

Life and Works
of
Isaac Arama.
by
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Life of Arama.

Of the life of Isaac ben Moses ben Meir Arama, but little information has reached us.

"Ad nos vix tenuis formae perlabitur aura"

Life
of
Arama.

None of his immediate contemporaries mentioning his name in the literary works written at that time, although the works of Arama seem to have been extensively read and appreciated by the most prominent literati of his age.

For instance, Isaac Abravanel in his commentary on the Pentateuch offers evident proofs that he examined carefully the עקידה of Arama, and though he does not mention the name of the author but merely says ונבר מצא חכם אחד, we know that this חכם was Isaac Arama and no other.

This fact may be proven by comparing the passages which Isaac Abravanel quotes in the name of that חכם with similar passages in the עקידה. The similarity, as will be seen, is so literally exact that none will hesitate to assign Arama as the identical author in both cases.

Let us compare the following two passages, one being found in Isaac Abravanel's commentary on the תורה in פרשת תצא, the other in the עקידה, Chapter 97. (שער צ').

Abravanel.

האמנה זאל צמדדשות דצרים זרים
צמכות שלוח הקן. דצרים רצב. אמר ר'
תנחום אם קיימת מלכות זו. אתה ממהר
יום זוא אליבו הנביא. כתיב כאן שלח
תשלח את האם ואת הבנים קחץ וכתיב בתם הנב
אנכי שלח לכם את אליבו הנביא וכו'...
ובמדדצו אל ר' נחמיה בן הקנה אמר ר'
נחמני מואי דכתיב שלח תשלח את האם וכו'
הבינה אנקראת אם וכו'... בעירו צתה אבמלכות
רוממת לענין גדול...
ובא הכפור מורה על נפשינו ככפור נמלטת
מאמי עליה וכו' קשורה ביד זה העלם הפתי
אבוא בגוף אשר הוא בעצד המורד צמדוניו
מאמנה זה אל כדרכה ומענה אותה בכל יום
בכל מיני סגופין עד אצטלו כחותיה. ולכן היתה
סבה לאחרת הנפש המאכלת. ולשלח אל בית
אביה כנעורים ישאשתדל לפדות ולרבות ממנה
בנים ובני בנים אשר הם כחות תולדותיה
ותולדות הכדקים צאופן כי צמוק הימים...
אלה תשלח את האם לחפשי בית אביה...

Also in פראת נצבים

הספק הא' וכו' הגדול אצכולן שנתעצמו להלחם צו
חכמי דורנו זה צמלכות חרדאגון על ינין הצרית
ומאמר הכתוב ולא אתכם לצדכם וכו' כי את אשר
ישנו פה וכו'. וכו'. כי מי נאן כח לדור במדבר וכו' לחייב
את אשר יקומו מאחריהם בזה אמרו נעשה ונשמע וכו'
או האבע אבועה לאמר אימר על נפשם אשר לא יצטל
לעולם וכו' וכו' מבוחר כי לא צנח יצבר חיש להאביע
צניו לדורי דורות. וכא מלך הנפש הצרית אהין
לה לאצ זה אופות וכו'. כמאמר הנביא מה לכם
אתם וכו'... בן כל הנפשות לי הנה...

Arama.

אמר ר' תנחומא אם קיימת מלכות אלוה הקן
אתה ממחר יום זוא אליבו הנביא אל הנה אנכי
אלה וכו'... ויראה אעם אבוגלה
מוכנה הוא להרחיק פחיתות הבכזריות
מוכרות. האדם כדי אלה יתנהג עמו
עם הצריות זולתו...
ואלה להתאכזר על נפשו פן יבוא
ויוכה אם על צנים. ובענין כי נפשינו
נמלטת מאמי עליה וכו' קשורה ביד
זה העלם הפתי אבוא בגוף אשר הוא
בעצד המורד צמדוניו ומאמנה צו
אלה כדרכו ומענה אותו בכל מיני
סגופין עד אצטלו כחותיו...
עד איתעורר האדם לבית מלחמותו...
... להביא בעצד אל בית אביו ולשחרר
הנפש המאכלת תחת ידו...
אנשתדל לפדות ולרבות ממנה בנים
ובני בנים אשר הם תולדותיה ותולדות
אל כדקים. צאופן כי צמוק הימים...
... אלה תשלח את האם לחפשי
בית אביה...

Also in שער צט

אחר אבעיר על הכתוב ולא אתכם
לצדכם אנכי כורת את הצרית וגו'. איך היו
כל ישראל מואצעים צאמירת התורה, אחרי
אבוא מבוחר אהין אדם מוריש לצניו
ולצניו אחרי חובת נדר וצניות אחר
לדורות עולם צאופן אלא יוכלו למוחות זה
כל זמן אלא קבלים עליהם צהייעם לפירקם
וכו' ? בואר זאת צאמרו אם דה האמנה
וכו'...

~~Such~~ Similar passages may also be found in various places in the works of both authors. The main reason for the omission of Arama's name in Abravanel's commentary may be that Abravanel did not himself edit his work but it was published by others twenty years after he had written it and the editor in order to enhance the importance of the author negligently omitted Arama's name.

Arama lived between the years 1440-1505. This we know from the author's own works in which he mentions the various edicts issued by the Spanish Government against the dissenters from the established Roman-Catholic Church. Those edicts, as history informs us, were issued in the year 1481 and whereas Arama was at least forty years old when he wrote the עקידה hence he must have been born about 1440.

Again, Meir ben Isaac Arama says in his work

"אנונים מלכותי 39'170 קנות לאבא מלחי זל" כנאיר איוב

This commentary, as the author himself testifies in the preface, was written in the year 1505. Now, since in mentioning his father he says זל and not כרני כפרת 1503, his father must have been dead at least over a year.

(יד' מ' רמ' מעיק ס').

Even according to the פני חסידים תשנ"ב who says, that in stating the authority of a deceased תנ" even a son within the year of his father's death may say זל and not

כרני כפרת 1503 Isaac Arama was evidently dead in the year 1505.

Dr. Jost, however, in his History of the

June states that Isaac Arama went with his son to Salonica, in the year 1508. This statement, as we have shown, is incorrect for Meir Arama, in his own work disproves it.

Isaac Arama appears to have been born in Spain. We have no positive evidence of this fact but we merely infer this from passages in Arama's own works, in which he names the cities of Spain where he periodically lived.

For example, in his preface to the עקידה he says:

"וּבְקוֹס רַבִּי מְנוּרָה יֵשֶׁב נֹחַ יִרְמְיָה כֹּהֵן וַיִּזְחָנִי בְנֵה נֹחַ שְׁחָן
וּבְלִכְוֹת חֲרָוִן וּבְעָרִים אֲשֶׁר צִחָנִי צֶהם צַחֲלִיל בְּנֵהם וּבְמַעֲוֹנָה
טַרְגָּמוֹנָה וּבְקָרוֹנָה חֲלִיב הַעִירָה צֶהם."

Mr. C. J. Pollack in his תולדות ר"ע suggests that Zamora was Arama's birth place, but this is merely a hypothesis, since we have no positive information concerning our author. All that may be gathered from his own works and that of his son is as follows:

Isaac Arama, at a very tender age, was already engaged in the study of Talmudic literature under the most eminent Spanish Rabbi of his age. The first ישיבה (College) he established at Zamora, a market town in Portugal twenty miles North-East of Lisbon. This ישיבה became very popular and students from all parts of the country went to that place so that they ^{would} receive instruction from the reputed teacher. His pupils seem to have loved him so much that they rather submitted to all the inconveniences which they had to undergo in that place than to be deprived of their teacher's wholesome and wise instruction.

For unknown reasons, Arama left that place and accepted the position of Rabbi at Tarragona, a sea-port city in Spain at the mouth of the Franco. He soon left for Braga, a city in Portugal, the capital of the province of Minho, where he remained for a long time. Here, as in Zamora, Arama endeavored to establish a ^{הוראה} and he soon succeeded in collecting together numerous young students devoted to the study of the Jewish law. His ^{הוראה} at Braga like that of Zamora became famous and the number of his pupils increased to such an extent that the Braga congregation protested against having such an army of students to support. Arama dismissed his pupils and under the existing circumstances he renounced his plan and cherishing hopes of having a model ^{הוראה} under his charge.

For sometime, Arama could hardly reconcile himself to his lonely situation. He loved to teach, to foster and implant ⁱⁿ the hearts of the younger generation the knowledge of God and His sacred laws. He was convinced that the mission allotted to the Jewish people is to know God and make Him known by the great truths revealed to our ancestors. But how could he ^{disseminate} the knowledge of God under the existing circumstances ^{and how} ^{he maintain} a ^{הוראה} when the government imposed heavy taxes upon the Jews, and in every way sought to impoverish and oppress them ^{therefore} that he could not reasonably demand of his congregation to support students who desired to devote their lives to the study of the law. He was however soon comforted by the great desire his congregation evinced to receive his daily instruction in the rabbinical law.

In response to this expressed desire of his congregation, Arama organized שיעורים (certain portions of the day devoted to study), for various branches of studies, Talmud, Exegetics, Mishnah, and Halachah. He pursued this manner of teaching very energetically and was well rewarded for his labors by the great and deep interest the congregation took in his instruction. Old and young as soon as they were free from their daily pursuits joined their Rabbi at the בית המדרש, where they remained till late in the evening. Occasionally, Arama delivered public lectures or דרשות by which he intended to instruct those who could not take part in his שיעורים as well as the non-educative masses. These דרשות, as it appears from his own statements in his preface to the עקידה, were not of the same nature and style as are those in the עקידה and חזון קשה. The study of philosophy in connection with religion Arama pursued much later, when he became Rabbi at Kalatayud. At first, Arama knew nothing of philosophy and had no desire to concern himself with metaphysical problems. His principles of Judaism were fixed, his belief established by tradition, why he thought, should he torture his mind with problems concerning the existence of God, creation of matter, existence of evil, etc. The Bible and the Talmud have no room for such questions. In studying these books, the Jew can find sufficient support for his belief.

"God created the universe and everything therein," is a sufficient answer for all questions regarding man and everything else. Judaism is unlike other religions in this respect, that it is based on a Revelation, therefore it needs no demonstrations from Logic and Philosophy. Judaism advocates no ~~personal~~ ^{corporeal} God. Ours is a living, everlasting, omnipotent, infinite Deity. He is a God of love, truth and justice, the Father of the poor, the oppressed, the weak and the lowly, as well as of the rich and the mighty. True and sincere belief in God and piety, cause us to enjoy every earthly blessing with a zest, the heart in which the love of God is not an inmate will seek in vain to know. Philosophy and Logic, at their best, only leave the mind in doubt; they offer no positive truths. It is faith and piety that strengthen the conscience and purify affection. It is Judaism that first taught man to believe in One God and to love Him with the whole heart, soul and strength. It is Judaism that instructed man in the pure principles of humanity; in following which, he will enjoy life here and receive his reward in a life to come. It is this blessed religion that satisfies the Jews at all ages, under all sorts of circumstances, in joy and adversity, in freedom and oppression, at home and abroad, why then should there be any need to find logical and philosophical proofs or even explanations for the injunctions

which Judaism teaches? Are they not true *per se*? Has not generation after generation accepted them unreservedly with perfect confidence and true faith? How then can the present generation undertake to bring the Jewish creed under the test of analysis? Away with the peripatetic doctrines and Arabian scepticism! Away with your sciences and materialism. The Jew may live happily by his faith in the manner handed down to him by his ancestors.

Such were the views of Arama before he entered the field of philosophical investigation. The very name of philosophy was hateful to him. A philosopher, whether Jew or gentile he regarded as an apostate for the simple reason that he is calling into question truths already confirmed by preceding generations.

In conformity with his beliefs and aversion for philosophy, Arama delivered his public דרשות urging the Jews in Braga to cling to their ancestral religion as dictated by Moses.

"ואהבת את ה' אלהיך בכל לבבך ובכל נפשך ובכל מאדך"

Some of his earlier lectures were also philosophic in character. In this manner of instruction he continued for several years until he was called upon to fill the position of Rabbi at Calatayud, then the ~~greatest~~ largest Jewish congregation in Spain.

At this latter place, Arama came in contact with Jews of a different character than those he had met at Zamora and Braga.

Here the Jews held a higher position. Some were even very influential at court, many were great merchants, rich and well educated in the sciences of the day. Here, the Jews were not united in forms of ~~worship~~ nor did they all agree to accept in toto the Jewish creed as taught by the Synagogue. The Bible and the Talmud were not sufficient authorities for them in all matters appertaining to belief, and unless they could find the reason and thoroughly understand the ^{commandments} enjoined by Judaism, ^{they regarded such laws void and insignificant.} As it may be supposed, Arama found himself an unequal rival against such elements. His Talmud could avail him nothing here where the very foundation of Judaism was shaken and brought under test. Thus, despite ~~of~~ his own aversion for philosophy and natural science, Arama decided to apply himself earnestly to those studies so that he could show the reason of the injunctions advocated by the Mosiac religion.

There were also numerous other causes which induced Arama to change his former views. Some of which may be the following:

The harsh and irrevocable edict of the Spanish government against all dissenters from the Roman Catholic Church, was that all who lived under the Spanish rule must, under the penalty of the inquisitional tortures, attend the established church and listen to the sermon of the officiating divine. The clergy were well equipped with all sorts of arguments which they portrayed

before their audiences in the most captivating style and eloquence. Their arguments made great harvests among the sectarians and turned out many converts. The Jews especially felt the blow very keenly because they saw that all their sufferings and endurances in behalf of their religion were wasted on the younger generation who preferred the arguments of the christian clergy to ~~that~~ ^{those} of their own Rabbis whose sermons, it must be admitted, were not very interesting; for they generally consisted of dry talmudical discussions, or a sentence of the Scriptures was strained to its utmost to establish a certain dogma. The lustre which Maimonides shed by his works over Judaism, was daily fading under the gloomy, spirit-less caecotic character of Arama's age. Judaism was thus looked upon by the more intelligent classes as an oppressive faith since it ~~showed~~ contained so many rules and regulations which no mortal man is capable of observing ~~them~~.

Isaac Arama saw clearly where the difficulty lay and by what means he ~~might~~ ^{might} ~~may~~ ^{might} revive the decaying spirit of Judaism among his coreligionists. In order that the Jewish Rabbi should attract command respect and attract attention, he must, in addition to his rabbinical studies, be conversant with the secular knowledge of the age, so that he may be able to interpret and expound Judaism in the language and spirit of the day. This great truth, Arama recognized and even admitted that the Talmud by itself is

insufficient ~~for~~ to supply the wants of rising generations. It may have answered the purpose during former ages when Jewish learning had a wider circulation among the masses. Then the maxim "ריו להכימא ברמיזה" was perfectly applicable. But the rising generations demand something more. Their knowledge of Hebrew is not so extensive and they come more in contact with men of experience and secular education. Thus it is natural that they ^{should} demand of their Rabbi a rational explanation of the faith which he wishes them to believe.

How much Arama appreciated this difficulty may be noticed from his own words:

עמינו זה בתוך עם עמקי שפה ואנשי לשון הוא יושב
באשר הוא ישם בין אומות אדום הערינה בכל עיר ומדינה
חכמיה שרים בכל חכמה ותושיה כהניה ושריה אלופים
לראש הפלוקופיא בשתופה עם אלהותם עשו ספרים היבה
ובמקהלות ימללו דברבן על דתם ואמונתם, והקריאות תצאן
בקריות אשר העמים יבואו לשמוע כפיהן מיט דבריהם וכו' ...

Similar passages may be found also in the חזות קשה Chap. 12.; also in יומא אומץ. Arama took his resolve to apply himself energetically to the study of natural sciences, logic and philosophy. The first work he read was the More Nebuchim of Moses Maimonides. Arama gives us also the reason why he read that book first and in preference to all other philosophical works extant at his time.

There were numerous Jews at that time who studied the More for the purpose of

of finding in it support for their innovations in Judaism. Not infrequently did those men publicly advocate pernicious doctrines in the name of Maimonides who was held as the greatest authority among the Spanish Jews, ~~who said~~ so great indeed was the influence of Maimonides among his native co-religionists that they gave rise to the famous adage:

"כיימות משה ועד משה לא קם בישראל כמושה בן מיימון"

Naturally enough, the apostates met with general success, for the name of the great Sage of Cordoba was sufficient to convince any body. For this reason, Ismael devoted himself with life and soul to the study of the More Nebuchim, that he might ~~dis~~ ascertain the exact views of Maimonides. As soon as he mastered the said work, and had discovered that Maimonides does not in any single point depart from the true Mosaic religion, but on the contrary, he shows how true and rational Judaism is, if only it be clearly understood, then Ismael felt exceedingly satisfied that he studied the More and resolved to ~~make~~ adopt it as his guiding spirit in the future.

Beside the More, he also studied with great interest the works of the great Abraham ~~then~~ Ezra, whom he ~~found~~ also followed in his ~~own~~ work the עקידה. He also read the works of Moses Nachmonides, Juda Halevi, Abu Achmad Algazali, Levi ben Gershon, Jedaiiah Bedersi, Abraham ben Shem-Tob Bihazi, Abraham ben Bonet, Abraham ben Chaya and Saadiah Alfayumi.

When Arama discovered, after reading all those authors, that their chief object in studying the peripatetic philosophy was not to find fault with Judaism, but endeavored to effect a reconciliation between philosophy and religion and ^{to} convince the world that Judaism is unlike and far superior to other religions in this respect that it does not fear to undergo the test of analysis, and that its doctrines are not founded on mysticism but on the most rational and philosophical principles, he determined to write a polemic work against those who strove to defame Judaism by their misinterpretations. The book he wrote to this effect was titled

חזות קשה Signifying that there is in store great punishment for those misleaders. In this work, Arama attacked bitterly the apostates as well as the cabalists who at that time were already playing a conspicuous part. Arama, however, did not publish this work. Mr. Pollack informs us ^{that} the reason for it was because as soon as the opposition heard that Arama intended to publish his חזות קשה, they used all means in their power to dissuade him from executing his intention. The main reason, however, may be, that Arama himself changed his opinion in this regard. Probably because he thought that in order to defend the cause of Judaism another and a more rational method should be adopted i.e. to reason and convince the misleading chiefs as well as the ^{misguided} masses.

seldom the case with other authors.

Each sermon consists of two parts. In the first part the author states the objections raised against certain Jewish doctrines and shows that had Judaism been better understood, these objections would vanish. He then endeavors to explain the true view of Judaism regarding the subject in question, and shows by examples drawn from natural phenomena how rational the Jewish standard is. Then, in part second, he sets forth numerous passages from the scriptural and rabbinical writings, showing that all those points which he has stated in part first are found in these passages.

His imagery is superb, his language eloquent, but his style is tiresome, for it is too verbose and the sentences are too long and loose.

Each Sermon is called שער. There are as many שערים as there are פרקים in the Pentateuch. Over every שער the author states his text from the weekly פרשה and the accompanying passage of the מדרש.

The sermons were not immediately published after they were written, but had been first delivered by the author, then discussed by the תלמידים of his ישיבה, and after Abraham thoroughly revised them, he then compiled them and published ^{them} under the title עקידה or as it is generally called עקידת יצחק which signifies that in these sermons the author combined the principles of reason with the glorious truths of Judaism.

As soon as the עקידה appeared in print, the masterly manner in which these sermons were composed soon spread ^{the author's reputation} all over Spain and the greatest Jewish scholars of his age critically examined his work and ~~decided~~ gave their acknowledgment of approval. We have shown in the beginning of this essay, that Abraham frequently quotes from Abraham's sermons. Also the great Isaiah Meha-Adumim quotes our author frequently and states that Rabbi Isaac Abraham's manner of interpreting the Scriptures is in every way plausible and many wise men have followed in the path opened for them by that sage.

כנאר עינים 29 כנאר בינה

Abraham's reputation and weight was not only amongst his own coreligionists but many learned Christian divines eagerly conversed with him on various topics and courted his companionship.

Soon after the publication of the עקידה, Abraham was requested to publish an abstract of this work, so that those who have not ^{enough} ~~so much~~ time to devote for reading the עקידה may at least have the benefit in reading an ~~extra~~ abstract of it. The author satisfied these requests by the publication of the חזון קשה which is almost an exact abridgement of the larger work. ~~Except~~ ^{Only} in two or three places the author adds new points not found in the עקידה.

Beside the works already mentioned, Arama also wrote an extensive commentary on the Five-Rolls (חמשה ספרים) and Proverbs (משלי).

The said commentaries as it appears from the style and tone, must have been written by the author before he commenced the study of philosophy.

Whether Arama wrote other works we have cannot tell. There are various accounts concerning this, the authors of ספר הדורות and ספר חסדות maintain that Arama wrote many more books than those extant, while again other chroniclers mention only the aforesaid works and no more.

Conflicting also are the accounts concerning his latter years. Some say that he died in Spain before the Jews were expelled therefrom. Others say that he died at Salonica in Turkey. We have already stated before that he probably died in the year 1503. at Salonica.

Isaac Arama left one son Meir Arama, the author of the celebrated work ספר חסדות, being a commentary on Job.

The family of Arama became extinct by the death of Jacob Arama, the only son of Meir ben Isaac Arama.

He states before, that the *נפיש* contains philosophical sermons exhibiting great penetration of judgment, and confuting many of the sophistical and mischievous fallacies of the apostates and cabalists. We shall now present some instances ^{from} Arama's works and show in what manner he treats certain subjects.

The Nature of Belief

which Judaism advocates, Arama declares is not ^{that of} blind faith. Judaism, he says, does not contain anything which is contrary to reason and repulsive to the feelings. The belief acknowledged by Mosaism, is the assent of the mind to a truth observed in the universe. This assent is not demanded, except on condition of an apprehension of truth, sufficient to distinguish it from all other known truths.

Now, all sciences admit that nature is intelligible; that there is reason or thought in the phenomena of nature. Its progress is only the ever advancing discovery of laws, of rational relations, of a coherent self-consistent system, in the objects and events of the material world. Though in her lusty youth, science had torn everything apart and showed that the whole surface of life, like a vast battle field was everywhere strewn with contra-

dictions, it has now attained a deeper insight into the nature of things. The universe is now recognized not ^{as} an aggregate of conflicting forces, but ^{as} a unity of purpose, design and intelligence. In the universe, nothing is detached, but each effect strengthens or modifies every other. This is admitted even by materialists.

Thus, none can deny that there are all over the universe invisible bonds which unite all things together, which is a sufficient indication that the universe is constructed on one plan. This is the certificate that the poles of thought are in a line with the poles of nature. The wave current of feeling is the surest guarantee that the electric links are all connected. The universe, then, being a unity and not an aggregate must be the expression of One Mind and Will.

In postulating this the intellect is satisfied that the constitution of things ~~is~~ in harmony with our moral and spiritual intuitions, can find its solution only in a self-sufficient Being, Infinite and Eternal, who is the First Cause and the sole source of all existence besides.

This, says he, is inculcated by the first commandment "I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt". Here the word I "אני"

implies self-existence, and it is, therefore, necessary in our reflection on the Deity, to look on Him as incorporeal, infinite in wisdom and design.

The reason, why man should at all doubt the existence of God, whose omnipresence is visible throughout the universe, arises from the fact that every man forms his notion of God from experience drawn from things around him. But as none of these are at all comparable to the Deity, so man's idea of God is imperfect. Still, every man will reason, and many, from an incapacity of grappling with the subject they undertake, fail to obtain a correct conclusion. Let us therefore, I trust, endeavor to show from simple facts, how we should approach a consideration of the nature of the Almighty.

The first of all created beings is man. Every other object in the world sinks into insignificance when compared with him. Thus, it is but reasonable to suppose that, in reflecting on his Maker, man will be apt to look on Him ^{with} regard to the qualities which he himself possesses.

The first great difference between human powers and those of the Divinity is, that mortals may be able to amalgamate and compound, but God alone can create. Man is local, God ubiquitous; man frail and perishable,

God immortal and without end. This may be shown from daily experience.

The notice, that generation after generation comes and passes away, there must therefore exist an invincible Being, who governs the universe, otherwise what power could maintain the uniform harmony that still reigns in creation.

By the same line of argument can it be proven that God is incorporeal.

Whereas, we every moment witness the decay of all that has form or consistence, we know, therefore, that God's might and vigor remain undiminished by the exactness of discipline preserved through the universe. Many, however, are apt to draw conclusions by comparison, vainly imagining that judging of God, by comparing His works with those of man, they will obtain a just knowledge of His works.

Let us do so, Arama proposes, by regarding the most stupendous work of man in contrast with the creation of the Almighty.

Man raises an edifice, years are spent in designing it, years in completing those designs; one generation begins, another finishes the labor. At length the structure is finished. Ages roll on, time's iron hand weighs heavily on the building, and its end is in the dust. God, on the contrary, designs to act, there is no previous consideration, no time spent in deliberation,

^{Simultaneous}
~~as soon as~~ with the thought is the deed, ~~coeval~~
 with the deed is its completion. Ages roll on,
 but the great work still stands, as per-
 fect as ^{it was} at its first creation, and who
 can foretell when its end will come?

If the genius of man is to be esti-
 mated by what it can effect, then how
 far beyond our conception would be
 the power of God when judged by a si-
 milar standard. How much below
 himself are man's works, he can only
 govern things under his immediate
 control, he cannot foresee the future,
 his knowledge is of to-day alone.
 But God knows all things past, present
 and to come. He governs all things, for
 He is with them all, and His works
 though so stupendous, are ^{as} insignificant
 when compared with His ~~own~~ ^{own} are
 man's with respect to himself. Still,
 who that reflects on the vast mag-
 nitude of the sun, the immense dis-
 tances of the stars, and their probable
 extent. Who that looks far into the
 abyss of space, and sees millions on
 millions of systems filling their allotted
 positions, revolving in their appointed
 seasons. Who, we ask, can fail to become
 impressed with the idea of God who made
 and directs them all?

Such are the means Judaism would
 employ to convince its followers of the

belief in One God.

Thus the Prophet Isaiah says:

"מִי מָרַד בְּשַׁעֲלוֹ מִים וּשְׁמַיִם בְּזָרַת תִּכְן וְכָל בְּשָׁלִישׁ עֶפֶר הָאָרֶץ וְכוּ'
 "שֶׂאוֹ מִרְוֹם עֵינֶיכֶם וּרְאוּ מִי בָרָא אֱלֹהֵי הַמִּיּוֹצִיא בְּמִסְפָּרֵי צְבָאָם לְכָל בֶּשֶׂם
 יִקְרָא מִרְוֵב אֲוִנִים וְאֲנִיִּץ כַּח אִישׁ לֹא נִעְרָר."

In a similar manner does the Psalmist express the grandeur of God. For example:

"הַשְׁכִּימָה מִסְפָּרֵימָה כְּבוֹד-אֵל וּמַעֲשֵׂי יְדִין מִגִּיד הַדְּקִיעַ"
 "עוֹשֶׂה אֹרֶךְ כְּשִׁלְמוֹהַ נֹטֶה שְׁמַיִם כִּי־רִיעָה" וְכוּ'

We also find the same argument adopted by the author of Job in the reply which Elihu gave to Job and the speech put into the ^{mouth} of God of himself. It commences thus:

"הֵן אֵל שְׂגִיָּא וְלֹא נָדַע .. עַל כָּפִים כָּמָה אֹרֶךְ .. תַּחַת כָּל הַשְּׁמַיִם
 יִשְׁרָהוּ וְאֹדְרוֹ עַל כְּנָפֹת הָאָרֶץ וְכוּ' . . ."

Now, argues Strauss, can any sane man complain that Judaism advocates an irrational creed? Are these arguments not sufficient to convince any person of the first fundamental truth which Moses enjoins upon us? Can an Israelite find any where a more rational creed? Disbelievers in the God of Israel may set forth arguments to suit their fancy, but surely those arguments are unable to convince the reflective mind. No matter how plausible and cogent the reasons given may be, there always remains in the thinking mind a residuum of consciousness which is still unsubdued. There still exists an inner protest. We feel that a fallacy is lurking somewhere although we may be unable to detect it, just as sensitive persons

are conscious of the presence of electricity in the atmosphere before it appears in the lightning; or, as we are sensible of the least want of harmony or sympathy among our acquaintances, long before it has ~~occurred~~^{occurred} into their action or conversation. But the truth which Judaism teaches perfectly satisfies the reason and meets with sympathy from the feelings. (שער ראשון, עקירה).

At the conclusion of that chapter (נעילת השער), Strauss contends against those who claim that

The Universe has no aim or purpose, but is an indifferent machine. He thought, that this denial of purpose in the world, is one of the most fatal strokes against Judaism and must be removed before we can make any further progress.

Indeed, when looking at things merely ~~from~~^{from} their surface, nothing strikes us more than the apparently purposeless^{character} of life. It seems an endless iteration and brute repetition, without advancement. Generation after generation appears on the scene, tread the same weary round, and disappears, and we might ask for what end? Nor, looking more closely, can we discover any law regulating the fortunes of the actors themselves. The wicked seem to succeed, the good to be trodden under or cast aside. The capriciousness of fortune characterizes life itself. The air is full of aimless

shafts, flying hither and thither, but ^{seemingly} directed by no Divine hand. It is chance that shapes our destiny. Our life is a perpetual dodging. No sooner do we elude one danger than another is upon us. There is no apparent purpose running through this entangled web, and human life looks like the irony of mocking spirits.

Now, Strauss admits that all this is sufficiently obvious. Nevertheless, a deeper inspection will disclose beneath these inharmonious particulars a musical harmony, a world perfectly tuned by the Great Maker who is in every respect harmonious.

To quote the author's own words he says (עולם הניגון — שיער י"ב, עקידה) :

" שיהא יתברך הוא העונה ראשונה לקול שירי הכלי הקטן
וטוב נגונו על דרך שאמר והיה טרם יקראו ואני אענה,
והוא יתן משוב מענה את השמים שהם הטור העליון
והיותר כולל בהשפיע את הארץ שהוא הטור השני בהמכים
עמה בטוב נגונה גם היא. והארץ תענה את הדגן שהוא
הטור השלישי, והכנה יענו את יזרעאל שהוא הטור הרביעי."

But it is essential that we should know how the facts are to be grouped and arranged. All the complex circumstances and events of life are merely the clothing of great general laws and tendencies. These laws or

tendencies may be called the soul of the facts. A few simple principles, endlessly varied and combined make up this magnificent panorama of life. These are the physical, organic and spiritual laws; and to them we must direct our attention, if we are to find

The aim and purport of the world.
On an attentive consideration, then, we shall find that they all work for the good of the whole; that is to say, for justice; and that the result is a gradual progress and amelioration. Nature does not work for any particular end, but for universal benefit. The physical and spiritual laws subserve a great general end, although they may be abused to the detriment of the individual. These views are expressed by Shrama in the chapters : א' ו"ב (עקירה) .

כי אין מפק כי כמו שהונח שיש לכל הפעולות
יחם עם טובע המציאות בכללו כן יש להורות
יחם לחלקי הפעולות עם חלקי המציאות . . .
אכונם כי כל טורי מערכות השמים והארץ כלם
נמדרו ונתקדו על פי התורה האלהית אשר בה
נקתכל וברא את העולם כלו . . .

Thus, Shrama holds that Benevolence, Justice, Love, Mercy and Truth are the indirect workings of the First Cause for the general welfare, through

the will and consciousness of man.

If we take a general survey of nature, where these laws are seen in their combined action, we shall find that provision is made for the good of the whole, not for the exclusive benefit of any individual. Every inch of this wide globe is packed with life, the excess of which flows into every cranny. The very air is filled with germs. The adaptation, too, is perfect, and just that sort of creature that can find its existence on any spot, is placed there, whether it be plant, insect, or worm. Every scrap of material is worked up and utilised, and the creative superintendence is everywhere busy, regulating and adjusting all with an eye to the whole. There are no preferences. Nature does not pamper one plant or animal to starve another, but even-handed justice is done to all. Every organism is weaponed for defence as well as for offence. There are no lotteries, but each draws its fair share, and care is taken that all shall be provided for. If a race is exposed to danger, it becomes more prolific. When the danger is over, its fertility declines. The reason that individuals some times suffer more than others is because they have violated some universal law; they have fallen out

of time. Thus, it is not chance that governs the affairs of man, but man is the author of his ^{own} good or evil. Even as the Prophet declares

אם תאבו ושמענתם טוב הארץ תאכלו
ואם תכזבנו וכזבתם הרב תאכלו

This working for the good of all, constitutes Justice, and is the strongest evidence that the Mind and Will of which nature is the interpreter, is Just and Good.

(עקירה שער א' ג' י' יח' כ"ד צ"ט)

Duty.

Duty, Isaac Abrama maintains, is a spiritual impulse, hence eternal and divine. But the special duties of man depend on circumstances. Every individual must adapt himself to the necessities of the hour. Judaism does not look upon Divine Revelation as an external fact, which, thousands of years ago, occurred at a certain period of time and was then completed and concluded, but regards it as a process which has gradually developed itself from the Divine Spirit in man, - which commenced with the primeval revelation made known to the first members of the human race, and has in so far reached its most important degree of development in the Revelation on Sinai. For, then and there, the

Law of God appeared in its principles perfect and the whole Jewish nation then and there accepted the mission of its dissemination.

It must, however, be borne in mind, that the world-saving injunctions of Mosaic law in some points, are not intended to be binding upon all coming generations. There is indeed a broad line of demarcation drawn between the form and the essence the soul and the body of the Mosaic laws.

Arama draws a distinct line between such precepts which are actions of the human spirit, hence of absolute and general force, and such as must serve these self-confirmed laws, whether they present themselves as religious truths or duties, as mirrors and fences, as means, so that they can naturally claim but relative validity, limited to certain times, places and persons.

To this latter class belong, for example, the laws regulating polygamy, slavery, witchcraft, priesthood, sacrifices etc. etc.

The Mosaic law obviously regards polygamy as an evil, which like slavery and many other things, under existing circumstances could not at once be eradicated, and which in some respects were preferable to greater evils. Hence the provision for such cases as a man marrying more than one wife, hence the injunctions concerning a קנה נפש etc.

The same may be shown regarding certain other mosaic laws, that they were intended merely for the generation to whom they were given.

Borne out by the incontrovertible Biblical testimonies, Arama regards true knowledge of God and man's moral conduct in his relation to God and his fellow-man, as the essence of the covenant between God and man; but every other religious enactment, without prejudice to its divine character, only as a token of that covenant.

Regarded from this point of view, the obligation which we owe to Israelitic life and belief, is not based upon a fact foreign to us, but upon that more exalted human nature, where commandments and admonitions - like every natural necessity - are indeed Divine decisions, that neither admit, nor require any further demonstration. But these decisions demand no obedience in opposition to man's nature. They are הזירות המולך in the tal mudical expression of the term, by virtue of which Reason that really proclaims them, should be silenced as before the Divine dispensation of destiny.

Into this bold view, Arama was evidently drawn unconsciously by the influence which Maimonides and Allen

Ezra exercised over him. Arama's own notions of belief were still semi-orthodox. This fact may be noticed when ^{he} expresses his own opinions, independent of the aforecited sages.

In order to show how much the above statements with regard to the division of the Mosaic injunctions differ from the orthodox standard of belief, we shall briefly present the orthodox formula.

According to the orthodox standard, there is no distinction between the essence and the form of God's law. It regards everything as substance and essence, as possessed of innate, absolute value. It rejects the idea that the fulfilment of the divine precepts is only a means for some higher aim, but regards it as the aim itself; so that all these laws are equally holy, equally inviolable, and can by no means be classified according to their different, inward worth.

The term "ceremonial law" is, from this standpoint inadmissible. The orthodox knows but a vast inseparably connected Divine ^{law}, which we are bound to fulfill, because all the תורה ונבואה were delivered to Moses on Mount Sinai.

Abraham ben Meir Aben Ezra was the first who broke loose from

that doctrine and ~~have~~ expressed his liberal view regarding this matter in his work יסוד מורה Chap. 5. in the following words:

"המצות שהם עקריהם שאינם תלומות במקום או בזמן
או בדבר אחר הם הנשועות בלב הם הפקודים כמין
פקדון שהוא נתון ביד אשר הפקד אתו על כן אמר
המלך דוד פקודי ה' ישרים משמחי לב: ואלה
היו ידועות בשקול הדעת קודם שנתנה התורה ביד
משה, ועל אלה אמר ושמר משמרת חקותי ותורתִי . . .

"The essential laws are those that are bound neither to a certain place, time, or anything else. They are implanted in the heart (in man himself); they are deposited there as a deposit, placed into the hand of him whom we confide in. Therefore, King David says, 'the statutes of the Eternal rejoice the heart. These laws were known by means of reason before the law was given to Moses; and with regard to this, the Torah says, 'he (Abraham) kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.'"

Thus, the Biblical laws, according to Shem Ezra, are of two kinds, one which ~~is~~ ^{is} binding neither ~~to~~ ^{to} certain times, nor ~~for~~ ^{for} certain persons, but can and should be fulfilled everywhere, at all times and by every body; while

the laws of the second class refer only ~~mainly~~ to Israel in their primitive state; as for example, שמיטה, יובל, פאה, שמיטה etc. refer to Palestine and the existence of the Temple.

Maimonides also divides the ^{מצוות} into ^{מצוות שמועיות} (Ceremonial laws) and laws of reason ^{מצוות השכליות} by which distinction he elucidates many Biblical passages which otherwise would be meaningless. His principle in explaining away certain Biblical laws was

"לא נתנו המצוות אלא לצדק בהן את הבריות"

Moral accomplishment of man

The moral accomplishment of man, Arama regards as the highest good to be attained; and which is acquired by comprehending the attributes of God in a negative way.

Anthropomorphism

Arama, throughout his works, denies the anthropomorphic conceptions of the Deity. All corporeal applications to God found in the Scriptures must be regarded as symbolic and figurative language. In like manner, must be considered the expressions

of the Rabbis with regard to the corporeity of Jehovah. They must not be taken literally, but must be understood to be tropes and tropes only.

Resurrection.

Spinoza appears to have believed in a bodily resurrection, in which one thing he differs from Maimonides.

Existence of Evil.

In the ninth chapter of the עקידה, Spinoza discusses the great problem, why in the realm of creation do exist persons who are out of harmony with the laws of their own nature and the will of God? From a Creator, infinite in power and goodness, we should expect a world free from frailty and misery.

The evil, he thinks, is not found in the Deity; for since He is ^{כחולב המציאות} *the cause of all existence*, therefore, no finite mode can belong to the infinite and hence no evil can.

It should be remarked here, that Spinoza did not hesitate to acknowledge that as all finite modes belong to the Infinite, therefore, all forms of evil must.

But let us turn to our author.

In denying this fact, the solution

of the problem of existence is broken down. It is our nature that gives rise to evil, not that it emanates from God. It is man who creates the disorder by the faculties he possesses as an intelligent being. He is also, therefore, the sufferer, as the general adage says

"הרע כוונתו רע" (The evil intends evil)

"Evil destroys itself"

But God, as manifested in the world, is everywhere acting for Justice, Goodness, Beauty, and Truth. He placed man in the beautiful garden of the earth, provided him with superior faculties by which he can work out his own destiny. It was Adam and Eve who brought misery upon themselves and their posterity. ~~But~~ The end of nature is justice, goodness, spirituality and beauty. The immense variety of objects which make up the world by their action and interaction work out that end. Although each of these objects has a distinct separate existence, mineral, worm, insect, flower, tree, animal, and man, they are all kept subordinate to their great end by invisible links which attach them to the great "I Am," at the centre. Man, equally with the humblest and the meanest of created things, is an

instrument for working out that Justice and Beneficence which the Deity desires. She forms part of those great world-forces that ply their unwearies spindles around him, weaving in the garment of existence. He cannot be isolated from them. Still, as the central law of the world is Justice and Goodness, of which the thousandfold complexities of physical and organic laws are instruments, so the central law of man is Will. He is a free agent and has the power within himself to choose the right from the wrong, the good from the evil, the beautiful from the abominable, virtue from vice life from death.

This principle has already been stated by Moses for he says:

ראה נתתי לפניך היום את החיים ואת הטוב ואת המוות ואת הרע
 "ובחרת" בחיים

Thus, all depends ~~all~~ upon man's own choice.

In this respect, as in many others, Judaism differs from other creeds, which declare that man is a born sinner, and is never able to change his fallen condition. It is in harmony with this principle that Judaism gives so much credit to a ^{בעל תשובה} because he applied his will power to control his passions in order to become a better man.

Death, says Arama, is not a curse; on the contrary, it is a blessing for mankind. The evil attaching to death arises from the circulated stories of another world, of which we know nothing.

The Superiority of the Jewish Faith.
 In judging of the propriety of the Jewish view of the Deity, Arama directs our attention not only to the Mosaic period but even further back to the times of the Patriarchs.

To Abraham the Divine promise was given that in him all the families of the earth will be blessed. This promise was repeated to his descendants Isaac and Jacob. Their posterity, the Israelites, were the inheritors of that promise. Sacred history informs us of the most signal Providence which was exercised over them in their descent into Egypt, and during their sojourn in that country and then their triumphant deliverance from the house of bondage. But it was on Mount Sinai that the Deity first appeared in the character of the Supreme Magistrate, and formed ^{the Israelites} ~~them~~ into a civil and religious society, of which He himself vouchsafed to take the principal direction. For reasons best known to God, it pleased Him to reveal Himself just at that time, ^{the Israelites only} were

singled out from all other nations to
 serve as a beacon, by the light of
 which the gross errors in the different
 systems of faith which other nations ad-
 vocate, might be corrected; and the be-
 lief in the true, living, unique God be
 substituted. Since that great event
 no nation on earth ever suffered so
 much in behalf of ~~their~~ ^{its} religion as
 the Jews did. The whole world ^{was} ~~is~~ at
 war with them; all wishing to annihilate
 the Jew. ~~Still~~ ^{yet} the Israelite still exists
 and ~~exist~~ will exist in spite of all
 opposing forces. Can there be any better
 example demonstrating ~~the~~ Providence?
 Behold! Persia, Rome, and other mighty
 nations have sunk into nothingness;
 but Israel still exists still upholds
 the glorious truths delivered to ~~them~~ ^{it}
 by ~~their~~ ^{its} ancestors. Can any one find
 objection with the Jewish God and
 religion? Why then, should the
 Jews now become negligent of
 indifferent ~~of~~ their faith? Why should
 they now neglect their sacred mission
 and seek ~~instruction~~ salvation among
 other religions not in the least to be
 compared with Judaism. Surely,

The Revelation of Israel

is so unlike other revelations claimed
 to be of Divine origin that no com-

parison ^{can} ~~may~~ be made between them. The Revelation of Israel took place ^{לענין כל ישראל} before the whole host of Israel and in broad day-light, while the revelations of other denominations occurred either before a select few, ^{or} in darkness. This fact ought to convince every rational mind of the superiority of the Jewish Religion. The commandments it enjoins and the sublime truths it advocates are stamped with a solemnity every way proper and binding on all men, at all times and ages.

The errors attributed to the Mosaic code, arise from the fact that the Scripture is not wholly understood. If carefully examined, it will be found that the Mosaic enactments contain the greatest truths and furnish the basis for all civil, social and religious organizations.

Behold! Israel's religion, as instituted by Moses, placed justice close by the side of Truth, and appointed them both as the foundation-stones of human existence. Judaism did not exclude justice from her pale as not belonging to her domain and ^{did not} leave it entirely to the State. For the justice of a state is changeable as its legislators. "You shall exercise justice," proclaims Judaism, "although the arm of the earthly judge cannot reach you, when you screen yourself behind the letter of the written law. The judgment is with God."

and therefore, truth and justice are inseparable.

But as God causes tree and bush not only to bear leaf and fruit, but adorns them also with the charms of beautiful and fragrant blossoms; as He placed the sun and the moon upon the firmament, not only that they may shine on the path of man, but planted also myriads of brilliant stars there, so it is not cold truth and strict justice alone within the confines of which He has circumscribed human existence, but giving him breath of life from His own breath; and also opening for him the perennial fountains of love. How sublime and cherishing is that love which parents extend toward their children; that children bear towards their parents; that allies brother to brother who would not forsake one another in the struggle of life; that pure love which breaks its bread unto the hungry, clothes the naked, takes pity upon the orphan, helps the widow, comforts the sick, consoles the mourner, saves the life of an endangered brother, and arouses enthusiasm for great and glorious deeds! What is that love? None can analyze it and explain us of what elements it consists. Still every one is conscious that he and his fellow-men possess such feelings, and that no man can dispense with that love, for it is the very

marrow of life, the jewel of his existence, the rose amongst the many thorns, the everlasting star in the night, the powerful anchor in the raging billows, the rock in the midst of the shaking earth, his shield, his refuge, his protection.

Truth examines, Justice measures, but Love neither examines nor measures. Love gives whatever it possesses. Justice discriminates, this is mine and that is yours; but Love gives also what is there and retains nothing. (זה לפניכם כמשורת הדין).

Now, who has taught such a Love, if not the religion of Israel? Who causes man's heart to turn upward saying: "Love thy God, the Eternal, with thy whole heart, soul and might"? What other religion instructed man to love his neighbor because he is a being like himself? Surely, it is Judaism that first proclaimed this grand principle. All other ~~other~~ religions have copied this from Moses, and claimed it as their own invention. It is Judaism that first taught "Honor thy father and thy mother." "Do not withdraw thy aid when thy brother is in need of it." "Hate not thy enemy; but offer him bread when he is hungry, and water when thirsty." "Do not bear any grudge against any man, but plead your cause in an open and upright way." It is Judaism, that has taught man the

great principles of humanity and philanthropy. And, though it does not say, "If a man strikes you in the face, present him your back that he may continue his blows; or if any one takes your coat let him have also your cloak," it advocates no unnatural love; it tolerates no unjust deed. The love which Judaism proclaims is the unlimited sympathy that does everything for the sake to benefit humanity. This is the device of Judaism.

Now, continues Arama, is there any reason, why we should get tired of Judaism and seek the consolation of other creeds? Judaism is of Divine origin, while the others are of human. The fundamental principles of Judaism will, at some future day, become the common inheritance of all mankind, while the other religions will vanish like smoke.

Arama thinks that the course of Development through which Judaism

passes produced ideas, which, although in accordance with the real meaning belonging to a stage of religious knowledge long since past, contain in their profound depths an everlasting true thought which, when regarded from a higher stand point, is manifested in full glory. As a spirit, yet destitute of higher maturity, perceives religious truths only in and by means of symbolical

acts. Thus, it feels less the necessity to represent those truths in some more concrete formations and so create for itself symbolical conceptions calculated to further the growth and development of the kernel yet hidden and unknown until it bursts the shell, rises from the maternal soil and manifests itself in its full majesty.

To this class belongs the most remarkable principle at all times acknowledged by the Synagogue, that every Israelite is a member of the Jewish covenant exclusively by virtue of his birth, without the mediating help of anything else. In accordance with this principle, therefore, no born Jew can separate himself from the covenant, not even by means of his ~~own~~ conversion to another faith, and no matter how ever much a born Jew may sin, he nevertheless remains an Israelite.

This principle has been hotly attacked by Jewish thinkers. It has been asserted that such a native religion would constitute a religion of the flesh and not of the spirit; that there could be no more horrible oppression and spiritual tyranny than the impossibility of emancipating one's self from the power of a denomination. Still, that principle is based upon profound wisdom and

deep thought. The mission of Israel, like the world-historic mission of every nation, rests upon certain natural peculiarities, and thus being a nature mission, must be distinctly separated from the Jewish profession, from its moral connection with the congregation of Israel which can be effected only by independent, free self-determination. But should we even concede that the principle in question, when considered in its strict meaning causes the national and religious and religious elements of Judaism to amalgamate and absorb each other, yet, when we examine it more deeply we shall find that it constitutes only the outward tenement of the great truth. Judaism is humanity. Its truths and obligations have, in their essence, been implanted in man's nature by God himself. These are axioms of the human spirit, and hence, according to their proper meaning, innate in him.

It must be stated right here, that perhaps on this vital distinction of the two contending parties is based the custom of the בר מצוה as well as its supplement the modern confirmation, in accordance with the principle

מושב וקומד מהר עיני ;

that is, the involuntary initiation into

the community of Israel of which he became a member by birth.

Arama in his עקרי דאמונה *distinctly* says, "that the sublime religious truths have been at once engraven, with distinct characters, upon the soul, and reflect from it as from a mirror. But they are dimmed by their direction toward physical objects that obscure the mirror, so that religious knowledge is but a sort of recollection, and effected only by the negative act of the purification of the soul from all stains. This idea is also expressed in the Rabbinical sentence: 'Man learns even while yet unborn, the whole Torah, but forgets it as soon as he beholds the light of the day in consequence of the touch of an angel.'

Even the Biblical particularism is, according to Arama, nothing else but a lever of unlimited universalism, and the Jewish nation nothing more, in the opinion of Judaism, than a prototype of redeemed mankind in a state of perfection.

The Temple and Sacrifices.

Not less startling is Aram's view on the Temple and sacrifices. On this, as in many other points our author adopts Maimonides' views and opinions, which are as follows:

Having laid down the principle that as little as God allows nature to take sudden leaps in the physical world, but has ordained a gradual development by means of which every act is preparatory for the next, so little does God ordain sudden transition in the moral world, having exemplified this by instances from the physical world, Maimonides says thus:

"A similar line of conduct did God pursue in many commandments of the law; for sudden transitions from extreme are impossible. Accordingly it is impossible for man to leave at once all things to which he has been accustomed.

... At that time the universal custom and mode of worship in which people were brought up was to bring sacrifices into the Temples and burn incense before their idols which were placed in those buildings...

Now the Divine wisdom, manifest in all creation, did not abolish and command our ancestors to lay aside these modes of worship, for this would have been repugnant to human nature which always follows habit. This would have been as if some prophet were to come in our days, who with respect to ^{divine} service were to announce, that God commanded that we should not pray,

abolish all holy-days and not seek His help in time of trouble, but that we should let our service be one of the heart without outward practice. For this reason these modes of worship were to continue. God only transferred them from imaginary or created beings to Himself, and commanded our ancestors to preserve them, to erect a sanctuary, to build an altar and to offer sacrifices to Him. . . .

Thus by his Divine Will was idolatry abolished and the great principles of the existence and unity of God established among our nation; and that those persons, who would have been startled by the abolition of the mode of worship to which they were used and who were not acquainted with any other, were not refractory.

In a similar liberal manner does Arama treat Prophecy and the qualifications of the prophet.

Those are Arama's views expressed in his עקרי דת חזות קשה

At the conclusion we beg leave to remark that in this essay we have but given a general outline of Arama's opinions. We had no precedent to follow nor sufficient material to work upon. We are the first who attempted to write on this author and as a matter of course every first attempt, is subject to severe

criticism. But on the other hand the writer hopes to receive credit for his work, since it was done with no help from any source. It is purely original with him.

The method we pursued in collecting the material for this essay was, that while reading the works of the author we noted down points. After reading through the *Sheda* and *Chozuth Koshe* we ^{examined} those points and then we ~~corrected~~ framed them in language of our own.

With these brief remarks we close our essay.

Isaac Rubinstein
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