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Sepher Emunas Mahomim

by

Abraham Shayyim Viterbo

A Translation and Introduction

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To the Memory  
of  
My Mother

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## Introduction

Abraham Chayyim Viterbo was a rabbi of Venice during the last half of the seventeenth century. The only reference to his date that we have is the statement of Eliezer Ashkenazi who printed the Sefer Emunas Hahomim in his collection of essays called the Ta'am Zekenim that the work was written in 1695. It was not published until 1854 when Ashkenazi printed it among his collection of essays. Concerning the life, character, or activity of Viterbo nothing has thus far been brought to light. He is one in that great army of Israel's learned who are denied biographical immortality. Ashkenazi in introducing the Emunas Hahomim says of the author, "Because of his broad mind and understanding of the Torah and general knowledge he was beloved by all the wise of his generation." Whatever picture of the man we are to draw must spring from the pages of this one treatise of his that is extant. It leaves the reader little doubt as to the position of the author on matters of Jewish faith and doctrines.

Viterbo opens his discussion with the question of original sin, a question that formed the basis for many a polemic between Jew and Christian during the Middle Ages. Christian theology begins with this doctrine as its starting point. The doctrine of hereditary guilt and sin, through the fall of Adam, and of the consequent entire helpless corruption of our nature which leads to death and finally salvation, is the core of the Christian concept of sin and salvation. Viterbo at the outset denies the doctrine that death came upon man because of Adam's original sin and peculiarly enough he adduces his proof from the Bible. He quotes the sentence in Genesis, "Behold the man has become as one of us, to know good and evil, and now lest he put forth his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat and

live forever." <sup>1</sup> So that man was never intended to be an eternal creature and death was decreed upon him even before he sinned. But Viterbo has a more scientific proof. Man is different from God in that he is formed of the four primary substances and what is composed must naturally decompose and return to its original form. Man's death is caused by the material of his makeup and is not the result of a special decree because of a sin.

But the more vexing problem of the origin of evil still bothers the author. Maimonides had answered the question with the negative idea of evil. Like ibn Daud he ascribed no reality to it at all. Evil is merely the negation of good. Man is born with a pure, divine soul but after he sins that departs and he becomes victim to all the evils. Viterbo ~~denies~~ flatly denies this and asserts that just as man was from the beginning so he is now and he has not changed at all after he sinned. Sin is a positive element for which there is a positive punishment and in the case of Adam it was the decree of God that man shall live by the sweat of his brow because he had transgressed a divine command. The punishment for eating of the forbidden fruit was exile from the Garden of Eden where all things grew without effort on the part of man. The garden is allegorical, says Viterbo, representing the eastern countries of rich and fertile soil from which man was driven because of his sin to a more sterile and barren land. According to Maimonides man was born with the power to distinguish between good and evil but when he sinned he lost it. Viterbo argues that this is contrary to the Biblical story which says that their eyes were opened by virtue of the sin--in other words that they did not have the power to distinguish between good and evil at birth but when

they sinned, they became conscious of the destination. Thus it seems that the sin was beneficial to man's moral good, endowing him with ethical discrimination. But Viterbo derides all of this and says again that man is as he was born and has not changed at all after the sin; from the beginning he knew good and evil. He did not know that it was disgraceful to expose the genitals and the fruit from the tree of knowledge revealed only this to him, which is far different from endowing him with moral discrimination.

What need is there, then, for Christian salvation? Man is as he was created and the incident of the Garden of Eden did not change him at all. He was not born perfect and afterwards acquired sin, but rather he was born as he is. When he transgressed a command he was punished by the decree that he must labor to live. It is far different ~~than~~ <sup>from</sup> the fall of man idea that needs salvation through Christ. But Viterbo is not only anti-Christian here but also against those who would by clever rationalism lead to Christian thought. Thus he objects to Maimonides' negative conception of sin which in truth seems akin to the Christian doctrine. For Maimonides, man also is born perfect but falls by virtue of his sensual makeup, although he posits no theory of salvation like unto the Christian. But Viterbo it is too near the border line of the enemy and his objection to a revered teacher in Israel is made in no uncertain terms.

A difference of opinion with one who ranks so high among the wise of Israel as Maimonides is classed by some as heresy. Viterbo differs with the philosopher on the question <sup>of</sup> original sin; does he therefore lose his portion in the world to come? This involves the author in the question of authority in Judaism and over what matters is their authority binding. The essay devoted to this is written in answer to one Paul Medici who turned Christian. Leopold Loew <sup>2</sup> mentions

this essay of Viterbo's and represents Paul Medici to be a Jew who through the corruption of the Sabbat~~an~~ Swindles turned to the Catholic priesthood and attacked the allegorical passages of the Talmud. The authority of the rabbis of the Talmud was then under fire. The Talmud, it was claimed, fashioned God into human form so that He even had a body upon which to put phylacteries. If the authoritative value of the Talmud falls, where then does our seat of judgment for what is right and what is wrong in Judaism rest? Viterbo's answer is unequivocal.

In matters of what actions are allowed and what prohibited<sup>t</sup> the Talmud is the authority without any dispute. The logic supporting this is forcefully constructed. The laws that govern the behavior of a Jew go back to the beginnings of Israel's history. The Bible is the basis for all law. But the Bible is not specific in all instances. How do we know that the fruit of the beautiful tree is the athreg? or that the affliction ordained for the tenth of the seventh month is to be a fast day? or that the passage about "as frontlets between thine eyes" speaks of the phylacteries? We know these things because they are recorded in the Talmud. Since the rabbis who recorded them lived so close to the time when these institutions were the general practice, when the Temple stood and the ritual was exactly as the Bible ordained, certainly we who live so far away must accept their interpretation of Biblical law as to its definite particulars. To differ with the Talmud in matters of law and custom is heresy, says Viterbo. The Gaonim said so and all the great commentators have followed that rule. The differences with the rabbis of the Talmud concern matters outside of law and custom. Rashi, ibn Ezra, Kimchi, and Maimonides differ often with the Talmudic statements but never as regard law or custom. They differ over matters in the Midrashim or



the G'marah where they follow the literal meaning of Scripture instead of the homiletic. Thus for law and custom the Talmud is the final authority for Judaism and for Viterbo to differ with Maimonides on the question of original sin is perfectly legitimate. In the first place Maimonides is not one of the rabbis of the Talmud and secondly, the problem of original sin is not a question of law or custom.

But those who would villify the Talmud had another point of attack. The rabbis differ in their opinions about the same matter and the Talmud even says that "both are the words of the living God." How can such a book be authoritative?--where two diverse opinions are labelled true. The answer is found in the history of the people. These laws were never recorded until after the exile. Before then they were common custom and practice, having come down from father to son since the days of Moses. But with the dispersion and scattering of the Jews, much was forgotten and by debate and argumentation the law was restored. Thus the diverse opinions are recorded but it ~~always~~ says that the law is according to Rabbi So-and-so. Both opinions are honest attempts to arrive at the truth; therefore, they are both the "words of the living God" but the law is according one of the opinions. Thus Viterbo answers another accusation against the Talmud as the book of authority.

There remains yet the charge of the enemy that since God is spiritual and not physical how can the Talmud speak of Him as putting on phylacteries? That charge says Viterbo can be hurled against Moses and the prophets also. Moses spoke of God as "a man of war." Isaiah beheld God sitting on a throne. These are certainly physical attributes of the deity and if you accuse the Talmud of it, you must include the Biblical references. But, says Viterbo, this is by way of allegory. That God is spirit and not matter is stated over and over again in both Bible and Talmud. But man is of limited mental ability; he can

not conceive something which his experience has not encountered. God as pure spirit without form is incomprehensible to man and therefore Moses, Isaiah, and the rabbis describe Him in terms which man can grasp. The rabbis were not insensible to the passages in the Bible which insist that God has no form, neither neck nor limbs--so how could they assert that God puts on phylacteries? To lend ~~force~~ <sup>force</sup> to the command about phylacteries they speak of them as being fit for even God to put on but they never could believe that He actually dons them.

That allegory is part and parcel of Jewish tradition Viterbo shows with many proofs. In the Book of Samuel God regrets that He set up Saul for king. Need God regret? Is He not omniscient and knows before-hand what is to occur? Certainly the quality of regret cannot pertain to God. David said that God laughs and Moses said that God is angered. These are human qualities and how can they pertain to pure spirit? If you attack the rabbis of the Talmud for ascribing physical attributes, then the prophets must fall in the same category. But, says Viterbo, when you analyze it you find that since you accept the words of the prophets as you do your religion, you interpret their words allegorically. But since the rabbis of the Talmud you do not accept, you ~~must~~ press their words to their most literal meaning. But, says Viterbo, for a true Jew the prophets and Talmud are equally binding and equally accepted and therefore a true Jew interprets their words with the same spirit as he does the prophets.

The history of the Talmud is indeed a checkered one. Almost from the date of its redaction, it was the object of criticism and attack both from within and from without. Internally there were the Karaites who flatly denied its place in Jewish life and who set themselves apart from the stream of Jewish life by casting the rabbinic interpretation overboard. Externally the Christian world attacked its

position at every turn. Our history is replete with disputations in defense of the teachings of the rabbis. Ever and anon it is the same charge. The convert Nicholas Donin, Pablo Christiani, de Santa Fe, and the convert Johann Pfefferkorn all raised their voices in one battle cry that the Talmud either denounces Christianity or that it proves the superiority of Christianity. Both failing, then the charge is that the Talmud is pagan and heathen. The charge of Paul Medici in the city of Florence falls into the same column and Viterbo adds his name to that long list of Jews who rush to the defense of the much abused tradition of the rabbis. His answer is no different but his courage is perhaps greater. Like Nachmanides he asserts that the Talmud has the privilege of employing allegory. It is not only its privilege, it is part of the Biblical tradition. The rabbis were not pagans who conceived of God as an over-grown human being. They were as spiritual as Moses and the prophets and they employed the same language to convey their thoughts.

The courage of Viterbo rings forth in his direct insistence that the Talmud is the source of authority for law and custom to all Jews. That one who denies it or refutes it as regards what is allowed or prohibited is a heretic. Cast as this was into a time when the Talmud was more than ever the butt of attack, Viterbo's directness and insistence is a challenge.

It is not only the doctrines and teachings of the daughter religion that Viterbo takes to task, he is cognizant of certain failings amongst the interpreters of his own religion. With the beginning of the third chapter of his book he hurls himself unreservedly against the Maimonian Credo and the rationalistic structure. Solomon Schechter in his essay on Dogmas in Judaism <sup>3</sup> says of Viterbo that he  
 .....  
 3. Studies in Judaism, p. 175 vol. I

is one of the two anti-Maimonists of the seventeenth century. A perusal of his ~~text~~ise leaves no doubt as to the fervor with which he assails the whole Maimonial philosophy.

The problem of dogma in Judaism is no new phenomenon, just as it is no stranger to any religion. Wherever men are concerned with the vitality of their faith the problem of defining the fundamental beliefs is an ever present need. Already in the Talmud the term heretic is applied to one who denied the existence of God, the Sinaitic origin of the Torah, or the position of Moses in the realm of prophecy. It is inevitable, a living religion must <sup>have</sup> ~~xxxx~~ dogma, but the proof of its life-like qualities is found in the earnest and honest searching of what those dogmas are. Once a religion closes its gates to the inquiry of its basic beliefs, it announces itself as ready for the grave. Life is thought and thought is challenge. It is as part of this living organism that Viterbo takes his place. The first popular credo of beliefs was consummated by Maimonides in the Thirteen Articles of Faith. Their popularity maintains even to our own day. But they did not go unchallenged from the day of their birth. The list of those anti-Maimonists discloses such great names as Nachmanides, Rabbi Abba ~~Mari~~ ben Moses of Montpellier and perhaps the greatest of them all, Chasdai Crescas. The latter charged Maimonides with the failure to distinguish between fundamental beliefs without which Judaism cannot exist and doctrines which Judaism teaches but which one may deny without shaking the foundations of the faith.

It is in line with the argument of Crescas that Viterbo begins his discussion of the question of dogmas in Judaism. That there are dogmas in Judaism he never questions. He does not with Mendelssohn cry that Judaism has no dogmas. On the contrary, he

is very definite in his enumeration of what constitutes fundamental beliefs and without which Judaism cannot exist. To be a Jew one must absolutely believe them. But there are certain doctrines in Judaism which a man may deny and not be called a heretic though he ought to believe them. The question of belief in a Messiah, an age-old point of attack upon the Maimonist position is such a one. Is this belief so fundamental to the religion of Israel that he who denies it is a heretic? Maimonides said "yes"; Viterbo said "no". The latter asks the question, "Who is a heretic?" He answers it by saying that he is one who presumptuously denies the Torah or disregards the opinion of the rabbis in a matter upon which they are agreed. If this is so, how can Maimonides call one an atheist who does not believe in the coming of a Messiah? Moses does not mention it nor does the Torah anywhere command it. How can we then read out of Judaism one who follows all the laws of the Torah but who does not subscribe to the idea of the coming of a Messiah? Furthermore, there have been some excellent Jews who did not accept the idea of a Messiah and the rabbis certainly did not exclude them from the fold. The Talmud records the famous saying of Rabbi Hillel who denied the coming of the Messiah, asserting that he already appeared in the days of Hezekiah. No one there labelled him as a heretic. They reasoned and argued with him; they even announced that a Jew should believe in the advent of the Messiah--but nowhere do they ban a Jew from his people if he does not hold such a belief.

From another point of view, says Viterbo, a Jew, honest, pious, and law-abiding, may reason for himself thuswise: Since the rabbis are in dispute as to the coming of the Messiah, he would rather believe that God will give reward and punishment in some

world. Therefore he can stand with Rabbi Hillel and deny the coming of the Messiah. With the Messiah idea the reward and punishment is in a corporeal world. But supposing one believes in the retribution that comes after death--where the Messiah idea is of no necessity. Can such an individual be excluded from the fold?

There is another article for the Maimonidean credo which one may or may not believe and still remain a Jew. In the Thirteen Articles we are told that one who holds that the Law of Moses will ever change cannot be called a Jew. Viterbo poignantly says it may be true that the Law of Moses will never change, it may be true that the Torah is eternal; but it cannot be decreed that he who does not believe so does not deserve the name Jew. In the first place, the Talmud already tells us that in certain instances in the Bible the law is changed. Adam is forbidden to eat of the fruit which is allowed to Noah. Noah and Abraham brought sacrifices outside of Palestine. Jacob married two sisters, something that was later forbidden to Israel in the Law of Moses. Thus it seems that laws are made to meet the necessity of the time and conditions. When these change the law changes. If the law has been changed so many times before the Sinaitic law, how can Maimonides hold that the law of Moses will never change? If we are to suppose that another Moses arose, sent by God himself, to decree new laws or change the old ones, would we not be in duty bound to accept them and follow them? Of course he must be a true messenger of God with the proper sign that he is ~~thus~~ sent. Certainly if Elijah could bring sacrifices outside of Palestine and make them acceptable to God, then it is conceivable that in some other worthy case the law may be disregarded. Furthermore, when the Messiah comes, the whole world will be changed; ~~is it~~ not possible that God may desire to give a new Torah for the new conditions?

We are told that the time will come when the ninth of Ab will be converted into a festival of rejoicing. Here then is a new event to happen, God is to add a festival more than we already possess. Are the rabbis of the Talmud who spoke thus to be denied a place in Judaism.

Viterbo has yet a more potent argument. If it is true that one who denies the Sinaitic origin of the Torah or even a verse, word, or grammatical point of it, is a heretic. The Talmud says all of that and denies one who holds such a view a portion in the world to come. But it certainly does not say that one who holds that the Law of Moses may be renewed, is a heretic. For to say that would be tantamount to denying God the power to change His own law. It is conceivable that the Creator of the world and the giver of the Law may by His own free will give unto Israel and mankind a new law. Is it not a bit irreverent to deny God that power? Then why, asks Viterbo, has Maimonides made it compulsory to believe that the Law of Moses will never be changed? It may or may not be renewed, says our author, but it is not one of those fundamental principles, the denial of which removes one from the fold of Israel.

A more direct and tangible source for the view of Viterbo was the Ikkorim of Joseph Albo. The book deals primarily with the problem of dogma. It deals with the problem of distinguishing a divine law from a human law, with the question of what constitutes the basal beliefs of any religion. Albo was not the originator of the problem, for Crescas, his teacher, had already published the Or Adonai in which he devoted considerable space to the question <sup>of</sup> fundamental dogmas in Judaism. Crescas had already taken issue with Maimonides on the faulty method employed in the selection of the thirteen articles of faith on the ground that he did not distinguish

between what was fundamental and what was derivative. This gave Albo his lead and he developed the problem in his own way. Albo distinguishes between general religious principles and special principles which are peculiar to a particular religion. From these general principles which are the Ikkorim there follow the derivative principles for a particular religion which are the Shorashim. The first are binding upon any religious person and the denial of them is heresy. The second are matters to be adapted to a particular situation. Albo named three fundamental principles of religion: the existence of God, Providence including reward and punishment, and last, revelation. There are many derivative laws which Jews should believe, but the three named are the sine qua non of all religion. Thus Albo had taken Maimonides and Crescas to task for the principles they enumerated. He objected the principles of unity and incorporeality on the ground that while they are true, Judaism can be conceived as existing without them. Those who rush to the defense of Maimonides argue that he intended to name not only fundamental principles but also true beliefs whether fundamental or derivative. If that is true, says Albo, then there are many others he might have mentioned--such as creatio ex nihilo, belief in miracles, God rests in Israel through the Torah, etc.

Viterbo is heir to all of this. His criticism of Maimonides is derived from Albo for he too attempts to distinguish between the fundamental principles and those that are derived. The ~~new members~~<sup>numbers</sup> of the former vary throughout Jewish history. Maimonides named thirteen, Crescas six, Albo three, and there is one who names twenty-six. Viterbo follows Crescas in the number but not in the dogmas themselves. He names six fundamental principles: 1) The existence of God, 2) Unity, 3) Incorporeality, 4) Revelation at Sinai and the truth of the Mosaic prophecy, 5) Torah comes from heaven, 6) Reward and punishment.



# 1) The Existence of God.

No religious creed is possible without this first dogma of the existence of God. Viterbo would be willing to name it and let it stand were it not for the activities of the philosophers, among whom is Maimonides. They attempt to offer logical proof, conclusions drawn from a rational process, that God exists. Maimonides had offered the very old teleologic argument which he had drawn from the works of Aristotle. Nothing is conceivable without someone to create it. Nothing could exist if God did not exist, for there must be a builder if there is a building. However, God is the one eternal uncreated element in the universe who has neither beginning or end. He created the world and its inhabitants but He was not created. All of that is true, says Viterbo, but the proof is a false one. The mind of man is limited, it can conceive only in human terms. To picture something that is not created but creates we may believe by faith or tradition but we cannot ask the mind to accept it rationally. For if you argue teleologically then the question must be asked as to when God came into existence for man cannot conceive of an endless beginning. If you attempt logical proof, says Viterbo, you destroy the very purpose you seek, for logic in this instance does not apply.

God exists because man feels it in the world about him. He beholds a vast universe of wonder and his mind--without any logical proof--says that there must be a power behind it all. In his days, the principles behind magnetism and the working of the compass were unknown. Men observed iron drawn to the magnet, they beheld the compass point north regardless of the wind or direction and they believed in the existence of both magnetism and the principle of the compass. They could offer no proof, they knew not of the scientific explanation behind all of it, but they believed because it fell within the bounds

of their perception. Thus the idea of the existence of God which is visible to us in all the phenomena of life and nature is true in the sense that the compass is, although we can offer no proof for it.

There is yet another factor that points to the truth of God's existence. Not a human being has been discovered in any portion of the world who did not have a belief in God. Viterbo lived not long after the discovery of America where queer bronzed, naked people stalked through thick forests. Even among these savages, even among these uncivilized creatures the idea of God was current. Certainly, says Viterbo, since most of the human beings believe in God, it is true. It is the old argument of consensus gentium<sup>545</sup> which Professor Wolfson argues does not exist in Jewish philosophy. Since the majority of the nations and peoples believe in a doctrine, therefore its truth is established. The argument, of course, is faulty for since the majority of people in the civilized world believe in Christ, therefore the doctrines of Christianity should be true for all peoples, including Jews. It may be for that reason that the argument of consensus gentium<sup>545</sup> never had a place among the great philosophers of Jewish history. Viterbo says that if there is a proof for the existence of God this argument sponsored by the discovery of America approaches nearest to it. However, he is willing to accept the principle of the existence of God by faith and from tradition.

## 2) Unity

There are two conceptions of unity, says Viterbo, human and divine, a physical and spiritual. We speak of one army when it is composed of many parts, one man when he is made up of many different elements. These are physical units which are not in the true conception of unity for they can all be reduced to some smaller form. The unity of God is different. He is one in the sense that no other

thing in the universe is. He is above physical category, He is one in the sense that no other object can be for He is not formed or composed. His unity is the perfect unity.

Viterbo dares a good deal in his argument on this principle when he states that it is acknowledged by all peoples and that no one ever held that there are many Gods. His motive is obvious, he is attacking Christianity for its self-praise in having destroyed idolatry. Viterbo says there never was idolatry. How can anyone accuse Aristotle, Pythagoras, or Hippocrates of idolatry. They all believed in one God but they had conceptions of angels and messengers whom they called Gods but who in reality were merely servants of the true God. The root of the trouble was, says Viterbo, not that they believed in many Gods, but rather that they did not believe in the true God for they were unable to grasp the idea of His presence. It was the shortcoming of their minds that was the source of error and not their conception of many deities. The idea of one God is common to all peoples, but to know the true God one must have understanding. The true idea of spiritual unity, a unity that is different from all other things in the world can only apply to God alone and wise people understand it, says Viterbo.

### 3) Incorporeality

That God has neither body or form is axiomatic for Viterbo. How could it be otherwise? Anything with form must be composed of matter and matter in the final analysis must decompose and return to nothing. Can we conceive of God as matter? Can God decompose and become nothing? It is heresy even to think it. Yet ibn Daud had argued that if one reads the Bible literally and gets a picture of God that has form, he is not a heretic. To Viterbo that is astounding for it denies the entire spiritual quality of the deity. Anyone who

attempts to unravel the mysteries of the Bible, who attempts to figure out some of the hidden secrets, in the end loses all that he possibly could gain and in most cases goes mad. Did not ben Azai and ben Zoma, as well as Elisha Aher, lose their lives and minds by attempting to probe some of the mysteries? Only the unusually wise can read those matters and understand them. This is, perhaps, Viterbo's criticism of the whole mystic, Kabbalistic movement that had preceded him. For several hundreds of years the Jewish world had been thrown into the whirlpool of mystic calculations, of picturizations of God and His kingdom. The spiritual element was being personalized and made all too human. Viterbo takes his stand with Maimonides in the absolute dictum that God is incorporeal, He cannot have either form or body. He is a pure spirit even though the mind of man cannot wholly conceive it.

#### 4) Revelation at Sinai and the Truth of the Mosaic Prophecy.

This fourth principle, the revelation at Sinai, is included in every nomenclature of Jewish dogmas up to the period of the Reform Movement. It is the basis of orthodox belief for without it the whole structure of orthodox religious life crumbles to the ground. Viterbo is definite. A Jew must believe that God revealed Himself to Moses at Sinai. There He handed to him every word found in the Pentateuch. We must believe every miracle, even violations of natural law, no matter how it taxes our reason. We dare not even say that Moses was a magician or that he was unusually clever and outwitted Pharaoh. It is all by divine grace and action. He goes even further; a Jew must believe in the rest of the prophets, in their divine inspiration. They are all the prophetic disciples of Moses and their prophecies all bear the stamp of divine truth. There are various

degrees of prophecy. Moses is the greatest because his speech was direct with God and because unlike the other prophets, his period of prophecy extends throughout his entire life, whereas the others are called only for certain, specific missions. There is also a difference in degree among the other prophets. Isaiah is greater than Ezekiel because his vision was more intimate with the divine.

However, the debatable point in this matter of prophecy is centered around the question of the difference between Moses and the rest of the prophets. The point of attack is Maimonides, who in his Sefer Hammadah had said that Moses's speech was direct with God while the rest received their messages through an angel. Viterbo denies immediately ~~that~~ that--holding that one whose prophecy is derived through an intermediary is not a prophet. Among that class are Manoah, Gideon, and Daniel. Maimonides makes the further distinction that performed his miracles before all the people, both those who believed and those who did not believe; the rest only before those did not believe. But Viterbo is astounded at this. Did not Elijah at Mt. Carmel perform before both classes? Was not the miracle of Joshua, the standing still of the sun, before both classes? Maimonides is in error here.

What then is the difference? It is found in the Scriptures in the verse, "not so are your prophets" which Viterbo interprets to mean that yours are occasional but his are not, for "he is trusted in all my house." Also from the verse that God spoke to Moses face to face. Thus Moses differs from the others. He knew God intimately and his prophecy is larger and more numerous than the rest. The others, like Elijah and Joshua, perform one miracle and are through. Moses performed a good many wonders. Another way of interpreting the Scriptural statement is to say that Moses caused the people to

hear the voice of God speaking from the bush. For the people had for the first time actually heard the divine voice and they were thus compelled to believe in Moses as the prophet of God. The others spoke their message without such direct proof of God's presence and that is the true difference between them. It is also the proof for us of the truth of Moses' prophecy.

#### 5) Torah from Heaven

The fifth principle which is closely allied to the fourth is that the Torah is a direct revelation from heaven and anyone who says that Moses spoke even a single word of it that was not directed by God is a heretic and is banned from the fold. On the surface it appears that this is implied in the preceding principle and so it is, except that Viterbo is troubled by several problems. First, there are the Karaites who believe in the Mosaic revelation but who refuse to accept the rabbinic interpretations. Are they Jews? In the first place, they are descended from a rebel forefather, Jereboam ben Nebat, who set up idols at Beth-El. The children merely follow the rebellious activities of their ancestors and rebel against the rabbis. Secondly, their ~~own~~ interpretations of the Bible are ridiculous. Anan their master interpreted the "plowing and harvest time" of the Bible as meaning sexual intercourse. Ibn Ezra had already showed the absurdity of it and Viterbo points to it to display their ignorance. Their view about the strictness of the Sabbath is likewise false, for that is only an injunction for the period of the wilderness. Thus Viterbo reads the Karaites out of Judaism.

There is, however, the more vexing problem of the value of the narrative portions of the Bible. What part do they play in the life of the Jews? Why are we to believe all the early stories of the Pentateuch--of the Patriarchs, of the flood, of the dispersion? What is their purpose or value? Viterbo takes his answer from tradition

It is all to show that God is the creator of the world; He made it and fashioned it and it is His. When He wills He gives to one people and at other times He may give it to other people. God took the land from the other peoples and gave it to Israel. The whole narrative portion is there to lead up to Israel's acquisition of the promised land. Nachmanides had given it a more philosophic interpretation. He had said that all the narratives go to prove the creatio ex nihilo principle. But Viterbo flatly denies it, using the rabbis and Rashi as his authorities.

The philosophers had attempted a few further rationalizations of Bible stories. They were perplexed by the flood story. The Scriptures say that the whole world was flooded and yet the world is not level as there are high regions and low regions. Furthermore, it says that the waters went fifteen cubits higher than the mountains and here it means the mountains near Armenia. But there are higher mountains in the world than these. So that not all the world was covered. How then do we get around the story? The philosophers said that it is not necessary to believe that the whole world was covered. Viterbo is loathe to allow that. He argues that by the world is meant the inhabited portions of the world, and that was certainly all covered. The other places that were higher were not inhabited as yet and therefore they were not included, for the purpose of the flood was to chastise man for his behavior. Furthermore, the waters came from underneath and so it is beyond a doubt that all the world was covered.

There are other attacks upon the Scriptures. Some ask: where did Cain and Abel secure wives? Viterbo quotes the rabbis in answer. They were born with twin mates. But that is incest. Viterbo would rather give God the power to create wives for them as he did for Adam in the beginning. Then there is the dispersion. What great

crime did they commit to be punished as they were. Not that they were going to war with heaven, the angels, and God Himself. That is ridiculous. It is literal as found in the Scriptures. They wanted to dwell together in one place and God wanted them to disperse and inhabit all the earth. Therefore, he confused their tongues and they scattered to all the ends of the earth.

What purpose do all of these stories serve? They do this: they give us the evolution of the history up to the time of Abraham who is the founder of our faith. How ~~xx~~ else would we be able to announce the events and activities of Abraham? We must know his origin and history before we approach the period of the beginning of the Jewish people.

Another problem disturbs Viterbo: Are the laws commanded in the Torah reasonable or are they merely a whim of the creator to test our faith. There are several answers that our author gives. In the first place, it is inconceivable that God would decree laws for us that were of no benefit to us. If He had desired to test us He would have decreed them for a while and then abolished them after He had completed His test. But our laws are commanded to us eternally. What reason is there for the sacrifice? What purpose in the red cow? What reason in the dietary laws? Maimonides had attempted to rationalize. The food prohibited us, he had said, was unhealthful. But that is nonsense, says Viterbo. Many peoples eat it and live long and healthy lives. The only reason we do not eat those foods is because tradition and law prohibit them and as Jews we observe the law and tradition. There is a reason in the mind of the Creator but we mortal beings cannot fathom it. The Talmud offers a raison d'être for the dietary laws. They are meant to prohibit the eating of heavy foods, for we Jews are a people given to thought and heavy food dulls



the mind and stultifies the senses. That, to Viterbo, is the most plausible reason for the prohibition in foods, probably because the Talmud, his fount of authority, advances it. On the surface it seems no more delectable than that offered by Maimonides, for other peoples are also given to thought and they consume a good deal of food which is prohibited to Jews. In the last analysis Viterbo would rather accept the laws on faith.

We are a bit surprised to find a discussion of free will under the fifth dogma, that of the Torah from heaven. We might expect it to be a separate principle of faith, but Viterbo is concerned with the problem in another sense. There are verses in the Bible to which some people point as denying free will. In Genesis we are told that the Egyptians shall enslave and afflict the Jews. In Deuteronomy, we are told that the people will rise up and go astray after strange Gods. Thus it is predetermined upon the Egyptians to do wrong and upon the Jews to become idol worshippers. Thus freedom of the will is denied in the Torah itself. The problem is certainly not a new feature in Jewish thought. In the Bible itself man is given the freedom to choose between good and evil. But Viterbo is concerned with the argument advanced by Maimonides who raised the question in his popular work. Maimonides was troubled by an old difficulty. If God is omniscient he knows how a given person will act at a given time. Since God's knowledge is certain and is not open to error, the person in question cannot help acting as God long foreknew he would act. Thus his act is not the result of his free will. Maimonides takes refuge in his old statement about the transcendence of God's knowledge upon which he dwelt in his earlier work in the Yesode Ha-Torah. Viterbo is bitter in his criticism. Maimonides should never have started something which he could not complete. It were better if he

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had left the problem of freedom of the will well enough alone.

Viterbo anticipates the deists of Locke's day. God had created the world and man, had given it its order and plan and then turned aside to let matters take their own course. He laid down ethical laws and rules for behavior and set the machinery of judgment for acts at the time of creation. He does not watch nor does he observe every being's behavior in particular. He could if He so willed but He rather gave man his own choice to do as his mind and heart directs. It is, of course, no pure deism. It is not the product of rationalism nor does it cast miracles to the wind. As a matter of fact it is based on pure faith and holds fast to every miracle of the Bible. God is just, wise, and merciful; certainly He will give man the freedom of action. He is not entirely set apart from the world for He is a gracious God. He sends His prophets and teachers to urge men to choose the right and proper path, for He wants His children to be righteous and to receive the reward for their good deeds. But the choice is with them and the consequences are the result of their own choosing.

We are still puzzled by the Biblical references to the Egyptians enslaving the Jews and to the Israelites going astray. Are those determined decrees or not? Viterbo, in trying to answer the question, falls into a difficulty. He argues that God is wise, He knows that the Egyptians were in the habit of oppressing strange peoples and judging by their past behavior He told Moses that they would oppress the Jews. Thus God knew that the Jews were a stiff-necked people; they had gone astray before and by habit they would continue so to do. It is not a question of freedom of will, it is merely judgment based on past behavior. It sounds like a cogent reply save that the problem of will is not so readily answered. Modern psychologists lay great stress on the limitations which past action places upon man's behavior.

We are told that man cannot act freely because he is the child of a tremendous past that has built up a certain behavior pattern. That is a denial of freedom of the will to many modern psychologists but Viterbo was too young in the world's history to be subject to its influence.

#### 6) Reward and Punishment

The last dogma listed by Viterbo is that of Reward and Punishment. It is a primary principle in every religious faith for it underlies the entire thought behind ethical or religious behavior. The world is filled with examples in which the righteous suffer and the wicked prosper. If there is no further process of justice than the whole religious fabric is torn assunder. What value are religious laws or ethical principles? In that all religious philosophers and theologians agree, including Maimonides, Albo, and Viterbo. The latter brings the ancient argument of the two souls--the animal soul which man has in common with all other creatures and which dies with the body, and the rational soul which lives after death and goes to its Maker to receive reward or punishment in accordance with its behavior on earth. The argument is enlivened with a strange appeal to reason. The animal lives from day to day, eating, drinking, sleeping, and is unconscious of the meaning of tomorrow. He knows not of death nor that his life must end at some time. But man has a mind, he knows that death is the end and that hangs over him like a cloud throughout his days. Is then man inferior to the animal? Is he doomed to live a more miserable and fearful life than the other creatures? Of course not! Man has this rational soul which lives beyond the grave and which is his consolation for the terror of approaching death.

Maimonides, however, had been very hard on the wicked--for th

them he gave no life in the world to come whatsoever. He interpreted the verse in Numbers that talks about "that soul shall be utterly cut off", as referring to the world to come. But Viterbo is very sharp in his criticism of Maimonides, for according to such a view man is like a beast and dies like one. As a matter of fact the rabbis taught that all Israel has a portion in the world to come, for each man--even sinners--is full of good deeds. Then too, God is merciful and He would not blot out the soul of a man as He does that of a cow. As to the verse that Maimonides used, Viterbo would rather accept the interpretation of the rabbis who said that it means that although the sinner has already been punished in this world for the sin he committed, ~~but~~ he will also be punished in the world to come. That fits much better with the idea of the rational soul and Viterbo is happy to accept it, especially since the rabbis present it.

The idea of resurrection, though not a separate dogma with Viterbo, is affirmed by him as true. According to tradition, when the Messiah arrives all the dead will arise and be judged in justice. This principle had been the butt of attack of many philosophers and thinkers in Judaism and outside. Ezekiel ~~as~~ caused the dead to arise. Elisha brought a dead child to life. If they can, certainly the Messiah can bring all peoples to life again. Some say that the child in the case of Elisha was not dead when the prophet revived him, but he was very sick and near death. But that is no miracle, says Viterbo, for expert physicians often do that. Elisha performed a miracle and Ezekiel certainly did, for the dead that he raised had been dead for hundreds of years. It is all a matter of divine will and power. God can raise the dead and no religious person can deny Him that power.

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Before concluding this introduction to the treatise of Viterbo, we must say a few words about the picture of the author that his work

paints for us. He stands out as a staunch orthodox Jew ready to defend the faith of his fathers against the slightest attack. Be it Christian or Jew, heresy or philosophy, his mind is ever ready to ward off any accusation. His answer to all of them is found in the book that his people gave to the world and in those who piously interpreted that which has been forgotten. If a Christian attack the Talmud it is because he is not a Jew and does not understand it. A true Jew finds his authority in the Talmud. When a philosopher attempts to rationalize this age-old faith, Viterbo hurls himself ardently in defense of pure faith in God and His Torah. Reason may lead to heresy, faith is ever pure.

## The Book of the Faith of the Wise

To interpret and to answer all the questions and arguments advanced by the heretics and Christians to deny the Written Law and especially the Oral Law.

By Rabbi Abraham Chayyim Viterbo, one of the rabbis of Venice.

### Introduction of the Author

Gather unto me, ye children of the mighty, precious men of truth, ye who are faithful sons, both big and little. May the great God multiply you as fish, who come from homes that purify and cleanse, who announce the salvation of Zion, the gathered and assembled who glorify in the greatness of the Most High. They reflect on them, hearkening to the words of the wise, they open their mouths and chirp by the hundreds and thousands. The words of the wise are as goads, who grind into fine points especially the laws and statutes.

I behold in this loose generation the reading of profane books which constantly argue against us to destroy and ruin the words of our rabbis. All their efforts are directed to show and to prove that the oral law does not agree with the written law and that it is a fabrication of their minds according to what they wish. They also shame their precious words when they say that many Aggados and homilies were spoken without knowledge. They say that because they do not understand them clearly. Our young people read these books without a response, so that it might be a snare and a stumbling block and perhaps it will turn their minds. I

I acknowledge here that since the major part of this book concerns matters of faith, the opinion of Maimonides does not seem correct to me in many instances; as they said clearly that wherever

there is <sup>1</sup> a profanation of the Holy Name we do not pay honor to the teacher . I write this book for Heaven's sake and call it the "Faith of the wise" and all who read it will find everything explained clearly, each matter in particular, both the arguments and questions which concern the written law and the oral law. Thus I begin this work.



# Beginning of the Book

In the beginning God created the world, the heavens, and the earth and all their hosts. Everything He made from absolutely nothing. He is true and His work is true; and His existence is discernible from the power of His wonderful deeds. Who can deny His existence? Does not this world, the earthly sphere, in which we and other nations of the land live testify? Who created it and who fashioned it? The prophet said, "Lift up your eyes on high and see who hath created these. He that bringeth out their hosts by number, He calleth them by name; by the greatness of his might, and for that He is strong in power, not one faileth."<sup>2</sup> He alludes to the first cause. Who is he who doubts its truth? Do they not all testify to his existence, for there is no effect without a cause, there is no building without a builder, there is no wisdom without a wise man. Blessed by He who knows the secrets. When man reflects on the matter of the world and its creation, the grass and trees, plants and herbs, the animate and inanimate, how good is each thing in its time! Who will not say, who will not acknowledge that all these are work of God?

Furthermore if you examine and search your mind as to the creation of the world, how tremendously marvellous is the matter of the four primary substances out of which the world was created: fire, water, earth, and spirit, especially that they change one into the other. Reflect on how He gathered them and united them by His wonderful wisdom, and made out of them all that He created. Search your mind with all your might, you human full of pride, and ask the philosopher, ask him the wisdom and knowledge as to which is the way where light abides. Let him show you and make you under-

stand how fire and water are combined and both of them exist. Have they not told thee that it is surely impossible, also how are earth and spirit put together? Is not the spirit above in the air and the earth below? Ask your scholars, ask them for instruction as to how the thing happens. Everyone of them will admit that it springs from God, for it is impossible to deny it and to say that it is not so. Anyone who knows astronomy, knows clearly with proof that all which exists in this earthly sphere is composed of the four primary substances. Explain, please, the structure of the earthly sphere, how it was created and does it exist. Do not say that the whole thing is an accident. It will all become perfectly clear to you why the great deep waters do not cover the earth, for there are many lands that are lower than the water, and how is it that the waters do not surge over and destroy the whole structure? Were it not for God's compassion upon the works of His hands when he said to the sea that thus far shalt thou go and no further. It is known that water is by nature light, and flows down from the high places to the lower. Why does it not flow down and cover the whole face of the earth? But the Creator of the world had already decreed it thus.

When you lift your head toward the heavens and behold, the sun, moon, planets, and the rest of the stars which God apportioned to bring light into the world, how can man not wonder and not be astounded at seeing great mighty bodies created of fire suspended in the air of the expanse? How was this done? Who is he who has the power to make bodies like these? Furthermore when a man builds a beautiful structure and he does his work so that it is strong, with the passing of time it decays and wastes away and afterwards is nothing. But God is not one of them for all of His works exist forever. How many thousands of years it is that He has created

the spheres and thus they will be forever. They have neither age nor decay, neither destruction nor end. And that is what Isaiah said: "Lift up your eyes on high."<sup>3</sup> to indicate what we have said-- that the work of man ends speedily, but that His work, the work of the Most High is not destroyed. They have neither renewal nor end, they are eternal and exist forever. That is the meaning of "By the greatness of His might, and for that He is strong in Power."<sup>4</sup> For the ministering spheres of the heavens and the constellations, although they are constantly moving in their courses and have no stand or rest at all, and it would be proper for them to be subject to old age and destruction, yet there is not one missing. He said, "Not one faileth",<sup>5</sup> that not even one of them decays and loses its original strength which was given to it during the six days of creation. Do not be troubled by what we said that the works of God are eternal. Are not man, the other creatures as well as the plants finite and die? And they are the works of God. Do not be abounded at this, for even man and the rest of the creatures are eternal in the species, that is undoubtedly the case.<sup>6</sup> In regard to the verse: "I create a new heaven and a new earth",<sup>6</sup> the interpretation of that is that when the times and customs change it is as if the heavens change, for thus is called the weather and the climate. That is the plain meaning of the verse and that is the universal custom.<sup>7</sup> "There is nothing new under the sun."

## Chapter One

### A Chapter Concerning the Sin of Adam

Know that the content of creation was made by the creator of the world, as it seems to our limited understanding only for the sake of man; the ~~quits~~ birds, the beasts, the fowl, and the fish, and even the inhabitants of the sky, i.e. the heavenly planets and their constellations, and that is the important matter to bear in mind. For after the creation of all these things had been completed ~~after~~ ~~in the six days~~ of creation, He said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness, and let him have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the fowl of the air." <sup>8</sup> You already know that it is the style of dignity and respect to employ the plural instead of the singular, as is the custom in the writings and ordinances of human kings. Thus, since God created man, He certainly made him complete, because he uses the creation of His own hands, but Moses does not reveal to us what this completeness is.

There are those who say that man was from the beginning created eternal by nature, and if he had not transgressed the word of God, he would live forever in a manner in which death would have no power over him at all, as it seems indeed from the plain meaning of the Scriptures. It is written, "On the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." <sup>9</sup> If this is so, then death was decreed upon him on the day that he transgressed the commands of the creator; and if he had not sinned, then this decree would not have been issued upon him and he would live forever. But after a careful consideration it becomes clear to us that the matter is not so. For all which is composed of the four primary substances must be separated and return to its prime state. Furthermore the verse says, "Behold, the man has become as one of us, to know good

and evil; and now lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever." <sup>10</sup> If so, it seems that from the ~~xxxxxxx~~ beginning he did not create him to be eternal, and the truth of the matter leaves us in no doubt but that death was decreed upon man before he sinned. For everything which is formed of the dust must return to its primal form, as we have said. And concerning that which the verse says, "On the day you eat of it, <sup>11</sup> you shall surely die" it is not in accordance with the truth, for even though God prohibited them from eating of the fruit of the tree, he did not decree upon them they would die immediately upon eating it. Rather, it was the serpent who spoke to the woman thus, in order to cause her to stumble, and he continued further to tell her "You shall not touch it" <sup>12</sup> for this prohibition contains nothing at all concerning touching.

With this introduction it will be clear to you why the woman, after she sinned and performed an act which is not proper and opposed the will of the creator, why she caused her husband to err with her. It is the nature of a woman to love her husband, and even though ~~se~~ herself is in great distress, it is not her will that he shall also suffer, nor that it should go badly with him. And that is the custom of a man in regard to his wife, and it is the way of all who love, that they will bear without trouble all kinds of worries and sickness, so long as the one who is beloved by them is not found in the same distress. But the matter is as we have said, the serpent said to the woman that even though God has told you that you would die immediately upon your eating from the fruit of the tree, it is not so, and the proof of it is that you will eat "and surely not die." <sup>13</sup> She believed his argument from two points of view; one in

which he told her that it was the intention of God that she die immediately after she had eaten, the other that this prohibition even concerned touching. Perhaps the serpent moved her as some commentators would say by saying to her, "Just as you will not die because you touch it, so you will not die because you eat it." But his words were founded on empty ground. Because touching was not prohibited but such is not the case with eating which was prohibited. Despite the greatness of the penalty it was not as he told her. Yet the prohibition was true and thus he easily caused her to err. When she observed that she was not punished for touching, she also ate; and when she saw that even upon eating she did not die, she was confirmed in the error that the words of the serpent were true and that there was no danger in the matter. Then she also gave to her husband and he ate with her. Thus the question has been solved. Since she had put her life in danger of death, and she ate of the fruit of the tree alone and she did not give it to her husband while she was still in doubt about the matter; not until she was convinced that there was no danger in the thing.

Let us return to our subject. It was not disclosed to us in the Torah what that completeness of man was before he sinned. On the contrary, it seems, that at first his eyes were closed, and afterwards were opened. As the verse says, "And the eyes of them<sup>14</sup> both were opened and they knew that they were naked." If this is so, then, before they sinned they were foolish, and afterwards they became open-eyed. That is nothing more than that he who sins is at an advantage. Maimonides in the Moreh Nebuchim raises this question and he answers that the ~~distinctions~~ of the true from the false are of qualities that came into existence from the divine soul, and these

were part of man before he sinned, since his ~~mita~~ soul was removed from him, he lost the power of distinguishing between true and false, and then he knew the difference between good and evil. Then his soul became clothed with the desire for the sensuous and the physical, for food and for sex and the other desires of the passions. <sup>15</sup> But this is not right, for it would appear from the Biblical verses that the curse was not that their eyes were opened, as it appears from the statement of Maimonides, because it relates that after they ate from the fruit of the tree of knowledge their eyes of both of them were opened and they understood that they were naked. Not that until then they did not distinguish between being clothed and nakedness. But since the passions did not have dominion over them, they were not aware of the fact that it is shameful for man to disclose his genitals. That is the meaning of the verse, "And <sup>16</sup> they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves girdles."

But to our opinion the statement of Maimonides is unnecessary because as man was created from the beginning, so he is, and he did not change at all after the sin. From the beginning of his creation were death and decay decreed upon him, as upon the rest of the compounded forms. As the matter is expressed in the verse "for dust thou art and unto dust thou dost return." <sup>17</sup> That is to say, since you are dust and formed of the four elements, you must necessarily decompose and return to dust. The matter of the punishment is this; when man was created God placed him in the earthly garden of Eden and said to him "of all the fruit of the trees of the garden you may eat" <sup>18</sup> --i.e. from the fruit of the tree which I have planted for your sake, so that you shall not be troubled to seek after your food. That he shall eat and drink of the produce of the land without trouble or labor, since God has given strength to the earth to bring forth the grass and the trees, everything completely and in

accordance with its nature, and bearing fruit after its kind. That is the meaning of "from the fruit of the tree thou mayest eat."<sup>19</sup>

But when he ate from the tree of knowledge and transgressed the command of the creator, He said to him, "Hast thou eaten from the tree whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat,"<sup>20</sup> "cursed is the ground for thy sake";<sup>21</sup> but he did not speak to him concerning death at all. That is to say, you have sinned and transgressed my command, and you have eaten of the fruit of the tree whereof I forbade you, I shall now curse the earth and remove from it the strength of its moisture and of its fat, so that it will not continue to bring forth grass of itself as I had planned and decreed from the beginning. If you do not till it with your hands, there will not grow from it anything but grass that is not fit to eat. That is the meaning of "Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee".<sup>22</sup> It is written subsequently, "In the sweat of thy face face shalt thou eat bread;"<sup>23</sup> that is to say that you will work hard and toil for your food, and if not you will find the earth by nature will give forth nothing but thorns and thistles. That is the meaning of "And you shall eat the herb of the field."<sup>24</sup>

We gather from this that man has remained just as he was created even after he sinned, and he has not changed at all, save that he was driven out of the earthly garden of Eden. That is a general term for all the lands to which God had already given the strength to bring forth from themselves herbs and trees, because Eden is a term of pleasure and delight. After he sinned and transgressed the commands of God, that strength was removed from the land, and he was as if driven out of the land.

Consider the matter carefully, for the idea of the earthly



garden of Eden is allegorical and not literal. If Pishon is the river Nile of Egypt as the Talmud says <sup>25</sup> and as our Teacher Rabbi wrote, <sup>26</sup> how much larger must that garden be which is more than 1500 miles in length and 6000 miles square if it is not laid out in a decline. For the river Euphrates and the Tigris river are in the East, the first runs through Bagdad and the second near Mt. Ararat, and the verses testify that all of them irrigate the garden and run through it. It is as we said, all this land from Egypt to the eastern countries is called the Garden of Eden because it is a luxurious land due to its moisture, its fatness, and its strength. But after he sinned, and the fruitfulness and the moisture were removed from it by the curse of God, everything disappeared, and and even these lands were desolate and arid like the rest of the places. Concerning the verse, "The eyes of both of them were opened and they knew that they were naked" <sup>27</sup> we have already said above that man knew from the beginning what the good and bad is, but he did not comprehend that it is disgraceful to expose the genitals. However, when he ate from the fruit of the tree of knowledge, this matter was revealed to him. That is, in that case, the sinner is not at an advantage, for what good is to ~~let~~ him to know or to understand that he is naked.

There are many opinions from of old in regard to the manner in which the serpent spoke. According to the opinion of Saadia Gaon, it was Satan in the form of a serpent who enticed the woman. <sup>28</sup> He has already been answered by the scholar Abraham ibn Ezra that if it was Satan who seduced the woman, what is her sin? <sup>29</sup> Furthermore if Satan enticed her and did not the serpent himself, why did God curse the serpent? The truth of it is as the plain meaning of the Scriptures show it, that the serpent himself seduced and enticed

the woman, and God gave him momentary understanding in order to test them. If the ass could speak with Bilaam, why should not the serpent speak with Eve? It might also be said that this speech was not by mouth or in clear language but by moving and waving of they hands, as stammerers do. But let not the matter of speech trouble you, for we find, "And God spoke to the fish and he spewed out Jonah upon the dry land."<sup>30</sup> How should God speak with the reptiles of the sea when He doesnot even speak with pure and good men, execept with a very few of them, and they are the prophets? However, the explanation of it is that he put it into his heart and will to cast him upon the dry land. In all such cases you will find the use of the term "speech" in the Torah and the prophets concerns the matter of thought without expression in words. As in Obadiah, "That sayest in thy heart, 'who shall bring me down to the ground.'"<sup>31</sup> Also in Deuteronomy, "I thought I would make an end of them, I would make their memory cease from among men."<sup>32</sup>

## Chapter Two

This chapter the author wrote to answer the words of the gentile priest, Paul Medici, a wise man who changed his religion in the year 5452 after creation.

The author speaks: In the chapter which I wrote on the original sin of Adam, and which precedes this one, I differed from the opinion of Maimonides in many matters, and when you read it, you were astounded at me--that I dare to differ from him. For is not one who differs from the words of the wise called a heretic, and he has no position in the world to come? But know that there is neither the essence of truth in this matter, nor did he who expounded it to you explain it fittingly. You know that before our exile, and that of our kings and priests in strange lands, the commentaries to the Written Torah were not written in a book, but were rather handed down from mouth to mouth, every father taught ~~them~~ to his son, one man from the other, and they forgot nothing. Why was it necessary to write in a book that "the fruit of the beautiful tree"<sup>33</sup> is the ethrog? Does not everyone know it as something which he has seen from his fathers? However, after the destruction of the Temple many things were forgotten, and they found it necessary in the days of Judah Hanasi, who was called among them, Rabbi, to write all these things in a book. That constitutes the Mishnah and the G'marah,<sup>34</sup> and he himself arranged it. His disciple Rabbi Jochanan arranged the Palestinian G'marah, and in the days of Rabana and Rabbi Ashi, they sealed the Babylonian Talmud, which is the last and principle work for us. Rabbi Aba, M'remar, and others of their disciples, those who are called the Saboraim, added that part

necessary to explain the words of the Tannaim and Amoraim. From that time on, concerning a matter of law of that which is either allowed or prohibited, we have not the power to differ from their words, nor to depart from their thought and decrees. Concerning that we are commanded in the law of Moses to hearken to the words of the wise and not to turn away from that which they teach you, and that is sensible and acceptable from the standpoint of reason. Since some of the authors of the Mishnah lived close to the time of the destruction, and some of them even at the time of the Temple, why should we not trust their words about that which they saw with their eyes and heard with their ears at the time that the Temple was still standing, or what they heard from their fathers who lived close to the time of the destruction? ~~How~~ can we today know more than they? That would be nothing less than a grave error. Because of that all the Gaonim decreed with the approbation of all the congregation of Israel that anyone who does not trust their words or their interpretations concerning that which is prohibited or allowed becomes a heretic. And that is correct. But in other matters which are not laws or judgments, such as the comments related in in the Gmarah and the Midrashim, even though we have not the power to destroy them, or to demolish their words or utterly to nullify them, we may nevertheless explain them with other interpretations as it appears to us from the literal scriptures. This has already been done by all the great commentators, Rashi, Abraham ibn Ezra, and David Kimchi. Many times they have departed from their commentaries and pursued the literal meaning.

Thus, as a matter of course, the argument which you raise against me is not a problem for two reasons: in the first place

because Maimonides is not one of the sages of the Talmud, and why should we not differ from him when we have a complaint that is reasonable and intelligent? In the second place, my argument concerns the question of the original sin of Adam, and there is nothing of prohibition or permission in it. Since it brings us to the heart of the matter, I will explain for you the saying of the rabbis: "Both are the words of the living God, and the Halacha is according to Rabbi. So-and-so."<sup>35</sup> When we argue it directly it will so puzzle you that you will say that even fools do not speak thus, that two should differ on one question, one says one thing and one says another and both of them should be right. That is impossible! They even say that the verse "And I will give the tables of stone...which I have written" refers to the Mishnah, and "that thou mayest teach teach them"<sup>36</sup> refers to the G'marah.<sup>37</sup> How is it possible that all the differences of opinion of the Tannaim and Amoraim, of the disciples of Hillel and Shammai and their many opinions up to Rabina and Rabbi Ashi were given to Moses at Mt. Sinai.

Another argument of yours that is even more surprising to me is what they state in Mesechta Berocoth: How do we know that God puts on phylacteries? How do we know that God prays?<sup>38</sup> Because it said, "I will bring them to my house of prayer."<sup>39</sup> It does not say the house of their prayer but the house of my prayer. You told me that even the foolish and stupid do not fall into mistakes like these. To whom would God pray, and wherefore would he put on phylacteries? Is He not devoid of corporeality? However, the secret of God is unto those who fear Him and when you study His Torah without a religious purpose, your loss destroys your gain. For Israel alone is suited to study and understand the deep things<sup>40</sup>

of the Torah, as it is said, "The Torah which Moses commanded to us is the heritage of the congregation of Jacob".<sup>41</sup> They also said that Israel was crowned with three crowns, the crown of the Torah, the crown of priesthood, and the crown of the kingdom.<sup>42</sup> However, I will interpret them and their words will be established.

We have already decided that the oral law is an interpretation of the written law, upon that which is not explained entirely or clearly in it. As for example: that the "fruit of the goodly tree" is the ethrog, that the "boughs of the thick trees"<sup>43</sup> is the myrtle. In the same manner we interpret the one by the other, using the oral law to know the essence and quality of the matter. Concerning that they said, "according to the Torah which they teach you",<sup>44</sup> and as Maimonides has written in his introduction to "Zeroim". In regard to the rebellious elder they said that he who transgresses the words of the wise incurs death.<sup>46</sup>

Know that every book that there is, if it is written in the language of secrecy it is impossible for the mass of people who read it to understand it except through the explanations and expositions by which some scholar well-versed in that field of scholarship explains it. We have already said that during the time of the Temple it was not necessary to write these interpretations and explanations in a book, for that which they saw from their fathers they also did and followed according to them. You will find many things which are entirely matters of the Torah, and which even the Karaites admit, are nevertheless not revealed or made clear except as the oral law explains them. How do we know that the phrase "as frontlets between thine eyes"<sup>47</sup> means to teach us concerning phylacteries, for the word "frontlets" we call a Hapax Legomena as

ibn Ezra wrote.<sup>48</sup> Thus the authors of the Talmud when they discussed the question for the laws of phylacteries as to whether it is a law from the Torah or a Rabbinic law, decided that it was a law from Moses from Sinai. Likewise the fast on the Day of Atonement is not entirely clear from the written law for the verse says, "In the seventh month, on the tenth of the month, ye shall afflict yourselves."<sup>49</sup> Who told us that this affliction is a denial of food? Is it not possible to say that it is an affliction of another kind: to walk in the sun, in the cold, rain, and the like as it is mentioned in Mesechta Yoma?<sup>50</sup> But we know that it is the denial of food through the oral law. Concerning that of which we are in doubt as to its interpretation, to whom shall we heed if not to the words of those who saw with their eyes all the customs of their fathers when the sanctuary was standing, just as the sage answered Lemburk,<sup>51</sup> the people of your congregation in the book of their disputes.

Concerning these explanations and interpretations of the matters of prohibition and permission when they said "which I have written"--that is, the Mishnah,--such as that the fast is the denial of food, that the fruit of the goodly tree is the ethrog, and the frontlets are the phylacteries, as we see it, these are fixed laws from the time of the beginning of the Jewish religion. It becomes clear to us without a doubt that they were received from Moses at Mt. Sinai. There is no question about this matter, every intelligent man understands it, and that is the meaning of the rabbis when they say that the Mishnah and the G'marah were given at Sinai. They meant thereby that the general principles and explanations that arise from them which are not explained in the written law. Not that Moses, our teacher, brought the Mishnah and the G'marah as it is

now written from Sinai, where rabbi so-and-so says thus and rabbi so-and-so says thus, as you thought. For these rabbis who debated in the Mishnah and the G'marah were not yet in this world and how could they say about them that Moses mentioned them, men who were born thousands of years after him? Why should Moses confuse the minds of the Jews with things that are to take place in the future? What good was it to them to know these disputes which were not born till later? Except that for the need of the hour the truth was revealed and they attain to it through the power of logic. But God forbid that the rabbis of Israel should speak thus. Yet they said explicitly in the Mesechta Berocoth that many laws were forgotten after the death of Moses and Ethniel b. <sup>Khar</sup> ~~Khar~~ brought them back through his power of reasoning, for everything is hinted at in the written law. <sup>52</sup> If you read in the Talmud the sections Erubin, Succah, Baba Kama, Baba Metziah, and Rosh Hashana, you will be unable to deny that the authors of the Mishnah and Talmud were extraordinarily wise in the sciences of mathematics and algebra and astronomy. They were also well versed in business and the remainder of the matters of law which is just as great a science. And how is it possible that such great and wise men as these should be so far removed from all wisdom as to say that Moses brought down from Mt. Sinai the arguments raised by Abbayi and Raba as they now are. God forbid!

It is ~~written~~ within my power to show you your error and the feebleness of your comprehension that you might attain the essence of their thoughts and wisdom. But the discussion will grow too lengthy and this is not its place. I will merely bring an example to verify my words. They say in Mesechta Berocoth, "Samuel said, 'The paths of the heavens are as clear to me as the paths of Nehardea except for the shooting star of which I do not know what its nature



is." <sup>53</sup> The interpretation of that statement is that he knew the heavens, that he knew the science of astronomy as well as the paths of Nehardea, the city wherein he was born. "Except for the shooting star" for it is not fixed and it does not appear at a fixed time and it has a tail. "I do not know what its nature is" is interpreted to mean that he did not know whence it comes, where it exists, or where it is going in its revolutions for it is not seen again and vanishes from its position. Consider the profundity of this man's wisdom, that until now, seventeen hundred years later, <sup>54</sup> how many scholars arose after him who invented the proper and right instruments and investigate, examine, and study the sciences of mathematics and astronomy--yet for them it is a doubtful question and they cannot explain it. How can one say about such men as these that they were fools, and say something which in truth, as you understand their words, that not even fools would say?

But it is as we said, when Moses gave them the written law anything of which the Jews were indoubt, he who was their teacher explained for them as to its meaning and that is the meaning of the "Halacha of Moses from Sinai." These they called the Mishnah and the G'marah and that without doubt is their meaning when they say that Moses gave them at Sinai. They mean that the laws and halachos that arise from the Mishnah and G'marah, Moses had already brought from Sinai without casuistry and dispute. But afterwards, during the exile and the troubles, they were forgotten, and were brought back through debate and argumentation. This is the truth and there is no room for your question.

That is the reason they said that only the Mishnah and G'marah interpret the laws--the laws of clean and unclean, of prohibition

and permission. For in truth it is necessary to hearken to their words and follow after their opinions. For if in their time there already began to be doubt and dispute, even though they lived at the time of the destruction of the Temple, surely we must now follow, who have not seen it nor heard it except what our fathers told us. But the aggados and interpretations by which they explain and interpret the Scriptures which do not give laws of prohibition and permission, not of clean and unclean, these are called the "Aggadah", and concerning these they do not at all say that they were given at Sinai. And as proof of this the great commentators interpret and explain the scriptures contrary to the Talmud--as Rashi, ibn Ezra and Rashbam as well as other great men of Israel do. Not one of them holds that these interpretations which are found scattered in the Talmud and Midrashim were given thus to Moses at Sinai. God forbid!! The authors of the Mishnah and G'marah knew that the essence of their explanations was homiletic and aside from their commentaries to the scriptures in which they lean on Biblical texts, there is still in the Scriptures the natural meaning which is the plain meaning. The Talmud has a saying, "I was eighteen years old before I knew the plain meaning of the Scriptures."<sup>55</sup> And Rashbam wrote similarly in his commentary to the Torah.<sup>56</sup> That is the essence of the matter and no intelligent man in the world doubts it.

If you ask how can one verse bear two different interpretations and both of them be right? Likewise according to what they decreed it is possible to interpret one verse in seventy different ways and thus give seventy sides to the Torah. I will tell you something. The Torah as we received it from our rabbis, Moses did

not write by himself, but it was given to him at Sinai word for word. If that is true and the Torah is the word of God, it is certainly possible that it received seventy interpretations--perhaps hundreds and thousands of interpretations, one different than the other and all of them dependent upon the knowledge of the speaker, which is the knowledge of God. His glory fills the whole world, He is the Almighty God, for nothing is impossible unto Him, everything for Him is in the category of the possible. Praised and exalted be His name.

I return again to the original subject which is that all which was clear and plain in the explanations of the Torah at the time of the prophets and the ancestors of our people, gave birth later to great doubts immediately after the destruction of the Temple when the Jews were dispersed to the four corners of the earth, Babylonia, Egypt and the other lands of the nations. At that time the Beth Din ceased to exist and that was a stumbling block which led to the forgetting of the laws and the explanations by the scattered people. Concerning everything which was not written in a book definitely and explanatorily the disciples confused. The first dispute was between the disciples of Hillel and Shammai immediately after the destruction of the Temple. They began the disputes, this one saying thus for so he received from his teacher and the other saying otherwise, and each bringing forth a proof for his argument. This debate of the first generation of Tannaim up to Rabbi Judah Hanasi is called the Mishnah, and he himself arranged it several hundred years after the destruction of the Temple. All the debates and disputes from the death of the disciples of Rabbi Judah Hanasi, who was called Rabbi, up to Rabina and Rav Ashi, are called the G'marah and it explains and interprets the Mishnah to make clear the words of the ancients with difficult questions and solutions

between them until they reach the truth. Many times you will find that they cannot reach it and they leave the matter in doubt and in question. But know that the purpose of these disputes is not to glorify themselves nor to praise their thoughts and thus to heighten a great name, and for pride. Rather, the essence of their disputes was only to make clear and to make lucid the truth for the sake of Heaven. You will find many times that two people dispute one matter, although one of them knows already that the truth is not with him, yet he is stubborn and sticks to his words, creations of wind, in order that it shall not be said that another man was victor over him and that happens many times.

But the opinions of the rabbis of the Talmud and Mishnah were not of people like that, founded upon pride or presumption, but rather for Heaven's sake and that is what they meant when they said that both are the words of the living God and the Halacha was according to rabbi so-and-so.<sup>57</sup> Because, since the intention of both of them was for good, even though the truth was with one of them, the law was according to rabbi so-and-so. At any rate do not think that that which is not established on the truth is not worthy. But rather, since his intention is good, to find the truth which his friend found, even though he did not find it, he is as worthy as the other. His words are considered before God in the same light as those of his friend, and that is the meaning of "And both are the words of the living God."<sup>58</sup> It is not as you think--two dispute one matter, one says it is prohibited, the other that it is permitted, and both their opinions are true. God forbid! There is no place for these words which you invented. May the wind bear them all away.

It is known to us, and it is true that it was the custom of the ancient authors in the eastern lands, in their books and compositions to write their matters in an allegorical manner, as we

see from the books and writings which were borrowed for us from the Greek scholars. For this reason, when they desired to debate on matters of instruction and things like that, of the the ethics of man, they compare it to proverbs and riddles, as if the beasts and the tree, and the stones speak one to other, in order to teach a lesson and enlighten mankind. That is known to all who are versed in their works and as Maimonides wrote. Also when they desired to speak of God they gave Him form and presented Him in the form of man who is the most complete and perfect creature in the world, and everything without is defective. The scholars and philosophers were compelled to speak thus because it was necessary for them to mention God and His world in their books and they were unable to explain their ideas to the mass without following this course. For it is impossible to make another man grasp and understand what a thing is, if the man that hears does not create in his mind the form of the thing and its essence. The prophets also followed this custom to the extent that Moses said, "The Lord is a Man of war."<sup>59</sup> Likewise God said to him, "You may see my back but my face you shall not see."<sup>60</sup> Isaiah said, "And I beheld God sitting on a throne, high and exalted, and the hem of His garment felled the Temple."<sup>61</sup> There are many like these, each one of the prophets according to his category and degree. Ezekiel also ~~xx~~<sup>62</sup> saw the angels in the form of animals and wheels and he did not even attribute to them the form of man. The reason for that is, since he started in his account to speak of the angels first in order to end up that he saw God, therefore he called them animals for if he had likened them to the form of man, he would not have left a form so perfect and chosen with which to describe God-- for there is not in the lower sphere a form more perfect or correct than man.

The principle question you ask is how can God put on phylacteries when He has neither body nor form. The same question you can put about Moses, for he called God, man. I can add questions, for God is spirit, without body, who has no face or back, no neck or limbs, as Maimonides wrote. Thus also Isaiah beheld Him sitting and he knew that only he can sit on a chair who has body and form. Thus you see that your complaint against the rabbis of the Talmud as to the corporeality of the Creator is in vain. If you have a just complaint about this, then you are right also about all the prophets. But the matter is as we have said, that he had to do this forcefully and powerfully for it cannot be understood if it does not at first take form in the mind of the hearer and reader as we have written. If the prophets had not given form to God and to the various intellects in different ways in the resemblance to man and other creatures, how could we understand or imagine a thing which we have never seen and of which we have never heard?

Do not think that when the rabbis said that God puts on phylacteries that it is as literally stated. Far be it! For the rabbis knew that God is not corporeal. As the Torah has it, "For the Lord<sup>63</sup> your God, He is God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath," and a body cannot at one time be in two places as Maimonides wrote<sup>64</sup> in his Sefer Hamadah. It is said that He did not show them any form and what has not form has no body. How could they hide from themselves such clear and ludicrous statements as these, because he who has body has no arms, and he who has no arms cannot put on phylacteries. You will find in the statement of the rabbis in Hagiga it is expressly said that God differs from the rest of existence by virtue of His spiritual nature. For thus they say then, "There is not above<sup>65</sup> either sitting or standing, neither neck nor weariness." Thus it is

plainly stated there that God has neither limbs nor movement such as living beings have. Consider that the rabbis said that God has no neck, if so He cannot put on phylacteries, because the head is their place. Do not argue and say that if it is as you say how can we picture or describe in our minds the true form of the Creator of the world. Know that the essence of the matter is that man has not the power to grasp the comprehension of God according to His true quality, and concerning this it is said, "Canst thou find out the deep things of God? Canst thou attain unto the purpose of the Almighty?"<sup>66</sup>

It has been shown that the opinions of the rabbis of the Talmud are agreed to a man that God has neither body nor form, wherever they indeed teach the plain meaning of the Scriptures. Maimonides, since this thing was clear to him, decreed in his Sefer Hamadah, that he who does not believe this is banished from the community of Israel and that is the established principle. Do not hearken to the opinion of Abraham ibn Daud for his opinions are not right as we shall explain with God's help.

In their desire to remind us that the matter of the phylacteries is an important commandment that it brings man near to God and His worship they try to add glory and strength to the matter, as if the phylacteries were fit for God to put on because of their importance to mankind. But not that He really puts them on as do mortals, far be it, as you have gathered from their writings. But they say it merely to enlighten us and bring us near to God. You will find in the Torah matters like this--example after example--for the prophets attributed to God many things which detract from His exaltedness and His character though they are not true. But they

speak thus to make us understand the exaltedness and the existence  
 of God. You will find in<sup>67</sup> the Book of Samuel that he says concerning  
 God that He is no man to be regretful. He maintains that since God  
 is cognizant of the future and of the events which are to take place  
 later, the qualities of regret and repentance cannot pertain to him  
 for the thing was already known to Him as is every event before it  
 occurs. Because the reason for man's regret and repentance is that  
 he has not the power to see what is to occur, and thus he believes  
 that he does something good and worthy and after he does it he dis-  
 covers that it is wrong and improper. But with God it is not so, for  
 He and His plans are one. He already knows the future and because  
 of that He need not regret what He did. That is the truth of the  
 matter and there is no doubt about it at all.

But does it not say on the Torah, "I regret that I have made  
 them,"<sup>68</sup> and in the Book of Samuel, "I regret that I have set up Saul  
 for a king."<sup>69</sup> Notice that it says clearly that He regrets. But the  
 matter is as we have said, that the prophets wrote and said these  
 things in order to give man an understanding of something that is  
 able to come within his corporeal perception and for this reason the  
 rabbis said that the Torah was not given to the ministering angels.  
 You will find that David said, "He who dwells in the heavens laughs."<sup>70</sup>  
 Moses said, "They provoke me with their vanities,"<sup>71</sup> and many like  
 these and these things do not pertain to God. Why do you not question  
 concerning the prophets and say of them that such qualities as regret  
 and anger, the shooting of arrows, they ascribe to God and give him  
 names--and thus make an accusation that not even the foolish speak  
 thus concerning God? But the common reason for it all is that since  
 you believe the words of the prophets just as you accept your religion,  
 you interpret their words allegorically and they are as pleasant  
 to you as honey from the honey-comb. But the words of the rabbis  
 of the Talmud which you do not believe, even though they are of the



same species and kind, example after example equal to the words of the Torah, you are not wont to explain them allegorically and according to a perverted literalism, good and right for your purpose. But with us it is not so, for the words of the rabbis of the Talmud are as important to us as the words of the prophets. There is no distinction between them for they are dependent upon the dogmatic principles which we Jews are in duty bound to believe. He who lifts a hand against them transgresses the prohibition implied in the words, "Thou shalt not deviate,"<sup>73</sup> which is a principle of the Torah. If this is so, one is like the other, they are both equally good, the words of the prophets and the words of our rabbis of the Talmud.

If the former spoke in allegory and riddle, the latter did likewise for they were their disciples and all their words are right, good and fitting for one who understands. Thus when it says in Berocoth that God prays, it is not literal, their words are spoken rather subtly and by illustration. The meaning of that matter is that they desired to show them the longing and desire on the part of God to have compassion upon Israel, the chosen people of God, except for sin. He is a just God. Thus<sup>they</sup> say in Exodus Rabah, "When they were led away to Egypt the Shechinah was with them, as it is said, 'I will go down with you into Egypt.'<sup>74</sup>" They were led away into Elam, the Shechinah was with them to help and aid them for God does not leave us nor will He ever forsake us unto eternity, as it is written, "Also this people when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not reject them nor cast them away to their pining, to break my covenant with them for I am the Lord their God."<sup>75</sup> Thus also the prophet Jeremiah says, "But I will not make a full end of thee, for I will correct thee in measure and will not utterly destroy thee."<sup>76</sup> This is the distinction between the Jewish people and the

rest of the peoples: the latter if they transgress the words of God and follow a path that is not good, He will destroy them and erase them from the earth, and the memory of them is blotted out of the world. Just as we find about the inhabitants of Nineveh about whom the prophet said, "In forty days Nineveh will be overturned,"<sup>77</sup> and had they not turned from their evil way through the mission of Jonah ben Amittai, they would have all died in the overturning of the city. Thus, too, did He destroy the people of Sodom from off the earth with sulphur and fire from heaven, and in places where these sinful cities were, there was formed a great river of salty and stinking water which is called Lake Kinnereth.<sup>78</sup> But with the Jewish people it is not so, for even though they transgress the commandments of God, he brings them to judgment and chastises them but He will never bring about their end nor their destruction for He has made a covenant with them that he will not destroy them as the master of prophets said, and that is the meaning of "I will not utterly destroy them."<sup>79</sup>

Therein is the meaning of the sentence, "How can God pray, as it says 'I will bring them to my house of prayer'?" It does not say their prayer, but my prayer. How does God pray? "Let it be My will before Me, that I may conquer My anger and have compassion on My children."<sup>80</sup> Note how they follow the manner of our teachers, the prophets, with illustrations and subtleties when they discuss about God. In order to give physical man the understanding they do not estrange from him in their writings the natural way of man and his regular conduct. This, because it often happens that the man is wrought up and angry with his children and his household when they do something that is not proper and which displeases him and while the anger and wrath are great, he whispers in his heart and he speaks to himself, and he says, "would that it were given to me that today I shall mete out vengeance and punishment upon them," even though it

rests with him alone as to whether he desires to take vengeance and punish them, he implores and prays to himself. That is the matter in our interpretation. The rabbis of the Talmud desired to teach us the laws of God for His people, the holy seed, and they adduced the example of a human father and son. All of this is in order that we creatures of clay may be able to grasp their thoughts with our minds. But they never thought that God really prays. Thus likewise in the case of Elijah mentioned in Berocoth, "Each day a heavenly voice goes forth and cries out, 'Who have burned my house'".<sup>81</sup> Thus all the Midrashim and stories are explained in this way as we have said, and not by the literal meaning.

### Chapter Three

The author speaks: We have already explained in the second chapter, which precedes this one, how essential it is for us to hearken to the words of the wise and that he who denies them or their explanations does not observe the Law of Moses at all. For he who denies that their explanation is the true one for the reason which we have advanced above and he presents from his own mind other explanations and meanings which are opposed to the traditional, makes clean the unclean and he permits what is forbidden or he makes unclean ~~xxx~~ what is clean and forbids what is permitted and other things like that; through his false explanations he comes to remove and abolish the written law and he is not a Jew. This the rabbis call interpreting the law in opposition to the adopted sense; i.e., he who gives an explanation opposed to the conclusion of the Halacha and accepted decision or by way of inventing laws and commandments or destroying them by taking them out of their context. For example, he who says, "Why is it necessary to have an ethrog when the verse says, "The fruit of the beautiful tree'"? By implication he permits any fruit, particularly if it is good, but thus he nullifies the law of the ethrog which God commanded us according to the tradition of those who preceded us. Likewise, one who says, "What prohibition is there against eating cheese which was pressed in another city with the meat that was slaughtered here, if the verse says, 'Thou shalt not boil a kid in the milk of its mother'<sup>82</sup>--only the meat of the kid and its mother alone?" But an ox and other cattle are permitted even with its mother's milk according to the literal meaning of the verse."

By this false explanation he comes to permit the forbidden

which according to the words of the rabbis, it says in the Torah three times, "Thou shalt not boil", once to prohibit eating, once to prohibit its use, and once to prohibit its boiling; and it mentions kid three times to prohibit a cow, a beast, and a fowl.<sup>83</sup> By my explanations are answered the objections which the commentators put to Rashi: that in one place he could write that the verse repeats three times to prohibit eating, boiling, and use and in another place he says that the verse is repeated three times to prohibit the meat of a cow, beast, and fowl.<sup>84</sup> How can one verse itself be interpreted for two laws, and if they are different aggados why does he bring them both? But in accordance with what we have said all this comes out in that they are not different aggados, and in the opinion of all the authorities, "Thou shalt not boil", is surely written three times to prohibit eating, use, and boiling. But the interpretation of cow, beast, and fowl is not derived from the word boil but from kid three times, as we have said.

Thus also one who gives interpretations from his own mind opposed to their traditional interpretation to make strict something which they made light. For example, a man who interprets the sentence, "A man shall not go out of his house on the seventh day"<sup>85</sup> literally, that it is obligatory for all generations or that it prohibits the going out of the house on the Sabbath, as do the Karaites--this one interprets the law in opposition to the adopted sense. According to all authorities the legal limit for walking on the Sabbath is twelve mil and that has the approbation of all the geonim as Rabbi Alfasi<sup>86</sup> wrote in his first chapter to Erubin. There are some who disagree and say that it is not so declared, that the punishment for the Erub for the purpose of Sabbatical limit is only according to the

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opinion of Rabbi Akiba who thought that the Sabbatical limits were derived from the Torah. But according to the opinion of a number of rabbis who agree in the opinion, the Sabbatical limit is not at all derived from the Torah nor even the number of miles, which Nachmanides has lengthened at the end of the first chapter of Lokin.<sup>87</sup> According to this, the command, "A man shall not go out of his place", was declared only while they were in the wilderness and it is possible to reason for this. Since it is forbidden to war on the Sabbath except when the enemy comes against them, therefore Moses decreed upon them that each one shall stay in his place on the seventh day within the limits of the Jewish camp, in order that they shall not go out and war with their enemies. The matter of two thousand cubits as the Sabbatical limit is from the rabbis as Maimonides wrote.<sup>88</sup>

It is our intention in this chapter to examine and find out what those fundamental principles are which one must believe to called by the name Israel and without which it is not proper to apply that title to him and he is forbidden entrance into the congregation. Maimonides in his commentary to the Mishnah in Perek Chelek and in the Sefer Hamadah exaggerates, for he brings into his account many things that even though we agree with him that every Jew is bound to believe them, nevertheless they are not called the dogmatic principles. If one from the point of view of his philosophy and his thought, even though he be mistaken and in error, comes to deny them, he does not lose the name of Jew for this reason. Of this same type is what he decreed in his magnum opus, the Hilkoth Teshubah,--that he who does not believe in the coming of the Messiah is a heretic and has no portion in the world to come.<sup>89</sup> You are already aware of the fact that a heretic is one who denies the Torah presumptuously and

high-handedly, or who derives the words of our rabbis in a matter in which they all agree and in which there is no difference of opinion. The great wonder is how he derived this principle, for behold Moses our teacher said nothing about it, nor did he bid us to believe in the coming of a redeemer at all in this matter. How can Maimonides say that he who does not believe in his coming, even though he keep all the commandments of God, the Torah, and its statutes, he is an atheist and cannot be called by the name Israelite? Also, the commentators to his work in the Sefer Hamadah do not find the source for his opinion in regard to this matter in the G'marah.

It is greatly surprising that Maimonides in his Sefer Hamishva-voth <sup>90</sup> complains against the author of the Halacoth Gedoloth that he includes in the account of the 613 commandments the reading of the Megilah, the reading of Hallel, and Chanukah. He says: "Examine on the basis of a careful examination of language, from whom could he have heard them spoken? Were they spoken to Moses at Sinai? He includes the Hallel ~~which~~ with which King David praised God and which came so many hundred years later." These are the words <sup>91</sup> of Maimonides. Our complaint against him is great; for in the final analysis, the author of the Halacoth Gedoloth, when he says that the reading of the Megilah and the lighting of the Chanukah candle are commands from the Torah, he does not decree on this ground that if somebody denies one of them he becomes a heretic and is not a Jew, as Maimonides does in regard to the command for the coming of the redeemer. Undoubtedly it is not a command from the Torah and it is not an oral law from Sinai. It is a rabbinic law and also among the doubtful disputes, and it is not according to the opinion of the majority of rabbis as we explained. Yet we must argue on behalf of

the author of the Halacoth Gedoloth and show that his opinions are not remote. The commandments which he enumerated are the ordinances of the prophets and are included under the rule, "The fundamentals of the Torah ye shall not forsake"<sup>92</sup> and in another place, "I will raise a prophet for them...to him shall they hearken."<sup>93</sup> If so, then the ordinances and the decrees and the commandments which the prophets ordained are in the same category as though Moses ordained them. Since Rabbi Simlai said that these commandments were in their place already, such as the Chanukah candle, the commandment about Hallel and the reading of the Megilah, and the Mrub which Solomon and his court had decreed, it is possible that Rabbi Simlai alluded to them as did the author of the Halacoth Gedaloth.

Maimonides brings into his account the prayer which is of rabbinical origin according to all the opinions as you will find it explained in Berocoth and it is the accepted decision. "The patriarchs established the prayers but the rabbis found support for them with the sacrificial cult; for that reason the Arvis (evening) prayer is also obligatory."<sup>94</sup> Concerning a polluted man they say that at the time of his pollution he is obligated to read the Sh'ma and make the blessing over food; and they advance the reason that the reading of the Sh'ma and the blessing over food are laws from the Torah while prayer is from the rabbis.<sup>95</sup> In Succah they say concerning prayer that if a man in a state of pollution begins to pray, he does not stop. They ask the question about the Lulav which it is thought may be taken at the table, consequently it is interrupted. They reply that the former is from the Torah, the latter is a rabbinic law. Rabbi Joseph de Leon in the book, Megilath Esther, also in the book Leb Someach<sup>96</sup> and the author of Kinot Soferim<sup>97</sup> tried to sustain



Maimonides by saying that what they reply there that one is from the Torah and the other from the rabbis means that the first refers to the prayer itself which is from the Torah, while the form and the time when it is said is a rabbinic law, but the main obligation is from the Torah. When they say in Berocoth that a polluted man does not pray during the time of his pollution, that refers to the form of prayer itself; that is, that he does not pray a long prayer, but a short prayer he does pray. Thus prayer is obligatory.

But that is all nonsense! For the opinions of the rabbis of the Talmud when they say that a polluted man does not pray is that during the time of his pollution he is forbidden to pray either the long prayer or the shortened one, according to the plain meaning of the Talmud and the opinion of the commentators. Also in regard to the problem raised in Succah that the prayers are established in place of sacrifice and if this is so then they are from the Torah, just as the Lulav. But they reply that the conclusion is agreed upon that the patriarchs established prayer and the rabbis linked them with sacrifices, therefore prayer is a rabbinic institution and there is no interruption between the long and shortened prayer. Thus the great commentator Rashi understood it and all the commentators and authorities. Furthermore, if the time of the prayer is not from the Torah, if it is not obligatory each day, nor even once a year or two years or three years, then according to Maimonides when does the obligation of the Torah fall upon us? It is sufficient to fulfill the obligation to pray once a life time. What kind of a commandment is this, the like of which we do not find in all the 613 commands? Furthermore, according to his view, he who accidentally does not pray the morning prayer and at Mincha is in doubt whether he prayed or

not, he must go back and pray. Perhaps he will say that since the Mincha prayer is once a day it is enough according to the 'orah. All of this is not to the point for the in the final analysis, according to the view of Maimonides, a polluted person must pray the short prayer while he is in the period of pollution. That is most astonishing, because the recitation of the Sh'ma is not obligatory except for the first sentence according to Rav, which is according to the Halacha of Rabbi Meir who says thus in the second chapter of Berachoth. If so, what is the difference between the recitation of the Sh'ma and the Tefila for even though he shortens the prayer, it will certainly be more than the sentence: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one."

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We return to our subject, the matter of the Messiah, for what Maimonides calls a fundamental principle, which if one does not believe in it he is excluded from the fold of Israel, is not actually so, as we have explained. Especially since this command is raised in the Talmud amidst disputes and arguments. Furthermore, some excellent men of our people did not believe in it, and yet the rabbis of the Talmud did not think of separating them from the congregation. They did not say concerning them that they were heretics and Epicureans as it occurred to the mind of Maimonides. Far be it! You will find in Sanhedrin that one of the rabbis of the Talmud clearly denied the coming of the Messiah and this is what is said there: "Said Rabbi Hillel, 'The Jews have no messiah for he was already consummated in the days of Hezekiah.'" We do not find anyone there who said concerning Rabbi Hillel that he was a heretic. Far be it! But they argued against him with reason and intelligence to destroy his opinion and to annihilate his words, according to the manner of the Amoraim.

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They said, "God forgive Rabbi Hillel for his opinion, for he is mistaken concerning him about whom Haggai and Malachai prophesied, for they came after Hezekiah." <sup>100</sup> In truth his opinion was weakened and destroyed. We have more to argue against Rabbi Hillel, for even the words of the prophets who prophesied before Hezekiah were not fulfilled at all in his days. For what was the pleasure which the Jews enjoyed in his days!

They have already decreed in the G'marah that we, all the Jews, are obligated to believe in his coming, and they said, "Cursed are those who calculate the Messianic end." <sup>101</sup> But Maimonides must have known that even though we are bound to wait patiently and in all trust according to what the rabbis command, nevertheless they do not say that he who does not believe in him is excluded from the fold of Israel. If so, why does he call him a heretic? You will find in Perek Chelek that all their ends are consummated and the matter is dependent only upon repentance. <sup>102</sup> In another aggadah you will find the reverse. It is written, "I, the Lord, will hasten it in time." <sup>103</sup> If they do not merit it, then it will be in its regular time; if they merit it then I will hasten it. But according to the first ~~stat~~ statement it is certain that the time which the Lord promised us has already passed and he delayed it for us until now because of the multitude of your transgressions and our sins and the Messiah will not come if we do not repent. But according to the second statement, if we merit it he will come before the time that God had previously fixed and He will anticipate his coming because of our merit. But if we do not merit it, then he will not hasten his coming before the time, but rather in its time; i.e., the time for the coming of the Messiah which God fixed whether we merit it or not. He will not delay but surely come. He will not delay as the first statamnt implies.

You will also find among them one who desires that the Messiah shall not come in his time. If an important man arise, raised in the Law of God, who obeys his commandments which He gave to us in His holy Torah, according to the tradition and interpretation of our rabbis, upon seeing these distinctions and disputes among the rabbis of the G'marah, he interprets their thoughts and considers all of these--and from his reasoning and study he denies the coming of the Messiah, but he believes that God will give either reward or punishment in the world that comes after life and that everyone has his reward according to his deeds whether they are good or bad and he clings to the thought of Rabbi Hillel, why does Maimonides exclude him from the congregation of Israel and what reason has he for it? What need is there according to the faith of Israel and the principles of our Torah for this Messiah when according to his teachings man must receive the reward for his good deeds in the corporeal world? But if one does not think in such manner and he differs about it and he says that God's reward and recompense to those who fear Him is not to the body in the corporeal world, but to the soul alone after death, in the heavens, the garden of Eden, in the place where there are the seraphim and the heavenly beasts, as we have said. Because of this shall he be called a heretic? Does he not believe in reward and punishment?

But behold that Maimonides has built a high wall around his Thirteen Articles of Faith without which according to his opinion one cannot be a Jew. He insists that anyone who denies one of them is a heretic. But it is like a bubble--for behold, he decrees in the fourth article that anyone who is to be called by the name Israel must believe that the Law of Moses will never change. It is possible that

the matter is according to his words, that the Torah is eternal. But when he deduces that one who does not believe that is not a Jew, that is not true, and I do not know how and where he got it. We do not find in the Talmud or in the Midrashim this matter at all and his principle is not correct. For on the contrary, according to what we find in the G'marah, Adam was forbidden the eating of living things, "All the fruit of the tree of the garden you may eat" <sup>104</sup>--and later on He permitted it to Noah, "As the green herb, I have given you all." <sup>105</sup> In the G'marah they say, "As the green herb which I allowed to Adam, I permit you all eating of living things." <sup>106</sup> Likewise He allowed them to eat the sinew of the thigh vein and prohibited it unto Jacob. Noah and Abraham brought their sacrifices outside of Palestine. Jacob was permitted to marry two sisters and after that it was forbidden to Israel in the Law of Moses. Then what is Maimonides talking about! For everything is good and proper according to the time and when the time changes the law changes--and there is no regret over this at all. It is possible that the thing which at one time makes use of one type of behavior, after years with a change of time makes use of another type of behavior. After the divine law has been changed so many times, which was given to our holy fathers before the giving of the Law at Sinai, why does Maimonides decree the absolute dictum that the Law of Moses will never change? If Moses arise, or there come another prophet as great as he in the word of God, and say to us that the entire Torah is to be renewed or part of it, and he brings us to Mt. Sinai or some other place according to which God decreed, and he should cause us to hear His voice in the miracles and wonders, amidst thunder and lightning--and thus give us another Torah from the hand of God, why should we not believe him nor accept his words?

Maimonides adds further that if there be anyone, whether there be of the other ~~other~~ nations or of Israel, who gives a sign or performs a miracle and says that God sent him to add or to subtract a commandment; i.e., as one did not hear it from Moses. Or who ~~says~~ that those commandments ordained upon Israel are not forever or for a generation to come, but are laws for the hour, behold he is a false prophet for he comes to deny the prophesy of Moses and his death is by strangulation. <sup>107</sup> These are his words and there is no truth in them, nor is there either root or branch for them in the Talmud. Rabbi Joseph Kara in his Kesef Mishnah pretended as if he did not know and he does not find its source. The verse that he brings, "All this command....thou shalt not add or detract from it." <sup>108</sup> He forbids to add or detract from our knowledge, like those who say what prohibition is there in the Shatnez <sup>109</sup> and like this are those who formed the word of God from their evil hearts and minds, and that is clear. Likewise his bringing support from a verse, "God is not a man that He should lie" <sup>110</sup> is no proof at all. For we have said that since the Torah obtains for physical man, today perhaps one thing is useful for him and tomorrow some new thing is more useful and better for him, because of a change of atmosphere and climate and there is no regret in all this, as we have said.

We acknowledge the words of Maimonides that if a prophet arise and give us signs and wonders and said to us that God sent him to change one of the commandments of the Torah, we should not readily believe him. Because when he changes or sets aside the laws that Moses gave us and invents other laws, he invents something for us that had not happened to our fathers until now. We certainly would not lend an ear nor hearken to his words in this message if he does not cause us to hear the voice of God speaking from the burning bush

as Moses did. Nor would we believe in signs or wonders, for perhaps he does it through magic just as the magicians of Egypt who also performed with their enchantment wonders like the miracles of Moses our teacher. Maimonides admits that Elijah, in his opinion, annulled the command of the Law of Moses when he brought his sacrifices outside of Jerusalem, contrary to the Law of Moses, and God accepted his sacrifice. He disproved the false prophets as it is written in the Book of Kings and if it is necessary to annul so many commandments to bring them back to religion, they can certainly be disregarded temporarily. Even though we do not find it in the message of God, there is still the reality that part of it was annulled. Then why does Maimonides exclude from the fold of Israel him who considers the Torah to be renewed is not an impossible event? When the world will entirely change with the coming of the Messiah and many things will be made new, perhaps by His will and desire will be added or detracted from the Torah, or He will invent another Torah fit and proper for that time. Because His thoughts are greater than our thoughts; and who can discover or affirm what He will do in the future? They mention in the Talmud that the fast on the ninth of Ab will in the future be converted into a great festival, as it is written: "Thou shalt call it as a festive day." <sup>111</sup> Thus according to their words He will invent new things; He will add a festival more than what we now celebrate according to the Law of Moses.

In Sanhedrin in Perek Chelek, they speak of those who have no portion in the world to come and they enumerate amongst them him who says the Torah is not from heaven. They explain in the G'marah, "That even if he says the whole Torah is from heaven except this verse, that God did not speak it but rather Moses himself did, con-

cerning him it is said that he spurned the word of God. Even if says that all the Torah is from heaven except this grammatical detail or this argument of minor to major or except this analogy, he spurns the word of God." <sup>113</sup> Where does Maimonides get the idea that he who says that perhaps the Law of Moses will be renewed is not in the congregation of Israel and is a heretic?

Rabbi Joseph Kara feels this in his commentary to the Sefer Hamadah and answers that certainly if he who denies an argument of analogy is a heretic, he who says that the Torah is not eternal must surely be one. He tries by speaking thus to find a pretext for the view of Maimonides. But is not possible that so great a scholar as he fell into an error over which not even school children stumble. His conclusion of minor to major which he builds carries his own refutation. There is a great difference between one who says that this grammatical point is not from heaven and that Moses spoke it himself, and one who says that by the will of God, perhaps the Torah will be renewed. For he who denies a part of the Torah or one of its commandments adduced by the argument of minor to major or that of analogy, he certainly is a heretic because later on another will arise and deny another commandment and so on until the whole Torah becomes annulled in a short time. Since he denies something which has already occurred, the giving of the oral law when he denies one of its commandments as we have explained above in the second chapter and since God has obligated us to believe all of it and not part of it there is no doubt that concerning him it is said that he spurned the word of God. For, in truth, he spurned that which God commanded when he established the word and testament. But he who says that perhaps God by His own free will will renew it, not that he has done so up to now, rather that it is proper for God to renew it by His own free



will--why is it said concerning him that he spurned the word of God? What despicable act does he commit toward the word of God, if he does not have in mind any deed at all and he admits that this renewal cannot occur unless God desires to renew his decrees, and if He does not so will it, the freedom of action is with Him to leave us the Law of Moses as it was given at Mt. Sinai? How does this argument of minor to major apply from present to future?

In the Book of Leviticus on the verse "These are the command-  
ments which God commanded to Moses!" <sup>114</sup> the rabbis say that this teaches that a prophet is not permitted to change anything from now on. <sup>115</sup> That is correct, because if a prophet comes and performs wonders and miracles and tells us that one of the laws of the Torah has been renewed or annulled we do not hearken to his voice, as we have said above, for the wonders and miracles are perhaps performed through magic and enchantment. For that reason, if it is not certain that he is a prophet from some time before and in the beginning his prophecy and message comes to change something in the Laws of Moses, even temporarily, we do not hearken to him at all. In the Sifre they say, "To him ye shall hearken, even if he says transgress one of the commandments of the Torah as Elijah at Mt. Carmel. If it is for the time being hearken to him." <sup>116</sup> Thus it is explained that if it is certain that he is a prophet from before, just as Elijah was to them at that time, we listen to him for the time being. This they also say <sup>thus</sup> in the Talmud chapter Hanchonokin. <sup>117</sup> But if he says to us that the Torah has been renewed, or one of its statutes has been changed forever, we do not hearken to him because he performed wonders and miracles. For in truth, if God desired to renew the Torah he would call us through Moses or a prophet as great as he to Mt. Sinai or some other place and amidst thunder and lightning, he would

make us to hear His voice as he did to our fathers. That will be the only sign of renewal and every miracle outside of that will not be enough to deny the laws of the Torah. That is the root of the faith based upon solid foundations, upon the rabbis of the Talmud, and not as Maimonides did when he removed from God, as if it were possible,, dominion over renewal of the Torah and said that it was entirely impossible. You will find in the G'marah that in the future all the books, except the Book of Eshter, will be void--as it is written, "And the memory of them shall not end with the children." <sup>118</sup> Thus many new things will be invented in accordance with what God will decree for that time, for His knowledge is greater than our knowledge. So what is Maimonides talking about? If it is true that the form of the sanctuary which is pictured in the Book of Ezekiel concerns the sanctuary which is to be built in the future as the rabbis said, there are certainly many additions and many subtractions in it compared to the one Solomon built.

There is also the verse "But with him that standeth here <sup>119</sup> this day." Its meaning is that since the Jews of that generation received the Torah at the hands of Moses, and they said to him "every- <sup>120</sup> thing which God spoke we will do and we will observe", they were in truth obligated to observe the Torah all their lives until the day of their death. But the strength of that obligation rested only upon that generation alone and not upon their children and their children's children that came after them. For that reason it was necessary to say to them, "But with him who standeth here with us this day." Because, since you heard the voice of God speaking from the midst of the fire and with your eyes you beheld the wonders and miracles which God then performed for you and you willingly accepted the Torah, then He said to them that the obligation rested

not only upon them but also upon their descendants after ~~them~~ them. That is the meaning of "The law which Moses commanded us is the heritage of the congregation of Jacob".<sup>121</sup> Thus they say in the G'marah that the phrase "who standeth here with us" teaches us that all souls which are to come were there at Mt. Sinai at that time. They meant that since the man of the future is in the seed of the father and since the fathers were there at Mt. Sinai and obligated themselves to observe the Torah for themselves and for their descendants, the oath also rests upon the children and they are also obligated like their fathers by the force of the inheritance. Because, if it is ~~true~~ that it is right and proper for children to inherit their fathers' possessions--houses, fields, and other property--they also must assume the obligations and they enter upon their obligations by force of the inheritance itself. Therefore, for us, if one is connected to the religion of the Gentiles and he throws over his own religion he is as a Jew who transgresses publicly. Thus he who is connected to the Gentile peoples, when he dies his children are obligated to mourn for him and rend their clothes over him for his rebellion is nothing--since his forefathers already established, accepted, and took oath to observe the Torah and an oath is not dependent on an oath.

That is the meaning of the verse and not literally that all beings who are to be were actually there at Mt. Sinai on the day of the giving of the Torah, as many of the people of our faith understand it. It is clear that when Moses said to them, "But with him who standeth here with us this day," he did not mean to tell us that the Law of Moses is eternal or that it cannot be changed. He told them that in order that they shall not have the power to overthrow the obligation of the Torah from the generations that came after them, unless God renews by His own free will; therefore he said that they were all obligated, as we interpreted it.

## Chapter Four

The author speaks: Do not wonder and do not become astounded at the fact that the questions and arguments which I advanced against the ideas of Maimonides escaped his attention. In truth there were many matters unknown to the rabbis who were great scholars, which were later revealed to the disciples. In this regard it is said, "I have grown wise from all my disciples,"<sup>122</sup> and the prophet said, "Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom."<sup>123</sup> Every man is privileged to err--as the psalmist said, "Every man errs."<sup>124</sup> If the thirteen principles of Maimonides are part of the tradition, then let us accept them. But if they are adduced by reason, then our opinion differs from his. We hold that according to our view those principles which every one who is called a Jew is obligated to believe are six in number:

- 1) The existence of God.
- 2) God is one.
- 3) God is incorporeal.
- 4) God revealed Himself to Moses at Sinai and the prophecies of Moses are true.
- 5) The Torah comes from Heaven.
- 6) Reward and punishment.

These are the six principles and when one denies one of them and does not believe it, he is not worthy of the name Israel nor of the the faith of Judaism. He leaves our holy congregation and becomes a heretic.

### 1) The Existence of God

Our weak and feeble minds cannot bring exact and perfect proof for the existence of God for the mind of man and his understanding is limited and he has not the power to comprehend or to understand the mysteries. If we cannot know or behold what happens at a distance of about three miles from us, how should we be able to know

what happens in the high heavens. All the philosophers who think or imagine that they have clear proof or exact evidence about this are in error. And among them is Maimonides who in his Sefer Hamadah says in the beginning of the book that the foundation and essence of wisdom is to know that there is a first cause and that He is the creator of all existence.<sup>125</sup> This is undoubtedly true, for the foundation of the Torah and the first commandment which it ordains upon us is that we know the existence of God and believe in Him. Without that the whole Torah collapses, for in the absence of a law-giver there cannot be law. That is why the Scriptures say, "I am the Lord thy God."<sup>126</sup> God is certainly the creator of all being both in the heavens and below, just as Maimonides wrote. This we are obligated to believe just as the prophets and the tradition commanded us, for they are more trustworthy and superior to all proof.

However, Maimonides does not speak of this at all. He desires to philosophize and to obligate us by the strength of logic and nature. He says that if it occurs to the mind that all beings cannot exist without Him, whereas He alone can exist and He is not destroyed in their destruction, for all beings need Him but God does not need them nor anyone of them; therefore, His verity is not as is their verity.<sup>127</sup> These are the words of Maimonides and their meaning is that even if you were to say that all creatures do not exist or that for some reason they were to be destroyed from off the world, not because of that must He also be destroyed. That is the meaning of "He is not destroyed in their destruction but they are destroyed in His destruction."<sup>128</sup> For even though at the death of the builder, the building is not destroyed thereby, that is so only when the building or the work after it is completed does not need the builder, such as a house, a boat, and the like. But if the thing constantly needs

the guidance of the builder and his work, such as man and other living beings who need the guidance of God. Scripture says, "For not by bread alone does man live, but by the word of God." <sup>129</sup> If He is destroyed, they are also destroyed; for if the head dies, the whole body dies. That is the meaning of Maimonides and it is fundamental.

However, what he decreed in the first section--if God does not exist, nothing else can exist--that is not correct at all. Because the questioner then replies, then according to your words it is impossible for anything to exist unless we know that there is something else which brought it into existence. This question may be asked also about God. Perhaps Maimonides will say that since God is eternal He is unique and has not genus, that since He has no beginning He has no end and He was not created as the other creatures were, and that He is forever and ever. All of this is true but there is no clear proof for it, for it is impossible for us to understand or to conceive with our minds something which is eternal and which has no cause. For while it is correct for us that God has not beginning that is only by virtue of the tradition and faith as we have received it from our ancestors. But if one comes and argues with us on the basis of natural phenomena and asks whether this precious stone has been placed here in the world since time immemorial, we would answer that according to the laws of nature your argument of existence is false and it is possible that what you say is by way of exaggeration. For perhaps that stone was there for hundreds, thousands, or tens of thousands of years, yet since it is found here there certainly was a hand in the world that placed it there and before that time it was not there. Thus in the matter of the existence of God the questioner argues--if you say that He is forever then I do not understand, because ultimately, before that time, He did not exist.

However this question cannot be answered on the basis of natural phenomena for man has not the power to enter into these mysteries of to understand them because of the limitation of our mental capacity. The conclusion of this matter is that here also Maimonides did not acquit himself correctly. We know His existence and His essence from His wondrous works, as David said, "How great are Thy works, O Lord, in wisdom hast Thou made them all; the earth is full of Thy possessions."<sup>130</sup> The knowledge of God is forced upon us from the strength of the created things. When we consider the heights and behold the heavens, the sun and the moon, the stars and the spheres, who does not acknowledge that there is a power in the world that created them all from absolutely nothing? Thus the prophet spoke, "Lift your eyes to the heights and behold who created these, who is found in the number of their host."<sup>131</sup> When we see a house we certainly know that there must be a builder who built it, for there is no work without a worker, as we have said in the beginning of the book and when we know that the the existence of God becomes clear to us. But it is impossible for one of faulty mind and doubtful knowledge to comprehend and explain the matter of creation with clarity, not to reflect upon it clearly and that because of the limitation of our mental capacity, as we have explained.

The author of the Ikkorim wrote that there are things which if we did not see them with our eyes we would not have believed in their existence but they are in the category of the possible, just as the magnet which draws the iron to it.<sup>132</sup> I will bring another matter even more wonderful which was not known at the time of Joseph Albo, the author of the Ikkorim; i.e., the compass which always points to the north even though the wind is blowing from the other direction. If you take it when it is pointing north and turn it south, or some

other direction, when you remove your hand from it, it will return to the north--even if you do that a thousand times! When it leaves the equator it hangs between north and south. For all of this we do not know the reason and if our fathers had told us about this thing we would not have believed them. However we believe the matter because it falls within our perception. Thus if even in natural things there are so many matters which have no rational explanation and yet we cannot deny their existence and label them as untrue, because in truth it is not there, there is no reason in the matter but rather that until now scientists have been unable to comprehend it--surely it is so with the existence of God, for it is a matter of truth even though there is no proof for it.

That is the meaning of the author of the Ikkorim and his proof is more fitting than all the proofs of Maimonides. Thus God was, is, and will be--as the belief is current among all the faiths extant in the four corners of the earth, in all the inhabited portions. Undoubtedly, man is able to bring many proofs for His existence and presence; nevertheless our minds are not able to comprehend or to understand these proofs, since man's nature and character is corporeal and it is impossible for a corporeal being to comprehend beyond his intellectual horizon. Thus Scripture says, "You shall see My behind but My face you shall not see"; <sup>133</sup> i.e., man can comprehend but very little of the superior might of the Creator. Even though He be a great scholar, he ~~is~~ comprehend the matter only with uncertainty. It is as one who looks at the back of a man, and even though he be very tall and large in stature and it appears that he is handsome, it is possible that he is ugly if one does not see his face. That is the meaning of the verse "And My face you shall not see" <sup>134</sup> as Maimonides wrote. <sup>135</sup> Furthermore it is possible that they err less than the false people who



deny the existence of God, and that the people who believe in Him and His existence do not err, for supposedly the opinion of the majority is right and true in all disputes. Isaiah said, "And in every place offerings are made to My name"<sup>136</sup> which we will explain further on. When we turn our attention the four corners of the earth and search and seek the opinion of men who dwell the world over, it appears that the influence of God is upon every creature; through his very nature he believes in the existence of God and in His presence.

You already know that the ancients thought that the end of the world and the end of the earthly sphere was the Mediterranean Sea, the small sea which lies between two lands, Spain and Africa. They held that the earthly sphere ended there as Ptolemy wrote in his book on geography. Since directly beyond the Mediterranean Sea they saw the large expansive body of water which is the ocean, they held that from there on all the world was full of salt water. They found no other settled lands and no humans as the above-mentioned author tells. Still it is true that Aristotle, the Greek who wrote his books about 450 years before the ~~destruction~~ destruction of the Temple, about the time of Ezekiel,<sup>137</sup> doubted the boundaries of the world and said that according to his opinion there are inhabited lands found beyond the great sea. He adds furthermore that in ancient times the land of Spain was joined to and not separated from Africa. They were separated later by the earthquakes that split up the land and formed a sea between them which is the small sea that separates. He adds that in the beginning of creation, Africa was also joined to America and in place of the dividing sea that now lies between them there lay a large land which he calls Atlantidi which was thoroughly destroyed by the tremendous earthquakes of those days. Although he was great in the study of theology, natural science and other sciences, as Mai-

monides wrote in his Moreh Nebuchim, nevertheless he wrote all his opinions with uncertainty. The reason for that is that since the knowledge of the sea known at the time was very little and since the boats were not fit because of the weakness of their structure and their feebleness of quality, the captains were not able to go any distance from land. Therefore, although his opinions were apparently correct and, in truth, it was as he thought as we have since seen, he wrote his opinions with uncertainty because he did not see it with his eyes but rather by way of accident. He was right only by virtue of his wonderful wisdom. After the passing of much time men found the compass and with its help they went far out into the sea a goodly distance from the land and it is now almost two hundred years that they have discovered the land about which the philosopher foretold. It is an entirely new world and its people are different from us. They are naked, without any clothes, and their skin is as red as copper. This new world they found is in a different sphere from ours and far from it. At the northern point which is nearer it is approximately 350 miles as you will find in the Book of History.

But we have said enough for our purpose concerning the belief in God's existence for in every place, in every land where the ancients went at that time, they did not find a single inhabitant of the land, including the savages and barbarians, who did not have a knowledge of God. If this is so, it is proof that the belief in God is a natural thing; existing in the heart of man as an axiom and naturally. It is like the compassion of a mother for her children, for that compassion is born in the womb of her mother and is not acquired by learning. This proof, although it is not definite, approaches it. If you consider that those barbarians of that land had neither knowledge nor understanding, nevertheless the matter is established in their minds

and the idea of a creator of the world was known to them--that there is one who brought the world out of nothingness, the spheres and the luminaries. Then consider also that they had the custom of sacrifices to appease their God. Then certainly the presence of God and His existence is a truism as we have said.

## 2) The Unity of God

After the first principle has been explained to us--that of the presence of God and the fact of His existence--the second principle will now be explained: that of the unity of God, that He is one and that there is no unity like unto His unity. Know that the term unity is applied to many things; i.e., the word one can receive many interpretations differing one from the other. It is already said concerning a large collection of soldiers that it is one army, even though it is composed of a collection of many men, horses and cattle necessary for men of war as Rabbi Bachya wrote in his Hoboth HaLevovoth in the chapter on unity. <sup>138</sup> Therefore grammarians give a collective name to unity because it includes many things. It is also said that man is one and yet he is formed of many limbs, veins, and bones. Thus one tree is formed of branches and leaves. Likewise one is applied to a finger, a hand, and the like and yet they include many different things--bones, flesh, and veins. But that is not the true conception of unity, for the only reason the term one is applied to them is that they are joined together. Furthermore, I will show you that if you take one object, no matter how small, and cut it up into small parts, then take a part of it as small as the point of a needle and divide that and separate it into parts without number, you will never be able to bring it to the first form about which you can say that it is the true unity; i.e., a unity in itself without anything joined to it. The same is true with a portion of a fine grain

of sand which is finer than the finest that can be found, even if you separate it and divide it into countless particles, as Rabbi Bachya wrote and as Euclid wrote in his book on fractions.

I advance to you the proposition that the true unity is a substance that cannot be divided. The meaning of the verse, "Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one" is that He, His existence, His presence is complete in itself, and His unity is unlike the unity of those who are compounded of units. We have already said that it is impossible to reduce an object to its primary essence in such a manner that it returns to its primary form, separate, without anything joined to it. Thus you will not find in this lower material world anything about which you can say that it ~~is~~ is one like the true oneness without a composition. For all the material objects which are created in this world are composed of a body, and everything which is composed of a body has a form, and everything that has form is made up of the four primary substances, and the idea of unity does not pertain to anything composed and compounded of matter. Everything which is composed is created, and everything created is physical. But God, since He is not created, to Him alone the idea of unity applies, and His unity is not like other unities and there is not another thing which you can describe with this kind of unity. For even physical things come under its category, as you know, but God since He is not created has not category ~~which He~~ and He is different from all the being and existence which He created. His unity is the true unity, for there is not unity like it, either above or below, neither among the inhabitants of heaven or of earth.

This principle is acknowledged by all the peoples and nations scattered over the face of the earth in all the inhabited portions, and no one ever held that there are many Gods. Let it not deceive

you that they say that the ancients believed in many Gods, for that is only to exalt and magnify their own religion and by praising it to say that it routed out of the world idolotrous worship. We will discuss ~~that~~ later in another book. It is sufficient for us now that the ancients never held that the heavens was the place of many Gods. Who can be impudent enough and arrogant enough to say that Aristotle the ~~Greek~~ about whom it may almost be said that another great scholar like him will not arise, Pythagoras his teacher, Hippocrates, Galen, and the other great scholars mentined by Maimonides, from whose thoughts and writings he took many of his ideas which he wrote in his book, Moreh Nebuchim, his book on medicine, also in his Hilcoth Yisode Ha-Torah,--how can one possibly say that they believed in many gods? But know that these people believed in the unity of God, that He alone created the world and the other creatures and spirits who exist to serve Him in the heavens, whom we call angels and they call them gods. This is not unnatural for in the Bible we find this name applied to the ministering angels. "Elohim I have seen going up and down the earth." <sup>139</sup> "We shall surely die for an Elohim have we seen." <sup>140</sup> That was their purpose and for that reason they said that one Elohim ruled over the vegetation, one over the sea, one over war, and so on in the same manner. All this is also found in our own faith, for God appointed officers for everything. For example: Michael, the officer of the Jewish people, is the officer of peace. The same holds for everything. In the Talmud they say that there is not a thing in this lower world which does not have an officer above <sup>141</sup> as it is written in "If there be for him an angel, an intercessor, one among a thousand." <sup>142</sup> If this were not so how could Isaiah say "In every place offerings are presented to my name." <sup>143</sup> Did not the peoples at the time of Isaiah believe in the multiplicity of gods, how could he proclaim

that all of them sacrificed offerings to His name? But the matter is as we explained it.

No intelligent person ever doubted that they are intended to worship God; all the peoples and nations believed in the unity of God as we have explained. Maimonides wrote in his Sefer Hamadah that the<sup>144</sup> beginning of idol worship was in the days of Enosh. If that is tradition we accept it. However, upon reflection it appears that it is not so, for in the days of Enosh Adam certainly lived in the world--and he was the work of God and how could he allow his grandson to worship idols? But Maimonides goes on to say that the essence of their error was this: that they said, Since God created the stars and the spheres to guide the world and placed them in the heavens and apportioned honor to them, they are servants who minister before Him and they are worthy to be praised, exalted, and accorded honor. It is the will of God to magnify and honor those who magnify and honor Him, just as a king desires to honor those who stand before him for it is an honor to the king. When this thought began to enter their minds they started to build temples to the stars, to bring sacrifices to them, to praise and exalt them with words and to prostitute themselves before them in order to incur the favor of the Creator, according to their low conception.<sup>145</sup> That is the essence of idol worship in the opinion of Maimonides and it is not correct to me. Because, when he says that the ancients worshipped the stars and the ministers of the heavens as intermediaries between themselves and God, it is not true at all. They worshipped the stars, the planets, and other things--literally as gods. We have ancient books, written in ancient times in Greek which were not known to Maimonides and they deal with their religion. We do not find in them anything of what he wrote.

Even according to his words, it was not idol worship at all,

since they knew His ~~exist~~ essence and they served the others only because they thus served Him. If so, the honor was all unto God and where is the idolatry here? With what did the nations err when they implored His servants in order to seek mercy and forgiveness for themselves? Do not we Jews likewise believe that Michael is the representative of the Jews and brings our prayers before Him? If Moses, who was as human as we, sought mercy for us in the matter of the golden calf and God ~~hearkened~~ to his words and prayers, it is not so far-fetched that the angels do likewise. What error is there here! Furthermore, the illustration which Maimonides uses is not an apt one for a king does not desire that his servants be honored in the same way that he is honored. On the contrary when they do that, it brings a great shame upon the king and it is considered a disgrace to him. It is a rebellion against the kingdom. If one takes the crown and puts it on the head of his great servant, even though he be vice-king, the man who puts it on certainly rebels against the throne and deserves death. The ancients recognized this distinction between a human king and his great servants. Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, after he had raised Joseph of all his servants, said to him: "Only the throne do I make greater than thee" since it is a sign of the kingdom and is <sup>146</sup> fitting only for the king. If they knew that it is not fitting that the servants of a human king be honored with the same honor as ~~the same honor~~ as the king himself, they certainly knew that there must be a difference between the Creator and His created things. Furthermore, if they knew that the sacrifices were fitting and proper only for God, why did they sacrifice them to His servants to liken them to Him?

However, the matter is not as Maimonides thought. The essence

of idol worship, at any time among the peoples was not according to their desire but rather because they did not know the true God. You will find that when Moses came before Pharaoh with the message of God and said to him, "Yahwe sent me to you" <sup>147</sup> Pharaoh answered him, "I never heard that there is a God whose name is Jahwe." That is the opinion of Aquila, the proselyte who translated the verse: <sup>149</sup> "The name Jahwe is not known to me." Thus Rashbam interprets it in his commentary to the Torah. Thus they say in the midrash, "All the names of idol worship were written before him, he searched and did not find the name that Moses mentioned; immediately he said, "I do not know Jahwe." <sup>150</sup> Behold Abraham himself served idols, as we know; and he would have thus continued until his dying day, had not God revealed Himself to him. In short, every form of idolatry is a case of error and not of desire. The Egyptians worshipped the lamb and other peoples bowed down before other creatures, then what will Maimonides say? For certainly those people did not worship the animals in order that they may bring their words before God. There are at this time in India and in northern countries many great people who worship the sun and the moon, and their intentions to serve them is <sup>not</sup> as intermediaries, but rather for their own sake. The planets and the stars are considered as gods in themselves.

Maimonides brings as proof for his statement, the sentence "Who would not fear thee, O King of the nations." <sup>151</sup> That is astonishing! On the contrary, it seems perverse to the literal meaning of the verse which is that the essence of idolatry was not taken by them because of their desire to do that which is improper, but the reason for it is their simplicity and folly, and the limitation of their knowledge with which to comprehend the true God. That is the meaning of "Who would not fear thee, O King of the nations." Its meaning and interpretation is as we have said. It is the intention of all people, scattered in all the inhabited lands, to worship the great and mighty



God, the creator of the world. However, everyone is not able to understand exactly that which he seeks. Thus many peoples were led astray into idol worship, and almost all of them followed after them. That is the meaning of "Who would fear Thee, O king of the nations;" that is to say, He who is king of the nations--how is it possible for one not to fear thee? In short, the essence of what he intended to say is that there can be no one who would not fear thee. He mentions the "king" probably because of the knowledge, understanding, and ideas of the leader of the people and the crowd follows him in this knowledge. "Was it not known among all the wise men of the nations that it befitteth thee", <sup>152</sup> meaning that to Thee alone appertains the greatness. The answer is that they are altogether brutish and foolish, that as one they are led astray because of their simplicity and folly. For they have not the power nor the knowledge to comprehend the existence of God. Therefore, they make Gods of wood and of stone in accordance with their mental conception. We have already quoted in this regard the statement of Isaiah, "In every place offerings are presented to my name." <sup>153</sup> The intention is one but the idea of unity pertains only to God.

### 3) Incorporeality of God

The third principle commanded to us is that we believe with perfect faith that God has neither body nor form, that the existence of ~~the~~ God, the master of the world, is spiritual, of a type and class different from the rest of the spirits as was pointed out to us above. Maimonides also mentions this principle in the first chapter to his Hilcoth T'shubah and also his first chapter of the Ikkorim brings the criticism of ibn Daud against that statement of Maimonides. Ibn Daud said that even though the essence of the belief is correct, yet he who believes that Gods existence is corporeal because of his literal

interpretation of the language of the verses and the stories, he does not deserve to be called a heretic. I see no reason at all for the statement of ibn Daud. For in truth you will find no greater heretic or scoffer in the world than he who says that God has body and form. Because it is known that he who is of form and matter is composed of the four primary substances and he who is formed and compounded has a genus; he who has a genus has space, length, and height; and he who has space, length, and height is not eternal. He must return to his natural state, he must decompose and return to what he was in the beginning. You will not find a thing in the world of all the created things which is eternal and exists forever by virtue of the nature of its composition. That is the opinion of our rabbis everywhere. "Above there is neither sitting nor standing, there is neither spine nor limbs"<sup>154</sup> --and as Maimonides also wrote.

As to ibn Daud's justification of those who believe that God is of body and form because of their literal interpretation of the verses and stories, that is true. Because of this, the possible gain of these people is swallowed in their loss. That is so because they desire to seek and search matters that are prohibited, matters which are not allowed to them for they had not yet attained to that height. Who is credulous enough to think or to believe that the stories and homilies were spoken literally? Thus, if one gets it into his mind that there is a bird whose egg drowned sixty cities<sup>155</sup> and such things which are spoken allegorically and he takes them literally, he will certainly become confused in mind and follow bad ways, as happened to Elisha Aher. He may die of the vexation or come to a state where he will not be able to bear it or he will not attain to that which he craves or desires. He may finish his days in some other way as happened to ben Azai. They say in Hagaga: "Four entered

the garden, ben Azai, ben Zoma, Elisha Aher, and Rabbi Akiba. Ben Azai looked and died, ben Zoma looked and went mad, Elisha Aher cut down the plantings, and Rabbi Akiba entered in peace and left in peace."<sup>156</sup>

It continues there "ben Zoma said, 'I looked between the upper and lower waters and there was only three fingers breadth between them, as it is said, "The spirit of God was wavering over the face of the waters."<sup>157</sup> Said ben Azai, 'when you approach pure marble do not cry out: Water, water! For it is written "false things are not correct before me"<sup>158</sup>'. They further say that ben Zoma is still outside, since the verse "And the spirit of God was wavering over the face of the waters" was written in connection with first day. These matters are as closed as a sealed book, but it seems that it was the opinion of ben Zoma that the heavens were created on the first day, since the heavens were created of fire and water. Therefore, he said that there is only the distance of three fingers between the upper water and the lower waters. That is to say that since the waters were created on the first day, ~~xxx~~ and they were the lower water, so the upper waters which are in the firmament were created on the first day. Concerning the matter of the three fingers it refers to the number of the skies, as it is stated in Perek Ein Dorashin: "Says Rabbi Judah, 'there are two skies, as it is written--"There are unto the Lord thy God the heavens and heavens of heavens."<sup>159</sup> Perhaps ben Zoma thought that there were three, the "heavens and heavens of heavens"; he took as proof for it. But the sages of the G'marah do not agree with him and they say that ben Zoma is still on the outside; i.e., outside of the proper level which he certainly does not reach. Because the heavens were created on the second day and the verse "The spirit of God was wavering over the face of the waters" was written in connection with the first day. That there are three skies is

likewise untrue. Both Rabbi Judah and R'esh Lakish held that there are seven heavens as it is written there. There is but one exception and that by Rabbi Judah who thought there were only three curtains visible to the eye as the habitation of the Shechinah. R'esh Lakish thought there were all seven as they said, but the three which ben Zoma spoke of we do not find. Ben Azai differs from ben Zoma in that he points out that the heavens which are the habitation of the Shechinah are not made of water, but of precious stones and jewels and that is the meaning of "when you approach to pure marble do not cry out: Water, water!" That seems to be the meaning of these statements.

However, because they died in their youth their faith was not destroyed, for they were young and their souls were not at fault. Because of this, even though they were of the Tannaim of the Mishnah they are not called by the title Rabbi for they did not attain to the ordination of the rabbinate. But Elish Aher, who did not die in his youth and who continued to reflect and examine the secrets of God, which was not proper, he became confused in his thought and his wisdom went backwards; he pursued an evil cause and heresies took hold of him. That is the meaning of "he cut down the plantings." He examined the "garden." Intelligent persons will understand it.

To our way of thinking, anyone who believes that God is corporeal and has form because of his literal interpretation of the verses and stories, he cuts down the plantings for he who does not attain to that height should not study nor examine them at all. In this regard Solomon said, "Do not make thyself over-wise, why shouldst thou destroy thyself?"<sup>160</sup> If one desires to fix a time for the study of the Torah, how many good and proper matters are there aside from these--such as the question of what is prohibited or permitted in which there is no danger. The sages have already admonished us con-

cerning this matter, and they have cautioned us about it, that even to one individual such matters are not taught unless he is a scholar and has an understanding mood; i.e., unless he has a good and well-trained mind with which to understand what is expounded and taught to him. Then he is instructed in the general principles as you find them in the second chapter of Hagaga and as Maimonides wrote. But the statement of ibn Daud is surprising.

#### 4) Revelation of Torah at Sinai

The fourth principle in accordance with our enumeration is the belief that God revealed Himself to Moses at meeting at Sinai, that his prophecy is true according to what is ~~now~~ written in the Torah, the prophets and the statements of our rabbis who received the tradition from their fathers, as the last of the prophets said, "Remember the Law of Moses my servant." <sup>161</sup> That is an important matter for he who denies the prophecy of Moses, denies the entire Torah, <sup>as</sup> you know. Anyone who is called Jew must believe that God appeared to him in the burning bush and that He revealed Himself to him and that He sent him to Pharaoh to bring his people Israel out of Egypt, as we find it in the Torah. That all the signs, wonders, and miracles which he performed both in Egypt and outside of Egypt, even though they were all things contrary to nature and contrary to the usual order, they are all true, as it is written in the Torah. He who doubts one of these and says that Moses our teacher was a magician, a sorcerer, or an enchanter and that his wonderful acts were not true or that they were done by jugglery, he is a heretic and is outside of the Jewish group. Concerning him it is said, "He despised the word of God" as <sup>162</sup> it is found in Perek Chalek.

In this general principle is also included the command to believe that all the rest of the prophets who came after him--from Joshua to Malachi--are all his disciples, that they received the

tradition one from the other, that they are all men of truth and that their words are right even though they are not all of them of the same degree. The difference between them is great. You will find that the principle thing about their prophecy was that it was for them and for their own use alone, as it was in the case of David and Solomon whose speech was not with God but for their own need and that is called the Holy Spirit. At times you will find that when the prophet prophesies, God called him and told him to go to that place because of the need of the time, even though if he lived in another generation he would not be fit for such a thing--as in the case of Jonah ben Amittai whom he sent to the people of Nineveh to reprove them that they may turn from their evil ways. But these prophets after they have completed their mission for that particular time, no longer have the prophecy rest upon them. You will not find that the spirit of God and of prophecy rested upon Jonah ben Amittai after the people of Nineveh left their evil ways. Furthermore he was not called by God for any other cause and he did not prophesy any more during all his days.

You will find that there are those who tell at length what they saw in their prophecy, as Ezekiel did, and those who shorten the account as Isaiah did. They say in the G'marah: "To what is Ezekiel like? To a villager who comes to a city. To what is Isaiah like? To a city dweller who comes a village." <sup>163</sup> The explanation of that is that when a villager goes to a city and then returns to his village, his town-people, he begins to tell them at length all that he saw. He tells them about the great <sup>a</sup> places of the princes of the city, about their expensive clothes, then he tells them of the wealth of the servants of the king, everything in detail until he reaches to the king himself. Thus Ezekiel, since he was not accustomed to this class, when he saw the chariot he greatly enlarged his account of it.

He began with the angels, the beasts, and the wheels, step by step until he reached God. "The voice of tumult like the voice of the Almighty." <sup>164</sup> But Isaiah, even though he saw the chariot and all the things that Ezekiel saw, it was not a novelty for him. Therefore he related the end of the matter alone and the rest was understood by itself. That is the meaning of "I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and exalted." <sup>165</sup> He was not anxious to tell that he saw the angels, the beasts, and the wheels. That is a city dweller who enters a village. The class of Isaiah is greater. It is the class of Samuel of Ramah and as we have said it is the most important except for that of Moses our teacher, for his class is greater than all of them. About this the Torah testifies that "there hath not arisen a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses." <sup>166</sup> It is furthermore written "Moses and Aaron are among His priests, and Samuel among those who call His name, they call upon God and He answers them. In a pillar of cloud He speaks to them." <sup>167</sup> Thus it mentions only Samuel and Aaron. According to all the world the class of Moses our master is greater than all the class of prophets, as we have said.

There remains for us now the discussion of the question as to the difference between Moses and the rest of the prophets. Maimonides wrote in his Sefer Hamadah that all the prophets had their prophecy through an angel except Moses our teacher. <sup>168</sup> But it is not so; for he who speaks with an angel is not a prophet at all. Manoaah and Gideon ~~we~~ are not distinguished among the prophets, and even Daniel who foretold many great and wonderful secrets were revealed, through him, he is not counted among the prophets. They explicitly mention in Sota those who are the prophets and he is not listed as a prophet because his prophecy was through Gabriel. <sup>169</sup> Maimonides furthermore says there that

all the prophets had their prophecy in a dream. In the Moreh Nebuchim we find things which are not permitted to be written. He says that the speech of Abraham with the angels was in a dream, in a vision of prophecy. Thus, according to his opinion the matter of the meal was also in a vision of the night. Likewise the overturning of Sodom, the circumcision, everything was in a vision of prophecy. That is not true. God forbid! It is forbidden to hear these things, all the more to believe them.

But the matter is contrary to what Maimonides thinks, for all the prophets had their prophecy from God and not through separate intellects, and all the books of the prophets are full of that. But Maimonides brings proof for his opinion from Scriptures: "The Lord spoke to Moses face to face."<sup>170</sup> However, it is not as he thought; for it is not apparent from this verse that the rest of the prophets had their prophecy through an intermediary. The meaning and the interpretation of "And the Lord spoke to Moses face to face" is that since the prophecy of the rest of the prophets <sup>was</sup> for an occasional event to which they were called by God, and the event was for that time only according to the need of the time. Therefore, they shook and trembled in the hour of their prophecy, for everything which happens to a man after a long time, when the event approaches it appears to him as if it were a novelty. But Moses our teacher was not thus, for his speech with God was as one who speaks with his friend--face to face--not with fear and trembling and not as one of the crowd who speaks to an honored and important man of the people, but rather with an expression of good will as one speaks to a friend. Since his distinction is greater than theirs, his intelligence and soul was nearer to God than theirs. So the rabbis said in the G'marah: in one case he saw through a clear



glass, in the other through a glass that was not clear.<sup>171</sup> That is so because there is a difference in the degree of prophecy between them, as we have said. They do not mention the fact that his prophecy was through an angel.

Maimonides builds a high wall but it is like a broken wall, for he continues that the difference in Moses is that his wonders were performed both before those who believed and before those who differed. Scripture says, "There has not arisen a prophet in Israel since like<sup>172</sup> unto Moses." Then he says that all the signs and wonders which Moses performed were before all the Israelites, but the rest of the prophets performed miracles only before those who differed. I grow more astonished at Maimonides, astonished that such a thing could be uttered by so holy a mouth. Surely the miracle which Elijah performed was before those believed and before those who differed. Likewise the standing still of the sun was done before the believing. Why does Maimonides quote the verse to prove it?--that "There was not a day like that before<sup>173</sup> it or after it, that the Lord hearkened to the voice of man." If so, his miracle was not smaller than those which Moses performed, for in truth his miracles do not defy nature as does that of Joshua in the ~~stop~~ stopping of the sun. It is a wonderful thing that through him the order of creation was changed, as it is written, "And day and night shall<sup>174</sup> not ~~stop~~ cease." God in doing this wonder for him departed from the principle and hearkened to his voice, and that is the meaning of "And there was no day like that before it or after it, that the Lord hearkened to the voice of man."

Maimonides feels this and says in the fifth chapter of the second part of the Moreh Nebuchim that it was for them like a long day in summer. He means that the greatness of the wonder was that he made the day in the season of short days seem to them like a long summer

day. His salvation and victory could only come if the days were long and God did it for him by adding only two or three hours in order that the believing shall not see it. That is his meaning, as we have said; that there is a distinction between the miracles of Moses and those of the rest of the prophets. The marvellous fame of the miracles of Moses was that they were done publicly, and that is what is meant by the verse "For all the signs and wonders which Moses performed before the eyes of all the Israelites." <sup>175</sup> By that he means to say that in the category of wonders not another has arisen like him. Maimonides proves his statement from the fact that in regard to Joshua it says, "Before the eyes of Israel" <sup>176</sup> and it does not say "All the Israelites"; i.e., that only part of them were conscious of the miracle, and that because of the short time that it (the sun) stood still. For that reason it was necessary to shorten the period during which the sun stood still, and declare that it was only for a few hours, and that it lengthened for them a short day of the winter season until it appeared to them as a long day of the summer. It stood for only several hours and the short time was felt by only part of them and it would not have been so if it had stood for a whole day. That is undoubtedly the meaning of Maimonides, as it seems to me.

I have gone at length into all of this to refute what the Marbonne and the rest of the commentators to his work in the Moreh Nebuchim attribute to him when they speak of the meaning of Maimonides. To them by the statement that the Scriptural passage about the standing still of the sun, as they guessed and estimated in their imagination, referred to the lengthening of the day, with the result that the day did not change at all. Rabbi Levi ben Gerson wrote in his commentary to the Book of Joshua that it is an impossible thing for the sun to stand still in its continuous motion. God forbid that our teacher, Moses ben

Maimon, the light of our exile should deny the passage itself.

However, the meaning of statement is as we have said. Since the miracles of Moses alone, according to his opinion, were performed before the believers, and those of the rest of the prophets were not, for that reason he said that the time was short. Thus when he shortens the time of the miracle he does not thereby ~~it~~ deny the miracle itself. May God forgive him, but how could such a distinguished scholar as Rabbi Levi ben Gerson say such a thing!! Rabbi Arama answers him in chapter thirteen in good taste and with understanding. He show that the ~~thing~~ <sup>thing</sup> was possible, in accordance with the power of God to perform miracles and wonders even greater than this with the stars of the heavens. <sup>177</sup> We have already stated the reason for our going into this at length even though it is not one of our subjects for discussion.

We turn again to the opinion of Maimonides in regard to his declaration that the miracles of the rest of the prophets were not performed before those who believe. That is not true, for we have already said above that the miracle which was performed for Joshua was greater than those of Moses, as was explicitly written: "There was no day like that before it or after it, that the Lord hearkened to the voice of man." <sup>178</sup> There is no doubt about the fact ~~xxx~~ that the standing still of the sun is a greater miracle than all the signs and wonders performed by Moses, for in them there was no change in the work of creation.

Perhaps <sup>a</sup> that is why the rabbis of the Talmud say that this miracle was performed also for Moses himself; even though it is not expressly stated in the Torah. <sup>179</sup> That is undoubtedly in order to make him equal to Joshua in the matter of miracles. Likewise the matter that Maimonides speaks of, that the standing still of the sun for Joshua was for a short time, that is not correct at all. I do not know why he said it or where he got it. It seems that he perverted the sense, for the passage says, "And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed until the nation had avenged

themselves of its enemies. Is this not written in the book of Jashar? The sun stayed in the midst of the heavens and hastened not to go down about a whole day." <sup>180</sup> It did not continue on its course until Joshua and his army had completed their vengeance upon their enemies, to destroy them and to finish them, and that did not happen in three or four hours as Maimonides wrote.

Thus they speak in the G'marah in Perek Bin Ma-amidim on the verse "The sun stood in the mid-heavens and it hastened not to go down about a whole day." Rabbi Joshua ben Levi said about twenty-four hours; six hours it went and six hours it stood and the whole thing was about like a day. Rabbi Eliezer said thirty-six hours; six hours it ~~went~~ and stood still for twelve, went six and stayed twelve, its standing was about a whole day. Rabbi Samuel bar Nachmoni said forty-eight; it went six and stayed twelve, it went six and stayed twenty-four, as it said, "It ~~hastened~~ <sup>181</sup> not to go down about a whole day"--by implication, the first was not a whole day. In the Tosefta they speak differently. Rabbi Joshua ben Levi said twenty four; it went six and stayed twelve--thus its standing still was a whole day. Rabbi Eliezer said thirty-six; it ~~went~~ <sup>182</sup> six, stayed twelve, went six, and stayed twenty-four. "It ~~hastened~~ <sup>182</sup> not to go down about a whole day" and the first is not a whole day. Rabbi Samuel bar Nachmoni said forty eight; it went six and stayed twenty-four, comparing its standing still to its going down. Just as it going down was a whole day so its standing still was a whole day." Thus far the Aggadah. All the opinions of the rabbis are contrary to Maimonides, for even in the opinion of Rabbi Joshua ben Levi, who shortened the time of the miracle more than all them, the sun stood still for more than twelve hours outside of the customary period fixed for the hours of standing still. We must say that according to their opinion the sun stood still twice; once when it was

in mid-heaven, found in the verse, "The Sun stayed in midheavens." And again when it came to the horizon, it delayed there and did not go down below to set, as found in the verse, "It hastened not to go down about a whole day." The conclusion of the whole matter, at any rate, seems to be that this miracle was performed publicly, before those who believe and those who differ, just as the miracles of Moses our teacher. This is not according to Maimonides.

Let it not trouble you that God performed a miracle through Joshua, a wonder so great that not even through Moses, the faithful of his house, did he do it. The answer is very simple; the miracles which Moses performed were for the need of the occasion. When he made the water to come out of the rock it was because of the lack of water when they were thirsty. When they ate the manna, it was because they were hungry. Thus the miracles which he performed in Egypt were done only in order that Pharaoh may send them forth. If Moses had had need for the sun to stand still at that time, he would have asked it of God and God would certainly have hearkened to him. But since he had no need for it why should God change the work of creation when it is not necessary. But for Joshua the time was urgent, for from the order of the verses it seems that he began the war in the morning and the beginning of the triumph was at dawn, except that during the pursuit the sun set and went to the horizon. What was the value of this triumph if the enemies of Israel were able to escape and flee from them with the help of the darkness of the night? Therefore he desired it because of the great need. He asked God that the sun stop its journey until they had avenged themselves over their enemies. That to me is the plain meaning and the correct one.

But the authors of the G'marah consider the matter in a different light, as we have said above, and by the force of the following

argument they say that the sun also stood for Moses. This is found in the chapter Ein Ma-amidim. It says that just as the sun stood still for Joshua, so it stood still for Moses and Nakdimon ben Gurion. About Joshua the verse is correct and also about Nakdimon ben Gurion. But how about Moses? Rabbi Eliezer says that the word Ochel (I will begin) occurs in both accounts.<sup>183</sup> Rabbi Jochanan says that it is because the word Tes (to put) occurs in both accounts.<sup>184</sup> Rabbi Samuel bar Nachmoni said that it follows from the context itself of the verse "Who when they hear the report of thee shall tremble and be in anguish because of thee"<sup>185</sup> and the verse "There was not a day like it ~~for~~ before or after that the Lord hearkened to the voice of Man." If you choose I will say that the time was not as long as the other, or if you prefer I will say that the hail stones were not alike. Thus far the the Talmud discussion.<sup>186</sup>

Its meaning is as we have said. They were troubled by the fact that Joshua received so great a miracle that not even Moses our teacher, the greatest of all the prophets, received the like of it. Therefore they said that the sun stood still for him also, as well as for Nakdimon ben Gurion. This is mentioned in the fifth chapter of Gitin.<sup>187</sup> The author of the statement argues that the statement about Joshua is correct, meaning that both the deed and the miracle are explained in the Torah. The case of Nakdimon ben Gurion is also correct, meaning that we learn the deed of Nakdimon from tradition for in his day the Bible was already canonized; therefore, even though we hear of it only in tradition it is nevertheless just as correct. One is entirely from the Torah and the other from the rabbis. But how about Moses? Meaning to ask why is it not mentioned in Scripture as is the account of the battle. Rabbi Eliezer answers with the argument of analogy, in the use of the word Ochel (I will begin). Just as the word Ochel is used

for Joshua when the sun stood still for him, so it is used for Moses, to make him equal to Joshua. Behold the word Ochel<sup>which</sup> is used in the case of Moses is of a higher degree, for it is applied to him in the wars against Sichon and Og. Furthermore, why should God say to him, "This day I will begin to put the dread of thee"<sup>188</sup> when that was not the beginning of his greatness, nor the first time that his fear fell upon the nations? Already it was written, "The People have heard, they tremble, pangs have taken hold of the inhabitants of Philistia."<sup>189</sup> They had also heard by then about the splitting of the Red Sea, and of the war with Amalek, so how could they say, "This day I will begin to put the dread of thee"? Hence he brings it only for an argument of analogy, as it was said.

Rabbi Jochanan said that there is the word Tes (to put) in the case of Moses, for the verse says, "This day I will begin to put the fear of thee" and in the case of Joshua it is said, "On the day that the Lord Tes (delivered up)." Just as in the latter instance there is the standing still of the sun, so the sun stood still in the former ~~instance~~ instance. But the opinion of Rabbi Samuel bar Nachmoni did not agree with these. He said, "In the case of Rabbi Jochanan what analogy is there? for there is not an extra word there." Nor does he agree with the opinion of Rabbi Eliezer. For the proper method of an analogy is for the first case to be explained so that it is clear, then in the second case~~it~~ it can be hinted at, so that it may be understood from what was already explained at length in the beginning. But here it is the reverse. In the first case, that of Moses, the account is short and is not explained at all, while in the case of Joshua it is given at length. Therefore he said that the standing still of the sun for Moses is learned from Scripture<sup>it</sup> itself. It says, "When they hear the report of thee they shall be in anguish and tremble."

In truth how did all the people under the heavens hear that he conquered Sichon and Og? Surely it must be through the standing still of the sun, for thus was it announced to all the peoples. The author of the G'marah asked him this--If it is true that the sun stood still for Moses and Nakdimon ben Gurion, how can the Scripture say, "And there was not a day like that before it or after it"? To that he answered that even though the miracle of the standing still of the sun happened to Moses and Nakdimon ben Gurion, it was only for a brief period and was not as long as in the case of that of Joshua. Thus the distinction is not in the question of the essence of the miracle which was alike for all of them--Moses, Joshua, and Nakdimon ben Gurion. The difference is hinted at in the verse "They was not a DAY like that before it or after it"; it does not say a miracle like that. That tells us that even though a miracle like that happened for Moses in the past, and will happen also in the future, in the case of Nakdimon ben Gurion, nevertheless it was not a day like that in the length of time for the miracle as in the case of Joshua ben Nun.

You also know that Joel in the plague of the locusts that occurred during his time said that the like of it had never been; he meant that so vast a multitude of creeping things had never been. How can that be? Had not Moses said before him that there never were locusts like that nor will there be any after it. They answered this already in the G'marah. In the case of Moses it was one kind of locust alone, and that kind of locust there was not the like before or after it. But in case of Joel there were many types of locust, the canker-<sup>190</sup> worm, locusts, caterpillar, and the palmer-worm--as it is written there. Such a number as that, in truth, had never been. If so, the species of locusts in the case of Moses was greater than that of Joel, but in the number of species and their variety, Joel's was greater than that



of Moses. That is the meaning of "like it their never was"--meaning in quantity and not in quality. In the Book of Psalms we find the verse "He also gave their increase unto the caterpillar, and their labour unto the locust. He destroyed the vines with hail and their sycamore trees with frost."<sup>191</sup> That is by way of metaphor necessary to a poem, as is the custom of poets and singers. Even though it (the sun) had already stood still for Moses, since there was a difference between them in the length of time of the standing still, he said, "There was not a day like that before it or after it;" i.e., in regard to the extension of time and not in the event itself. In the Pirke d'Rabbi Eliezer they say that the sixth wonder from the day that the heavens and the earth, the sun, the moon, the stars were created to bring light upon the earth, was when Joshua fought the battles of Israel. The Sabbath eve was approaching and he saw Israel's predicament--it would not profane the Sabbath. The wise men of the nations would search the heavenly constellations to find out how best to descend upon Israel. What did he do? He stretched forth his hand to the sun and the moon, and called upon them in the name of God. Each stood in its place for thirty-six hours, until Saturday night, as it is said, "The sun stood still, the moon stayed, until the nation had avenged itself of the enemies." All the kings of the earth beheld it, for there was not the like of it since the day of creation. Scripture says, "There was not a day like that before it or after it" and also "For the Lord fought for Israel."

Note that the statement of the great Rabbi Eliezer certainly differs from what they said in the chapter Ein Ma-amidim. According to this statement ~~in~~ the occurrence of the standing still of the sun did not happen at all from the day that the heavens and earth were created until the days of Joshua. Then what is Maimonides talking about?

The logical conclusion of it, which seems to be actually the correct one according to the literal interpretation of the Scriptures, is that the miracle of Joshua was greater than that of Moses. Now, then, can Maimonides affirm that the miracles of Moses were of a greater category than those of the rest of the prophets, and were nobler and greater because they were also performed before those who believe? Elijah, when he performed the miracle of the fire licking up the water, certainly did it before those who believed, because the Israelites were there and God answered him. It is said that he turned their hearts backward for through the miracle their hearts, in truth, turned to God, the creator, whereas formerly it was backward, backward from the truth. The same is true in the miracle of Daniel when he was delivered from the mouth of the lion. When Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego cast him into the fiery furnace, it was before those who believe and those who differ, and before his brethren, the Israelites. The same is true of the miracle of Ezekiel when he revived the dead. It was before the eyes of those who believe. What need is there to bring further proof for this matter?

However, the difference between Moses and the other prophets we need not seek in the manner of Maimonides. It is explained clearly from the Scriptures itself in many places, especially in Moses' struggle with his sister, for it is said there, "not so are your prophets," meaning your prophecies are not like those of Moses. Yours are occasional which his are not, "for he is trusted in all my house."<sup>192</sup> Then there is the verse, "And there hath not arisen since in Israel a prophet whom the Lord knew face to face, in all the signs and wonders which Moses performed in the sight of Israel."<sup>193</sup> Thus Moses spoke to God face to face, something that the other prophets did not do. Therefore they say in the G'marah that in one instance it is in a prophetic

vision that is dimmed, in the other it is not dimmed for the prophecy of Moses our teacher was without parables and riddles.

The difference between the miracles of Moses and the rest of the prophets is from the point of view of plurality. When the prophets perform this or that miracle, it is once or twice, as in the case of Elijah and Joshua. Moses performed many miracles, and that is the meaning of "There hath not arisen since in Israel a prophet like Moses whom God knew face to face" and next to it is found "In all the signs and wonders." That is to say that no one like him has arisen in the signs; i.e., in the multitude of signs. It is possible to interpret the passage in another way and say that the mission of Moses and his message was for the congregation, because Israel heard the voice of God speaking from the midst of the bush on the day of the giving of the Torah. That is in reality the sign of the truth of his prophecy. Previous to that they had not been able to believe in him at all, but when they heard the voice of God and beheld the might of His glory, there was no doubt in their minds. That is why God said to him, "Behold, I come unto thee in a thick cloud that the people may hear when I speak with thee, and may also believe thee forever." <sup>194</sup> That is to say that this will be the absolute proof that they shall not again be aroused against you, but they shall trust in you forever--for I myself and My Glory will speak to the people. One who hears the words ~~after~~ from the king himself, as Rashi interprets the verse in his commentary.

Scripture says, "Cause the people to hear the voice of God <sup>195</sup> from the midst of the fire, as thou didst hear it and didst live." It is also written, "Israel saw the mighty deed which God performed in Egypt, and they believed in God and Moses His servant." <sup>196</sup> Their faith was against their will, without any objections and without any doubts, because they heard and they saw the mighty arm of God, as we have said.

That is the meaning of "All the signs which Moses performed in the sight of all the Israelites;" i.e. that all his signs and prophecies were verified by all the people when they heard the voice of God. That is not true of the other prophets for they were believed ~~and~~ only through their own prophecies and messages without any other proof. In this regard Moses differs from the rest of the prophets and legislators of any people or nation. The wise person will understand. . We have said enough about the fourth principle.

## Chapter Five

### 5) Torah from Heaven

We have already mentioned that the fifth principle obligates us to believe that the Law of Moses was given to us from God, in general and in particular. Everything which is written in it, both the commandments and the stories, ~~xxx~~ was given by God. Therefore anyone who says that Moses wrote in the Torah from his own knowledge, even a part of the Torah, is called a heretic. Thus they say in the G'marah in Perek Chelek. "Even if one says that the whole Torah is from heaven except this verse, that God did not give it but Moses himself did, about him it is said that he profaned the word of God." <sup>197</sup> Yet Maimonides and Albo tell us nothing of the Karaites, who are in truth from the seed of Israel, as we are, from the ten tribes who rebelled and fought against the tribe of Judah and separated themselves from the tribe of Judah and Benjamin in the days of Jeroboam ben Nebat, as you will find it in the Book of Kings. <sup>198</sup> There is also another sect, springing from the disciples of Antigonus of Soho, Zadok and Boethius who began about <sup>199</sup> three hundred years before the destruction. Nevertheless they are all Jews, from the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Even though they believe in the Torah and observe it, they differ from us in its interpretation and they do not believe the words of the rabbis of the Mishnah and Talmud. They say that all which we find in the Talmud and Midrashim is not true. Holding that view they interpret the Torah with different interpretations which are not like the interpretations of our teachers. They are in error and they are ignorant and it is not necessary to answer them for their forefathers began in error to serve idols and to follow after Baalim. When they conspired against Reboam, the son of Solomon, they hearkened to the word of Jeroboam the son of Nebot, for he erected Baalim at Beth-El and he said, "These are thy

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gods, O Israel." It is no wonder that the children who spring from their lines have separated themselves and follow their fathers in rebellion--in rebellion against our teachers--for children follow the deeds of their fathers. Most of the interpretations and explanations which they have written to the Scriptures are foolish, ridiculous, and blasphemous, and even fools do not fall into their error. For example, Anan interprets the verse "In plowing time and in harvest time thou shalt rest"<sup>201</sup> to mean the prohibition of sexual intercourse on the Sabbath. What has that to do with the verse which intends to prohibit planting in the year of release, as is known? Ibn Ezra in his commentary to the Torah brings the statement of the Karaite commentator and says "Anan said that the verse 'in plowing time and in harvest time thou shalt rest' refers to the lying with a woman. Is that not disgraceful! For if we acknowledge that plowing time refers to sexual intercourse, he certainly is wrong as regard to harvest time".<sup>202</sup>

I take that to mean that if we interpret the phrase, plowing time, to mean cohabitation; i.e., the cause of pregnancy, then the phrase harvest time would mean the birth--i.e., that a woman is prohibited to give birth from her womb on the Sabbath. That is impossible because there is no set time for birth. It is in the hands of God. That is the meaning of Ibn Ezra's "If we acknowledge that plowing time refers to sexual intercourse, he certainly is wrong as regards harvest time."

Likewise their tradition in regard to the Sabbath is in error. They do not go out of their houses because the verse says, "No man shall go out of his house on the seventh day;"<sup>203</sup> which is the Sabbath limit. But in reality that is said only in regard to the wilderness in the case of the manna, because the limits for the Sabbath which the rabbis established are those which were written later. If it is true that a man is obligated to sit in his house, in his place, on the Sabbath--then what is the pleasure which he is supposed to enjoy on that day? Is it not rather dejecting to sit in the house as one sits in prison?

We return to our subject and declare that according to the view of Maimonides in his thirteen principles of faith, the Karaites are not included in the fold of 'Israel. His view is in agreement with the statement in Perek Chelek which states "Even if one says that the whole Torah is from heaven except this argument of minor to major, or this argument by analogy, about him it is said that he profaned the word of God."<sup>204</sup> We might add that Albo includes this in his Ikkorim in the second principle, which is that the Torah is from heaven. It is important that you know that all the events and narratives which you find in the Torah are not simply stories, like the rest of the legends of history. Their great value is in the matter of faith. Thus they say in Genesis Rabah that even the verse, "Timna was the concubine to Eliphaz"<sup>205</sup> was placed in the Torah to show you the greatness of Abraham for many desired to cleave to his seed. Timna was the daughter of princes, as it is said, "Latan's sister was Timna."<sup>206</sup> Timna was of the princes of Seir, of the Hovites who dwelt there previously. She said, "I am not worthy to marry you but let me at least be your concubine." Therefore they said that the Torah speaks about the creation of the world before everything else to show us and teach us that He is the creator of everything, that He formed the earthly sphere from absolutely nothing, that He alone rules over it, and at different times He gives it to whomever He desires. Thus there is great worth in the story that God is a man of war and all that happens in the world below is by His will and is not an accident. Therefore the Torah begins with the story of creation: to teach mankind that He rules over everything, that he who builds a house, a vessel, or anything else, since he owns it, he can give it to whomever he pleases. That is the statement

<sup>207</sup>  
Genesis Rabah.

Rabbi Isaac said that the Torah should have begun with the verse "This month shall be unto you."<sup>218</sup> Then what sense is there in beginning with Genesis? The sense is to show the might of His deeds. He told his people that He would give them the possessions of the nations, and if the peoples say to Israel, "Ye are robbers that ye conquered seven peoples," they would answer them ~~that~~ that all the earth belongs to God. He created it and he may give it to whomever it is fitting in His sight. When He so will, He gives it to them and when He wills to take it from them and give it to us, He does so. That is Rashi's interpretation in his commentary. He interprets the statement as we have interpreted it, that God is master of the world and after He gave it to the seven nations, He took it from them and gave it to Israel.<sup>209</sup>

Nachmanides disagrees with this and declares that the real purpose of it was to write into the Torah the principle of creatio ex nihilo, and he who does not believe it does not believe in the Torah of Moses at all. To our way of thinking he neither understands the view of the Midrash or of Rashi. Nachmanides here chose to differ from the view of Rashi, instead of following him and he did so without reflection and without thought. But the essence of the matter is that although it was necessary to relate in the Torah the creation of the world, nevertheless since the body of the Torah is made up of statutes, commands, and laws, Moses should have begun with the essence and after that he should have filled in with the accessories, which are the events and happenings. That is why the rabbis said that it was necessary to begin with the essence. The question concerns beginning, as we have said. It is for that reason that Rabbi Isaac does not ask whether the Torah should contain the verse "This month



shall be unto you" but he said it should have begun with it. The point of his question concerns the matter of beginning. He continues with the question, "Then why did He begin with Genesis?" He answers that since God created the world for His people Israel, His holy seed, therefore he began the Torah with the creation of the world, to show that the purpose of creation was for Israel, that they may dwell in that land. He gave it to the other nations in the beginning only as a trust, so that later on they may return it to Israel at the time and season appointed by God. That is why they declare that the "Torah opens with Genesis because of the might of His deeds...He told His peoples He would give them the possessions of the peoples."

Moses relates that God created the world, that He brought it from non-existence to existence, from absolutely nothing; that previous to that He was alone in His world and there was nothing extant even of the four primary substances out of which all created things are formed. He said that in the beginning He created the first substance from which all created things were later formed. That is the meaning of "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, and the earth was waste and void."<sup>210</sup> That means that at the beginning of creation, on the first day, there was waste and void, and the void refers<sup>211</sup> to the smooth stones sunk in the deep. If the meaning of smooth stones is that of tiny, minute particles, as it appears from the plain meaning of the word, then the author certainly agrees with what we have said and therefore he is careful to tell us what happened after it. He said that since the four primary substances were in confusion at the time of the waste and void, nothing existed on the earth but the dense darkness above the void. Therefore God the Creator decreed that light shall come into being. "The Lord said: Let there be light. And there was light."<sup>212</sup> When He saw that the light was good, He divided

it from the darkness and set the limit for one by day and for the other by night, as Rashi explains it. That means that during the time that there was waste and void, the light and darkness were used in the confusion without any fixed time. When the four primary substances were among them, at times the fire used to win and thus grow strong, and then it was light; at times the earth used to grow strong, then it was dense darkness. Because it is the nature of fire to give light, and the nature of the earth to bring dense darkness, as is known. When God saw that the world He desired to create needed light, He separated one from the other, so that fire and earth shall no longer be used accidentally. He fixed limits for them--one by day and the other by night. That is the interpretation of the statement in Genesis Rabbah and is the sense of Rashi's interpretation.

I set all this down at length to answer the complaint of those who argue against our rabbis. They say, "How is it possible! Is not the darkness only the absence of light?" They argue that when the rabbis said that light and darkness were used in the confusion, they meant confusion literally: that the light and the darkness were confused. At the same time there was light and darkness, and from that they argue that it is impossible for it to be so. For darkness is not a physical substance as is light which is derived from the physical body of the sun. Darkness is not composed of something; it is merely the absence of light. But as we have explained it, there great astonishment vanishes.

There are some philosophers who argue: How is it possible for light to be formed on the first day, when of a certainty the luminaries had not yet been created? But this is no argument, for "There is no strict order observed in the Torah as regards earlier or later."<sup>213</sup> Then they say that light was of one kind and was not from the sun at

all. There are northern countries in which the sun leaves them for five months during the year and the snow brings light to them from the power of its whiteness. Thus they are not aware that there is a kind of light that does not need the power of the sun. As in one case, so in the other; there is no room for their argument. The philosophers further argue: How can one call the moon a luminary? It is known that the moon has no light of its own, that it is like the earthy sphere which receives its light from the sun. The proof of that is that it does not give light unless it is set opposite it so that it may receive the sparks from the sun. But this argument has neither root nor branch according to what we have explained above. The Torah was given to men and not ministering angels, and since the moon brightens this world and sheds light upon it, what difference it it to me whether the light is its own or is received from the sun. In the last analysis it sheds light upon the world, so why may it not be called a luminary by virtue of the function and work that it performs. The idols of the nations are called Elohim ~~haharaxim~~ as in the phrase, "Ye shall have no other Elohim before me." <sup>214</sup> Those who invent lies to lead their hearers astray are called prophets. Those who sacrifice to idols are <sup>215</sup> called ~~prophets~~. priests, as in the verse, "Matan, the priest of Baal." All of that is only in accordance with the knowledge of those who believe in them. So why should not the moon be called a luminary, since it gives light to the earth and brings light to the eyes, regardless of whether the light is of itself or from some other source.

The Torah relates in the story of the flood that when God saw the wickedness of man, he issued a decree for the destruction of the human species and all other created matter including living creatures, plants, and trees. This is found in the verse, "The end of all flesh is come before me, for the earth is filled with violence through them,

and behold I will destroy them with the earth." <sup>216</sup> It continues to relate that Noah was a righteous and whole-hearted man in his generation, that he pursued the good and proper paths, that he followed the way of God. "Noah walked with God." <sup>217</sup> Therefore God saved him from the waters of the flood--him, his wife, his sons, and the wives of his sons--for he was a righteous and good man. All His ways are just and He judges each according to his deeds whether he is righteous or wicked. That seems to be the literal meaning of the Scriptures.

In Genesis Rabbah they say, "Noah walked with God;" <sup>218</sup> but in the case of Abraham it says, "The God before whom I walk." <sup>219</sup> That is, Noah needed support to help him. They also say there that he was a righteous and whole-hearted man in his generation but had he lived in the generation of Abraham, he would have been accounted for nothing. Thus it seems that their point of view was that he and his family were saved to prevent the destruction of the human species. God desired to leave a remnant of them and he chose Noah for he was better than all the people of his generation, although he was not perfect in his deeds. They quote the verse there: "And Noah went in, his sons, and his wife....because of the waters of the flood." <sup>220</sup> But Noah was of the men of little faith for he did not believe that the flood would come even though God had already told him. He knew it from God Himself, as it is said, "The end of all flesh is come Before me...." <sup>221</sup> Make thee an ark of gopher wood." Even when he saw that the rain began to come down, he did not believe and did not enter the ark until the waters reached his mouth and they forced him into the ark, as it is written, "Because of the waters of the flood." That is the ~~same~~ <sup>222</sup> opinion of the rabbis.

However, we must inquiry as to what compelled them to think thus--that Noah was not fit to be called a righteous man had he lived

in the generation of Abraham. The truth of it is that when God decided to chastise every species of living creature because of their sins, he decided to destroy them temporarily from the earth. It was not His desire to rid the world completely of its creatures, only temporarily because He did not create the world for waste. He formed it for inhabitants, and therefore he chose Noah who was better than all of them even though he was not perfect in his deeds, and He permitted him and his family to live, in order that a stem and shoot will remain to inhabit the world after the flood. Therefore He commanded him to make the ark and enter it, to save himself and his family from complete destruction--that they may inhabit the world after the flood. That appears to be the literal meaning of the Scriptures.

The whole world, the lower sphere was destroyed by the flood, as it is written, "And they covered all the high mountains." <sup>223</sup> It says further, "Fifteen cubits upwards did the waters prevail and the mountains were covered." <sup>224</sup> From the statement that the ark rested on the mountains of Ararat it seems that the waters prevailed over the mountains in the eastern lands, for they are in truth the highest mountains in all the inhabited portions of the world. Josippon ben Gurion testified that in his day, at the time of the destruction of the second Temple, the broken pieces of the ark were seen, that he himself saw them. The opinion of our rabbis of the Talmud and in Genesis Rabbah is the same. They quote the verse, "Lo, in her mouth an olive leaf freshly plucked." <sup>225</sup> From where did she bring it? From the Mountain of Olives, as it is said, "Thou art a land that is not cleansed nor rained upon in the day of indignation." <sup>226</sup> However, some say that she brought it from the garden of Eden. They arrive at that conclusion from the verse, "He blotted out every living substance"; <sup>227</sup> by implication, all the created matter was blotted out and destroyed by the water. Then

how can the verse say that the dove brought an olive leaf? Therefore, they said that the waters of the flood did not fall upon Palestine. But even with such a solution, we must admit that even though the waters did not rise over the land of Israel, nevertheless they levelled themselves and came down into it from the rest of the lands. Since the whole world was full of the waters of the flood, even the <sup>high</sup> mountains, the land of Israel was also covered with the waters which had scattered in all the the inhabited portions of the world. It is therefore clear from their opinion that the waters passed over and covered the whole world.

In regard to the view that she brought it from the garden of Eden, <sup>how</sup> did Noah know that the waters were abated from the face of the earth? Perhaps it will be said that when Noah saw that she brought the sign in her mouth, he surmised that something new had happened. Then he opened the windows and saw that the waters had abated from the face of the earth. But know that all the stories of the flood, its events and happenings, the matter of the ark, all are in the form of a miracle. It was God's will to save and leave a remnant of the human species and the rest of the living creatures. He who is well versed in the science of the sea and of algebra, it wertainly will be clear to him that it is in no way possible for the ark to stand up in a natural way against the storm of the raging waters from one end of the world to the other, as occurred at that time. As Scripture has it: "the fountains of the great deep were broken up and the the windows of heaven were opened up." <sup>228</sup> The world was broken up and overturned and the lower waters came out of it in order to drown all its sides from above and from below. If the water that came from the lower places was warm, as the rabbis said, how did the pitch cool off? Furthermore, how was the ark able to carry all species of living creatures, male

and female with the food necessary for all of them? However, all of this is, as we have said, a miracle. God ordered Noah to build the ark and put him into it in order to show that He does not desire anything outside of the natural and that the world is guided by His order. For it seems on the surface that all that occurred then was natural and not by way of a miracle.

The philosophers argue that according to a rational understanding and also from the literal meaning of the Scriptures, when they are clearly understood, it is not necessary to believe that the whole world was flooded by the waters of the flood. Since water naturally goes to the lower level because of its weight, it is impossible for the world to be covered at one time--for the world is graded and not level. Thus if the lower countries were covered with the waters of the flood, the higher regions were uncovered, and the flood was entirely in all the inhabited places. But the Scriptures<sup>229</sup> say, "All the high mountains under the heavens were covered" --meaning that the whole earthly sphere was included. It says, furthermore, "He blotted out every living substance on the face of the earth"--everything that was in it, beast, the marrow of every kind of beast, grasses, and trees; all were destroyed and became nothing. We also find that the waters reached and surpassed fifteen cubits higher than the mountains. If those mountains are the mountains of the east in Armenia, near the Euphrates river and the Tigris, as Ibn Ezra wrote, then there is no doubt but that the truth lies with the philosophers. It is possible to say that there remained many places in the world over which the waters of the flood did not pass, for there are lands higher than the mountains of Armenia by four thousand cubits. If the waters prevailed fifteen cubits higher than the mountains of Ararat then those countries were not covered by the waters of the time of Noah.

But in reality, as it appears from the literal meaning of the verses, the highest mountains which were known at that time were the mountains of Ararat, for they showed their peaks above the other places when the waters began to decrease, as it is written, "The ark rested...on Mt. Ararat."<sup>230</sup> Therefore we must say that since God desired to send the flood to remove men from their evil and destructive deeds, He sent the storm only in the inhabited places. Why should He cause it to rain and flood the desolate waste lands when there is no living creature there to chastise? "Since at the beginning of the world only a few of the lands were inhabited, for mankind was not dispersed until the generation of the dispersion, as it is written, "God scattered them over the face of the earth"<sup>231</sup> -- therefore it said that the flood was complete, that it covered all the high mountains. That means specifically and in general all the inhabited lands, that all the high mountains were covered which were known at that time to be inhabited. If the mountains of Ararat in the east are in Armenia, then the matter stands as we have said; i.e., that during the covering ~~of~~ the mountains of the north were certainly not covered, nor were the mountains of Africa covered, i.e., where the Negroes live. That seems to us to be the truth of the matter. But the essence of their argument is no argument at all, for the world was not filled with the rain as they thought. But God caused the rain to come down forty days and forty nights in order to moisten the earth, to stir it from its place and destroy its foundations, so that the hidden waters may come out of it when it is split open, and will cover the earth. That is the meaning of the verse, "All the fountains of the great deep were broken up."<sup>232</sup> If the ~~fountains of the great deep~~ waters came from underneath it is certainly possible that they covered everything at one time, even though it is graded. For the vast amount of water of the



deep is enough to fill the earth. Its companion testifies to it, for the sea which is three times greater than the land and is entirely filled with water, even though it is not level ground and is graded as is the land.

This brings us to the important problem of the negroes, whence they came and where their race began to change their color from white to black. There is no doubt but that we are all the descendants of one man, both black and white the offspring of Adam and Eve, as is known. According to the opinion of the rabbis the Canaanites turned black through the curse of Noah, as it is said, "Cursed be Canaan, a servant of servants shall he be to his brethren." <sup>233</sup> Perhaps we ought to say that we do not know the reason for the black skin of the negroes, since there are many other differences between us and them, besides the color of the skin. Their skin is thick, while ours is thin. There is also a difference in the appearance of the eyes, the hair, and form of the whole body. According to our rabbis all these differences and defects were taken on by them at the time of the curse when they were set apart and separated far from the white people. The blackness of their skin is not the result of the heat of their country in which they live. The proof of that is that we have seen white men who have gone to those countries and lived there, and after three hundred years their children were still white and they did not turn black because they lived near the equator. Their eyes and the color of their skins were just like their fathers; as is known. What is the proof for their argument that the blacks are a race in themselves because of the curse of Noah. That if it was the result of the heat of the land then the children of those from the north would change their skin from white to black, or at least their children's children would after a few

hundred years.

That seems probable, but after reflection and investigation into natural science it seems that it is not so. It is rather like the rest of the things in the world which go from one extreme to the other step by step. You will find in the northern countries, the cold one, that the people are white, and the nearer they are to the equator and thus closer to the sun, the nearer they come to being black in color. There is a gradual process until it reaches the complete black in the lands of India; it is therefore evident that the descendants of Adam and Eve in truth became black in proportion to the nearness of their country to the rays of the sun. They did not change immediately upon coming there, but rather gradually, some hundreds of years after the heat had penetrated their flesh and blood.

The Torah does not relate whom Cain and Abel, the children of Adam and Eve, married as wives, since the world was desolate and there was nobody there but themselves. The Jewish scholars say that the children of Adam were born with their mates. The Christian scholars say the same thing, and in truth the opinion of the sages of the Talmud is the same, for they said that Cain and Abel were born with twins. If this is the tradition, we accept it. But it seems after reflection that it is not so, for according to that opinion we are all bastards, because we were born of twins, corrupt, base, and shameful. It is better to say that God gave them wives, that He made them Himself because of the need, as He did in the case of Eve. That is my opinion in this matter even though I have no proof for it, and he who desires to differ with me, may do so.

Furthermore, consider the building of the Tower of Babel during the generation of the dispersion. Ask yourself what their intention was, what the purpose of their work was that God became angry with

them and destroyed their building. What was their transgression or sin? Josepon ben Gurion in his chronicle says that the generation of the dispersion built the tower in order to go up to heaven and make war against God and the angels.<sup>234</sup> Following after that the poet in the Musaf Service wrote, "Come let us go up to heaven to war with Him." But that is all nonsense, for Josepon ben Gurion was greatly influenced by the stories of the Greeks and Oriental idolaters. For in truth we find in their books that men who were the offspring of the Anakim (giants) made a ladder, built a tower and went up to heaven. There was a great battle between them and the gods. The latter defeated the giants and drove them out of the heavens. Those are literally the words of Josepon and also of the poet. Would that they had never been written.

However, those who interpret the Bible literally say that the intention of those who built the tower was to gather themselves together and all dwell in one place. That is found in the verse, "Let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad on the face of the earth."<sup>235</sup> Ibn Ezra furthermore adds that Abraham our father was one of the builders of the tower.<sup>236</sup> And in truth according the account of the generations, it seems to be so. It is possible that at that time he did not know God, for he was young. The principle of the knowledge of a Creator he had, but when he took hold of the faith in God he was forty years old, as they say in the G'marah. Rabbi Jochanan and Rabbi Chanina both say that Abraham was forty years old when he recognized the Creator, according to the version of Maimonides in his Sefer Hamadah.<sup>237</sup> According to the version of our books he was forty-eight years old. But we will not decide which is the correct explanation of this matter at all, for it is of the hidden mysteries of God. According to the literal meaning of the Scriptures the builders

of the tower did not sin, and did nothing unusual. If so, why were they punished? Although there is no cogent answer, it is better to accept the opinion of those who interpret the Scriptures literally. They say that when God created man He said to him, "Be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth."<sup>238</sup> He sought to multiply his species in order that their descendants in the future would scatter and fill the earth. Since the intention of the builders of the tower was contrary to this, since they sought to dwell together in one place and thus leave the earth waste and desolate, He confused and diversified their tongues so that one man did not understand the other. Thus they scattered to all the inhabited parts of the earth.

That which we have said up to this point concerning what the Torah relates about the creation of the first man and the other creatures, is necessary to the matter of faith. It shows us the evolution of the generations, their history and events until they reached a state of society when Abraham our father, the greatest of the faithful ones, was born. Since he initiated and founded our people, how is it possible to write the history of the Jewish people without knowing whence they sprang? And it would be impossible to make known the account of the events of Abraham, if what the Torah wrote down had not begun with creation. Therefore everything which you find in the Torah of the events and happenings which occurred to our ancestors, which appear like worldly stories, are not really so, for there is not in the Torah a word which is extraneous. The ways of God are right.

The Torah does not tell how Abraham was able to recognize his maker when his fathers were idolaters, as it is written, "Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor" who served strange gods.<sup>239</sup> Terah his father was publicly an apostate as the Midrash says. Perhaps it is as Maimonides wrote in his Sefer Hamadah that when he was

young he began to ponder and to reflect by <sup>day</sup> and by night, and thus his mind examined and reflected until he reached the way of truth and understood the right path with his clear understanding. He knew that there was one God who ruled the world, that He created all and there is not in all of existence another God besides Him. When he began to plead with and to refute the inhabitants of Ur-Kasdim and to call upon the name of God. He told his fellow townsmen that the Lord, He is God, that it is fitting for them to break their idols and to worship the creator of the world for He is the Lord of all the earth. Scripture says, "And he called there in the name of Jahwe, the God of the world." <sup>240</sup> When his strength prevailed over them, the king of the land sought to kill him but he fled to Haran. <sup>241</sup> In his Morsh Nebuchim he adds further that he found it written in an Egyptian book about the worship of the farmer, that Abraham who was born in Cuthah differed from the opinion of the crowd who worshipped the sun and when the king <sup>242</sup> of the country heard it he put him in prison. Maimonides said that in either case a miracle was performed for Abraham our father, whether it is said that the king who put him in prison did not intend to kill him so that he could be saved and God turned his mind; or whether it is said that he cast him into the fiery furnace and then he was saved as they say in the 'almud and as the verse hints, "I am the Lord who brought thee out of Ur of Chaldees." <sup>243</sup>

You will find in the Torah matters which man is <sup>not</sup> easily able to understand or comprehend except after much reflection and examination. An example of that is the case of Simeon and Levi who craftily killed all the inhabitants of Shechem, as you know from the verse, "And it came to pass on the third day, when they were in pain, that the two sons of Jacob, Simeon, and Levi, Dinah's brethren, took each man his sword, came upon the city unawares and slew all the males." <sup>244</sup> That was

not a proper act, to kill all the people of the city craftily and with the deceit they employed. Maimonides answers that the Moacheans who commit adultery deserve death, therefore the sons of Jacob judged them according to their laws. <sup>245</sup> But what is Maimonides talking about? If Shechem deserved death because of adultery it was not within their power to kill him. Furthermore, after they concluded a contract with him, as they did, their sister became a married woman in everything and Shechem was her husband. Then why did they kill him? Furthermore, if Shechem did what was not right in committing adultery with their sister, why did they kill all the people of the city? What sense is there to the opinion of Maimonides! If Shechem deserved death it does not therefore follow that all the people of the city deserved death. Likewise that which Rashi wrote, that they changed the conditions from female to male is not correct and is no reason at all, for killing

<sup>246</sup> so many men. Although there is no absolute answer to the problem, it is best to give a reason for the action and bring it as near to reason as possible. That is that they considered the action of Shechem in lying with their sister as straining the honor of the family. When Jacob reproved them for their action they answered, "Shall he make our sister as a harlot?" <sup>247</sup> The bitterness in their heart was due to the fact that their sister who was a virgin and was chaste, he made her into a harlot. According to their law, whoever commits adultery in her father's house while she is a virgin, becomes a harlot. Therefore they wreaked vengeance upon him and killed him. Perhaps that is why Rashi brings the words of Targum Onkelos who translates <sup>248</sup> אחותיהן as ית אחותה making it plural.

But the fact of the matter is that the Targum usually changed אח to אח according to the situation but here it does not change it at all and leaves the אח as the original. The meaning of the Targum, if it used the word אח would be that

they must deal with our sister as harlots are dealt with, but as the Targum has it it means that they make a harlot of our sister and thus stain our honor and leave us abominations.

There remains the question yet as to whether they had the right to kill all the inhabitants of the city for that reason, for they were not all guilty because of his transgression. You know that in these small kingdoms in ancient days the kings were not absolute rulers as they are now, but rather all their deeds were decided in the council of the elders of the city. Therefore Shechem did not want to decide the conditions and make a covenant with the sons of Jacob until he had heard the opinion of the council of the city. Since they did not prevent him but gave him the right to transgress, to make a harlot of Dinah their sister, there were just as guilty as was their king. According to what they ruled about the prohibition of harlotry, it was up to them--the elders and the judges of the people of the city--to sentence death upon Shechem for having committed adultery with the daughter of Jacob, then they would be entirely free. But since they confirmed it and gave him the right to transgress, they deserved death as well as did their king. Perhaps that is to what Kaimonides referred.

There remains for us yet another consideration. If Shechem deserved death it was not within the power of the children of Jacob to kill him. According to the laws of Israel he who lies with a virgin in her father's house is not guilty of anything, not he or she, and even the name adultery is not applied in that case. There is no other obligation than that the man take her for a wife. Thus, after Shechem and the people of the city made peace with them and they were circumcised they left the category of Noachians and they no longer deserved death. Furthermore, who permitted them to kill them because they

transgressed their own laws? If a Jew commits a transgression and sins against a law of the Torah, has a Gentile judge the right because of that, to declare him guilty and to kill him? Perhaps Maimonides will say that since this occurred before the giving of the Torah the children of Jacob considered themselves as Noachians and therefore they put the people of Shechem to death. But that is all nonsense, for according to the laws of the Noachians Dinah their sister deserved death, as we find in the instance of Tamar: "Judah said, 'Bring her forth and let her be burned.'" <sup>249</sup> Rashi, in the name of Ephraim, in the name of Rabbi Meir, said that Tamar was condemned to death because she was the daughter of a priest. <sup>250</sup> That is homiletic and is far removed from the order of history, for even in the time of Judah the daughter of Shem lived and she was permitted to bear children. But according to the plain meaning both men and women were guilty of death according to the Noachian laws.

In Sanhedrin in the chapter on the rebellious son they say that Esther who cohabited with Ahasuerus was not guilty and that according to the Jewish laws and not according to the Noachian laws. <sup>251</sup> The discussion in the Gemarah there follows: Rabbi Jochanan said in the name of Rabbi Simeon ben Jotsedek that they voted and decided in the upper chamber of Nithza in Lud that if a man is told to transgress all the laws of the Torah so that he should not be killed, he should transgress and not be killed, except the worship of idolatry, incest, and the shedding of blood. In these cases he should rather choose death than transgress. When Rabbi came he said in the name of Rabbi Jochanan that even when it is not at the time of a governmental order for apostasy, they should not accept it, meaning they should transgress and not be killed, but only in private. However, publicly they should rather choose death than transgress even a minor com-



mandment. They argue further there that Esther's act was public, meaning that she married Ahasuerus who was a Gentile and yet she did not sacrifice herself. But they harmonize it. Rabbi Abayya said that Esther was merely like natural ground. Rabba said that for one's own pleasure it was different. Thus when a Gentile cohabits with a Jewish daughter it is not in the category of incest. All of this is according to the Jewish laws only and not according to the Noachean laws, as we have said.

We do not find that the sons of Jacob subjected their sister to any punishment, therefore they regarded her as a Jewish daughter, whether from one point of view or the other. It is so even according to the opinion of Rabba who said that there is a difference in the enjoyment, that if a Jewish girl is forced by a Gentile she should transgress and not be killed. If it is done for his pleasure it is not in the category of incest. That is the opinion of Maimonides and Nachmanides. If then they considered their sister under the laws of Israel, why should they consider themselves as Noachians and kill all the people of Shechem? In the last analysis we do not find a better interpretation for the matter than the one we have given. Perhaps they did not act correctly for even their father Jacob reproved them about this before his death. "Cursed by their anger for it was fierce." <sup>252</sup> "Let my soul not come unto their council." <sup>253</sup> He had no portion with them in the slaughter of the people of Shechem. If they did what was proper then why does he remove himself from their council and their company?

Now we will inquire into the question as to whether there is a reason for the laws of the Torah and for its statutes which God commanded us, or whether they are decrees and statutes according to the knowledge of Him alone who decreed them. To our way of thinking, let it be said that it is impossible that the great God, the Creator

of the world, commanded his children the Israelites laws and statutes which have no content or benefit. It is impossible that He established them with no benefit for us, but only to see whether we hearken to His voice and are set and fixed in the service of God. If it is true that the Torah and commandments are of no profit to our bodies and souls, then after a hundred or two hundred years, when He saw the steadfastness of our hearts to Him, God, and His service, He should have told us through a prophet that I have seen that you hearkened to My voice, that you love Me with your whole heart and soul, and since I commanded for you many laws that have no purpose except to test you, therefore from today on you are free from these commandments and from this day on they are no longer binding upon you. On the contrary we find that God keeps His promise and He commanded us to obey His commandments and always, as it is written, "These words which I command thee this day shall be on thy heart, thou shalt teach them to thy sons and speak of them..."<sup>254</sup> All the Scriptures point to the permanence of the laws. Thus the last of the prophets said, "Remember ye the law of Moses My servant which I commanded you in Horeb, even all the statutes and ordinances."<sup>255</sup> Thus we see that they were given for a purpose and not by accident nor to test us.

When we consider the commandments in general we find that a portion of them are obligatory upon us even if they had not been commanded in the Torah, obligatory according to the custom of the country. These are the customs which our fathers had already observed before the giving of the Torah and they are also customary among the nations. As an example there is the prohibition against murder, theft, adultery, and the like. It was for that reason that the people of every city appointed judges to punish the transgressors<sup>ors</sup> of these laws and to drive them from the group. Know also that of the

religious commandments some were already customary among the nations, such as the priests' share of the dough and the sacrifices. The latter were already fixed and customary with the Egyptians and other nations, as is known from Maimonides from what he wrote in his Moreh Nebuchim. When the Jews lived in strange lands among people who already had the custom of sacrifice, they were favorable to the sacrifice. Moses also instituted them for Israel after they left Egypt, for it is impossible to make a man believe that what he is already accustomed to and used to, is untrue. If Moses had told the Israelites that the custom of sacrifice was not right, it would be as if one were to come at this time and tell us that the prayers are not acceptable to God. You cannot find anyone to believe that. These are the opinions of Maimonides and according to that there is no use in the sacrifice at all. The great wonder is how God could decree sacrifices without any purpose except that of illusion. The Kabbalists say that the sacrifices are by way of allegory, that when a cow is sacrificed before God on the altar, it is to confess that so he deserves that it be done to him because of the sin that he committed. The merciful God forgives and has compassion on the work which He created in His likeness and His image, and therefore He has his substitute in the animal. Thus also according to their view there is no value in the physical sacrifice. Since it is only a substitute, then according to them there is no value in it.

In the Gêmarah they say that he who says regarding a bird's nest that you should have mercy upon it, he is silenced. It seems clear according to their words that there is no reason for the commandments. But it is not their view that the commandments of God and His statutes are without reason, nor that they were given by chance

without any purpose, God forbid! It is rather that there is a reason for them but they are not known to us, for the ways of God are right but the mind of man cannot comprehend them. Maimonides brings this matter under discussion and declares that what they say about silencing the one who pleads mercy for the nest of a bird, that according to the opinion of the one who speaks it, there is no reason for the commandments. But there are some who say that there is a reason for the commandments. But that is not true, for we do find either in the Gemarah or in the Midrashim anyone who considers the laws of the Torah as given without purpose or reason. All scholars and people of understanding must believe that they were established with good reason and understanding, only that we creatures of clay cannot attain to them. What will Maimonides say as regards the red cow? What reason is there in it? whether the ashes make clean the unclean, or unclean the clean, or make the consumed parts unclean. Likewise with the laws of circumcision, slaughter, and the like, the reason is not made clear to us.

The same holds for the prohibition against eating animals, fowl, or fish which are ritually unclean. There is no reason for it. That which Maimonides says that Scripture prohibits them because they are injurious to the body, that is not true. There are fish which have no fins or scales which are less digestible than many kinds of fish that have not these characteristics, and yet they are permitted. The meat of the rock-badger and the hare is certainly more digestible and better than the meat of the roe, the buffalo, and the mountain goat which the Scriptures permit because of their ritually proper parts, even though they are injurious to the body, their meat is as hard as wood and causes bad sickness bringing the earthworm which is very dangerous and kills man. In northern countries, in the cold

places, far from the equator, about fifty degrees colder, the meat of the pig is more adapted to and better for the body and is more pleasing to the taste than the meat of the goats and lambs. Is it therefore permitted to be eaten? The Torah fixes the legal sanction among cattle for all that are ruminant and cloven footed. The people of Egypt and in other countries of Africa eat the meat of the camel, Christians in northern countries and in countries of the East eat the pig and they do not suffer. They eat and drink of their sacrifices and they do not die because of the heaviness of the food. There is no good sense in the statement of Maimonides at all. Health is one thing and the Torah another.

What would he say about the prohibition, "Thou shalt not boil a kid in the milk of its mother"? <sup>256</sup> There is nothing wrong in putting a little milk in a food. Nevertheless to the minds of the rabbis of the Talmud it is permitted to eat the cheese first and then the meat but not the meat first and then the cheese. They give the reason that the meat sticks between the teeth. Thus their objection is not that it is injurious to the body nor because of the mixture in the stomach of the one who eats. The G'marah says that in <sup>257</sup> Leviticus the word וְהָיָה כִּדְמָיִת should be vocalized וְהָיָה כִּדְמָיִת. Perhaps they meant to say that man is created in the image and likeness of God in order that he should have the mind to reflect about the works of God and of His wonderful deeds. He is permitted to eat and drink and <sup>258</sup> ~~came~~ for the other needs of the body in order to preserve his body and retain his strength according to his nature as a material being. The form and quality of man is part animal, but part of him is spiritual and divine. Therefore, even though he is allowed to eat for the need of his body as other living creatures do, yet everything which shuts his brain and dulls his head is prohibited because of his unity with God. It

is known that the surfeiting of the body dulls and stultifies man's mental powers. The class of food forbidden to Israel is forbidden because Jews must think about God's wondrous works, search them and study them, as it is said, "You shall teach them to your children and you children's children." <sup>258</sup> It is also said, "You shall labor in it by day and by night." <sup>259</sup> He who fills the body with foods that make the the body heavy, he will certainly not have the inclination nor the proper mind to think about the matters and wonders of God. The time after the body is satisfied is lost, he is not able to comprehend the greatness of God nor His wisdom. That is undoubtedly correct. You will find that scholars, people who work mentally, such as doctors, mathematicians, eat very little and they eat only light and dainty food. On the contrary people who work on the soil and other laborers who work physically, they eat and drink and fill their stomachs. The rabbis say that the Torah weakens the strength of man. Not only the Torah but the study of anything weakens the strength. Therefore, it is said, "Ye are children of the Lord your God, ye shall not cut yourselves..." <sup>260</sup> for folly of that kind causes the loss of time and does not allow man to reflect on the ways of God. That seems to us to be the reason for the prohibition of foods based upon the views of the rabbis. May God judge us for merit.

There remains for us yet the problem in regard to the law of Moses as to why the Jews when they entered Palestine killed and destroyed all the inhabitants of the land. How is it possible that God should tell them, Moses, Joshua, and Israel, to blot out and annihilate all the men, women, and children who dwell in these lands without causing them to sin. Were they not His handiwork? Yet Samuel told <sup>261</sup> Saul, "Go and destroy the Amalekites." What sin did the young, still sucking at their mother's breasts, commit? that upon all of

them the decree of destruction was given. All the philosophers wax excited in answering this, for in truth it is important. All the people whom Joshua slew were created by God and by His great hand, and what excuse or reason can He present to order him to destroy them? It is as if a mechanic should after a good deal of trouble and many years of labor make a great piece of work, then suddenly take a hatchet and chop it up and demolish it entirely. That is impossible from any point of view. Samuel was very angry at Saul when he allowed Agag the king of Amalek to ~~xxxx~~ remain and showed mercy upon him. That seems contrary to the qualities of good and mercy, for just as He is merciful so you must be merciful, just as He is gracious so you must ~~xxxx~~ be gracious. Therefore those who oppose our law say that if the Jews subdued many large nations as did Alexander the great and many other kings like him who killed all the inhabitants of the land, man, women and children, and enslaved them the world would have been destroyed by them and their faith would not spread to the nations. Joshua also burned and destroyed all the cities and villages that fell under his hand which he conquered in the war. He killed thirty-one kings which is contrary to the ethics of war, for it is not proper to kill the women, surely the children and the kings after they are captured.

But know that it was not the intention nor the determination of Joshua to destroy the country and to kill its inhabitants, for God has mercy upon the creation of His hands. However, since the seven nations were wicked and were pursuing a bad road, God decided to destroy them from the face of the earth, as he did to the generation of the flood, and to Sodom and Gomorrah. He did so because when He brought His people out of Egypt, the Israelites in their going out fled from the Egyptians and the seven nations did not desire to re-

ceive them into their land but rather went out to make war against them. In that connection Scripture says, "Remember what Amalek did to you on the way in your going out of Egypt." <sup>262</sup> The intention of the Jews was to settle in their lands in peace, quiet, and tranquility, but the nations did not desire it. Therefore they were compelled to make war against them and drive them from their lands. Hashi in his commentary to the Torah says that the verse, "Then proclaim peace unto it" <sup>263</sup> refers to wars of offense. Scripture goes on to say, "Thus shalt thou do to all the cities which are very far from thee." <sup>264</sup> In regard to that verse Mizrachi writes that to the nations that are far off we should approach with proclamations of peace, even if they are confirmed in the worship of their gods. <sup>265</sup> But the seven nations we do not approach with proclamations of peace unless they accept conversion, that they will no longer worship idols. Otherwise we do not accept them. With that argument he takes issue with the statement of Nachmanides who differed with Hashi on the verse, "There was not acity that made peace with the children of Israel, save the Hivites, the inhabitants of Gideon." <sup>266</sup> From that we see that if they had made peace they would have accepted them according to the view of Hashi who decided that the verse, "Then proclaim peace unto it." as referring to wars of offense except that of the seven nations, who even if they made peace had no escape.

However, the opinion of Mizrachi is that this verse refers only to peace with the converts, that they shall not worship idols, and since the other nations did not agree to that Joshua killed and slew them. But he was troubled by this question: if the Gibeonites made peace properly with the Israelites and agreed not to serve idols, then why did they resort to cunning? He answers by ~~the~~ saying that the



Gibeonites erred in that they thought that there was no escape for the seven nations even if they agreed not to serve idols. They saw that the Jews killed the people of Ai and of Jericho but they did not understand that they did not accept the condition not to worship idols. They thought they did not desire to accept any of the seven nations and therefore they resorted to cunning. Mizrahi says that the complaint of the princes was because of the trickery with which they deceived them.

In the Jerushalmi they say that Joshua sent three advance messages before he crossed the Jordan stating that if they made peace, they would not kill them, but after they crossed the Jordan they would not make peace with them at all--and the proof of that is that the Gibeonites resorted to cunning. In Sofra they infer from the Scriptural verse, "in order that they shall not teach you" that if they repented they would be accepted. Rashi interprets there by saying that speaks of those who live outside of Palestine and therefore God orders them not to receive them lest they teach them to do disgraceful deeds; i.e., the inhabitants of the border lands. But those who live outside of it, if they repent we accept them. From this we see that even the countries situated far off are not accepted unless they agree not to worship idols and therefore Mizrahi says that it refers to the seven nations. He said that he found it thus in parts of the versions that the seven nations if they are within the boundaries of Palestine, even if they agree not to worship idols, they are not saved since it is established that they are firm in their uncleanness and they must be careful lest they teach them. But if they dwell beyond the border they are accepted and they are not troubled by them. In regard to the verse, "that they shall not teach you" that includes even the seven nations who dwell outside of the border. Those who

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dwell within the borders of Palestine, about them it is said "Thou shalt not let a single soul live." That is the view of Mizrahi and it is valueless for his opinions contradict one another.

In the first instance he says that if the seven nations repent and agree not to worship idols, that according to the view of Rashi we accept them and do not kill them. That was brought out in the verse, "There was not a city that made peace...." Rashi did not say that we seek peace with them only as regards taxes and service of labor if they desire peace without abolishing idol worship. He said that in regard to conversion, if they want peace to abolish idol worship we certainly accept them. Then in his interpretation to Rashi in Sota he contradicts his first opinion and says the contrary. If the seven nations are in Palestine we do not receive them at all but if they are outside of the boundaries, we accept them. That is not like his first opinion. Furthermore, according to his statement that the seven nations are not accepted within the boundaries, the Gibeonites when they resorted to cunning did not err. Were it not for that cunning they would not have accepted them for they lived within the boundaries. But the opinion of Rashi as explained on the verse, "Ye shall approach in peace" is that it refers to wars of offense, that it is necessary to make peace with them if they so desire. But with the seven nations both before the crossing of the Jordan or after it we do not advance upon them in peace, for about them it is written: "Thou shalt not let a single soul live in the whole region." Therefore the Gibeonites had to resort to cunning for they knew that the seven nations could not be saved even with the abolition of idol worship and the said that what they came from a far off land acting as though they were not of the seven nations. That is the opinion of Rashi which is not like that of Mizrahi.

Whether they are within the boundaries or outside of them the seven nations, even if they abolish idolatry, are not allowed by law as the Sifre teaches. In regard to the statement in the Sifre, "in order that they shall not teach you," implying that if they repent we accept them, that is only when they come of their own accord, without anticipating peace, as the Gibeonites did. Under those conditions we accept them and we must allow them to live in our midst. The leaders were angry because of the deceit because according to the law they acted properly in accepting them for they came to convert of their own accord without anticipating peace. That is the meaning of "ashi. But all the writers, including Maimonides, agree that the verse about approaching a city in peace includes the seven nations also. All cities must be approached in peace and if they answer peacefully, then the matter is alike for all of them, for if they acknowledge their slavery and accept the seven Noachian laws we must allow them to live in our midst.

If you are troubled by the question as to what then is the difference between the seven nations and the other peoples, it is this: The latter, if they do not accept slavery and the Noachian laws, their males are killed but the women, children, and cattle are taken as booty. The seven nations, if they do not make peace, do not accept the slavery and Noachian laws, all of them are killed--men, women, children, and cattle--for about them it is said, "You shall not let a single soul live." That is the opinion of the Tosefos in the chapter Hasholeach that the verse "Thou shalt not let a soul live" refers only to cases where they do not desire to make peace as is proved from the plain meaning of the Scriptures.

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They bring proof from the statement there--"They shall not dwell in thy land lest they cause thee to sin against me." Shall

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I infer that it refers to the case of a stranger who takes it upon himself not to worship idols and therefore it expressly states that one must not block the way of a servant to his master. Thus every stranger is included, even the seven nations. If they repent and vow that they will not serve idols, we must allow them to live in our midst. But the verse says that there was not a city that made peace, that is to say, however, if they had made peace we would have accepted them.

But the real question is: Why did the Gibeonites have to resort to cunning? Even after they crossed the Jordan would they not have accepted their slavery and service. But know that before they crossed the Jordan Joshua sent three advance notes to the seven nations. First, that they vacate the land and give it to them freely. Second, that they accept the taxation and service. Third, if they so ~~desire~~ let them make war. All of this is found in the Jerushalmi. None of them desired to accept the first two conditions, neither to accept the taxation nor to vacate the land. They chose war. Then Joshua crossed the Jordan and began to annihilate them. The mistake that the Gibeonites made was that they thought that after these notes which Joshua sent them there was no more opportunity for them to escape. However, that was not so, for certainly when Joshua drew near to the war, according to the law he had to advance to every city in particular and offer them another opportunity for peace. Since they did not know that they resorted to cunning. The anger of the congregations against the leaders was due, perhaps, to the fact that they made a covenant with them for The Torah says that if they accept the taxation we must allow them to live and not that we make a covenant with them. Therefore is removed the argument of the philosophers as quoted above, for it is clear that when the Jews went out of Egypt they had to find a land that <sup>was</sup> subjected and they had to free it. Joshua sent three notes in advance, either

that they clear out or war--and they chose war. They showed themselves ill-disposed toward Israel for they were steadfast in their uncleanness and therefore they were all deserving of death.

Their other argument, that if the Jews had conquered many great nations as Alexander and others did, they would have destroyed the world, that is not true at all. Even in the opinion of Rashi the command "not to let a soul live" refers only to the seven nations. The rest of the peoples it is forbidden after the war to kill them, according to the ethics of war among all peoples and nations. If finally you are troubled by the question as to why the young of the seven nations who dwell within the boundaries of Palestine, were killed for they are innocent and certainly are not guilty of committing any evil. the answer is that whatever is bad and spoiled by nature, even though its inherent weakness does not show itself now nor cannot it yet do any harm, it is nevertheless necessary to remove and destroy it, for later on the time will come when it will be harmful, when it gets big and has strength. Thus if you leave a cub or a tiger, feed him and satisfy him from the best of your house, when he grows up he will kill you if he gets the chance to do so. It is <sup>their</sup> ~~the~~ natural habit to eat meat from the time of their birth. Thus they came forth from the womb of the mother and that is their natural instinct. So it is with these nations, since their children are from an unclean root it is impossible for them to be good and kind, for as the fathers do, so do the children. The prophet said, "I will ~~not~~ have compassion upon her children for they are children of harlotry." <sup>273</sup> When God saw that they and their children and all of their descendants were bad and sinful he decided to destroy them from off the face of the earth and to give their portion to another nation better and more fitted to inhabit their land. That is the literal meaning of the analogy which the philosophers who

oppose our religion advanced against our opinion. 'hey said that God when he told Israel to kill and destroy the seven nations acted like an artist who creates a piece of art with all his ability and effort and then suddenly smashes it and destroys it. 'he truth is that he who paints a picture, fashions a piece of sculpture, makes a bas relief for a statue, when he finishes it and has put into it all his energy and strength, he still looks for a single flaw or shortcoming in it. If upon investigation he finds anything wrong, that it is not perfect, it is certainly true that he will smash it, destroy it and make another in its place, more beautiful and better than it. So God, when He saw that the seven nations were wicked people, and they had departed from his favour and worship, He blotted them out and destroyed them and placed the Jews in their stead in their lands and in their dwelling places.

The opponents of the Torah further argue the question as to why the Jews were given the right to lend money to strangers on interest. That is no question at all for Scripture permits the lending of money to the peoples of the world on interest so long as it is not in excess to what is proper. In business it is allowed to sell goods for profit if the profit on it is according to law and is proper and what difference is there between money and goods? The Scriptures say, "To a foreigner thou mayest lend upon interest but to thy brother thou shalt not lend upon interest." <sup>274</sup>----which is to teach us that according to law you must lend to your brother without interest and you are forbidden not to lend him and excuse yourself by saying that you do not desire to lend to him because you do not take interest from him. On the contrary that is more sinful than lending for interest, for it is a poor man that you thus harm <sup>him</sup> all the more. If your brother comes to you to buy goods where he is able to make a third profit on it, if

you loan it to him and take half of that third from him, which is a sixth, you have already thereby transgressed the ~~xxx~~ words of the 'orah which say, "To thy brother thou shalt not lend on interest." It is forbidden to take from him anything from which he can make a profit without danger of loss. But if you do not lend it to him and you are able to do so, and you lend it to a stranger to take interest from him then you transgress far more, for by that the whole third is lost to him. (Author's note: That is the meaning of the rabbis ~~wh~~ they said that if Moses had known how much profit there was in this thing he would not have written it. They meant that Moses by virtue of his quality of kindness and of goodness thought that they were all like that so he commanded Israel to lend without interest. Had he known that they would withhold lending to Jews without <sup>e</sup> interest and cause the poor to suffer thereby, he would not have written it.) But if the man is a stranger and not of his people why should he give him the benefit of his goods and he himself should not get a profit? That is the meaning of "To a stranger thou mayest lend upon interest but to thy brother thou shalt not lend on interest."

Those who lend on excessive interest, even though they do it to Gentiles, act contrary to our religion and the time will come for them to answer judgment. In the Sifre they say that the statement, "To a stranger thou mayest lend on interest"--that is a positive law; "to thy brother thou shalt not lend on interest"--that is a prohibitory law. That is to say, that he who lends must lend to a Jew without interest, but he who does not lend has not transgressed a prohibitory law. However, if he desires to lend to a stranger without interest, he is permitted to do so. That is the truth of the matter and all the codes agree. Maimonides in his great work and also in the book of <sup>lws</sup> understands the language of the Sifre literally and declares

that he who lends to a stranger without interest has transgressed a positive law. But that is nonsense! What transgression of a positive law is it for one to practice the rule of piety transcending the strict requirement of the law. Ibn Daud, Nachmanides, and Rashba have already answered him that his position in regard to interest and usury is explained wrongly and is a mistaken compromise. The wonder of it is that they account the command "To a stranger thou shalt lend on interest" as a positive law and he counts it among the 613 commandments. Far be it! However, Nachmanides in his criticism has already withdrawn it from the account.

There remains for us now the discussion of the problem of free will; i.e., whether man acts from his own will, as his heart directs or whether his acts and deeds are decreed for him by God. Maimonides in his Sefer Hammadah says that freedom is given to every man. If he desires to choose for himself the good path and be a righteous person, he is free to do so. If he desires to choose the evil way and be a wicked person, he is free to do so. <sup>275</sup> He adds a third rule which is that this matter is very important and is the foundation of the Torah. He said that if God decreed upon man that he be either righteous or wicked or if there was anything there <sup>which</sup> drew man naturally to one particular idea or to one particular deed, how could God through the prophets command us to do this and not that, to make good our ways, when from the day of his birth it was already determined for man, or his nature drew him toward that thing and it was impossible to change him? What place is there for the whole Torah? What judgment is exacted from the wicked and what reward is paid to the righteous? <sup>276</sup> "Shall not the judge of all the earth do justice?" Do not be astounded and cry out, "How can man do anything he desires?" Then all his acts are turned over into his hand. Has he ever done



anything without the permission of his master? Scripture says, "Every-  
thing that God desires He does upon heaven and earth." <sup>277</sup> Lest you  
will say, "Does not God know all that will be before it happens?" Does  
He know that this man will be a righteous person and that one a wicked  
person, or does He not know? If He knows that, it is impossible for  
the man not to be either righteous or wicked. If you say that He  
knows that he will be righteous and the man becomes wicked, then He  
does not know the thing exactly.

Know that the answer to this is larger than the earth and wider  
than the sea, yet you must know and understand this matter of which I  
speak. I have already explained in the second principle that God  
does not know a thing with a knowledge which is extraneous to him in  
the sense that man and his thought are two. He and His knowledge are  
one and the knowledge of man cannot conceive this thing clearly. Just  
as a man has not the power to grasp the truth of the creator, as it  
is said, "No man can look upon Me and live," <sup>278</sup> so no man has the power  
to grasp or conceive the ~~the~~ knowledge of the creator. Thus we are  
unable to know how God knows all creatures and their deeds. But we  
know without a doubt that act of man is by man and that God does not  
direct him nor decree upon him that he act in a particular manner.  
Therefore it is said in prophesy that man is judged according to his  
deeds as to whether he is good or bad and that is the important thing  
for all the views of the prophets are dependent upon it. All these  
<sup>279</sup> are the words of Maimonides.

It is indeed with good reason and understanding ibn Daud wrote  
about him that he does not follow the custom of wise men for a wise  
man does not begin a thing which he does not know how to finish. He  
began with questions and difficulties and left the matter a question  
and returned to faith. It were better that he had left the simplicity

of the simple alone and not raised a question in their minds, and thus leave their thought in doubt. Perhaps some time the question would have arisen in~~in~~ their minds. Maimonides said that the act of man is given over to the hand of fate, but gave him the mind to exist without being held by the power of fate, and that is the power given to man to be either good or bad. God knows the power of His work whether there is strength to bring him to that quality or not, but this comprehension is not decreed. There is no sense in this, for even if the comprehension of God should be from the power of fate by which a man will be either good or bad, since He already knows it, from the start before it happens, it does not lie in the power or the ability of that man to do anything else but that which God already knows. Thus ibn Daud concludes by saying that all of this is to no avail.

Maimonides further adds there that although God knows in general all the events, He knows them in general and not in particular. After he shows that it was not decreed upon Pharoah to do evil to the Jews and that his sin caused the denial of repentance for him, he argues further with the verse from Scripture, "They shall serve them and afflict them"<sup>280</sup>---thus it was decreed upon Israel to worship idols. Then why were they punished? He answers that it is not decreed upon a certain man that he will be an apostate but rather every apostate who worships idols, if he does not desire to worship them need not. God declared only the general trend of the world. That is like saying that this people has both righteous and wicked within it. "or that reason the wicked person need not say that it has already been decreed that he be wicked because it was known to Moses that there are wicked people in Israel. It is said, "The poor shall never cease from the land."<sup>282</sup> Thus the Egyptians, everyone of them who oppressed the Israelites, if they had desired to do no evil to them, it was within their

power for the idea is not decreed for the particular. He already said that man has not the power to know how God knows things which are to happen in the future. These also are the words of Maimonides.

Ibn Daud in his notes criticized it and said that these opinions are childish. The view of Maimonides that God knows all the creatures and their deeds is of great astonishment. Who compelled him to say that, to show that God knows all the deeds of man and his acts before they exist? However, we have another opinion in this matter. In reality God has the power to know if He so desires. But now that He by His own will turned this power aside from Himself from the day that He created man and the world, He desires that each man do as his heart wills. He gave him a brain and a mind to understand and to distinguish between good and evil. Therefore God does not see and does not know what men are doing in particular but He gave strength and power to the world that it should go along according to the power and influence it received from God in general. I do not know who compelled ibn Daud to say that the knowledge of God is as the knowledge of the astrologers who see but do not see clearly. These words of his are words of exaggeration. Far be it that God should see things unclearly and distant from the truth as do the astrologers. If He desired to see them clearly who could prevent Him? But the matter is as we have said. God withdrew all His power in this regard and allowed man to do by his own will all that his heart desired.

The argument of Maimonides as to how it is possible for man to do anything he desires for he thus will do something against the will of God's intention and desire--that is no argument at all. Since God withdrew His power willingly He does not want to know what the end of man will be, whether good or bad. He will be whatever he will be. He does not do anything against God's will, for what concern is it of God's? If he does good he will receive reward, if he does evil he will

receive chastisement, all according to what he does. If you ask then why did God send prophets and why did He reprove the people and warn them constantly that they do what is good and proper in His eyes, the answer is that since He is a God of grace and mercy He has compassion upon the works of His hands. Even though He gave them the power to do all that they desire, still He constantly has mercy and compassion upon his creatures. That is why Scriptures say, "I have no desire in the death of the wicked"; <sup>283</sup> and it is also said, "I place before thee this day life and good, death and evil; choose thou life." <sup>285</sup>

That is to say that even though I have not the governing power over all your actions, <sup>still</sup> ~~for~~ I have placed before you life, for that is the good way. As to the verse, "Everything He desires He does in heaven and on earth" its interpretation and meaning is that there is not in the heavens above nor on the earth beneath anyone who shares with Him the dominion and worship. He Himself rules over all creatures above and below. It is not as Maimonides thought speaking of the actions of mankind. ~~Then~~

The same is true of the verse, "and the people <sup>shall</sup> rise up and go astray." There is no denial of free will in it as ibn Daud said. Even Moses said, "You will deal corruptly while I am yet alive with you this day....how much the more after I die?" <sup>285</sup> That is to say, that since I know that you are a stiff-necked people I am almost certain that you will deal corruptly also after my death. When a wise man wants to know a little about what will happen he observes and judges by the past. Moses who was a very wise man said that since you are accustomed to go astray from the good path during my life, so you will do perversely after my death according to my estimate. Thus God said, "The people will arise and go astray after strange Gods of the land"--meaning just as it is accustomed to do by virtue of its stiff-

neckedness. There is no decree here at all.

In the question of the Egyptians there is no issue of free will. God knew that the inclination of the Egyptian heart was bad, accustomed to pursue and oppress strangers and therefore He said to Abraham that the end will be that they will enslave Israel by virtue of their evil practice toward their strangers; therefore they deserved to be chastised. It is not that God decreed upon them the immutable decree that they are to oppress Israel. I return again to the words of ibn Daud who said that God punishes the evil of men with something worse, and after He exacts the first punishment He returns and exacts the punishment for the greater evil. Thus they say in the Mishnah, "He once saw a skull floating on the face of the water and he said to it, 'Because thou drownest others, they have drowned thee, and in the end they that drowned thee shall themselves be drowned.'" <sup>286</sup> Its interpretation is this: because you killed, they will kill you and he who kills you will also be killed. Many of our faith, even of the wise were perplexed by this and their minds were confused, for Abel was killed and he killed nobody in the world. The Kabbalists say that Abel destroyed the plants as in the instance of ben Zoma and because of that he looked and died. Perhaps it was as they said for I do not know that type of scholarship and my teachers did not attain to it. However, the words of the Mishnah stand in their place and they are very plain. If Hillel said that he who kills somebody must himself be killed, it does not follow that he who does not kill somebody can not possibly be killed by accident. The Mishnah says, "Because thou drownest others, they have drowned thee, and in the end they that drown thee shall themselves be drowned"--meaning they killed you because you killed somebody else. He said that because he recognized it from before because he was a robber, as Rashi interprets it there.

The meaning of it is that he who kills anybody highhandedly must be killed by force and not that it is impossible that he who does not kill should also be killed.

The truth of it is as ibn Daud wrote that the Egyptians were wicked and deserved the plagues. Had they hearkened to Moses at the beginning and sent the Israelites forth, they would not have been lashed or drowned. But they were insolent and despised God before His messenger and that caused it. Furthermore, God said that they oppressed them with rigor and made their lives bitter with hard toil.<sup>287</sup> Maimonides also wrote in his commentary to the Torah, "They killed of<sup>288</sup> them and drowned of them." Scripture says, "Also the nation whom they shall serve, I will judge."<sup>289</sup> That is to say that even though I have decreed that thy seed shall be a stranger in a strange land, nevertheless the nations that destroy them shall be thy children. "I will judge;" i.e., I will judge them according to the deeds they do to them. If they do what I decreed it is well. If they do not, if they add oppression upon them more than the the amount I decreed, I will judge them. Since the Egyptians oppressed them not as God decreed but added to their work the killing of the children by drowning them in the sea, they were guilty and there is no refutation of freedom of the will here.

## Chapter Six

### 6) Reward and Punishment

The sixth principle which is also the last that we must believe is that of reward and punishment, which is the belief that when a man dies the soul is separated from the body. The body returns to the four primary substances from which it was formed while the rational soul remains alive and eternal. It leaves the body at the moment of death and returns to the upper regions. If the man acted properly in this world, it receives reward there, but if he acted improperly it receives punishment according to the sin. This goes on until it is cleansed of its sins which it committed. Then it returns to its normal condition and is like the souls of the righteous. That is what Solomon meant to say in the verse, "The spirit returns to God."<sup>299</sup> That is to say that the spirit which is the rational soul at the demise of man, when his body ~~xxxxxx~~ returns to the dust, it returns to God. From the statement that the spirit returns, since it does not use the word meaning "goes" we see that his view is like that of some of the philosophers who say that the souls of men are sparks from the Shechinah itself. That also is the significance of the image and likeness which is mentioned in the Torah. "Let us make man in our image and likeness."<sup>291</sup> That is to say, the ~~pxix~~ spiritual image. It is thereby that man is distinguished from the other living creatures. They said that when man dies his spark returns and cleaves to the Shechina from which it came.

The verse in Scripture, "He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life"<sup>292</sup> refers to the vital soul which is found in every living creature. It causes motion and is found within the blood and around it in the body. It dies and disappears at the demise of man. However, the rational soul is not found in the other living creatures. It is

found only in ~~man~~ and through it man draws near to his creator. That is the heavenly likeness and the intellectual form that is meant in the verse, "Let us make man in our likeness" and "God created man in His image." Thus our rabbis said, "Beloved is man for he was created in the image of God."<sup>293</sup> That is to say that man is beloved and distinguished from the other living creatures because He is created in God's image.

With the above we answer the objection of those who ask why the idea of the eternal soul is not explained in the prophets. If you ask what the quality of this soul is, I can answer you only by saying that since it is spiritual and not visible, we cannot know its quality or essence. Because we are mortals we can probe only that which falls within our comprehension and perception. The Talmud interprets the phrase in Scripture, "that thy days may be lengthened" as meaning an endless world and "that it may be well with thee"<sup>294</sup> as meaning a world that is all good.<sup>295</sup> Perhaps they decided that from the multiplication of words or perhaps it was a tradition with them received orally one from the other. Whenever a verse speaks of life after death, it is called the world to come in the writings of the rabbis.

This lower world, everything under the heavens, is divided into two parts; those that have breath, which includes cattle, beasts, fowl, fish, and everything that moves; and those who are endowed with speech--the human species. How is it possible that God, since He made man in His own image and likeness, should make him inferior to the other living creatures? Cattle and beasts know nothing at all about the past or the future. Since they lack both mind and the power of speech they do not know what their end will be nor do they know anything of the nature of death. The end of every living creature is the return of his body and form to absolutely nothing. It is a tre-



mendous burden which it is impossible to bear, especially for man who is a living creature endowed with reflection and understanding about the wonders and great mysteries of God. He knows from the beginning of his life what his end will be. He knows that it is death, expiration, and destruction--something that the other living creatures do not know for they do not know what the day will bring. If it is true that man is made in the image of God, then he is more abhorred, disgraced, and is baser than the cattle. They eat and drink until the day of their death without knowing that death is approaching. But man is not thus, he searches with his mind and knows what is to come upon him. He knows that death will end his years and cover him like a cloud. Thus he is inferior to the animals. However, that is not correct for when the animals die they are cut off and gone from the world and not a remembrance of them is left. With their death, their soul dies which is in the power of their blood as we have said. But man is not so so, aside from this kind of soul which he has in common with the animals, he has another--the spiritual soul or the rational soul which never dies. It is eternal and everlasting. It is from that that man receives consolation. Although he knows and understands that the time must come for him to die just as the animals do, still he has the power also of understanding that his soul when it leaves the body will return to God to dwell among the upper regions, as we have said. Therefore, if the soul is immortal and remains eternal after the body dies, as we have proved, when the body is destroyed and erased from off the face to the earth, the soul must go to God to receive its reward or punishment in accordance to how the man in whom it did abide acted in this world. That is the principle of reward and punishment that is mentioned everywhere in the Talmud and Midrash.

In truth it is impossible that it should not be so for we see

so many wicked people, those full of sin and destruction who prosper, who live in peace and security in this world. On the other hand we behold righteous and perfect people who are in want of food, who behold their sons and daughters in fear, distress and misery. Thus it seems that the wicked person is rewarded while the pious and righteous person is persecuted and is in want. We have already heard that Rabbi Akiba and the other martyrs were put to death in a horrible manner in the Bar Kochba war during the reign of Hadrian when Betzar was conquered and they were surely righteous and renowned people. If it is true that when the body dies the soul dies with it then their station in life is lower than that of the wicked. Then what is the reward for the righteous who observe the laws of God, His statutes and His ordinances? What is the punishment for the wicked who deny the laws of God? What difference is there between them? The righteous are like the wicked. If with death of the body man ceases and his life entirely ends, then there is no difference between a person who commits one light transgression and one who commits many heavy transgressions. Then what sense is there to the whole Torah and the words of the prophets who commanded us to follow always in the paths of God and to observe His statutes and His ordinances? According to this view, what difference is there between Moses our teacher, the master of all the prophets, and Jereboam ben Nebat who cause the many to sin? As one dies so the other dies. Likewise the station of Ahab ben Omri would be greater than Rabbi Akiba, God forbid!

But the matter is as we have said. It was established by God that after the ~~soul~~ soul leaves the body it returns to the spirit of God whence it came. If it did well it is rewarded, if it did evil it receives proper punishment according to its sin. Thus Maimonides writes in his Sefer Hammadah that the good reserved for the righteous

is the world to come and that is life immortal, the good in which there<sup>296</sup> is no bad. In the Torah it is written, "In order that it may be well with thee and thy days be long." The phrase "thy days be long" refers to a world that is eternal, and "may be well with thee" refers to a world that is all good; i.e., the world to come. We do not know what the joys of the righteous are nor what kind they are, for the ways of God are hidden. However, we do know without a doubt that God rewards man according to his deeds, whether thy be good or bad.

Maimonides wrote that the punishment of the wicked is that they do not merit life in the world to come, for their lives are cut off and their years blotted out like cattle. He said that that is the extinction that is mentioned in the Scriptural verse, "That soul shall<sup>297</sup> utterly be cut off." According to the traditional teaching the repetition **כרת תכלת** refers to being cut off in this world and<sup>298</sup> cut off in the world to come. Nachmanides in his chapter on retribution also says that that is its meaning. But the views of Maimonides are not correct at all, for they say in Sanhedrin, "Three kings and four common people have no portion in the world to come, as the Tana quoted in the Mishna says, 'All Israel has a portion in the world to come.' These are Bilaam, Doeg, Achitophel, and Gechezi. The kings<sup>299</sup> are Jereboam, Ahab ben Omri, and Menassah." We thus see very clearly that not all the wicked people are included as Maimonides thought. It cannot be said that they are different views for it teaches that all Israel has a portion in the world to come. According to the general opinion they are not different views for the verse continues, "thy people are all righteous." Yet in truth they are not all righteous, but that is to teach you that even the sinners in Israel are filled with good deeds just as a pomegranate is full of seeds. Their interpretation of the verse "that soul shall be utterly cut off" is not

as he thought, the destruction and annihilation of the soul. Far be it that the souls of sinners shall be entirely cut off like the souls of cattle, for He is a merciful and gracious God. Even the souls of the commoners and kings enumerated in Perek Chelek, God forbid that it be said about them that they died and disappeared like cattle. May he be forgiven but in many things he is in error. How can he say with his holy lips that the souls of kings of Israel are destroyed from the world after death? Does he not remember that they say there that one of them came in a dream at night to that teacher to argue with him. He said to him, "Who are you to tell me I have no portion in the world to come?" It says there that he asked him a question and the law escaped his memory. Thus their souls are not destroyed after death, God forbid! as Maimonides wrote, because after many years their souls are linked with the living and they speak to them in a dream. What need is there for further proof in this matter? If those listed in the Mishnah, who are far more offensive, and their souls are not annihilated, surely those who are not so horrible among the wicked, their souls are not destroyed. The matter is as was stated that there is no destruction of the soul at all for it is spiritual and not corporeal. In regard to the interpretation of the G'marah on the verse "that soul shall be utterly cut off" meaning from this world and from the world to come, they mean that although the sinner has already been punished for the sin he committed by the shortening of his life, you may think that his punishment is complete with his death and that he will not be punished any further in the world to come; therefore the rabbis say that it means also in the world to come. It is not enough for him to be punished only in this world. He will also be chastised and punished in the world to come, for there is the place of judgment and everyone is paid according to his deeds. That is the

truth of the matter as it appears from the words of our rabbis. It has nothing to do with destruction or annihilation of the soul, as Maimonides thought.

We must now say a few words about the resurrection of the dead. According to our tradition all the dead will arise with coming of the Messiah and they will be judged in justice and law. Maimonides forgot this matter in Sefer Hammadah and he says only that the world to come is after death. Ibn Daud errs in understanding his views for he says, "It seems to me that the words of Maimonides approximate one who says that there is no resurrection of the dead in body but only in soul alone. By my life, that is not the opinion of the rabbis about this. Perhaps God gave them strong bodies, and made their bodies like the angels, like the body of Elijah. The angels and their crowns are literal and not allegorical." These are the words of ibn Daud.

But that is an exaggeration, for Maimonides acknowledges everything that he says about the resurrection of the dead after the coming of the Messiah, that it will be just as he says. However, his words in the Sefer Hammadah only say that the world to come is after death. That is clear as Joseph Karo said, for there there is neither eating nor drinking, and there is no sexual intercourse, for there is no body left after the soul leaves the body. All who believe in the books of the prophets certainly believe in the resurrection of the dead at the coming of the Messiah, for it has already been accomplished by Ezekiel, as it is said there.<sup>300</sup> There it means that their souls were already prepared and ready, just as their dry bones were ready, and all they needed was the breath. That is the breath mentioned in the second chapter of Genesis, "He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life."<sup>301</sup> When God brought that breath into their bodies then their bones clove one to the other. Thus if some people arose through the

work of Ezekiel, why shall then not all arise through the work of our righteous Messiah?

Elisha revived the son of the Shunamite woman though he was already dead when Elisha approached him. In the Moreh Nebuchim it is said that the son of the Shunamite woman was very sick, almost at the point of death when the prophet approached but it was not yet wholly dead; that is, he was not devoid of all breath.<sup>302</sup> That is to say that he was very near to one who has no breath but that in truth the child was alive. However, that is all nonsense! According to that there is no miracle at all, for expert physicians many times save the sick who are at the point of death through their medicine. But in the case of Elisha the prophet said that in reviving the child he performed a miracle from God as a result of prayer. What would Maimonides say about the dead of Ezekiel? They were dead for many hundreds of years, their bones were dry and still, by the will and command of God thy returned to their original form. Thus everything can only be by the will of God, for He is mighty.

Notes

1. Shebuoth, 30 b
2. Isaiah, 40:26
3. Isaiah, 40:26
4. Isaish, 40:26
5. Isaiah, 40:26
6. Isaiah, 65:17
7. Ecclesiastes, 1:9
8. Gen. 1:26
9. Gen. 2:17
10. Gen. 3:22
11. Gen. 2:17
12. Gen. 3:3
- ~~Gen.~~
13. Gen. 3:4
14. Gen. 3:7
15. Moreh Nebuchim, 1:2
16. Gen. 3:7
17. Gen. 3:19
18. Gen. 2:16
19. Gen. 2:16
20. Gen. 3:11
21. Gen. 3:17
22. Gen. 3:18
23. Gen. 3:19
24. Gen. 3:18
25. Genesis Rabbah, 17:2
26. Commentary to Genesis, 2:11
27. Gen. 3:17

28. This reference the translator could not locate in the existing works of Saadia.
29. Commentary to Gen. 3:1
30. Jonah, 2:11
31. Obadiah, 1:3
32. Deut. 32:29
33. Lev. 23:40
34. The author here is in error. The G'marah was not part of the Talmud in the days of Judah Hanasi. It came later.
35. Erubin, 13 b
36. Exodus, 24:12
37. Berocoth, 5 a
38. Berocoth, 6 a
39. Berocoth, 7 a
40. Isaiah, 56:7
41. Deut. 33:4
42. Aboth, 4:13
43. Leviticus, 23:40
44. Deut. 17:11
- 45.- Introduction to Sefer Zeroim
46. Sanhedrin, 84 b .
47. Deut. 6:8
48. Commentary to Deut. 6:8
49. Leviticus, 23:27
50. Yoma, 78 a
51. Now reference is made to this disputation by Steinschneider nor by the other lists of disputations.
52. Temura, 16 a
53. Berocoth, 58 b
54. The author's chronology here is in error. The difference is 1450 years.



55. Sabbath, 63 a
56. Commentary to Genesis, 37:1
57. Erubin, 13 b
58. Erubin, 13 b
59. Exodus, 15:3
60. Exodus, 33:23
61. Isaiah, 6:1
62. Ezekiel, 1:4~~ff~~
63. Joshua, 2:11
64. Hilcoth Yesode Ha-Torah, 3:4
65. Hagiga, 16a
66. Job, 11:7
67. I Samuel, 15:29
68. Genesis, 6:7
69. I Samuel, 15:11
70. Psalm, 2:4
71. Deut. 32:21
72. Deut. 32:23
73. Deut. 17:11
74. Gen. 46:3
75. Leviticus, 26:44
76. Jeremiah, 30:11
77. Jonah, 3:4
78. The author here is in error. He confused the Dead Sea with the Sea in Galilee.
79. Jeremiah, 30:11
80. Berocoth, 6 a
81. Berocoth, 2 \*
82. Exodus, 34:26

83. Chulin, 126 a .  
84. Commentary to Exodus, 34:12  
85. Exodus, 16:29  
86. This reference to Alfasi is missing.  
87. Nachmanides' commentary to Macoth.  
88. Hilcoth Teshubah, 5:7  
89. Hilcoth Teshubah, 8:7  
90. Commonly attributed to Yehudai Gaon.  
91. Hilcoth Mitzvoh, 2:7  
92. Deut. 28:14  
93. Deut. 18:5  
94. Berocoth, 12 b  
95. Berocoth, 18 a  
96. Abraham Allegri  
97. Eliezer ben Jacob Joseph Ha-Kohen.  
98. Berocoth, 18 a  
99. Sanhedrin, 99 a  
100. Sanhedrin, 99 a  
101. Sanhedrin, 97 b  
102. Sanhedrin, 97 b  
103. Isaiah, 60:22  
104. Gen. 2:16  
105. Gen. 9:3  
106. Sanhedrin, 54 b  
107. Hilcoth Yesode Ha-Torah, 9:1  
108. Deut. 13:1  
109. Sifre to Deut. 232  
110. Numbers 23:19  
111. Lamentations, 2:22

112. Zechariah, 8:19
113. Sanhedrin, 99 a
114. Lev. 27:34
115. Sabbath, 104 a
116. Sifre to Deut. 175
117. Yebomoth, 91 b
118. Esther, 9:28
119. Deut. 29:14
120. Exodus, 24:7
121. Deut. 33:4
122. Psalm 119:89
123. Jeremiah, 9:22
124. Psalm, 116:11
125. Hilcoth Yesode Ha-Torah, 1:1
126. Deut. 5:6
127. Hilcoth Yesode Ha-Torah, 1:3
128. Ibid.
129. Deut. 8:3
130. Psalm, 92:6
131. Isaiah, 40:26
132. This reference should be in the second chapter of the Ikkorim but could not be found.
133. Exodus, 33:23
134. Ibid.
135. Moreh Nebuchim, 1: 21
136. This is misquoted. It is found in Malachai, 1:3
137. Author is in error here. Ezekiel lived about two centuries before Aristotle.
138. Habbath Haleboboth, 1:7
139. I Samuel, 28:13

140. Judges, 13:22
141. Mechilta Shiratha, ch. 2
142. Job, 33:23
143. See note 136
144. Hilcoth Obde Kochobim, 1:1
145. Ibid, 2:1
146. Gen. 41:40
147. Exodus, 5:1
148. Exodus, 5:2
149. Targum to Exodus, 5:2
150. Exodus Rabbah, 18
151. Jeremiah, 10:7
152. Ibid.
153. See note 136
154. Hagiga, 16 a
155. Berocoth, 57 b
156. Hagiga, 3 a
157. Gen. 1:2
158. Psalm, 101:7
159. Deut. 10:14
160. Ecclesiastes, 7:16
161. Malachai, 4:4
162. Sanhedrin, 99 a
163. Hagiga, 13 a
164. Ezekiel, 1:24
165. Isaiah, 6:1
166. Deut. 34:10
167. Psalm, 99:6

168. Hilcoth Yesode Ha-Torah, ch. 7
169. Megila, 3 a
170. Exodus, 33:11
171. Leviticus Rabbah, 14
172. Deut. 34:10
173. Joshua, 10:14
174. Genesis, 8:22
175. Deut. 34:12
176. Joshua, 10:12
177. Arama, ch. 13
178. Joshua, 10:14
179. Taanith, 20 a
180. Joshua, 10:13,14
181. Aboda Zorah, 25 a
182. Tosefta to above.
183. Deut. 2:25 and Joshua, 3:7
184. Deut. 2:25 and Joshua, 10:12
185. Deut. 2:25
186. Taanith, 20 a
187. Gitin, 56 a
188. Deut. 2:25
189. Exodus, 15:14
190. Joel, 1:4
191. Psalm, 78:46
192. Numbers, 12:7
193. Deut. 34:10
194. Exodus, 19:9
195. Deut. 4:33
196. Exodus, 14:31
197. Sanhedrin, 99 a

198. I Kings, ch. 12-14
199. Cannot be located.
200. I Kings, 12:28
201. Exodus, 34:21
202. Commentary to Exodus, 34:21
203. Exodus, 16:29
204. Sanhedrin, 99 a
205. Genesis, 36:12
206. Genesis, 36:22
207. Genesis Rabbah, 1:3
208. Exodus, 12:2
209. Commentary to Gen. 1:1
210. Gen. 1:1
211. Hagiga, 12 a
212. Gen. 1:3
213. Mechilta Shiratha, ch. 7
214. Exodus, 20:3
215. II Kings, 12:18
216. Gen. 6:13
217. Ibid.
218. Gen. 6:9
219. Gen. 24:40
220. Gen. 7:7
221. Gen. 6:14
222. Genesis Rabbah, 32:9
223. Gen. 7:19
224. Gen. 7:20
225. Gen. 8:11
226. Ezekiel, 22:24

227. Gen. 7:23
228. Gen. 7:11
229. Gen. 7:19
230. Gen. 8:4
231. Gen. 11:8
232. Gen. 7:11
233. Gen. 9:25
234. Joseph ben Gurion
235. Gen. 11:4
236. Commentary to above.
237. Hilcoth Yesode Ha-Torah, 3:5
238. Gen. 1:28
239. Gen. 11:27
240. Gen. 13:4
241. Hilcoth Yesode Ha-Torah, 3:4
242. There is no reference to this book.
243. Gen. 15:7
244. Gen. 34:25
245. Commentary to above
246. Commentary to Gen. 34:16
247. Gen. 34:31
248. Commentary to above.
249. Gen. 38:24.
250. Commentary to above.
251. Sanhedrin, 74 a and b
252. Gen. 49:7
253. Gen. 49:6
254. Deut. 6:6
255. Malachai, 3:22
256. Exodus, 34:26

257. Lev. 11:43  
258. Deut. 11:19  
259. Joshua, 1:8  
260. Deut. 14:1  
261. I Samuel, 15:3  
262. Deut. 25:17  
263. Deut. 20:10  
264. Deut. 20:15  
265. Elijah ben Abraham  
266. Joshua, 11:19. Manuscript in error. It should read Gibeon.  
267. Leviticus Rabbah, 17:6  
268. Deut. 20:18  
269. Sota, 20 b  
270. Deut. 20:16  
271. Tosefoth to above verse.  
272. Exodus, 23:33  
273. Hosea, 2:6  
274. Deut. 23:21  
275. Hilcoth Teshuba, ch. 5  
276. Gen. 18:25  
277. Psalm, 135:6  
278. Exodus, 33:20  
279. Hilcoth Yesode Ha-Torah, ch. 2  
280. Gen. 15:13  
281. Deut. 31:16  
282. Deut. 15:11  
283. Ezekiel 33:11  
284. Deut. 30:15  
285. Deut. 31:27



286. Pirke Aboth, 2:7  
287. Exodus, 1:13  
288. Commentary to above  
289. Deut. 15:14  
290. Ecclesiastes, 12:7  
291. Gen. 1:26  
292. Gen. 2:7  
293. Pirke Aboth 3:18  
294. Deut. 5:16  
295. Kidushin, 39 b  
296. Hilcoth Teshuba, 8:1  
297. Numbers 15:31  
298. Hilcoth Teshuba, 9:1  
299. Sanhedrin, 90 a  
300. Ezekiel, 37:10  
301. Gen. 2:7  
302. Moreh Nebuchim, 1:42