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The Relation of God  
to the Universe  
in Saadia

by

Daniel Fogel

Thesis submitted in partial  
fulfillment of requirements  
for the Degree of Master of  
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## DIGEST

The problem which we will examine in this paper is how God relates to the universe in the philosophy of Saadia. The first section will deal with the nature of God. Saadia attempts to establish the basic proposition of the existence of God by an analysis of the universe. He demonstrates that God has created the world out of nothing. God, therefore exists as the Uncaused Cause of the universe, and His existence is made a ~~con~~comitancy to the existence of the universe. Saadia derives all other principles about God from this premise of the existence of God by means of logical inference.

Certain characteristics may be ascribed to God because of His existence as the source of all things. An examination of these characteristics leads us into a discussion of attributes by Saadia, who involves himself in a paradox. The problem is how to understand God who is totally different from that which He has created. God's essence is ultimately unknowable to man but He may be understood in an approximate sense by the manner in which He manifests himself in the world. There are certain attributes which are implied in God's role as the Creator. These are essential attributes but can never be understood as indicating a division in God's essence. The primary attribute of God is that He is a unity and none of the attributes can negate this principle. We cannot literally describe God's essence; we can only speak figuratively about Him, or in terms of what His essence cannot be.

The second part of this work deals with the nature of man and the physical universe. Man is distinguished from other creatures because of

His rational knowledge. This rational knowledge originates in the soul, which directs the activities of man. The universe has been created in an ordered manner, and this regularity of nature enables man to attain true knowledge. We find that even miracles do not contradict this order, since God has consciously manipulated nature to validate the messages of His prophets.

God relates to the universe primarily through laws and commandments. This relationship must be understood as being totally unlike any kind of relationship between created beings. Man, then, is punished or rewarded according to his observance of these statutes. Man's compensation comes primarily in the world to come and he is only partially rewarded or punished for his actions in this world.

To Eleanor, my wife, a patient  
and stimulating companion.

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## INTRODUCTION

It is the purpose of this paper to examine three different aspects of Saadia's philosophy as presented in his major philosophical work, The Book of Beliefs and Opinions. The first part will deal with the nature of God in terms of His existence and His attributes. The second part will be an examination of the nature of the universe, which includes man and the material world. The last part will deal with the problem of how God relates to the universe.

Saadia has formulated a philosophy which is an attempt to discover the rational meaning of certain religious beliefs. According to him, the three sources of these beliefs are reason, Bible, and tradition. Reason assumes the greatest importance in the development of Saadia's philosophy, for the revealed truths of Scripture, and subsequently tradition, also must conform to the principles of reason.

The importance of rational knowledge in Saadia's philosophy raises a question of the necessity and importance of revelation.<sup>1</sup> The problem is resolved by Saadia, who maintains that both reason and revelation are manifestations of the same truth.<sup>2</sup> Saadia finds no contradiction in supporting both of these methods for determining the truth.

Know, then, and may God direct thee aright, Oh thou that studieth this book, that we inquire into and speculate about the matters of our religion with two objectives in mind. One of these is to have verified in fact that we have learned from the prophets of God theoretically. The second is to refute him who argues against us in regard to anything pertaining to our religion.<sup>3</sup>

We will not investigate the use of tradition in Saadia's philosophy, since its function is primarily to corroborate the rational knowledge of

man. Furthermore, Saadia does not consistently use tradition as a criteria for validation of religious beliefs in The Book of Beliefs and Opinions.

The first and primary religious belief is that of the existence of God. This fact is revealed in Scripture,<sup>4</sup> and Saadia shows how it also may be proved by means of rational investigation.<sup>5</sup> The method of reasoning used by Saadia includes three different kinds of knowledge.<sup>6</sup> The first consists of knowledge gained by direct observation. The second is from the intuition of the intellect. The third kind of knowledge is that inferred by logical necessity. All three of these sources of knowledge are important, but Saadia emphasizes that knowledge gained by intuition of the intellect and logical necessity are dependent upon the first source of knowledge gained by direct observation. According to Saadia, we can only affirm that which does not contradict the sensory data. This sensory data does not need to be proved, for it is immediately known.

Saadia's method of proof is that of logical deduction from basic principles. Conclusions are deduced from premises according to the rules of syllogistic reasoning. This type of proof was, of course, discovered by Aristotle who defines it as "an argument in which, certain things having been assumed, something other than these follows of necessity from their truth, without needing any term from outside."<sup>7</sup>

There are five rules by which logical inference must be judged, and these rules govern all of Saadia's rational proof:

(We must,) namely, (make certain) (a) that there is no other (means than the theory in question) of sustaining the truth of what is perceived (with the senses), nor (b) any other (method) of upholding



what is (intuitively) apprehended (by reason). Furthermore (c) it must not invalidate any other (accepted) fact, nor (d) must one part of it contradict another, let alone (e) that a theory must be adopted that is worse than the one that has been rejected.<sup>8</sup>

The first chapter of this paper will deal with the proofs Saadia presents for the existence of God. Since the starting point for all knowledge is sensory evidence, Saadia first seeks to prove the existence of God by examining the nature of the universe. He points out that everything in the universe is caused by something else. In order to affirm the fact of the existence of the world, Saadia argues that there cannot be an infinite causal regression. He then concludes that there must be something that is not caused to explain the origin of the universe, and that this Uncaused Cause, which is the source of all existence, is God.

Saadia proceeds to show that not only is God the Creator of the world, but that He has created out of nothing. Moreover, Saadia maintains, God, as Creator, is totally different from the material world that He creates, and therefore must be immaterial.

We find that there is a difficulty in attempting to describe the existence of God prior to creation. This difficulty is that we can never talk about God's existence prior to creation without introducing a discussion of creation itself. According to Saadia, we therefore infer the absolute existence of God from the fact of creation. Having arrived at this idea of the existence of God, Saadia then says that God's existence is always the same.<sup>9</sup>

We may, however, raise this question concerning Saadia's conclusion that God's existence is absolute and unchanging. There was a time, he

says, when God did not create; therefore, the problem arises as to whether there was a change in God owing to the creation.

Saadia refutes this argument by showing that creation implies a creator that cannot change--that is, the very act that brings to our mind the question whether God changes, requires as its agent a God who never does change. God's nature is always the same, but we view it in two different ways--prior to creation and after creation.

We turn now to the question of how God's nature is to be expressed in human thought and language; namely, the subject of God's attributes. God's nature is described in terms of positive and negative attributes, although the terms positive and negative are not explicitly used by Saadia.

None of these attributes may conflict with the propositions established concerning the existence of God. These propositions are: (1) That God is the Uncaused Cause, and (2) That God is immaterial.

The first positive attribute of God is that He is a unity.<sup>10</sup> This unity is to be understood in two ways. God is a numerical unity; secondly, God is a simple unity. The next group of positive attributes are what Saadia terms essential attributes.<sup>11</sup> These essential attributes are omnipotence, omniscience, and vitality. Since God is a unity, these attributes do not imply division in the essence of God. These attributes have only "ideal" meaning for Saadia. Ideal is used in the sense that these attributes are merely nominal clarifications of a term. In the case of God, the essential attributes are only expressions of the term Creator and, therefore, these attributes do not imply a real distinction in God. The third group of positive attributes is comprised

of the attributes of action. In this case, it seems that Saadia means to say that these terms of action may be used with respect to God in a positive sense inasmuch as they cannot imply division within God, since they do not speak about God's essence.<sup>12</sup>

The second division of attributes are the negative attributes. Negative attributes are an admission that man cannot attain direct evidence about the nature of God, but that he can say what God is not. All of these negative attributes may be classified under the general heading of the incomparability of God. Saadia spends much time pointing out that God, who is the Uncaused Cause, incorporeal, and numerically and essentially one, cannot have the terminology of the created world applied to Him in a literal sense. Saadia takes a list of ten categories of existence and demonstrates the inapplicability of each of these categories to God.

Following the discussion of the nature of God, the nature of the universe will be discussed. The universe may be divided into two major areas: Man and the physical universe.

The discussion of man will deal with his body and soul, including their functions and relationship. The emphasis in Saadia's philosophy is upon the soul of man, for it is rational. The functioning of the soul, however, is dependent upon its union with the body of man. The proof for the soul is similar to the proof of the existence of God. Saadia says that the soul is not visible, but that it must exist because we are able to see its manifestations. He concludes, therefore, that there must be a soul or else much of our sensory knowledge would have to be denied.

Once the nature of God and the universe is established, we may

examine the nature of the relationship between God and the universe. First, in terms of the universe, Saadia again asserts the paradox that God, who has created the universe and controls it, cannot enter into any relationship with the universe, since the term relation itself involves an anthropomorphic conception of God.

With respect to (the category of) relation I say that it would be improper to connect anything with the creator in an anthropomorphic manner or to relate it to Him, because He has existed since eternity, (that is a time) when none of these things created were connected with Him or related to Him. Now, that they have been created by Him, it would be necessary to make the inadmissible assumption that a change has taken place in His essence, permitting them to become related to and connected with Him in an anthropomorphic fashion, subsequent to the existence of a contrary situation.<sup>13</sup>

The term relation as applied to God cannot be understood in the same sense as it applies to man, for He is unique and incomparable. Relation, however, expresses a causal connection between God and man. This causal connection is inferred by man through an analysis of the universe. Therefore, according to Saadia, man cannot obtain immediate knowledge of God, but must come to an understanding of God indirectly through a study of nature.

We see that God does exist after the creation of the universe and that He continues to affect that which He has created. In this sense, God relates to the universe and is the cause which maintains the existence of all creation.

God operates in the world in two ways, according to Saadia. First of all, He established the universe with an unchanging order. Because of this uniformity of nature, man is able to attain truth by

deductive reasoning. Secondly, God operates in the world by means of miracles. This appears to be in contradiction to the notion of an ordered world. Saadia, however, resolves this contradiction by showing that miracles also imply order, for God has consciously manipulated nature to validate revealed law. The law in the Bible is classified as deriving its authority from two sources--revelation and reason.<sup>14</sup> The laws of revelation are ritualistic in nature and the rational laws possess a moral character.

The existence of the law as a manifestation of God's will introduces a number of questions. One of these questions is God's omnipotence and man's will. Saadia says that while God is omnipotent, man nonetheless has free will. Another of these questions which we will examine is that of God's justice, and the rewards and punishments which are meted out to man.

The last problem which will be discussed is the relationship of God to man in the world to come. This involves an examination of both redemption and resurrection.

## CHAPTER I: EXISTENCE OF GOD

All of the proofs for the existence of God in the philosophy of Saadia are based upon the assumption that it is not possible to know God directly, but he can be known indirectly by means of reasoning. The general proof used by Saadia is the cosmological proof for the existence of God. This proof is based upon the principle of causality which asserts that everything which comes into existence has a cause. This principle of causality, combined with the existence of the universe, may be phrased in the following way:

Everything that comes into existence must have a cause.  
The world came into existence.  
Therefore, the world must have a cause.<sup>15</sup>

The second principle which Saadia uses to prove the existence of God is the denial of an infinite causal regression. Since we know we exist, there must be an uncaused cause that is the source of all existence.

Saadia uses three stages in his cosmological proof to show that God exists as the creator out of nothing. The first stage of Saadia's proof is that the world was created. In the second stage, he argues that the cause of this creation must have been external to His creation. The final stage of the general proof is to show that the world was created out of nothing.

### I. THE COSMOLOGICAL PROOF

#### A. Argument That the World Was Created

1. Finitude.<sup>16</sup> The heavens and the earth are finite as can be

shown from the fact that the heavens revolve about the earth. The earth must be finite or else the heavens could not make a revolution around it. The heavens are also finite because of the movement of the celestial bodies in the heavens. Finitude is something characteristic of all created things and we know that there are no other worlds in existence, because the dust and earth from other worlds, if they existed, would have penetrated into the atmosphere of this world.

2. Composition.<sup>17</sup> All things are composed of different parts and divisions. Composition implies that someone put these parts together at a specific time. There are some who also maintain that this second argument from composition is also an argument from design, which emphasizes the fact that composition implies an arbitrary manipulation of the natural order.<sup>18</sup>

3. Accidents.<sup>19</sup> Since accidents are temporal, the nature of the bodies in which these accidents reside must also be of a temporary nature. Therefore, the world is finite, refuting those who claim that it is eternal.

4. Time.<sup>20</sup> Here, Saadia shows that time is not eternal, for an infinite time can exist only potentially and not actually. He also shows that time is defined in terms of matter. This is a crucial argument for Saadia, since the previous statements have only proved that the world was finite and created. The argument from time demonstrates that the world must have come to be in time, and therefore was not eternal.

Time is therefore dependent upon the creation of existing things--for it cannot exist without matter.

It constitutes, in reality, only the duration of existing beings, the successive stages in the history of the sphere (of the universe) and what is beneath it. Consequently, so long as these beings do not exist, it is idle to speak of "time" in any shape or form.<sup>21</sup>

### B. Creator External to Creation

The basic argument used by Saadia in proving the externality of the creator is to show that an object cannot create itself.<sup>22</sup> According to Saadia, reason demonstrates that an object, after its creation, should be stronger than at a time when it was not created. Since it can be demonstrated that an object cannot create itself in this stronger state, it is inconceivable that it should create itself prior to its existence. The ability of an object to create implies that non-existence and existence are combined within the same body. This is a contradiction and anything contradictory cannot be used as valid evidence for a proposition.

Saadia also refutes those who say that there was creation from an eternal substance.<sup>23</sup> He argues that creation implies that an essence has been created for the first time and the existence of an eternal matter constitutes something which denies what happens in the very process of creation.<sup>24</sup>

### C. Creation Out of Nothing

Saadia now seeks to demonstrate that the nature of causality will show that God created the world out of nothing. "All things present themselves to us only (in the form of) either maker or product."<sup>25</sup> If God created the world out of an eternal matter, then it would be equal



to God in its eternality. This eternal matter would be something which God did not create and it would be impossible to establish who was the maker and who was the product in this relationship. The only consistent way in which a cause and effect relationship could be used to explain the existence of the world is if God created the world out of nothing. This is the only explanation, according to Saadia, which does not contradict the existence of the universe. Saadia points out that "unless we conceded the existence of a thing was preceded by nothing, it would be impossible for anything to exist at all."<sup>26</sup>

## II. REFUTATION

Saadia seeks to strengthen his assertion that God created the universe out of nothing by refuting all of the other propositions concerning the source of existence. He cites the twelve other theories which may be divided into the following categories: (1) God created the universe out of something; (2) Creation by dual forces; (3) Creation originating from various material entities; (4) Creation which arose with the absence of any organizing function.

### A. God Created the Universe Out of Something

There are three theories which propose creation by God out of something. The first theory is that God created the world out of eternal spiritual beings.<sup>27</sup> Saadia rejects this notion because of the absence of any kind of sensory evidence for these beings which "they picture fine as hair and like indivisible atoms."<sup>28</sup> The major objection to this theory is that if God was able to change spiritual beings

into material beings, then he should be able to perform creation out of nothing.

The second theory is that God created material bodies out of his own substance.<sup>29</sup> The major argument here is Saadia denies that God would change into something material from something incorporeal because material existence is painful.

The third theory is that God created all things from both his own substance and from things which existed from eternity with him.<sup>30</sup> This theory presents a false view of God, according to Saadia, for there is a certain amount of regularity and organization in God's actions. Saadia says that this theory regards God as "capable of every absurdity, such as changing Himself and whatever is connected therewith."<sup>31</sup>

#### B. Two Creators

The second category contains only one proposition. This proposition claims two eternal creators.<sup>32</sup> The duality of the source of existence must have been a popular opinion, since Saadia spends much time developing an extensive refutation. The two eternal creators are derived from an analysis of nature which yields the idea that all things contain good and bad elements. The proponents of this theory maintain that originally these two principles were separate, and that the intermingling of the principles brought about all existing things for a determinate period of time, with the eventual victory of the good over the bad. Saadia refutes this theory by showing the possibility of the emanation of opposite acts from the same source. On the other hand, he also demonstrates that it is impossible for one act to emanate from two

sources, since there could be no adequate division of responsibility for this act. If two principles were responsible for an act, it would mean, according to Saadia, that they could also hold back from creating. This possibility of creation and non-creation to exist within the same body is impossible. He also points out that these two principles are never found in a pure state, as their proponents assert, and that if these principles were created, how can we know whether there were not things which preceded these two principles.

Saadia goes on to show that this theory is untenable, since a mixture implies the transformation of one of the principles which the advocates of the theory are unable to admit. He also points out that sensory evidence invalidates the proposition of two sources, since we never see the resulting mixture where the principle of good is greater than the principle of evil. Finally, two originally separate sources could not mingle, since it is evident that many parts of the principles are unable to maintain a union in any way.

Saadia also refutes any kind of dualism based upon revelation.<sup>33</sup> This rejection is based upon the fact that revelation comes only through prophecy. The prophet, who comes from the principle of good, cannot know anything about this source after his separation. Furthermore, his mingling with the principle of evil would impair his ability to inspire confidence among the people. The last point of rejection is that a prophet's message is validated by miracles. Since the dualists "reject whatever contradicts the natural and habitual,"<sup>34</sup> they have no means for validating the message of the prophet.

### C. Creation From Material Entities

There are three theories in this category that claim things are created from the material world without any external creator.<sup>35</sup> The first of these theories holds that everything originates from the four natural qualities: heat, cold, humidity, and dryness. These qualities originally existed by themselves, and when they united, all the bodies originated from them. Saadia says that these qualities have never been perceived in isolation, but only in conjunction with a body. There also is no sensory evidence that a union of separate elements will ever remain united. In addition, if these qualities had within them the ability to unite, then they could not always have appeared in isolation. If the cause of the union of these qualities was something external to the qualities, then the theory of creatio-ex-nihilo would be acceptable.

The next theory in this category of creation from natural sources is the creation of all things from four elements of nature and matter.<sup>36</sup> Saadia objects to this view because a creative act is ascribed to that which is lifeless and not visible. He also points out that every act has an agent and the only one who can exercise such power and choice is God who is the Creator.

The third theory which Saadia refutes is the view that the heavens, which are composed of a fifth element, are the sources of all bodies.<sup>37</sup> The proof for this proposition is that the heavens rotate in a circular manner, which is different from that of any of the four elements, which tend upward or downward. Saadia refutes this by showing that the heavens are composed of fire and that the real motion of the

fire is circular. Next, Saadia denies that the heavens are eternal, for what is subject to division, variation of movement, and time, cannot be eternal, and therefore must have been preceded by something. Finally, there cannot be a fifth element, since there has to be something corresponding to it in the eyes of the individual.

#### D. Absence of Purpose and Cause in Creation

In the last category, we are concerned with five propositions claiming no organizing principle by which creation can be explained.

Saadia maintains that a theory which says bodies occur by the pressing together of certain bodies is wrong, because the theory of chance only has meaning if there is regularity present in the world.<sup>38</sup> If there are few things that come about by chance, as the theory would say, then there would be no explanation as to how the majority of things came about. Saadia also objects to the absence of any kind of explanation of where things come from and where they go. His last argument against the theory of chance is that if there is a created thing, there must be a creator.

The second theory in this group is that everything is eternal.<sup>39</sup> The advocates of this theory claim to affirm only that which they have perceived, and, therefore, reject an unperceived God. Saadia points out that holding of the eternality of all existence is also asserting something never perceived by the senses. If sense perception is the basis of their argument, then these people cannot affirm eternality by logical reasoning, according to Saadia.

The third theory is credited to the Sophists, who claim that all things are created and eternal.<sup>40</sup> In other words, reality is whatever anyone says it is. The fundamental objection to this theory is that it is impossible to establish reality, for it would have to be a composite picture of the opinions of all men.

The next theory which is refuted by Saadia is that of the Skeptics.<sup>41</sup> They assert that there is no certainty and one cannot truly believe in anything. Saadia points out that in their skepticism, they have affirmed something and if they were consistent, they would have to abstain from abstention.

The last theory is of those who have no opinion at all and reject the evidence of science and the senses.<sup>42</sup> Saadia says that it is impossible to even argue with such people, for they would deny every argument without any consistent reason.

## CHAPTER II: ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

The problem of attributes has to do with what man can say about the nature of God. We know that there can be no direct knowledge about God because man's knowledge is finite and God is infinite. The way to obtain knowledge of God's nature is to examine how God manifests himself in the universe.

We see certain problems in Saadia's discussion of attributes. He is inconsistent in his method of describing God's essence. At one time he says that the terms used to describe God's essence are not attributes of God's essence at all, but merely explanations of how God acts as the Creator.<sup>43</sup> At another time, Saadia ~~seems to imply~~ that the attributes which describe God's essence are identical with His essence.<sup>44</sup> The general principle which Saadia asserts consistently, however, is that whatever is said about God cannot contravene His Unity.<sup>45</sup>

Another problem is that Saadia seems to reject the possibility of any kind of positive attribute about God;<sup>46</sup> and yet sees practical value in being able to speak about God with positive terms.<sup>47</sup>

### I. LANGUAGE AND NATURE OF GOD

Saadia specifically states that there is only one thing that can be literally said of God and that is the affirmation of His existence.

Were we, in our effort to give account of God, to make use only of expressions that are literally true, it would be necessary for us to desist from speaking of Him as one that hears and sees and pities and wills to the point where there would be nothing left for us to affirm except the fact of His existence.<sup>48</sup>

The implication in this passage is that the nature of God really cannot be understood and expressed by attributes.

Saadia is not satisfied to restrict language only to an affirmation of God's existence. His solution is to allow reason, Bible, and history to validate the proper usage of attributes, rather than allow terms of unequivocal meaning.

If language were to restrict itself to just one term its employment would be very much curtailed and it would be impossible to express by means of it any more than a small portion what we aim to convey. It is therefore preferred rather to extend its use of words so as to transmit every meaning, relying for the correct interpretation upon reason and acquaintance with texts of Scripture and with history.<sup>49</sup>

The examination of God and His nature in this section will deal primarily with the use of reason and its relation to attributes. The first step in the reasoning process, and the basis of all other rational statements, is that knowledge has to begin with the sense perception of concrete objects. Since concrete objects are finite, man as a finite being can never transcend this finitude. Therefore, language, the expression of man, is also finite in character and not an adequate means for describing the nature of God.

The nature of God, according to Saadia, is based upon the principle of God existing as the Creator. From this fundamental premise, he derives the principle that God is incorporeal, and when man has arrived at the most true idea of God, his idea involves incorporeality.

When, therefore, what is comprehended is of an extra-corporeal character and not contained within a bodily frame, the possibility of any further knowledge beyond it is absolutely excluded.<sup>50</sup>



The literal use of language is only possible when it applies to something material and finite. It is not applicable in the case of God who is incorporeal. God is unknowable to man because He is incorporeal and man is corporeal. God also is unknowable in a literal sense because He is by His very nature infinite, and man can never grasp the totality of God. Saadia demonstrates the infinity of God by contrasting the nature of the material world and God. The nature of the material world is rationally very subtle and the nature of God is even more subtle than anything which is material.

The idea of the Creator, exalted and magnified be He, must of necessity be subtler than the subtlest and more recondite than the most recondite and more abstract than the most abstract and profounder than the most profound and stronger than the strongest and more exalted than the most exalted, so that it would be impossible to fathom its character at all.<sup>51</sup>

The comparison of superlatives in this passage indicates again that God is unknowable, for the infinite and endless cannot be embraced by the human mind. The infinite nature of God is also implied in the statement that God is incomparable.<sup>52</sup>

There are two major divisions of attributes in the philosophy of Saadia, although he never labels them specifically. These divisions are positive and negative attributes.

## II. POSITIVE ATTRIBUTES

The positive attributes are divided into essential and active attributes.

### A. Essential Attributes

The essential attributes are merely explanations of a name or term. In the philosophy of Saadia, essential attributes are derived from the word Creator.<sup>53</sup> The explanation of this term does not say anything more than is already included within the term or subject itself. Any statement about the essential attributes of God as a Creator gives no new information about God, but merely clarifies what is already His essential nature.

The three essential attributes of God as a Creator are Life, Omnipotence, and Omniscience.

All this is evident from the fact that He created all things, for, according to what our reason discloses to us it is clear that only he that possesses the power can create, and only one who is alive has the power and that whatever is created and well made can emanate only from one who knows, before he had made it, how the thing to be created was to come into being.<sup>54</sup>

The formulation of these three attributes brings about another problem and that is the principle of God's unity and the possibility of the division of that unity. Saadia uses the term unity in two different ways. First, God is a numerical unity.<sup>55</sup> Secondly, Saadia says that God's essence is a simple unity. Unity of essence will be considered prior to numerical unity.

Saadia is unequivocal in stating that there can be no physical division of essence, since God is incorporeal and composition and division are characteristic of created material things. The problem, however, is whether essential attributes denote logical and metaphysical plurality. Saadia apparently did not believe that essential attributes

constituted even logical plurality for these statements had ideal rather than real existence. Ideal here is used in the sense of being only a nominal clarification of a term. The ideal existence of these attributes is indicated when Saadia says:

Our application to Him of the epithets "living," "omnipotent," and "omniscient," which are explanations of the term Creator--only one who possesses these attributes at one and the same time can be a Creator--does not produce any increase in His essence but merely the thought of the presence of something created by Him.<sup>56</sup>

The immutability of the essence of God is also proved by the refutation of the three-fold nature of God as maintained by the non-Jewish community. Saadia criticizes those who say their belief in the Trinity is rationally based because they recognize "God's vitality and omniscience as two things distinct from His essence."<sup>57</sup> Anything which "harbors distinction within itself is unquestionably a physical being."<sup>58</sup> Also, their omission of God's omnipotence involves them in a contradiction. If their omission of omnipotence is because it is implied in the omniscience of God, then by this very same reasoning, it seems unnecessary to mention God's omniscience since this could also be implied in God's vitality.

No matter how many attributes there are, the simplicity of God's essence cannot be contravened. This principle of immutability is summed up by Saadia when he says "that if even a single change were to be allowed in the case of God, every change in the world would have to be granted possible in Him."<sup>59</sup>

Another essential attribute which has been mentioned previously is that of God's numerical unity. The basic argument which Saadia uses is that only one God is necessary for the explanation of creation, since there is only one universe.

Saadia also lists a number of refutations of theories which attempt to prove that the source of existence is numerically multiple. He points out that any other division of the source of existence is arbitrary since there can be any number of divisions, none of which can be shown to be more valid than any other one.<sup>60</sup> The other argument which Saadia uses to refute the existence of more than one God is that any concept which proposes more than one source of existence cannot demonstrate how there can be any kind of adequate division of labor among these sources.<sup>61</sup>

Saadia lists eternity as another essential attribute. The proof of this attribute is that everything else has been shown to be finite, and God, because He is the creator of everything which exists, therefore must be eternal.

#### B. Action Attributes

These may be explained as terms which figuratively express the manner in which God manifests Himself through nature.<sup>62</sup> An example of this type of attribute would be one that contains a description of God as merciful or gracious.

It is the task of man to interpret these scriptural attributes so that they are harmonized with his reason. Each individual expression cannot be judged by itself, but "rather on that of the previously stated principles, considering the expression merely as a figure of speech and

an approximate rendering of thought."<sup>63</sup> Saadia also says that all these statements point to some idea (in connection with God).

As for their interpretation it is such as we find in the matters other than those pertaining to the Creator. Thus we know that it is really of the nature and peculiarity of language thus to extend and transfer meanings and employ figures of speech.<sup>64</sup>

### III. NEGATIVE ATTRIBUTES

The second major division of attributes as noted previously are the class of negative attributes. Saadia places these attributes under the term incomparability. Saadia takes the ten categories of existence and with each category, explains why it cannot apply to God. These categories are:<sup>65</sup> (1) Substance, (2) Quantity, (3) Quality, (4) Relation, (5) Place, (6) Time, (7) Position, (8) Possession, (9) Action, (10) Passion.<sup>66</sup>

These attributes express an absolute negation about the nature of God. This is absolute negation in the sense that these terms deny God that which does not naturally belong to Him. God's nature is essentially infinite and is made up of a substance whose essence is unique and so incomparable that it cannot have any form of positive description in a literal sense.

Saadia justifies this incomparability of God by showing that none of the categories of existence may apply to God.

1. Substance. God cannot be a substance because He is the creator of everything and therefore cannot be like that which He created. Scripture also confirms this.

Thus the Scriptures, taking into account everything that exists, exclude the possibility of its resembling the Creator or the Creator's resembling it. These explicit statements are, then, to be regarded as the basic principles that are to serve as the foundation of belief to which every doubtful expression with a figurative meaning must be referred in order to be brought into agreement with them.<sup>67</sup>

2. Quantity. Quantity also cannot be applied to God because it involves division and measurement. Since He is the Creator out of nothing, His omnipotence includes the power to create those things to which measurement and division may be applied.

3. Accidents. In regard to the category of accidents, Saadia regards an accident as having meaning only in terms of what God has designated for man.

When therefore, we find Him saying that He loves or hates a certain thing, what is meant thereby is whatever He has commanded us to do is designated by Him as lovable in His sight, since He has made the love of that thing obligatory upon us.<sup>68</sup>

4. Relation.<sup>69</sup> The category of relation has no applicability to God for it denotes a connection in an anthropomorphic way. Such terms as king indicate only that man wants to express his esteem for his creator by using a term of esteem and honor which is used among men. Saadia also points out that there can be no relationships such as "haters or lovers of God."<sup>70</sup> These scriptural references are only a metaphorical term to express praise or disapproval of the way in which men act toward God.

5. Place and Time.<sup>71</sup> Both categories of place and time cannot be applied to God for He existed before all of these classifications,

and there cannot be any change in God because of movement in terms of place and time. Whatever assertions are made in the Bible in terms of place are ways of indicating the greatness of God, and references which have to do with time are referring to the acts of God and not to God Himself.

6. Possession.<sup>72</sup> Saadia says that possession cannot apply to God for a universal God could not possess one thing to the exclusion of all others. The problem is to reconcile Israel's special place as recorded in the Bible. Possession, according to Saadia, refers to the "means of conferring honor and distinction"<sup>73</sup> on certain people.

7. Position.<sup>74</sup> This category cannot be applied to God because position involves the concept of a physical being. Position would also involve God in change, and God's nature has been shown to be immutable.

8. Action.<sup>75</sup> Again Saadia makes the point that the concept of action involves a physical agent--that one acts upon himself before generating any motion in others. God does relate to the world as the Creator, but God produces effects by merely entertaining the thought of whatever He wishes to accomplish. When God creates "He brings it into being without actually taking it in hand or coming in contact with it." God not only acts in a different way from anyone else, but also He is not the recipient of any action.

### CHAPTER III: THE NATURE OF MAN

Our investigation of man's nature will deal primarily with an examination of Saadia's conception of man's soul. Man's nature is composite like all other created things in the universe. The basic difference between man and the other parts of the universe is that man has an immaterial soul combined with a material body. Both the soul and body are dependent upon each other, for the soul can only function when it is united with the body. After the body has died, the soul remains in a special state, waiting for the time when it will be reunited with the body. The soul has thus attained immortality, for it continues to exist even though it does not have the ability to function.

#### I. THE EXISTENCE AND ACTIVITY OF THE SOUL

There is very little information in the philosophy of Saadia concerning proofs for the existence of the soul. This is in contrast to the emphasis Saadia places upon demonstrating the existence of God. Although the proof for the existence of the soul is much less extensive, it is similar to the method used to prove the existence of God. The existence of the soul is inferred by logical necessity. The argument is that we cannot see the soul, but we can see manifestations of the soul's activity. Saadia points out that there must be a soul or else we would have to deny the sources of our knowledge.<sup>76</sup> This denial is impossible, since all rational knowledge is dependent upon what we know by means of our senses, intuition, and logical inference.



The manifestation of the soul's activity may be observed in the examination of the intellectual and emotional aspects of one's life. The soul has three faculties (נפשו): appetitive (עצמו), impulsive (המו), and cognitive (דחמו). These three faculties do not imply division of essence, for the soul is immaterial. The three aspects of the soul are described by Saadia in the following manner:

As for the appetitive faculty, it is that whereby a human being entertains the desire for food and drink, and sexual intercourse and for seeing beautiful sights and smelling fragrant odors and for wearing garments that are soft to the touch. The impulsive faculty is that which renders a person courageous and bold, and endows him with zeal for leadership and championing the common weal, and makes him vindictive and vain glorious, and other such things. As for the cognitive faculty, again, it exercises judgment over the two other faculties. When any one of them or of their subdivisions is aroused, the cognitive faculty takes it under consideration and investigates it.<sup>78</sup>

The cognitive aspect of the soul's activity is the most important of the three aspects of the soul, for it is the rational and evaluative aspect of the soul. It is the faculty which tells us what is right and wrong, and man is wise insofar as he follows the directives of this faculty.<sup>79</sup> Cognition is also the faculty which enables us to remember things perceived by the senses.<sup>80</sup> Saadia says that man only knows of past things "by means of his intellectual faculty, which received their form and imprint so that they became impressed upon him and were completely appropriated by him."<sup>81</sup> Cognition is therefore a combination of that which integrates man's sense perceptions and that which functions as a conscience for man.

The act of cognition comes from the soul itself and not from any other outside source. Saadia states that it is "inadmissible that it acquire its knowledge from the body, since the latter is not a function of the body."<sup>82</sup> This can be demonstrated by the example of a blind man who is able to have a cognitive experience. Since he does not get his knowledge from a physical source, the soul must be the source of his cognition. There are many other activities of the soul, but they all seem to come within the category of these three major faculties.

Saadia mentions that there are other faculties of the soul but the general principle involved here is that man needs to constantly use his wisdom to regulate his conduct, since his appetitive and impulsive needs will cause bad conduct.<sup>83</sup>

Once, then, he recognizes the role belonging to a given impulse, he must give it full opportunity to discharge its function in the required measure. On the other hand, if he sees an instance in which the said impulse should be checked, he must restrain it until the ground for such restraint no longer exists.<sup>84</sup>

It is proper for man, therefore, to pursue the path of moderation in terms of the exercising of his appetitive and impulsive faculties.

## II. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SOUL

From the manifestations of the soul's activity, we may derive an understanding of the nature of the soul itself. The first thing which becomes evident is that the soul is rational. When the soul departs from the body at the time of death, it is evident that the body is deprived of wisdom.<sup>85</sup> This fact indicates the rational nature of the

soul and that the substance of the soul must be unlike the substance of terrestrial and celestial beings.

Another quality of the soul is the ability to reflect virtue and evil by means of its light. According to Scripture, "Virtuous souls shine like the heavenly spheres which are illuminated by the stars... the wicked souls, on the other hand do not shine, but are on a lower level."<sup>86</sup>

We are not able to see the soul "due to its transparency and to its resemblance to the air in finess, just as we are unable to see the heavenly spheres on account of their substance and their transparency."<sup>87</sup> The difference between the soul and the heavenly spheres is that the spheres are not endowed with reason. The substance of the soul then "must be a fine substance that is clearer and purer and simpler than that of the spheres."<sup>88</sup>

Saadia also establishes the true nature of the soul by refuting the following opposing theories which explain the nature of the soul. These theories are: (1) The soul is an accident; (2) The soul consists of air; (3) The soul is divided into two parts, the rational and irrational; (4) The soul consists of two kinds of air; (5) The soul consists of fire; (6) The soul is identical with the blood.

1. Accidents.<sup>89</sup> The soul, according to Saadia, could not be an accident, for "something accidental cannot be the source of the great wisdom and remarkable understanding that are the basis of existence." Furthermore, since the soul is the bearer of other accidents such as

love, hate, good will, and anger it cannot be an accident, for an accident cannot be the bearer of other accidents.

2. Air and Fire.<sup>90</sup> These theories are untenable because the soul does not exhibit the qualities of air or fire.

3. Rational and Irrational.<sup>91</sup> In this theory the rational would be the permanent part and the irrational, the temporary part. Saadia's main objection to this theory is that if the two parts of the soul were distinct, then there is no adequate explanation of how the rational element would be able to work with the irrational part, which furnishes the sense data.

4. Two Kinds of Air.<sup>92</sup> This theory is based upon the respiratory process in man. Saadia rejects this theory saying that "the purpose of respiration is to temper the natural heat of the heart wherein the soul has its seat."

5. Blood.<sup>93</sup> This theory is rejected on the basis that the blood is only the "seat and center of the soul," and cannot be identified with the soul itself.

Saadia also takes note of the various Gnostic arguments which claim that it is bad for the pure soul to be united with the impure body.<sup>94</sup> His refutation consists of two arguments. The first, which has been noted previously, is that it is the nature of the soul to be incapable of action by itself and that it must join with something through which it can become capable of virtuous activities. The second argument is that the soul needs to accomplish virtuous activities in order to attain immortality, the reward for carrying out God's commandments. This belief in the immortality of the soul is dependent upon a

belief that the soul is something apart from and can exist independently of the body.

Although the problem of punishment and obedience will be dealt with in another part of this paper, we will mention the arguments which object to the subjection of the soul to punishment and sin. Saadia says that all of these objections must be examined in the light of two things characteristic of the soul. First, the soul has freedom of the will, and second, the punishment and suffering of the soul may be God's way of giving the soul its greater reward in the future world.<sup>95</sup>

### III. THE SOUL AND THE BODY

The question of the nature of the body is of secondary importance in the examination of the nature of man. The body is the temporal aspect of man's nature, but this finitude is not bad in itself. Saadia denies that the body itself is an impure substance, for it is impure only when certain secretions come forth. While these secretions are in the body, it is still pure.

The connection which exists between the body and soul is important for an understanding of the activity of the soul. The soul is created simultaneously with the completion of the human body, and is located in the heart during the life of the body. When the body dies, the soul remains, waiting to be re-united with the body at some future time. The time for the reunion of the soul and body will be when the Lord decrees that resurrection should take place. Up until the time that the body dies, the soul and body function as a unity. This mutual interdependence is so strong that "if God had allowed the soul to remain

unattached it would not have been able to attain well being or bliss for life eternal...and the soul has no means, by virtue of its nature of rendering this service except through the instrumentality of the body."96

## CHAPTER IV: THE NATURE OF THE UNIVERSE

There is no systematic explanation of the universe by Saadia in The Book of Beliefs and Opinions. We are, however, able to piece together a picture of some of the component parts of the universe and to demonstrate that there is order and regularity operating within nature, and that miracles do not contradict this order and regularity.

### I. COMPOSITION OF THE UNIVERSE

We learn certain things from Saadia's conception of the creation of the world. It has already been established that there is only one world since there is no sensory evidence of dust and dirt from other worlds penetrating into our universe. By means of sensory evidence, it is also apparent that everything is finite and composite. The relationship between everything in the universe is that of cause and effect, with God being the Uncaused Cause.

Saadia lists a number of different categories of existence without indicating the most comprehensive classification. The most inclusive list seems to be the ten categories of existence which are known to have originated with Aristotle. The important distinction in this list is between substance and accident. Substance is that which exists within itself and accident is that which can exist only within something else. We see that the difficulty in making this distinction is that a substance like the soul exists within the body. The soul does exist within the body, but it is the cause which gives life to the body.

Substances have a special character in that only God can create substances, and when God does not act to create a substance, nothing else is created.

It is difficult to determine just which parts of the universe may be called substances. Certainly a substance cannot be composite in nature. Saadia lists, and subsequently refutes, the assertions that such things as human beings, fire, air, and empty space could each be the substance of God.<sup>97</sup> He also implies that substances may be among the five principle groups of existing things; namely, minerals, vegetables, animals, astral bodies, and angels.<sup>98</sup> In another section, he mentions that earth, fire, air, and water are the four elements which make up all of the bodies of creation. Four qualities--heat, cold, moisture, and dryness--are also mentioned, and are possessed by corporeal beings. None of these four qualities ever appear in isolation.<sup>99</sup>

The boundaries of the universe are the earth and heavens. The heavens are made up of concentric spheres and between the heavens and earth are air and fire. All of this seems to be held together by a movement which prevents things from flying apart. This movement seems to operate in some kind of circular motion.<sup>100</sup>

Saadia also has various calculations concerning aspects of this world. Among these are that the world has been in existence 4,693 years,<sup>101</sup> and that sources of air and fire located between the earth and heavens is 1,008 times the entire mass of the earth.<sup>102</sup>

This fondness for calculating and measuring what exists in the world leads us to an important conclusion about Saadia's conception of the universe. This is his conception of the order and regularity in



the universe.

## II. ORDER IN THE UNIVERSE

God has created an ordered world and acts in an ordered way Himself. Saadia points out that absurdities and exaggerations should not be attributed to God.

It (the soul) will not, therefore, praise Him for being able to cause five to be more than ten without adding anything to the former, nor for being able to put the world through the hollow of a signet ring without making the one narrower and the other wider, nor for being able to bring back the day gone by in its original condition. For all these things are absurd.<sup>103</sup>

For Saadia, God cannot operate in an absurd manner but must work in an ordered way in the universe.

Science too is only able to determine truths because there is regularity and order in nature. Saadia claims that sciences are correct, since the only way natural law can be upheld is by science. He indicates the importance of discovering the truth about objects by "speculation about the objects of knowledge and their investigation to the point where these would be established as convictions according to the laws of geometry and become firmly fixed in the mind."<sup>104</sup>

Another indication of the order in the world is seen in Saadia's refutation of the theory of chance as the way in which creation occurs. He says that the concept of chance has no meaning unless there is something natural by which to determine what things have been created by chance. There is, however, no way of determining what happened by chance without a principle of regularity being present in the world which then

would deny the presence of chance. This refutation of the principle of chance operating in the world means then, that there must be some kind of purpose and order operating in the universe.

### III. MIRACLES

If there is regularity and order in the world, the problem occurs as to how is one to explain miracles. A miracle is the changing of the essence of something, such as the changes which occurred during the Ten Plagues, the cleaving of the Red Sea, and the assembling at Sinai. These miracles are accomplished for the purpose of validating the message of the prophets. According to Saadia,

Human beings realize that it is impossible for them, with such power and ability as they possess, to subdue the elements of nature or to transform the essences of things. They are, indeed, incapable of doing that because these are all the work of the Creator. For it is He that subdued the various elements of nature and created them in their composite form, although it is their natural tendency to fly apart. However, God so altered the character of their separate essences that as a result of their combination no essence of theirs appeared in its pure form any more, but always as something else than the unadulterated essence.<sup>105</sup>

The paradox of God's interference with the fixed order of the world is explained by Saadia in the following manner: First, miracles do not contradict the fixed order of the universe because miracles are a conscious manipulation of nature for the purpose of validating the message of His prophets. Secondly, God notifies the people of the fact that he is about to change the natural order. So we see that there is regularity in miracles because God calls attention to change. Therefore, we take it for granted that all things remain the same unless God

notifies us.

Miracles also do not destroy our confidence in the unchanging God, for if we already have accepted the fact that God can accomplish creation out of nothing, then we cannot deny Him the ability to accomplish miracles.

## CHAPTER V: THE NATURE OF LAW

God relates to man in an indirect manner. Saadia says that God "has informed us by the speech of His prophets that He has assigned us a religion whereby we are to serve Him. It embraces laws prescribed for us by Him which we must observe and carry out with sincerity."<sup>106</sup>

These laws, which are found in the Bible, can be classified as deriving their authority from two sources--revelation and reason. These two positions are also expressed in the Moslem world. Saadia wanted to harmonize the two positions of revelation and reason, "but his attitude was necessitated not so much by a tendency to compromise as by the character of the Biblical Law which so clearly showed the two separate aspects of morality and ritual."<sup>107</sup>

Whatever motive may be ascribed to Saadia, it is clear that he was trying to show the logical nature of the rational laws and the applicability and relation of reason to the revelational laws.

### I. THE LAWS OF REASON

The rational laws may be divided into three categories:

#### 1. Man's Gratitude Toward God

He made it obligatory upon us to learn to know Him, to worship Him and to dedicate ourselves wholeheartedly to Him.<sup>108</sup>

#### 2. Man's Reverence of God

He forbade us to conduct ourselves in an ugly insulting fashion toward Him, even though it could not hurt Him.<sup>109</sup>

### 3. The Proper Human Relationship

Nor would He permit one of us to wrong the other to commit violence against Him.<sup>110</sup>

Altman, in his article, "Saadia's Conception of the Laws," points out that the heading of these three general categories of rational laws by gratitude is significant, for it gives one an insight into the use of the term reason as related to law. He says that "Reason demanding gratitude can only mean a natural moral instinct, not Reason in any sense of Logic."<sup>111</sup> We can see a similarity between this intuitive moral sense and the second category of intuitive knowledge which Saadia discusses at the beginning of his book. The implication here is that God has given man this intuition.

Now the approval of each of these classes of acts that we have been commanded to carry out is implanted in our minds just as is the disapproval of each of the classes of acts that we are forbidden to commit.<sup>112</sup>

Saadia also examines the rational laws from another aspect. This argument is different from the first in that these kinds of laws are not actually demanded by man's intuitive sense. These laws are rational, because one is able to see the harmful effects which would come from the non-observance of them.<sup>113</sup> Killing, for example, was prohibited because of the pain of the victims and a "Frustration of purpose that the All-Wise had in mind with regard to them." Adultery was forbidden because it would prevent people from carrying on normal social relations. Theft was forbidden because there would be no basis for carrying on economic relationships. Untruth

destroys the harmony and stability of the soul.

The last doctrine of rational law is the refutation of the hedonistic principle. Hedonism advocates that acts are relative and their consequences, while objectionable to some, are pleasurable to others. Saadia says that such a theory is internally contradictory and mutually exclusive.

The second division of laws, according to Saadia, are those which are revealed and appear to be optional.

## II. THE LAWS OF REVELATION

Yet the Law has made some of them obligatory and others forbidden, and left the rest optional as they had been. They include such matters as the consecration of certain days from among others, like the Sabbath and the Festivals, and the consecration of certain human beings from among others, such as the prophet and the priest, and refraining from eating certain foods, and the avoidance of cohabitation with certain persons, and going into isolation immediately upon the occurrence of certain accidents because of defilement.<sup>114</sup>

Saadia points out that the chief reason for fulfillment of these precepts is that they are the commandments of God, yet they do have partially useful purposes.<sup>115</sup> Among the benefits man derives by observing these laws of revelation are that they enable him to relax and to perform other functions which will benefit him spiritually and physically. The separating of one man from the others also serves a useful purpose. A man is able to operate more effectively as a leader and teacher if he is distinguished in some way from his fellow man. The prohibitions against sex preserve the family structure, while the prohibition against eating certain animals prevents any comparison between

God an animals which would deify the animals. The laws of cleanliness enable man to think about and appreciate the spiritual elements in his life.

Reason seems to be prior to revelation, for Saadia points out that much of what is revealed is rationally based.

Similarly, if one were to follow up most of these revealed precepts, one would discover that they are, to a large extent at least, partially justified and possess much utilitarian value, although the wisdom and the view that the Creator had in mind in decreeing them is far above anything that man can grasp.<sup>116</sup>

So far as the revelational laws are concerned, it is not necessary to prove why they should have been revealed, since reason cannot fully grasp God's purpose. The revelation of rational law creates a problem as to why this law should have been revealed if it could have been determined and demanded by reason. Saadia's discussion of this problem involves two explanations. The first explanation for the revelation of the rational law is that while reason may establish certain principles, it cannot develop these principles in detail.

Thus, for example reason calls for gratitude to God for His Kindness, but does not define how this gratitude is to be expressed or at what time or in what form it is to be shown.<sup>117</sup>

The second explanation is that man eventually would have been able to establish these rational laws by himself, but God provided a way for man to earn a greater reward.

Let me then, say in explanation of this matter that, on the contrary, God's making His creatures' diligent compliance with His commandments the means of attaining permanent bliss is the better course. For according to the judgment of reason the person who achieves some good by means of the effort that he has expended for its attainment obtains double the advantage gained by him who achieves this good without any effort but merely as a result of the kindness shown him by God. In fact, reason recognizes no equality between these two. This being the case, then, the Creator preferred to assign to us the ampler portion in order that our reward might yield us a double benefit, not merely a compensation exactly equivalent to the effort.<sup>118</sup>

### III. ETERNAL VALIDITY OF THE LAW

The next problem Saadia raises is whether the law was given for all time or whether it was to be abrogated after a specific period. In support of the eternal validity of the law, he points to the historical tradition of Israel.

I say, then, that the children of Israel have a general tradition to the effect that the prophets had informed them that the laws of the Torah were not subject to abrogation.<sup>119</sup>

Saadia says that Israel is a nation because of the law. He finds that there is scriptural evidence for saying that Israel will exist as long as the heavens and earth, which are eternal. He therefore concludes that the law is eternal.

Saadia refuses to admit that there are scriptural passages which show that the law can be abrogated. One such scriptural limitation says that the Torah should be observed until the day of resurrection. Saadia says,

The period of its validity would of course be fully known in advance by God, whereas it would become known to men at the



time of the institution of the second law. In either case, however, there could be no talk of abrogation, since the law was intended, from the time when it was first instituted, to be of limited duration.<sup>120</sup>

## CHAPTER VI: FREE WILL AND DETERMINISM

We will deal, in this chapter, with Saadia's attempt to reconcile God's omnipotence with man's free will. Having already established God's omnipotence, Saadia first describes the importance of man in the universe. Any investigation, Saadia says, will reveal that man is the most important creature in the universe. The criteria Saadia uses to determine man's place comes from an examination of the location of the most prized things in the universe. The criteria is that "whatever is most highly prized is placed in the center of things."<sup>121</sup> Observing that the earth is in the center of the heavens, Saadia concludes that the most important thing is on earth. With the elimination of earth and water as being inanimate, and beasts as being irrational, Saadia says that "only man is left, which gives the certainty that he must unquestionably have been the intended purpose of creation."<sup>122</sup>

Being placed at the center of creation only tells us that man is the most important creature. It doesn't tell us why this is so. Saadia lists two general reasons why man is distinguished from all other creatures. First, man is distinguished by reason. By means of his reason, man is capable of reaching scientific heights no other creature can attain. Man's soul, from which his wisdom comes, embraces the whole world with its knowledge, and that is why much in the world has come to depend upon man who is physically small.

The second characteristic which distinguishes man from all other creatures is that God implanted within man the capacity to carry out His commandments, further enhancing his importance.

I realized that the superiority ascribed to man was not due to some false notion that struck our minds or to an inclination on our part toward favoring man...On the contrary, it was nothing but the unadulterated truth and plain veracity. Nor did the All-Wise endow man with superiority in these respects for any other reason than that He had made him the bearer of His commandments and prohibitions.<sup>123</sup>

There is an immediate objection as to whether this capacity to obey is such a desirable distinction, for man is subject to much sin and suffering. Saadia, however, indicates that there are other reasons for man's suffering. Man is subjected to suffering in order that he learn to fear punishment for future transgressions of commandments. Secondly, man suffers because he is subjected to both the possibility of a permanent sojourn in hell, and the possibility of eternal reward. "Were it not for these two alternatives, there would have been nothing to imbue man with either aspiration or fear."<sup>124</sup> Another reason for man's subjection to suffering is that man learns from the example of the punishment of others.

These examples of man's importance and his distinctions from the rest of the universe demonstrate, according to Saadia, that God is just.

Saadia then examines the nature of man's actions in order to determine whether they are really free. Reason demands, says Saadia, that God who is just, would not ask of man that which he cannot do. The doctrine of freedom of the will on man's part becomes a fundamental proposition for Saadia. He reasons that the ability to act must come before the act itself "to the point where an equal opportunity would be granted to man either to act or desist from acting."<sup>125</sup> Saadia rejects the possibility that the ability to act occurs simultaneously with the act itself. According to this view, man has freedom in the sense that he

consents to the act without causing it. He also rejects the possibility that the ability to act follows the act itself.

The affirmation of man's ability to fulfill an act occurring prior to an act raises another question about the nature of man's actions. The problem is whether man's abstention from an act is in itself a positive act. There is here a distinction between the actions of God and the actions of man. Man's abstention from action is a positive act according to Saadia.

As far as man is concerned, however, since his action extends to the domain of accidents only, his sole reason for desisting from one thing is that he chooses to allow the opposite thereof to take place. Thus if he does not love, he hates; and if he is not well disposed, he is angry. Hence thou wilt not find a middle ground for him between these two alternatives.<sup>126</sup>

God, as has been noted before in terms of attributes, cannot be compared in any way to man whether it is to the essence or actions of man. In two scriptural passages, the abstention of man is characterized by the positive actions of "keeping God's charge and walking in His ways."<sup>127</sup>

Saadia then supports the proposition that man's ability to act is present in his actions and inactions and "that, on the other hand, God's non-interference with man's freedom must not be understood as an act in analogy with man's abstention from acting, but as absolute passivity. Thus, man's freedom is completely assured."<sup>128</sup>

A further reason for thinking that man has freedom of will is that he is held responsible for his actions. Saadia points out that "man cannot be considered as the agent of an act unless he exercises freedom of choice in performing it, for no one can be held accountable

for an act who does not possess freedom of choice and does not exercise this choice."<sup>129</sup>

Saadia briefly touches on an important area of intent. He says that the law imposes no punishment on a person who does something without proper knowledge. In this case, the person acts with freedom of choice in performing an act but is not subject to punishment because his act was committed without intent. However, the person who acts without intent is negligent to the degree that he has committed a lesser offense. There is a case cited in Scripture where a man inadvertently kills another when cutting wood. He is negligent in terms of protecting those who pass by. In a second case where a person has gathered sticks on the Sabbath, he is negligent insofar as he has forgotten it was the Sabbath.

Saadia goes on to prove that man's senses can testify as to the absence of any kind of compulsion. The proof of this absence is that he feels no compulsion.

I find that a human being feels conscious of his own ability either to speak or remain silent, or to take hold of things or desist from them, while at the same time he is not conscious of the existence of any other power that might at all prevent him from carrying out his will.<sup>130</sup>

Saadia then enumerates a number of proofs from reason showing that man acts without compulsion.<sup>131</sup> First of all, there cannot be two authors of one act. We see that man performs an act thereby eliminating the possibility of anyone else exercising any compulsion. Secondly, there is no sense to a commandment unless there is someone who is able to carry it out. Thirdly, in order that man be punished, he must be

responsible for his actions. The fourth reason cited is that if there were compulsion, then both Jew and non-Jew would have to be rewarded, since each would be what he was compelled to be. Finally, Saadia points out that anyone could present an excuse of inaction or transgression on the grounds that he was subject to some kind of compulsion.

## CHAPTER VII: THE DESTINY OF MAN

God relates to the universe as the cause of all existence and as the cause which preserves all creation. This final chapter will deal with the ultimate destiny of man and how his conduct affects his destiny. Saadia seeks to show that man's rewards and punishments will come in the next world, after a time of redemption and resurrection.

### I. REWARD AND PUNISHMENT

Saadia's view of man's existence in this world is, at best, a bleak one. This world is one where happiness and joy are surrounded by pain and sorrow.<sup>132</sup> The painful existence of man is evident in every facet of life. Saadia says that no man is comfortable or secure in this world, regardless of what position he has attained in life. Man, furthermore, seems to be constituted so that his impulses desire those things which are evil. We need only look around, he says, to see that the righteous person who tries to be truthful generally earns only trouble, while those who are evil and godless reap the abundance of prosperity.<sup>133</sup>

The desolation of this world raises the problem of how an omnipotent and omniscient God can allow this situation to exist. The answer is quite simple since God always operates in a just manner. Man suffers because his actions will be rewarded or punished at some future time in another world. Man suffers primarily for two reasons in this world:<sup>134</sup> First, because of transgressions he commits; and secondly, he suffers because he will eventually be rewarded proportionately at some other time. We know, says Saadia, that God keeps a record of all

of the actions of people.<sup>135</sup> These actions are partially compensated for in this world, but the majority of man's deeds are either rewarded or punished in the world to come.<sup>136</sup>

Even those persons who are evil are allowed to continue their existence by God because while on earth, they may possibly accomplish some good, and eventually, they will receive proper punishment for whatever evil they have committed.

This reward and punishment will be given to the body and soul together. The instrument of compensation will be a luminous substance similar to the sun which will bring light to the virtuous and heat to the evil.<sup>137</sup> The elements of heat and light belonging to this substance will be administered according to the individual's actions on earth.<sup>138</sup> The righteous will then subsist on this light and the evil will be punished by the heat. The world to come will be totally different from this world, since there will be no necessity to provide man with his physical needs.<sup>139</sup> The nature of time will also be different, since all of it will be light, there being no need for darkness to provide a time for man to rest and restore his strength for his work.<sup>140</sup>

The exact nature of the punishment is never defined. Saadia says that this would be asking too much, since the whole problem of reward and punishment is only known approximately.<sup>141</sup> It is known that the compensation in the world beyond will be perpetual. If the retribution were finite, then people might act righteously only for a definite time.<sup>142</sup> The intensity of reward and punishment will vary, however, according to the nature of the individual's actions. There will be proportionate compensation among both the righteous and the wicked in their respective



groups. The ones who will be punished most intensely will be those who do not believe in God, and those who believe in more than one God.<sup>143</sup> Saadia voices the hope that at the time of redemption, every detail of reward and punishment will become known.<sup>144</sup>

## II. REDEMPTION AND RESURRECTION

Redemption is the returning of all the people of Israel to God's holy place. The concept of redemption must be accepted because it has been validated by miracles and the fact that God promised in Egypt that he would restore Israel to its former abundance and carry out proper judgment concerning them.<sup>145</sup> This concept is possible because God can accomplish anything that He wishes.

Israel will be redeemed from her long suffering. One way to earn redemption is by practicing repentance. Redemption, however, will eventually come regardless of the state of man's repentance. Man's painful subjection will be terminated at some future date by means of a major catastrophe similar to the first flood, which will come and engulf the earth. The immediate problem is for those on earth who have not completed their repentance at the time of redemption. Saadia points out that this problem will be resolved by God causing disaster to fall upon those who have not completed their repentance so that they will resolve to repent, and therefore be permitted to participate in the redemption of all Israel. This time of redemption will be one where everyone will be imbued with the capacity to prophesy, and all "pestilence, disease, and infirmity will disappear and similarly, sadness and sorrow."<sup>146</sup>

Occurring simultaneously with redemption will be the process of resurrection. Resurrection can be logically justified because all men must be rewarded according to their actions. All men, therefore, must be brought back to life. Once they are resurrected, they will never die again.<sup>147</sup>

Saadia points out that there can be no rational objection to resurrection, because once creation out of nothing has been established, the doctrine of resurrection can be shown to be even more plausible. The statements in the Bible also support the reality of resurrection.

Belief in resurrection is so important that Saadia maintains that anyone who does not believe in resurrection will not be resurrected with the rest of Israel at the time of redemption.<sup>148</sup> Israel will be resurrected prior to others because of the extra pain and hardship inflicted upon it.

## NOTES

1. This question is directly related to the nature of law which is discussed in Chapter V.
2. Saadia Gaon, The Book of Beliefs and Opinions, Samuel Rosenblatt (tr.), p. 18.
3. Ibid., p. 28.
4. Gen. 1:1.
5. Saadia, op. cit., p. 40 ff.
6. Ibid., p. 16.
7. W. D. Ross, Aristotle, p. 32.
8. Saadia, op. cit., p. 25.
9. Ibid., p. 131.
10. Ibid., p. 86.
11. Ibid., p. 101 ff.
12. Ibid., p. 129.
13. Ibid., p. 123.
14. Ibid., p. 137 ff.
15. Harry Austryn Wolfson, The Philosophy of Spinoza, p. 192.
16. Saadia, op. cit., p. 41.
17. Ibid., p. 42.
18. Saadya Gaon, The Book of Doctrines and Beliefs, Alexander Altmann (tr.), p. 54, note 1.
19. Saadia, op. cit., p. 43.
20. Ibid., p. 44.
21. Ibid., p. 85.
22. Ibid., p. 46.
23. Ibid., p. 47.

24. Ibid.
25. Ibid., p. 48.
26. Ibid., p. 49.
27. Ibid., p. 50.
28. Ibid., p. 51.
29. Ibid., p. 55.
30. Ibid., p. 58.
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid., p. 59.
33. Ibid., p. 63.
34. Ibid., p. 64.
35. Ibid., p. 66 ff.
36. Ibid., p. 69 ff.
37. Ibid., p. 70.
38. Ibid., p. 74.
39. Ibid., p. 75.
40. Ibid., p. 78.
41. Ibid., p. 80.
42. Ibid., p. 82.
43. Ibid., p. 102.
44. Ibid., p. 104.
45. Ibid., p. 102.
46. Ibid., p. 112 ff.
47. Ibid., p. 118.
48. Ibid.
49. Ibid.

50. Ibid., p. 93.
51. Ibid., p. 92.
52. Wolfson, op. cit., I, 133 ff.
53. Saadia, op. cit., p. 102.
54. Ibid., p. 101.
55. Ibid., p. 102.
56. Ibid.
57. Ibid., p. 103.
58. Ibid.
59. Ibid., p. 105.
60. Ibid., p. 97.
61. Ibid., p. 98.
62. Ibid., p. 129.
63. Ibid., p. 136.
64. Ibid., p. 117.
65. Ross, op. cit., p. 21 ff.
66. Saadia, op. cit., p. 129 ff.
67. Ibid., p. 114.
68. Ibid., p. 122.
69. Ibid., p. 123.
70. Ibid., p. 124.
71. Ibid., p. 124 ff.
72. Ibid., p. 126.
73. Ibid.
74. Ibid.
75. Ibid., p. 127.

76. Ibid., p. 17.
77. Ibid., p. 244.
78. Ibid., p. 360.
79. Ibid., p. 361.
80. Ibid., p. 3.
81. Ibid., p. 76.
82. Ibid., p. 247.
83. Ibid., p. 421.
84. Ibid., p. 360.
85. Ibid., p. 242.
86. Ibid.
87. Ibid., p. 256.
88. Ibid., p. 241.
89. Ibid., p. 236.
90. Ibid., p. 237.
91. Ibid.
92. Ibid., p. 238.
93. Ibid.
94. Ibid., p. 245 ff.
95. Ibid., p. 249, 50.
96. Ibid., p. 247.
97. Ibid., p. 112.
98. Ibid., p. 113.
99. Ibid., p. 66.
100. Ibid., p. 70.
101. Ibid., p. 85.

102. Ibid., p. 278.
103. Ibid., p. 134.
104. Ibid., p. 26.
105. Ibid., p. 147 ff.
106. Ibid., p. 138.
107. Alexander Altmann, "Saadya's Conception of the Law" (Bulletin of The John Rylands Library), 1944, p. 321.
108. Saadia, op. cit., p. 139.
109. Ibid.
110. Ibid.
111. Altmann, op. cit., p. 322.
112. Saadia, op. cit., p. 140.
113. Ibid.
114. Ibid., p. 143.
115. Ibid.
116. Ibid., p. 145.
117. Ibid.
118. Ibid., p. 138.
119. Ibid., p. 157.
120. Ibid., p. 159.
121. Ibid., p. 180.
122. Ibid., p. 181.
123. Ibid., p. 183.
124. Ibid., p. 185.
125. Ibid., p. 186.
126. Ibid., p. 187.

127. Ibid.
128. Ibid., p. 86.
129. Ibid., p. 187.
130. Ibid., p. 188.
131. Ibid.
132. Ibid., p. 324.
133. Ibid., p. 326.
134. Ibid., p. 213.
135. Ibid., p. 207.
136. Ibid., p. 337.
137. Ibid., p. 338.
138. Ibid., p. 348.
139. Ibid., p. 342.
140. Ibid., p. 343.
141. Ibid., p. 354.
142. Ibid., p. 244.
143. Ibid., p. 350.
144. Ibid., p. 355.
145. Ibid., p. 291.
146. Ibid., p. 311.
147. Ibid., p. 281.
148. Ibid., p. 276.



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