel. Gersonides often glosses over the scientific explanation of how the plague actually happened, as in how the water actually became blood or what it meant for water to become blood.[33] But, occasionally, the plagues are explained quite scientifically as natural events. For instance, the cattle plague was caused by a certain mold that developed only in the air outside of the city, which explains why people were not harmed by it:

> '...behold the hand of Adonai is (upon your cattle....) (Ex. 9:3) means that the plague of God, exalted be He, is in your cattle which are in the field. Now this was a great wonder that this mold that was created in the air was then, in a miraculous way, causing the cattle to die and being spread only by the air outside of the city.[34]

He even uses the rabbinic material to help him give a naturalistic explanation for the plague of darkness:

> 'Darkness which may be felt.' (Ex. 10:21) Its explanation in Genesis Rabbah[35] is that a wondrous thickness was created in the atmosphere to the extent that a person could feel it--and [this explanation] is correct. And for this reason, people did not see each other and no one got up from his place. But it was necessary to close off the nostrils and the mouth in order that this thick, smoky air which God, exalted be He, had created miraculously not enter their bodies and kill them.

Yet he does not attempt to explain how this was true in the places where the Egyptians lived and not so for the Israelites:

> 'But all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings.' (Ex. 10:23) This means that in the places where they lived there was light and this thick, smoky mist did not enter. And this is the greatest wonder; that the Egyptian who was a neighbor to Israel had darkness in his house, and in the house of Israel there was light....[36]

Still in all, these plagues are summed up at the end of the section in the first to'elet, which explains how all of them were aimed not only at acquiring for those particular Israelites faith in God, but that this faith be ever perpetuated among the Jewish people--a noble thought that undoubtedly held great emotional appeal for the readers:

> The first lesson is in doctrines: It is to make it known that when God, exalted be He, did evil, providence for the good was intended. For this reason, God, exalted be He, did evil from the standpoint that it was good and not from the standpoint that it was bad because there is nothing that comes from Him that is bad.... For this reason, it is explained that [God] hardened Pharaoh's heart in order to multiply the miracles. Thus, the intention of the multiplication of miracles was in order that Israel apprehend that He is God and that they make this known to their children after them in such a manner that this true faith continue perpetually in Israel.[37]

Therefore, in his discussion of the plagues, Gersonides successfully dissipates many of his readers' perplexities about the existence of such miracles, but he

does not force his scientific and philosophical ideas on them. They are there for those who are inclined to want them or find them useful, but the overriding emphasis is on the ultimate religious value of the plagues. A similar approach can be found in Gersonides' discussion of manna and of the water that came from the rock.[38]

Two of Gersonides other comments on miracles that need to be mentioned here to complete our study of how he highlights the providential nature of miracles above all else are the discussions of the pillars of cloud and fire and the killing of Korah and his company. The pillars of cloud and fire are interesting from the standpoint that, unlike any other miracles we have examined, they are reinterpreted to be actual symbols of God's providence. Not only is there no attempt to describe what they were made of or how it was that they stayed with the Israelites constantly for close to forty years, there is not even any implication that such a naturalistic explanation might exist. Rather, the pillars are physical symbols of God's constant watchfulness over the people of Israel. For Gersonides, the pillars are actually symbolic of the Active Intellect, of course. But, as is often the case, this is not made specific here. All that is specific and clear is that the Israelite people were subject to a constant flow of providence during their years in the desert:

> 'And Adonai went before them by day (in a pillar of cloud to lead them by the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give

> them light; that they might go by day and by night:)' (Ex. 13:21) This means that God, exalted be He, was proceeding before them through what emanated and overflowed from Him which was a pillar of cloud during the day and a pillar of fire at night to make light for them so that they could walk by day and by night when God, exalted be He, so desired. ... Hence, these are the miracles that God, exalted be He, perpetuated for Israel all the days that they were in the wilderness, in order that more of this exceptional might would be publicly known to them so that they would believe in Him with perfect faith. Thus [Scripture] says that God, exalted be He, 'walks' before them in order to speak in human language. It means to say that His providence was conjoined with them to lead them on the way, as with all of these great miracles.[39]

Gersonides professed to be against allegorical interpretation of Scripture in the sense of making the people and things in the Biblical narratives symbols for philosophical concepts. Generally, he veered away from this when describing events he took to be miracles, by explaining their scientific and philosophical significance more directly. But this seems to be one case where he comes very close to allegory.

The Korah discussion is of interest mainly because it is one of the few miracles that appears to bring some very destructive results upon a group of Israelites. This could be construed as being far from providential. Even so, Gersonides is able to demonstrate that this event taught a very important and positive theological lesson:

> 'Hereby ye shall know that the Lord hath sent me (to do all these works and that I have not done them of mine own mind.)' (Num. 16:28) Moses gave them a sign

> through which they recognized that this was an act of God. That was, that if they did not die the death of all humanity, but that God, exalted be He, created a new thing for them. Thereby the opening of the earth's mouth was caused and it swallowed them and everything they had that went down alive into the depths of the earth--which is called "sheol." Now, this creation by God, exalted be He, occurred by way of a miracle within the innermost part of the earth beneath them. What was created through it [the miracle] was the splitting open of the earth. Thus, the meaning of this miracle is that what He performs by way of nature over an astonishingly long period of time, He did miraculously in a [mere] moment of time. ... (A)ll of this happened to them by way of punishment from God, exalted be He, because only the sinners died, none other than they. And the most wondrous [aspect] of all of this is that in the self-same place that the earth broke apart, God, exalted be He, made it so that there remained some in the place who were the sons of Korah who did not die, as will come [to be seen] in Parashat Pinhas. This was so because they did not continue in the counsel of their fathers. Thus, our rabbis, may their memory be for a blessing, said that the place was closed up for them at Gehinnom....[40] (emphasis mine)

Hence, there is a naturalistic explanation of what happened--something akin to a fault in the earth's surface was created very suddenly. But, this is not the miracle. The miracle is God's awesome power to work in ways that benefit humanity--to cause to perish only those who deserved punishment from all those who were present.

It is this awesome power of God to bestow providence upon Israel and thus ensure their faith in Him that is, above all, the message of Gersonides' commentary on the miracles in the Perush al Hatorah. We have seen that on

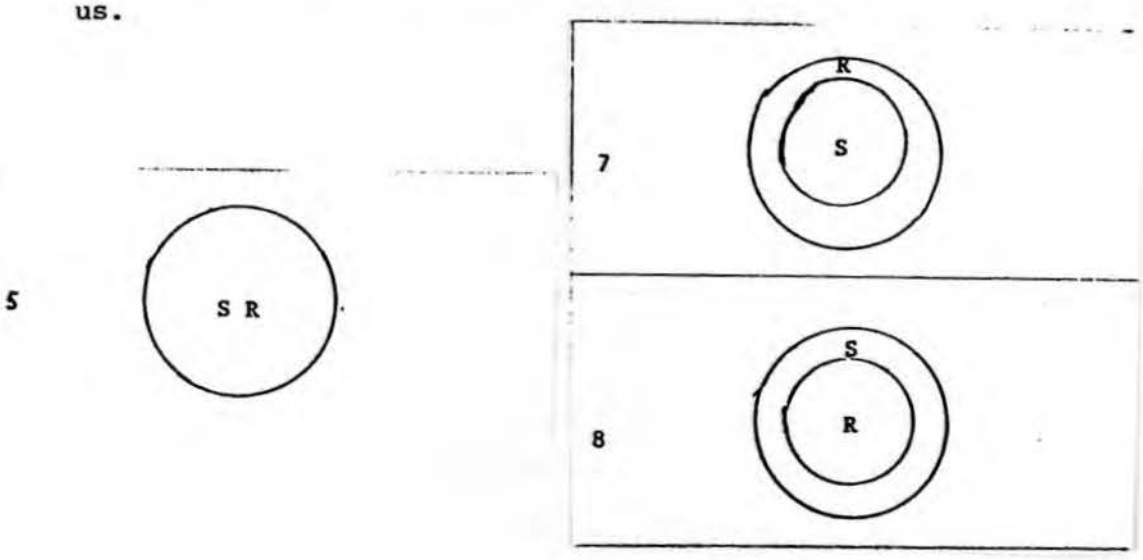
the bet hamidrash front of his "offensive" on miracles, Gersonides has utilized equivocal language, the appeal to pathos, and a technique of "theologizing" his philosophical and scientific concepts as the main persuasive techniques in destroying his audience's erroneous idea that the rational disciplines had nothing to offer in terms of elaborating upon and elevating the religious tradition. In this process, Gersonides uses many of the same "battles" or discussions that he developed in Milḥamot Adonai. He alludes to the issues of the agency of miracles, the characteristics of miracles, and the connection of the prophet to miracles throughout the Torah commentary. But never does he explain these positions explicitly. For to do so would have been inappropriate both from the standpoint of his need to conform to the literary style of the genre of Biblical commentary and from the standpoint of his projected purpose in writing the Perush. Hence, it is clear from this study that Gersonides' Perush al Hatorah is a work that attempts to fight for the same cause as his philosophical work, Milḥamot Adonai. Both works attempt to uphold the value of the religious tradition within a rational framework. However, Gersonides is dealing here with a different type of enemy, an enemy that is suspicious of the claims of philosophy. We shall now turn to an evaluation of the offensive on miracles on both of these fronts. We shall attempt to determine the success or failure of the specific arsenal employed on each front and the success or failure of the cause as a whole.

CONCLUSION

In our study of Levi ben Gerson's concept of miracles as presented in Milḥamot Adonai and the Perush al Hatorah, we have observed many aspects of his rhetorical strategy and style. We have noted his major points of argumentation as to the agency, purpose, and general characteristics of miracles. We have examined his use of the three fundamental elements of persuasion, ethos, pathos, and logos, and many other persuasive techniques in presenting these arguments. We have also studied his philosophical and exegetical literary styles and have seen how these affected his rhetorical approach. Most significantly, we have observed Gersonides' struggle to come to terms with the conflict between reason and revelation, of which we spoke in the Introduction of this paper. We have come to understand that Gersonides' primary goal in resolving this conflict was that of defending God and Jewish tradition against the mistaken views and ignorance he found among both students of philosophy and students of the houses of rabbinic study of his day. Furthermore, we have learned that Gersonides used different rhetorical approaches in confronting these two distinct audiences. Norbert Samuelson has devised a system of diagrams which represents the various

ways that reason and revelation are brought into relation with one another as sources of truth and morality. This method can be very useful to us in further interpreting and, at last, evaluating the degree of success of Gersonides' rhetoric on miracles as an important component of his struggle to resolve the reason/revelation conflict.

On Samuelson's chart of the possible relations between reason and revelation, reproduced in full in Appendix B, diagrams #5, #7, and #8 are of greatest interest to us.



In these diagrams, "S" represents the range of authority of reason and "R" represents the range of authority of revelation. Having studied Gersonides' presentation of his concept of miracles in two separate works, it should now be possible to come to some hypothesis about where he stands with respect to the relationship between reason and revelation--at least as far as miracles are concerned.

Samuelson's diagrams can be of considerable help to us in setting forth such an hypothesis.

We have already noted that Gersonides believed that philosophy and religion represented the same "truth." Thus, any apparent conflict that arose between these two systems had to be only apparent since there could be only one truth.[1] This is quite easily observable in all that we have studied about Gersonides' concept of miracles. In both Milḥamot Adonai and the Perush al Hatorah, we have seen Gersonides go to great efforts to demonstrate how Scripture, the rabbinic tradition, science, and philosophy are all devoted to teaching the same information--only in different ways. When this observation is applied to Samuelson's chart of possible relations between reason and revelation, we find that there can be only three ways of interpreting Gersonides' views about their relationship. For there are only three diagrams in which the range of the two systems are shown to cover the same "territory" of "truth." The first of these is diagram #5 which symbolizes a system wherein reason and revelation have the exact same "range of authority." In this system of thinking, "whatever can be known by reason can be known by revelation and whatever can be known by revelation can be known by reason."[2] The scope of truth and morality they respectively represent is absolutely identical.

In both diagram #7 and diagram #8 there is still only one truth, but, in each diagram, the scope of one

representation of the truth is quantitatively limited compared to the other. This is evident from the way these systems are depicted in the diagrams. As Samuelson describes it, these diagrams show that "(n)ecessarily the range of reason in diagram #7 and the range of revelation in diagram #8 are limited because they are included within the ranges of these respective counterparts."[3] Diagram #7, then, depicts a system wherein "everything that can be known by reason is included in but does not exhaust what can be known by revelation."[4] Contrarily, diagram #8 represents a system wherein "everything that can be known through revelation is included in but does not exhaust what is known by reason."[5] Our task, then, is to determine into which of these diagrams Gersonides can be placed on the basis of our study of his concept of miracles.

We have seen that in Milḥamot Adonai Gersonides' goal was to eradicate the erroneous idea held by some philosophically-oriented Jews that miracles have no place in a rational system and, therefore, could not have existed. Gersonides wants to show these individuals that the revelatory tradition does have significance to a rational way of thinking and that, in fact, if one looks carefully enough, it represents the same truth that philosophy and science represent. However, in the Milḥamot, it is apparent that the revelatory tradition by itself, without the help of philosophical knowledge to interpret its material, might not be clearly observable as "the truth" to all readers.

Its intrinsic ability to make clear to people the truth about the physical and intelligible universe and how it works is limited. The philosophical tradition, on the other hand, has an unlimited range for acquiring knowledge of the universe. It is thus better able to arrive at the truth about the universe. Hence, we will place Gersonides' explanation of miracles in Milḥamot Adonai in diagram #8 of Samuelson's chart.

On the other hand, we have seen that in the Perush al Hatorah Gersonides' discussion of miracles leads us to believe that his thinking on the revelation/reason relationship would be better classified as diagram #7. In the Perush, Gersonides' major emphasis is to show that philosophy does have some contribution to make in our understanding of the revelatory tradition; that the philosophical viewpoint can be applied to Scripture and yet not be considered heretical or even inappropriate as a means of explicating Scripture. He thus wants to eradicate the erroneous idea that philosophy has nothing to teach us about miracles, which are, first and foremost, matters of faith. This rhetorical task seems to fit with Samuelson's diagram #7 since Gersonides is implying by this method that revelation's scope of truth is the whole of the truth but that the concerns of philosophy are able to aid the understanding of that wider range of truth. In the Perush, the revelatory tradition seems to be the unlimited, all-encompassing repository of truth. While the philosophical

realm deals in the same truth, it appears limited--only being able to arrive at some aspects of that truth.

Samuelson notes that in both #7 and #8 there is no value judgment placed on the "quality of the claims" of either source of truth.[6] This is an important point to stress with respect to Gersonides' presentation of miracles in these two works. In no portion of any of Gersonides' discussions of miracles that we have considered does he imply that either the revelatory tradition or reason is inferior to the other in understanding the universe. While the Milḥamot shows the philosophical tradition to represent the "whole" of the truth and the Perush shows the revelatory tradition to represent the "whole" of the truth, neither text implies the other source is a less important source of truth simply because it is less comprehensive in scope.

For example, in Chapter 12 of the Milḥamot, the point of Gersonides' discussion of Joshua 10 is to show how the "miracle" that occurred at Gibeon can be seen as having happened in conjunction with a rational and regularly observable astronomical phenomenon. Both the phenomenon of the sun appearing not to move at high noon and the victory at Gibeon are part and parcel of the same historical "truth." However, if one reads the Joshua 10 account directly from the Bible, most readers would undoubtedly receive the impression that the sun actually stood still at Gibeon that day. So, philosophy and science

are able to widen the scope of our understanding of Scripture. Read alone, Scripture might unintentionally lead us away from the truth. But, by reading it in conjunction with scientific knowledge, it can be clearly understood as describing "the truth." Examples of how the Perush emphasizes the revelatory tradition are found in many of the miracles we have studied. For example, in the Koraḥ story, scientific knowledge alone might well be able to explain how it happened that the earth split open as the result of an earthquake and how many people could thus be killed. This explanation would represent the "truth." But another aspect of this "truth," that science itself could not adequately explain, would be the great religious significance of the event and the fact that only the guilty perished. In the Perush, then, explanations of miracles such as this one widen the scope of our understanding of the "truth" as taught by the rational disciplines.

Obviously, Gersonides' final position cannot be placed in both of these diagrams. But, for persuasive purposes, he seems to have portrayed the position as if it does. This is a very difficult task to accomplish. Was he successful in this dual portrayal of his position? Was Gersonides' portrayal of his position as diagram #7 in the Milḥamot and as diagram #8 in the Perush carried out so that the audiences would have been convinced that the respective positions they were reading were each his true belief?

There is very little historical data we can use in attempting to answer this question. We know that Gersonides came under a great deal of criticism as a heretic for many of his philosophical ideas by such individuals as Ḥasdai Crescas, Isaac Arama, and Isaac Abravanel.[7] Arama and Abravanel were, in fact, particularly critical of Gersonides' view of miracles.[8] Milḥamot Adonai was even renamed "Milhamot 'Im Adonai," "Wars Against the Lord," by one of Gersonides' critics, Shem Tov ibn Shem Tov.[9] The Perush, by itself, seems to have come under less criticism, but was not immune to it. We do know that Judah Messer Leon sought to forbid the study of Gersonides' commentaries because he believed this was a heretical work with which Gersonides was attempting to supplant the Talmud.[10]

Still, along with these attacks, we also find evidence that Gersonides' works were always held in some esteem, at least by some. For example, we find record of the fact that in 1546 it was still considered "dangerous" to print Milḥamot Adonai. But the fact that opposition to and controversy over this work was still alive two centuries after Gersonides' death may indicate that it was still widely circulated and read in certain circles.[11] As we have mentioned before, Charles Touati claims that many of Gersonides' critics did not actually understand his philosophy. Yet even they often "borrowed" his ideas.[12] Furthermore, we find that Spinoza was somewhat influenced

by Gersonides' thinking since he adopted much of Gersonides' terminology in his own treatment of miracles.[13] So, even though Milḥamot Adonai was highly criticized, it was influential.

As far as the Perush is concerned, the general impression of its degree of acceptance is that it was quite well respected over many centuries.[14] This can perhaps be attributed to Gersonides' having succeeded in writing a commentary largely void of allegorical interpretation and instead including more in the area of moral and practical lessons.[15] After all, the disdain for allegory in Biblical commentary was a central theme of the Maimonidean controversy that directly preceded Gersonides' time. One of the few points that was agreed upon as a criticism of the then current state of Torah commentary was that it had become too allegorical.[16] Moreover, we find many of Gersonides' commentaries included today in the standard commentary collections, particularly his commentary on some of the Prophets and Writings. His commentaries must have always won, then, a considerable degree of respect.

The fact that these works of Gersonides have withstood the test of time must teach us that they both were considered useful and worthy of study by a certain group of scholars throughout history. But the information we have about their acceptance is too incomplete to come to any real conclusion about the rhetorical success or failure of these documents based on this data alone. Accordingly,

let us evaluate Gersonides' Milḥamot Adonai and Perush al Hatorah on the basis of his discussion of miracles alone and attempt to determine if his strategy was successful on the basis of whether he accomplished what we have claimed he set out to do. In order to do this, we shall examine some of the most salient points made in Chapters II and III about his argumentation in these two works and speculate as to whether these discussions could have been convincing to his projected audiences.

As far as Milḥamot Adonai is concerned, he may not have been particularly successful with the immediate audience he was attempting to influence. His readers who were well-versed in philosophy seem to have fallen into at least two categories--those who accepted Aristotelian principles completely and wanted to follow them almost to the letter and those, like Crescas, who were skeptical of how much use ought to be made of this Aristotelian material. Gersonides seems to have tried to appeal to both audiences in the Milḥamot. But, as we observed by using Samuelson's scheme, he mainly stressed the viewpoint that Aristotelianism could actually broaden and enhance the revelatory tradition. This must be why philosophers like Crescas and Shem Tov ibn Shem Tov attacked Gersonides so virulently. Even though Gersonides attempted to employ many scriptural and rabbinic proofs for his point of view, it was always obvious that those proofs were being made to conform to philosophy. This group of philosophers was unwilling to take such

liberties with the traditional rabbinic texts. They might have found Gersonides' attempt to classify miracles into categories appealing as a connecting link to Aristotle. They also would have undoubtedly appreciated his efforts to show that the occurrence of miracles was always an expression of providence. But it is easy to understand how these same readers might have been offended at Gersonides' insistence on attributing this providence to various combinations of natural causes and the Aristotelian form/matter distrinction instead of attributing them directly to God.

Furthermore, Gersonides' whole discussion of the agency of miracles is basically devoid of reference to the religious tradition. In the few places where he does apply the revelatory tradition to his arguments, it is used to support his theory of the Active Intellect as the agent, which was much too heretical an idea for these particular readers to accept. Even more importantly, the view that God is the agent of miracles that these readers must have held is treated as a position that is "ridiculous" by Gersonides. Although Gersonides did make some effort at being tactful and respectful in setting forth this point, the fact remains that no one likes to be told his position is absurd or ridiculous. Hence, the crucial agency argument could hardly have been convincing to this group of readers.

But let us look at the other proposed group of

readers--those who saw themselves as strict Aristotelians. It seems reasonable to suspect that Gersonides was unsuccessful here as well. It is doubtful that truly "strict" Aristotelians would have been convinced by Gersonides' efforts to set up the discussion of miracles as an "empirical" study. Establishing a taxonomy of miracles and saying that the use of "reliable" sources approximates having first hand, observable evidence could hardly have been compelling to this group. After all, in the final analysis, empiricism must be based on truly observable data. No matter how hard Gersonides tried to make his approach look empirical, it was not at all empirical. This is one of the major limitations of Gersonides' general methodology in attempting to show that miracles and philosophy represent the same "truth." Miracles would not even be within the realm of "truth" to a true Aristotelian, even if they could be shown to be somehow related to science and philosophy, as Gersonides tried to demonstrate.

Perhaps Gersonides' strongest appeal to the strict Aristotelians in the audience was his argument on the agency of miracles. By using the rhetorical technique of the "dissociation of concepts" and the "ridiculous" and by limiting his argumentation almost entirely to the realm of philosophy here, it is possible to imagine even a strict Aristotelian being convinced that Scripture actually taught the Aristotelian position without knowing it. Gersonides skillfully resolves the apparent conflicts

between the two traditions here by showing that it only "appears" that Scripture was saying that God was the agent of miracles. If one reads it carefully enough, Scripture can be seen as teaching that the Active Intellect was the agent. This is a good example of how Gersonides successfully argued that reason and revelation describe the same truth but that philosophical study could make this more clearly understood. Indeed, Samuelson noted about diagram #8 that "any conflict entails that the tools of either reason or revelation were not used properly."[17] In both the "dissociation of concepts" technique and the portrayal of the other possible agents as "ridiculous" positions, Gersonides very adeptly shows how the tools of revelation were simply not being used properly.

Still, when Gersonides returns to the discussion of actual miracles and their characteristics after his discussion of the agency of miracles, he faces his basic problem again. His audience of strict Aristotelians were simply not prepared to let anything be called a miracle. Gersonides himself seems to be of the same opinion, but will not admit it to himself. He changes the meaning of the word "miracle" to such an extent that when he describes, for example, the case of Joshua 10, it can hardly be seen as a miracle anymore. Perhaps, in his own mind, Gersonides was truly able to see the quick victory at Gibeon as a miracle. But it is difficult to accept that others would have seen it this way. It is this attempt to redefine what is

"miraculous" which is the greatest deficiency of Gersonides' position on miracles in the Milḥamot. In light of this problem, it is certainly understandable why Kellner referred to Gersonides' philosophy as a "doomed attempt to clothe Judaism in the robes of Aristotelianism."[18]

The Perush may have been somewhat more successful in its effort to demonstrate that revelation encompassed more of "the truth" than reason. It is also more difficult to determine who, precisely, was in this audience. We have been assuming that they were less well-versed philosophically and scientifically than the readers of the Milḥamot. But we have also noted that Gersonides assumes a certain amount of knowledge of these disciplines on their part. He refers openly to his concept of the Active Intellect in enough places that it would be hard for the reader not to take note of it. He also refers the reader directly to the Milḥamot when he wishes to make clearer a point of metaphysical or scientific import. Therefore, this audience is not assumed to be ignorant of these disciplines. But they are, at the same time, considered to be more revering of the religious tradition. It is a difficult kind of impression with which to work.

Secondly, it is somewhat problematic to try to determine what kind of criteria this audience might have used to evaluate Gersonides' presentation. We do not have a clear picture of what they considered as guidelines for success as we had with the strict Artistotelians. Perhaps

the best guess that can be made about this is that these readers wanted to feel as if their religious tradition had been clarified and elevated after reading a scriptural commentary. Let us determine, then, through these two criteria, in what way Gersonides could be seen as somewhat more successful in this rhetorical effort.

As to clarification, the Perush descriptions of miracles are often accompanied by explanations of how it was that these unusual events occurred and what the significance of the events was at the time they occurred. For example, the narrative of the Red Sea is very perplexing to the rational mind. Gersonides quite successfully eradicates such perplexity by describing in much detail what specific natural events might have actually occurred at that moment. He accomplishes this in a number of other places as well. However, it should be noted that Gersonides does not always provide such explanations where they might be useful. He never explains, for example, through what specific mechanism the water in Egypt was turned to blood. We never learn how the staff turned into a serpent. These are problems that Gersonides' audience would have had difficulty resolving without his help. But, in certain instances, Gersonides must have felt it unnecessary or perhaps found himself unable to provide such a clarification. Thus, when Gersonides did provide these clarifications they were probably appreciated and found convincing by his readers. But they were not provided often enough.

It is probably fair to say that Gersonides was more successful in the area of elevating and enhancing the revelatory tradition than in clarifying it. This is where he placed his most concentrated effort in the Perush. This statement may seem to assume that Gersonides' use of equivocation was enough to encourage the most skeptical readers to continue reading so that they could appreciate his effort to elevate the tradition. This writer is not convinced that Gersonides' use of equivocation could have been successful with the most skeptical of readers. If there were some among his audience who truly felt that Gersonides' ideas about metaphysics were heretical, it is hard to imagine that they would have overlooked or failed to discern Gersonides' allusions to Aristotelian metaphysical concepts, even if they were not stated explicitly. There were probably a significant number of bet hamidrash students who, like Judah Messer Leon, held that the work was utter heresy.

But if we guess that this group was only a minority, then it may be safe to say that the majority of Gersonides' Perush audience did appreciate and find compelling Gersonides' efforts at the elevation and enhancement of the religious tradition. Especially in the to'aliyot section, but also scattered throughout the bi'ur hamilot and bi'ur divre haparashah sections, we have seen that Gersonides is extremely skillful at deriving lessons of religious significance from the text. In this way, the readers of

Gersonides' Perush learned from the Red Sea miracle that prayer is efficacious even in the most hopeless of situations. They came to a great appreciation of what great providence human beings can be subject to by trusting their leaders. And they learned, above all, that good is ultimately rewarded and evil punished. From the staff becoming a serpent and the hand becoming leprous, the audience learned the theological significance of miracles: They occurred to help the Israelites arrive at proper faith in God. The plagues in Egypt carried this significance as well as one further lesson: That the great faith acquired as a result of these plagues would be perpetually sustained by the Jewish people throughout the ages. The list could go on. The lessons given by Gersonides in the Perush are certainly edifying. They might well have struck a chord of satisfaction among the majority of the bet hamidrash readers and evoked an emotional response in them that caused them to overlook other weaknesses in the work. Thus, it might be said that Gersonides succeeded in his effort to portray his view of the reason/revelation relationship as Samuelson's diagram #7 in which revelation has access to a wider scope of "the truth" than reason. It teaches about the moral implications of what reason can only explain and clarify.

One might ask then: What can we learn about Gersonides' true view of the reason/revelation conflict based on his presentation of his concept of miracles in Milḥamot

Adonai and the Perush al Hatorah? He cannot have held both view #7, wherein revelation has an unlimited range of authority and reason a limited range, and view #8, wherein reason has an unlimited range of authority and revelation a limited range, simultaneously. This is a difficult problem to solve and may be insoluble altogether. It is probably reasonable to assume that Gersonides did not adhere most closely to view #7 even though he may have portrayed that view relatively more successfully to his audience. It is obvious from the very clear statements of his philosophical ideas in Milḥamot Adonai that he gives reason at least as wide a range of ability to arrive at the truth as he gives to revelation. Even though Gersonides deemphasizes the significance of these ideas in the Perush, the reader still has the impression that they are extremely important to him. Samuelson suggests that Gersonides' true view belongs in diagram #5--that he applied to both reason and revelation the exact same range of authority.[19]

This is a possible answer and follows logically from what we have pointed out thus far about Samuelson's diagrams. That is, if Gersonides portrayed himself as holding view #7 to one audience for a certain rhetorical purpose and as holding #8 to another audience for a different rhetorical purpose, then it is logical to assume that he actually held a view somewhere in between. This would be diagram #5. However, it is somewhat more likely that his true view is

the view portrayed in Milḥamot Adonai, represented by Samuelson's diagram #8. This is the case for a number of reasons. Even in the Perush where Gersonides emphasizes the moral lessons of Scripture, he still insists upon including scientific and philosophical concepts even where they are not needed to prove his point about God's providence. He certainly could have stressed the providential nature of the parting of the Red Sea without going into detail about what natural processes combined to cause the event. But, given Gersonides' world view, this was not possible for him. He seems to feel compelled to give the reasoned explanation of what occurred in the majority of instances where this is possible.

In addition, we have observed time and again in the Milḥamot that, for even the most theologically-oriented notions, Gersonides supplies a reasoned explanation. In Milḥamot Adonai, even the concept of providence itself, which Gersonides stresses to such an extreme in the Perush, is explained through the metaphysical concept of the distinction in character between form and matter. He goes to great efforts to point out the logical absurdity of God being the agent of miracles. If Gersonides truly thought reason and revelation to be equal in authority, it hardly seems possible that he would have spoken in such severe terms. Instead he might have spent more time proving God's indirect responsibility for miracles.

Furthermore, a number of scholars other than Samuelson

have made the point that the Perush al Hatorah was really written only as a supplement to Milḥamot Adonai. Isaac Husik, J. David Bleich, and Charles Touati have each made the statement that the Perush is of primary interest as a work that complements and supplements Gersonides' fundamental view on miracles and other concepts explained in the Milḥamot.[20] This further supports the argument that Gersonides' true view was closer to Samuelson's diagram #8 than to diagram #5.

Yet, in order for Gersonides to be able to fight the war in which he perceived himself to be engaged, he had to fight on two fronts, one of which would not even be approachable if he were to use the strategy of his true view. Hence, he wisely chose to employ two different strategies, taking into account the separate needs of his two audiences. On the basis of our evaluation of the strategy Gersonides employed in these two works in the offensive on miracles, it seems reasonable to conclude that Gersonides may have had a wide enough margin of success to "win" the offensive on the exegetical front, but not on the philosophical front. This may seem to be an ironic conclusion--that his more successful offensive was not on the front where his true view stood. However, this win/loss record reflects not so much Gersonides' sometimes ineffective use of persuasive strategy and arsenal as it does the difficulty of the rhetorical task he set out to accomplish in the first place.

For Gersonides has demonstrated a good understanding of and sensitivity to the needs and requirements of his two separate audiences. He did actually develop two significantly different techniques in order to fight for one single cause. But, what he perceived to be the erroneous ideas on one front were much more difficult to eradicate than the erroneous ideas on the other. Added to this is the fact that it seems likely that the majority of his audience in the bet hamidrash environment was at least somewhat amenable to a limited use of the reasoned disciplines in approaching the revelatory tradition. On the other hand, the strongest opponents of Gersonides among the philosophers may have been much less flexible as to how much material from the religious tradition they would allow to penetrate their psychological "filters" before they would become alienated by the arguments being made. A rigid adherence to Aristotelian principles leaves little room for any ideas from the realm of theology, no matter how skillfully the religious tradition might be interpreted to comply with the philosophical views.

Thus, the "enemy" on the bet hamidrash front of Gersonides' miracle offensive may well have been eradicated by his stated intention to convince the audience that Scripture, if read properly, "moves those who behave according to it perfectly, toward true felicity."[21] However, it is hard to imagine that Gersonides succeeded in eradicating the erroneous idea he was fighting in Milḥamot

Adonai, attempting to persuade his audience of philosophers that "(t)he Torah is not a code compelling us to believe falsehoods."[22] It seems logical to conclude that most of Gersonides' strict Aristotelian readers would have continued to believe that miracles had no place in a rational world and gave no support to the tenets of theology or philosophy. It cannot be rightfully be said, then, that Levi ben Gerson won the offensive he waged on miracles.

FOOTNOTES

Introduction

[1]Menachem Marc Kellner, "Gersonides on Miracles, the Messiah and Reserrection," Daat 4 (Winter 1980): 5.

[2]George Sarton, Introduction to the History of Science, 3 vols. (Washington: Carnegie Institute, 1947): 3:595.

[3]The Jewish Encyclopedia, 1904 ed., s.v. "Levi Ben Gershon," by Isaac Broydé.

[4]Encyclopaedia Judaica, 1972 ed., s.v. "Miracle: Contemporary Views," by Michael J. Graetz.

[5]Chaim Pearl, The Medieval Jewish Mind. (London: Vallentine, Mitchell, and Co., Ltd., 1971), p. 18.

[6]Leo Strauss, "The Mutual Influence of Theology and Philosophy," The Independent Journal of Philosophy, 3 (1979): 117.

[7]Ibid., p. 112.

[8]Leo Strauss, "Progress or Return? The Contemporary Crisis in Western Civilization," Modern Judaism 1 (May, 1981): 33.

[9]EJ, s.v. "Miracle: In the Talmud," by Louis Isaac Rabinowitz.

[10]Julius Guttman, Philosophies of Judaism. (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1964), p. 48.

[11]EJ, s.v. "Miracle: In Medieval Jewish Philosophy," by Eliezer Schweid.

[12]Strauss, "Influence," p. 115.

[13]Guttman, p. 239.

[14]Strauss, "Progress," p. 39.

[15]EJ, s.v. "...Medieval...."

[16]Ibid.

[17]Levi ben Gerson, Milḥamot Adonai (Leipzig: K. B. Lark, 1866), p. 6.

[18]Ibid.

[19]It was Nima H. Adlerblum's A Study of Gersonides in his Proper Perspective (1926) which first brought the significance of the title to my attention. Although her scholarship has been brought into question by Menachem Kellner, I am indebted to her for pointing this out to me. Her observations about Gersonides' writings are used occasionally elsewhere in our study, but not to support any major point in the presentation.

[20]Strauss, "Progress," p. 44.

[21]Kellner, "Gersonides and His Cultured Despisers: Arama and Abravanel," Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies 6 (Fall 1976): 291.

CHAPTER I

[1]Yosef Yerushalmi, "The Inquisition and the Jews of France in the Time of Bernard Gui," Harvard Theological Review 63 (1970): 318.

[2]Simon Dubnov, History of the Jews 5 vols. (New York: Thomas Yoseloff, 1969) 3:31-32.

[3]Ibid., p. 51.

[4]Yerushalmi, p. 321.

[5]Dubnov, p. 234.

[6]Ibid.

[7]Bath Sheva Albert, The Case of Barush (Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan University, 1974), p. viii.

[8]Dubnov, p. 38.

[9]Isaac Husik, "Gersonides," in Philosophical Essays of I. Husik, eds. M. Nahm and L. Strauss (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952), p. 172.

[10]Charles Touati, La Pensée Philosophique et Theologique de Gersonide (Paris: Minuit, 1973), p. 44.

[11]Ibid., p. 47.

[12]Ibid., p. 46.

[13]EJ, s.v. "Levi ben Gershom," by Charles Touati.

[14]Yosef Shatzmiller, "Gersonides and the Jewish Community of Orange in his Day," in Studies in the History of the Jewish People in the Land of Israel, ed. B. Oded, et. al. (Hebrew) 3 vols. (Haifa: University of Haifa, 1972), 2: xiii.

[15]Ibid., 3: xiii.

[16]Touati, Pensée, p. 46.

[17]Norbert Max Samuelson, Gersonides, The Wars of the Lord, Treatise Three: On God's Knowledge (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1977), p. 2.

[18]Yerushalmi, p. 326.

[19]J. David Bleich, Providence in the Philosophy of Gersonides (New York: Yeshiva University Press, 1973), p. 10.

[20]Husik, pp. 172-173.

[21]Touati, Pensée, p. 45.

[22]Sarton, p. 605.

[23]Touati, Pensée, p. 16.

[24]Ibid., p. 17.

[25]Marc Saperstein, "The Cultural and Political Context of the Conflict Over Philosophy," (Rabbinic Thesis, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, 1972), pp. 54-55.

[26]Ibid., pp. 3-7.

[27]Touati, Pensée, p. 26.

[28]Ibid., p. 20.

[29]Saperstein, p. 29.

[30]Ibid., p. 31.

[31]Samuelson, "Philosophic and Religious Authority in the Thought of Maimonides and Gersonides," CCAR Journal (October, 1969): 31.

[32]Milḥamot Adonai, pp. 6-7.

[33]JE, "Levi ben Gershon."

[34]Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 1967 ed., s.v. "Gersonides," by Frank Talmage.

[35]Touati, Pensée, p. 24.

[36]Adlerblum, p. 12.

[37]Silverman, p. 103.

[38]Ibid.

[39]Husik, p. 184.

[40]Husik, A History of Medieval Jewish Philosophy (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1943), p. 357.

[41]Samuelson, On Knowledge, p. 54.

[42]Ibid.

[43]Milḥamot Adonai, p. 7. (Translation by Nima Adlerblum).

[44]Adlerblum, p. 107.

[45]Samuelson, On Knowledge, p. 78.

Chapter II

[1]This assumption is supported by the fact that Gersonides wrote most of the Milḥamot before he wrote his commentaries on the Bible. He was meticulous about recording the date when he finished each of his works and even sections within each work. Thus, we know for certain that Gersonides completed his thirteen year project of writing Milḥamot Adonai in 1329, whereas he did not write his first Biblical commentary until 1325, when he was already well into the composition of the Milḥamot. He finished his last works of Biblical commentary in 1338. (This information is taken from a conveniently outlined chronology of Gersonides' works found in Sarton, op. cit., p. 605).

[2]Husik, "Gersonides," p. 178.

[3]Adlerblum, p. 42.

[4]EJ, "Levi ben Gershom."

[5]Kellner, "Gersonides, Providence, and Rabbinic Tradition," Journal of the American Academy of Religion 42 (1974): 675 (footnote)

[6]Silverman, p. 112.

[7]JE, "Levi ben Gershon."

[8]Kellner, "Despisers," p. 269.

[9]Kellner, "Miracles," p. 34.

[10]Milḥamot Adonai, Leipzig edition, p. 7.

[11]Letter from Jacob J. Staub, Professor of Religion, Lafayette College, Easton, Pennsylvania, 16 June 1981.

[12]Silverman, p. 100 and footnote #10, p. 118.

[13]Samuelson, "The Problem of Future Contingents in Medieval Jewish Philosophy," Studies in Medieval Culture 6 (1975): 71.

[14]Samuelson, On Knowledge, p. 4. The outline of other treatises can be observed by looking at the outline of treatise three, p. 120 of Milḥamot Adonai. Other treatises follow this basic outline, although it varies somewhat.

[15]Kellner, "Miracles," p. 18.

[16]Samuelson, On Knowledge, p. 5.

[17]M.A., p. 441.

[18]Ibid.

[19]Ibid., p. 442.

[20]Ibid.

[21]Ibid.

[22]M.A., p. 443

[23]Ibid.

[24]Ibid., p. 442.

[25]D. J. Allan, The Philosophy of Aristotle 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 31.

[26]M.A., p. 443.

[27]Ibid.

[28]Allan, p. 31.

[29]Kellner, "Miracles," p. 19.

[30]M.A., p. 443.

[31]Ibid., p. 444.

[32]Ibid.

[33]Ibid.

[34]Ibid., p. 445.

[35]Chaim Perelman and L. Olbrechts-Tyteca, The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1969), p. 414.

[36]Ibid.

[37]Samuelson, On Knowledge, p. 54.

[38]Perelman, p. 413.

[39]Ibid., p. 416.

[40]Ibid.

[41]Seymour Feldman, "Gersonides on the Possibility of Conjunction with the Agent Intellect," AJS Review 3 (1978): 116.

[42]Kellner, "Miracles," p. 15.

[43]M.A., p. 445.

[44]Kellner, "Maimonides and Gersonides on Mosaic Prophecy," Speculum 52 (January, 1977): 71.

[45]M.A., p. 445.

[46]Kellner, "Despisers," p. 280.

[47]George N. Atiyeh, "Avicenna's Conception of Miracles" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1954), pp. 84-85.

[48]Ibid., p. 95.

[49]M.A., p. 446.

[50]Ibid.

[51]Ibid.

[52]Ibid., p. 447.

[53]Perelman, p. 207.

[54]Ibid., p. 206.

[55]M.A., p. 447.

[56]Ibid.

[57]Ibid., pp. 447-448 and Kellner, "Miracles," pp. 22-23.

[58]Ibid., p. 448 and Ibid., p. 23.

[59]Ibid., pp. 448-449 and Ibid.

[60]Ibid., p. 450.

[61]Ibid.

[62]Ibid.

[63]Kellner, "Miracles," pp. 24-25.

[64]Silverman, pp. 115-116.

[65]M.A., p. 451.

[66]Ibid., p. 452.

[67]Ibid.

[68]Kellner, "Miracles," p. 27, footnote 100.

[69]M.A., pp. 454-455.

[70]Ibid., p. 455.

[71]Ibid.

[72]Ibid., pp. 455-456,

[73]Ibid., p. 456.

[74]Ibid.

[75]M.A., pp. 456-457.

[76]Ibid., p. 457.

[77]Ibid., p. 458.

[78]Ibid., pp. 458-459.

[79]Ibid., p. 459.

Chapter III

[1]Saperstein, p. 4.

[2]Levi ben Gerson, Perush al Hatorah, reproduced by photo offset (Venice: Daniel Bombirni House, 1547; New York, 1958), p. 2a.

[3]Silverman, p. 101.

[4]This is the publication called To'aliyot Haralbag, Joseph Ottolenghi, ed., cited in the Bibliography.

[5]Encyclopedia of Philosophy, "Gersonides."

[6]Guttman, p. 237.

[7]JE, "Levi ben Gershon."

[8]Perush, p. 27a.

[9]Ibid., p. 28a.

[10]Ibid.

[11]Ibid., p. 54b.

[12]Ibid., p. 56a.

[13]Mikra'ot Gedolot, Yehoshu'a, (Jerusalem: Eshkol, 1976), pp. 20a-21a.

[14]M.A., p. 448.

[15]From this point on, when we refer to the Perush, we are referring to the Perush al Hatorah only and not his entire Biblical commentary.

[16]Perush, p. 68a.

[17]Ibid.

[18]Ibid., p. 68b.

[19]Ibid.

[20]Ibid., p. 68a.

[21]Ibid.

[22]Ibid.

[23]Kellner, "Miracles," p. 29.

[24]Perush, pp. 68a-68b.

[25]Ibid., pp. 55a-56a.

[26]Perush, pp. 55a-56a.

[27]Ibid., p. 20b.

[28]Ibid., p. 2a.

[29]Ibid., p. 188b.

[30]M.A., p. 459.

[31]Perush, p. 55b.

[32]Ibid., p. 55a.

[33]Ibid., p. 58b.

[34]Ibid., p. 59a.

[35]I have not been able to locate this citation in Genesis Rabbah. However, an explanation of the plague of darkness is offered in Exodus Rabbah 14:1.

[36]Perush, p. 60a.

[37]Ibid., p. 60b.

[38]Excerpts of these passages are translated in Appendix A.

[39]Ibid., p. 65a.

[40]Ibid., p. 188b.

Conclusion

[1]Samuelson, "Authority," p. 31.

[2]Samuelson, "Possible and Preferred Relations Between Reason and Revelation as Authority in Judaism" paper presented to the Academy for Jewish Philosophy, Philadelphia, June 1981. (Mimeographed), p. 5.

[3]Ibid., p. 3.

[4]Ibid., p. 5.

[5]Ibid.

[6]Ibid.

[7]EJ, "Levi ben Gershom," and Kellner, "Despisers," p. 273.

[8]Kellner, "Despisers," p. 274 and p. 284.

[9]EJ, "Levi ben Gershom."

[10]Ibid.

[11]Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, "Levi ben Gershon."

[12]EJ, "Levi ben Gershom."

[13]Ibid.

[14]Kellner, "Despisers," p. 270.

[15]Adlerblum, p. 45.

[16]EJ, s.v. "Maimonidean Controversy," by Haim Hillel Ben-Sasson.

[17]Samuelson, "Possible and Preferred," p. 5.

[18]Kellner, "Miracles," p. 34.

[19]Samuelson, "Possible and Preferred," p. 5.

[20]Husik, "Gersonides," p. 183; Bleich, p. 17; and EJ, "Levi ben Gershom."

[21]Perush, p. 2a.

[22]M.A., p. 9.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A.

EXCERPTS FROM THE PERUSH AL HATORAH: THE MIRACLES OF MANNA AND WATER FROM THE ROCK

Manna:

> 'Behold, I will cause to rain bread from heaven for you.' (Ex. 16:4) You should know that this miracle was very wondrous because it is not possible that a thing like this will come to be naturally at any time because something that can possibly be food cannot come to be from these vapors ascending in the air. This is clear with just a little speculation by anyone who investigates the nature of things. Thus, at any rate, it is possible that something of the nature of this manna that fell from the sky for them would be the result of the mixture of the elements and the [process of] blending. For, if this were not the case, the existence of manna would have been impossible by its very essence. Now, that whose way [of arising] may be so characterized, is not created miraculously, just as a square whose hypotenuse is equal to one of its sides is not creaated miraculously. ...
>
> 'At even, then you shall know that Adonai (hath brought you out from the land of Egypt).' (Ex. 16:6) This means, as has been explained to you: The greatness of His power and His might to do what ever He wishes. This [means] that everything you ask of Him, He will give to you, even as far as bringing you meat to eat in this desert. On this very day, before the evening and the morning passes, you will see the glory of Adonai in that He will give of Himself to you bread to eat in this

> miraculous fashion since He heard your complaints which you presented to Him. For your complaints which you voiced to us [Moses and Aaron] that 'you have brought us into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger' (Ex. 16:3) are not concerning me [Moses] or concerning Aaron, but concerning God, exalted be He, for everything that happened to us exists because of Him.
>
> 'And the glory of Adonai appeared in the cloud.' (Ex. 16:10) This occurred in a miraculous way. This means that Israel recognized when the prophecy came. And this is what happened in many of his prophecies, according to what was explained in the narratives of the Torah. This occurred in order to bring Israel to have faith in the phenomenon of prophecy in order that they accept the Torah with perfect faith--that there not remain any doubt concerning God, exalted be He....
>
> Perush, pp. 70b-71a

Water From the Rock:

> 'Wherefore do ye try Adonai?' (Ex. 17:2) It is possible that they said this as a kind of test because they already had water to drink which they brought with them from Elim. Rather, they wanted to test if Moses could give them water there. For, in this way, they would know that everything he did was from God. And if he could not, they would say concerning this that God was not in their midst, as it has been said: that those miracles that have been created were [created] by chance. ... And if God was in their midst, he would be able to give them water, without a doubt, because He is the Ruler of all. ...
>
> 'Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock....' (Ex. 17:6) [Scripture] speaks in the language of human beings. The intention [of the statement] is that this miracle has already emanated from Me to you and when you hit the rock, enough water for the people to drink will come out of it. [That is, Moses already has the knowledge and the power

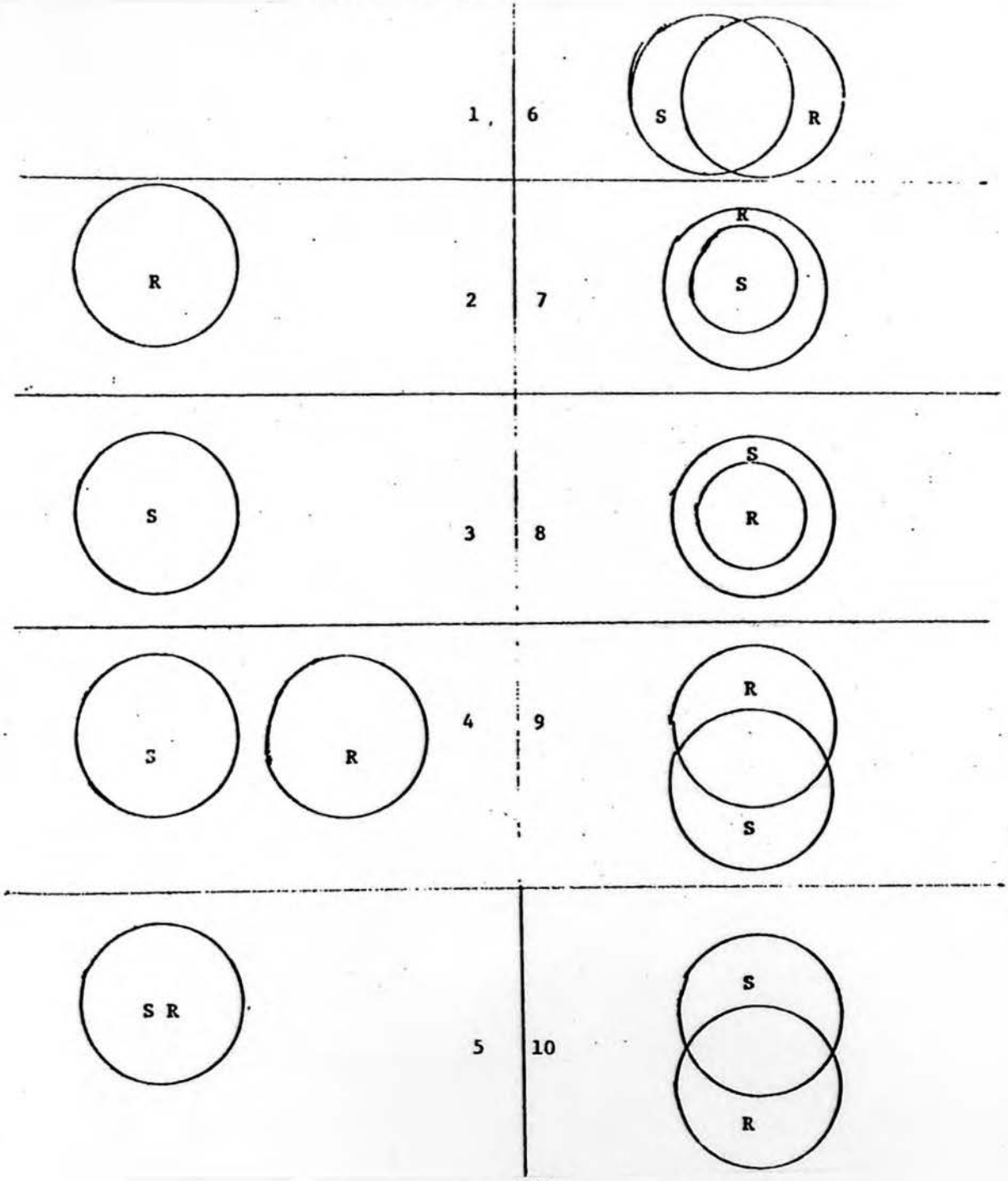
necessary to perform the miracle] Or, it means that you will be in conjunction with Me there where I will stand before you, and then this miracle will be performed by you because of your conjunction with it [the Active Intellect]. And it seems, according to what we understand from our rabbis, may their memory be for a blessing, in the Mekhilta (Tractate Vayassa, Chapter 7, lines 50-55), that Israel said to Moses: Where is your power and your might to bring forth by means of your staff anything you want? Just as you did in Egypt, give us water by means of the staff. But, undoubtedly, you will not be able to do this because only a miracle for a bad purpose can be done by means of the staff because only evil can be done by that God who performed those plagues. ...(T)hey wanted to test through this matter if God was in their midst by which of the miracles were performed by means of the staff. Or were these miracles from another god whose way is such that one finds only evils coming from him? For this reason, God, exalted be He, commanded that this miracle which was for the good be done by means of the staff.

Perush, p. 71b.

APPENDIX B.

NORBERT SAMUELSON'S CHART OF "POSSIBLE RELATIONS BETWEEN REASON AND REVELATION"

S = Reason
R = Revelation



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