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THE GUIDE FOR THE PERPLEXED

BY

MOSES MAIMONIDES

TRANSLATED FROM

THE ORIGINAL ARABIC TEXT

BY

M. FRIEDLÄNDER, PHD

SECOND EDITION

REVISED THROUGHOUT

London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd.

[1904]

Originally Scanned and OCR'd by Andrew Meit and David Reed. Additional proofing and formatting by Richard Hartzman. Extensive additional proofing and formatting by John Bruno

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p. iii p. vi

PREFACE

The first Edition of the English Translation of Maimonides *Dalalāt al-Ḥairin* being exhausted without having fully supplied the demand, I prepared a second, revised edition of the Translation. In the new edition the three volumes of the first edition have been reduced to one volume by the elimination of the notes; besides Hebrew words and phrases have been eliminated or transliterated. By these changes the translator sought to produce a cheap edition in order to bring the work of Maimonides within the reach of all students of Theology and Jewish Literature.

M. FRIEDLÄNDER.

Jews' College, *July* 1904.

p. v p. vii

PREFACE TO VOLUME ONE OF THE FIRST EDITION

IN compliance with a desire repeatedly expressed by the Committee of the Hebrew Literature Society, I have undertaken to translate Maimonides *Dalalāt al-Ḥairin*, better known by the Hebrew title *Moreh Nebuchim*, and I offer the first instalment of my labours in the present volume. This contains--(1) A short Life of Maimonides, in which special attention is given to his alleged apostasy. (2) An analysis of the whole of the *Moreh Nebuchim*. (3) A translation of the First Part of this work from the Arabic, with explanatory and critical notes.

Parts of the Translation have been contributed by Mr. Joseph Abrahams, B.A., Ph.D., and Rev. H. Gollancz--the Introduction by the former, and the first twenty-five chapters by the latter.

In conclusion I beg to tender my thanks to Rev. A. Loewy, Editor of the Publications of the Hebrew Literature Society, for his careful revision of my manuscript and proofs, and to Mr. A. Neubauer, M.A., for his kindness in supplying me with such information as I required.

M. FRIEDLÄNDER.

Jews' College, *June* 1881.

p. x p. ix

CONTENTS

Life of Maimonides	xv
Moreh Nebuchim Literature. Analysis of the Guide for the Perplexed	xxvii

PART I.

Introduction--

Dedicatory Letter	1
The Object of the Guide	2
On Similes	4
Directions for the Study of this Work	8
Introductory Remarks	9

chapter

I	The homonymity of <i>Zelem</i>	13
II	On Genesis iii. 5	14
III	On <i>tabnit</i> and <i>temunah</i>	16
IV	On <i>raah</i> , <i>hibbit</i> and <i>ḥazah</i>	17
V	On Exod. xxiv. 10	18
VI	On <i>ish</i> and <i>ishshah</i> , <i>aḥ</i> and <i>aḥot</i>	19
VII	On <i>yalad</i>	19
VIII	On <i>maḳom</i>	20
IX	On <i>kisse</i>	21
X	On <i>'alah</i> , <i>yarad</i>	22
XI	On <i>yashab</i>	23

XII	On <i>kam</i>	24
XIII	On ' <i>amad</i>	25
XIV	On <i>adam</i>	25
XV	On <i>nazab, yazab</i>	25
XVI	On <i>Zur</i>	26
XVII	On Mishnah <i>Hagigah</i> ii. 1	27
XVIII	On <i>karab, naga', niggash</i>	27
XIX	On <i>male</i>	28
XX	On <i>ram, nissa</i>	29
XXI	On ' <i>abar</i>	30
XXII	On <i>ba</i>	32
XXIII	On <i>Yaza, shub</i>	32
XXIV	On <i>halak</i>	33
XXV	On <i>shaken</i>	34
XXVI	On "The Torah speaketh the language of man"	34
XXVII	On Targum of Gen. xlvi. 4	35
XXVIII	On <i>regel</i>	37
XXIX	On ' <i>azeb</i>	37
XXX	On <i>akal</i>	39
XXXI,	On the Limit of Man's Intellect	40,
XXXII		42
XXXIII to	On the Study and the Teaching of Metaphysics	43-
XXXVI		52

XXXVII	On <i>panim</i>	52
XXXVIII	On <i>aḥor</i>	53
XXXIX	On <i>leb</i>	54
XL	On <i>ruaḥ</i>	55
XLI	On <i>nefesh</i>	56
XLII	On <i>.hayyim-mavet</i>	56
	p. x	
XLIII	On <i>ḵanaf</i>	57
XLIV	On <i>'ayin</i>	58
XLV	On <i>shama'</i>	58
XLVI, XLVII	On the Attribution of Senses and Sensation, to God	59, 63
XLVIII	The Targum of <i>shama'</i> and <i>raah</i>	64
XLIX	Figurative Expressions applied to Angels	65
L	On Faith	67
LI-LX	On Attributes	68- 89
LI	On the Necessity of Proving the Inadmissibility of Attributes in reference to God	68
LII	Classification of Attributes	69
LIII	The Arguments of the Attributists	72
LIV	On Exod. xxxiii. 13; xxxiv. 7	75
LV	On Attributes implying Corporeality, Emotion, Non-existence and Comparison	78

LVI	On Attributes denoting Existence, Life, Power, Wisdom and Will	79
LVII	On the Identity of the Essence of God and His Attributes	80
LVIII	On the Negative Sense of the True Attributes of God	81
LIX	On the Character of the Knowledge of God Consisting of Negations	83
LX	On the Difference between Positive and Negative Attributes	87
LXI	On the Names of God	89
LXII	On the Divine Names composed of Four, Twelve and Forty-two Letters	91
LXIII	On <i>Ehyeh, Yah, and Shaddai</i>	93
LXIV	On "The Name of the Lord," and "The Glory of God"	95
LXV	On the phrase "God spake"	96
LXVI	On Exod. xxxii. 16	98
LXVII	On <i>shabat</i> and <i>nah</i>	99
LXVIII	On the Terms: The Intellectus, the Intelligens and the Intelligibile	100
LXIX	On the Primal Cause	102
LXX	On the attribute <i>rokeb ba'arabot</i>	105
LXXI	The Origin of the <i>Kalām</i>	107
LXXII	A Parallel between the Universe and Man	113
LXXIII	Twelve Propositions of the <i>Kalām</i>	120
LXXIV	Proofs of the <i>Kalām</i> for the <i>creatio ex nihilo</i>	133
LXXV	Proofs of the <i>Kalām</i> for the Unity of God	138
LXXVI	Proofs of the <i>Kalām</i> for the Incorporeality of God	141

PART II.

	The Author's Introduction. The Twenty-Six Propositions employed by the Philosophers to prove the Existence of God	145
I	Philosophical proofs for the Existence, Incorporeality, and Unity of the First Cause	149
II	on the Existence of Intelligences or purely Spiritual Beings	154
III	The Author adopts the Theory of Aristotle as least open to Objections	156
IV	The Spheres and the Causes of their Motion	156
V	Agreement of the Aristotelian Theory with the Teaching of Scripture	159
VI	What is meant by the Scriptural Term "Angels"	160
VII	The Homonymy of the term "Angel"	162
VIII	On the Music of the Spheres	163
IX	On the Number of the Heavenly Spheres	163
X	The Influence of the Spheres upon the Earth manifesto itself in four different ways	164
XI	The Theory of Eccentricity Preferable to that of Epicycles	166
XII	On the Nature of the Divine Influence and that of the Spheres	168
XIII	Three Different Theories about the Beginning of the Universe	171
	p. xi	
XIV	Seven Methods by which the Philosophers sought to prove the Eternity of the Universe	174
XV	Aristotle does not scientifically demonstrate his Theory	176
XVI	The Author refutes all Objections to <i>Creatio ex nihilo</i>	178
XVII	The Laws of Nature apply to Things Created, but do not regulate the	178

	Creative Act which produces them	
XVIII	Examinations of the Proofs of Philosophers for the Eternity of the Universe	181
XIX	Design in nature	184
XX	The Opinion of Aristotle as regards Design in Nature	189
XXI	Explanation of the Aristotelian Theory that the Universe is the necessary Result of the First Cause	190
XXII	Objections to the Theory of the Eternity of the Universe	192
XXIII	The Theory of <i>Creatio ex nihilo</i> is preferable to that of the Eternity of the Universe	195
XXIV	Difficulty of Comprehending the Nature and the Motion of the Spheres according to the Theory of Aristotle	196
XXV	The Theory of Creation is adopted because of its own Superiority, the Proofs based on Scripture being Inconclusive	199
XXVI	Examination of a passage from <i>Pirke di-Rabbi Eliezer</i> in reference to Creation	200
XXVII	The Theory of a Future Destruction of the Universe is not part of the Religious Belief taught in the Bible	201
XXVIII	Scriptural Teaching is in favour of the Indestructibility of the Universe	202
XXIX	Explanation of Scriptural Phrases implying the Destruction of Heaven and Earth	204
XXX	Philosophical Interpretation of Genesis i.-iv.	212
XXXI	The Institution of the Sabbath serves (1) to Teach the Theory of Creation, and (2) to promote Man's Welfare	218
XXXII	Three Theories concerning Prophecy	219
XXXIII	The Difference between Moses and the other Israelites as regards the Revelation on Mount Sinai	221

XXXIV	Explanation of Exodus xxiii. 20	223
XXXV	The Difference between Moses and the other Prophets as regards the Miracles wrought by them	223
XXXVI	On the Mental, Physical and Moral Faculties of the Prophets	225
XXXVII	On the Divine Influence upon Man's Imaginative and Mental Faculties through the Active Intellect	227
XXXVIII	Courage and Intuition reach the highest degree of Perfection in Prophets	229
XXXIX	Moses was the fittest Prophet to Receive and Promulgate the Immutable Law, which succeeding Prophets merely Taught and Expounded	231
XL	The Test of True Prophecy	232
XLI	What is Meant by "Vision"	234
XLII	Prophets Received Direct Communication only in Dreams or Visions	236
XLIII	On the Allegories of the Prophets	238
XLIV	On the Different Modes in which Prophets Receive Divine Messages	240
XLV	The Various Classes of Prophets	241
XLVI	The Allegorical Acts of Prophets formed Parts of Prophetic Visions	245
XLVII	On the Figurative Style of the Prophetic Writings	247
XLVIII	Scripture ascribes Phenomena directly produced by Natural Causes to God as the First Cause of all things	249
	 PART III.	
	The Author's Introduction and Apology for Publishing, contrary to the Teaching of the Mishnah, an Interpretation of Ezek. i.	251
	p. xii	
I	The "Four Faces" are Human Faces with four different peculiarities	252

II	The <i>Ḥayyot</i> and the <i>Ofannim</i>	252
III	Further Explanation of the <i>Ḥayyot</i> and the <i>Ofannim</i> derived from Ezek. x.	255
IV	The rendering of <i>Ofan</i> by <i>Gilgal</i> in the Targum of Jonathan	256
V	The Vision of Ezekiel is divided into three stages: (1) <i>Ḥayyot</i> (=the Spheres); (2) <i>Ofannim</i> (=Earthly elements); and (3) the man above the <i>Ḥayyot</i> (=Intelligences)	257
VI	On the Difference between the Vision of Ezekiel and that of Isaiah (vi.)	258
VII	The Different Ways in which the Prophet perceived the Three Parts of the <i>Mercabah</i> (Chariot)	259
VIII	Man has the Power to Control his Bodily Wants and Earthly Desires	261
IX	The Material Element in Man Prevents him from Attaining Perfection	264
X	God is not the Creator of Evil	265
XI	Man is the Cause of his own Misfortunes	267
XII	Three Kinds of Evil: (1) That caused by the Nature of Man; (2) Caused by Man to Man; (3) Caused by Man to himself	267
XIII	The Universe has No other Purpose than its own Existence	272
XIV	It is the Will of the Creator that the Spheres regulate the Affairs of Mankind	277
XV	Impossible Things are not ascribed to the Creator, but it is difficult to Prove the Impossibility in each Individual Case	279
XVI	On God's Omniscience	280
XVII	Five Theories concerning Providence	282
XVIII	Every Individual Member of Mankind enjoys the Influence of Divine Providence in proportion to his Intellectual Perfection	289
XIX	It is an ancient Error to Assume that God takes no Notice of Man	290
XX	God's Knowledge is Different from Man's Knowledge	292

XXI	The Creator's knowledge of His Production is Perfect	295
XXII	Object of the Book of Job, and Explanation of the First Two Chapters	296
XXIII	Job and his Friends Discuss the various Theories concerning Providence	299
XXIV	On Trials and Temptations	304
XXV	The Actions of God are Not Purposeless	307
XXVI	The Divine Precepts Serve a certain Purpose	310
XXVII	The Object of the Divine Precepts is to Secure the Well-being of Man's Soul and Body	312
XXVIII	This Object is easily seen in some Precepts whilst in others it is only known after due Reflection	313
XXIX	On the Sabeans or Star-worshippers	315
XXX	It is one of the Objects of the Law of Moses to Oppose Idolatry	320
XXXI	The Law Promotes the well-being of Man by teaching Truth, Morality and Social Conduct	321
XXXII	Why did God give Laws to Oppose Idolatry instead of Uprooting it directly?	322
XXXIII	Another chief Object of the Law is to Train Man in Mastering his Appetites and Desires	327
XXXIV	The Law is based on the ordinary condition of man	328
XXXV	Division of the Precepts into Fourteen Classes	329
XXXVI	First Class of Precepts, to Know, Love and Fear God	331
XXXVII	Second Class, Laws concerning Idolatry	332
XXXVIII	Third Class, Moral Precepts	338
XXXIX	Fourth Class, Laws relating to Charity	339
XL	Fifth Class, Compensation for Injury and the Duty of Preventing Sin	342

XL I	Sixth Class, Punishment of the Sinner	344
XL II	Seventh Class, Equity and Honesty	350
	p. xiii	
XL III	Eighth Class, Sabbath and Festivals	352
XL IV	Ninth Class, Prayer, <i>Tefillin</i> , <i>Zizit</i> and <i>Mezuzah</i>	354
XL V	Tenth Class, The Temple, its Vessels and its Ministers	355
XL VI	Eleventh Class, Sacrifices	359
XL VII	Twelfth Class, Distinction between Clean and Unclean and on Purification	366
XL VIII	Thirteenth Class, Dietary Laws	370
XL IX	Fourteenth Class, Marriage Laws	372
L	On Scriptural Passages with seemingly Purposeless Contents	380
LI	How God is worshipped by a Perfect Man	384
LII	On the Fear of God	391
LIII	Explanation of <i>Hesed</i> (Love), <i>Mishpat</i> (Judgment), and <i>Zedakah</i> (Righteousness)	392
LIV	On True Wisdom	

PART THREE

p. 251

INTRODUCTION

WE have stated several times that it is our primary object in this treatise to expound, as far as possible, the Biblical account of the Creation (*Ma'aseh bereshit*) and the description of the Divine Chariot (*Ma'aseh Mercabah*) in a manner adapted to the training of those for whom this work is written.

We have also stated that these subjects belong to the mysteries of the Law. You are well aware how our Sages blame those who reveal these mysteries, and praise the merits of those who keep them secret, although they are perfectly clear to the philosopher. In this sense they explain the passage, "Her merchandise shall be for them that dwell before the Lord, to eat sufficiently" (Isa. xxiii. 18), which concludes in the original with the words *ve-li-me-kasseh 'atik*, i.e., that these blessings are promised to him who hides things which the Eternal has revealed [to him], viz., the mysteries of the Law (Babyl. Talmud, *Pesahim* 119a). If you have understanding you will comprehend that which our Sages pointed out. They have clearly stated that the Divine Chariot includes matters too deep and too profound for the ordinary intellect. It has been shown that a person favoured by Providence with reason to understand these mysteries is forbidden by the Law to teach them except *viva voce*, and on condition that the pupil possess certain qualifications, and even then only the heads of the sections may be communicated. This has been the cause why the knowledge of this mystery has entirely disappeared from our nation, and nothing has remained of it. This was unavoidable, for the explanation of these mysteries was always communicated *vivâ voce*, it was never committed to writing. Such being the case, how can I venture to call your attention to such portions of it as may be known, intelligible, and perfectly clear to me? But if, on the other hand, I were to abstain from writing on this subject, according to my knowledge of it, when I die, as I shall inevitably do, that knowledge would die with me, and I would thus inflict great injury on you and all those who are perplexed [by these theological problems]. I would then be guilty of withholding the truth from those to whom it ought to be communicated, and of jealously depriving the heir of his inheritance. I should in either case be guilty of gross misconduct.

To give a full explanation of the mystic passages of the Bible is contrary to the Law and to reason; besides, my knowledge of them is based on reasoning, not on divine inspiration [and is therefore not infallible]. I have not

p. 252

received my belief in this respect from any teacher, but it has been formed by what I learnt from Scripture and the utterances of our Sages, and by the philosophical principles which I have adopted. It is therefore possible that my view is wrong, and that I misunderstood the passages referred to. Correct thought and divine help have suggested to me the proper method, viz., to explain the words of the prophet Ezekiel in such a manner that those who will read my interpretation will believe that I have not added anything to the contents of the text, but only, as it were, translated from one language into another, or given a short exposition of plain things. Those, however, for whom this treatise has been composed, will, on reflecting on it and thoroughly examining each chapter, obtain a perfect and clear insight into all that has been clear and intelligible to me. This is the utmost that can be done in treating this subject so as to be useful to all without fully explaining it.

After this introductory remark I ask you to study attentively the chapters which follow on this sublime, important, and grand subject, which is the pin upon which everything hangs, and the pillar upon which everything rests.

CHAPTER I

IT is well known that there are men whose face is like that of other animals thus the face of some person is like that of a lion, that of another person like that of an ox, and so on: and man's face is described according as the form of his face resembles the form of the face of other animals. By the expressions, "the face of an ox," "the face of a lion," "the face of an eagle" (Ezek, i. 10), the prophet describes a human face inclining towards the forms of these various species. This interpretation can be supported by two proofs. First, the prophet says of the *Hayyot* in general that "their appearance is this, they have the form of man" (ver. 5), and then in describing each of the *Hayyot* he attributes to them the face of a man, that of an ox, that of a lion, and that of an eagle. Secondly, in the second description of the Chariot, which is intended as a supplement to the first, the prophet says, Each hath four faces; the one is the face of a cherub, the second a man's face, the third a lion's face, and the fourth that of an eagle (*ibid.* x. W. He thus clearly indicates that the terms "the face of an ox" and "the face of a cherub" are identical. But cherub designates "a youth." By analogy we explain the two other terms--"the face of a lion" and "the face of an eagle" in the same manner. "The face of the ox" has been singled out on account of the etymology of the Hebrew term *shor* (ox), as has been indicated by me. It is impossible to assume that this second description refers to the perception of another prophetic vision, because it concludes thus: "This is the *Hayyah* which I saw at the river Chebar" (*ibid.* ver. 15). What we intended to explain is now clear.

CHAPTER II

THE prophet says that he saw four *Hayyot*: each of them had four faces, four wings, and two hands, but on the whole their form was human. Comp. "They had the likeness of a man" (Ezek. i. 5). The hands are also described

p. 253

as human hands, because these have undoubtedly, as is well known, such a form as enables them to perform all manner of cunning work. Their feet are straight that is to say, they are without joints. This is the meaning of the phrase "a straight foot," taken literally. Similarly our Sages say, the words, "And their feet were straight feet" (*ibid.* i. 7), show that the beings above do not sit. Note this likewise. The soles of the feet of the *Hayyot*, the organs of walking, are described as different from the feet of man, but the hands are like human hands. The feet are round, for the prophet says, "like the sole of a round foot." The four *Hayyot* are closely joined together, there is no space or vacuum left between them. Comp. "They were joined one to another" (*ibid.* i. 9)." But although they were thus joined together, their faces and their wings were separated above" (*ibid.* ver. 11). Consider the expression "above" employed here, although the bodies were closely

joined, their faces and their wings were separated, but only above. The prophet then states that they are transparent; they are "like burnished brass" (*ibid.* ver. 7). He also adds that they are luminous. Comp. "Their appearance was like burning coals of fire" (*ibid.* ver. 13). This is all that has been said as regards the form, shape, face, figure, wings, hands, and feet of the *Ḥayyot*. The prophet then begins to describe the motions of these *Ḥayyot*, namely, that they have a uniform motion, without any curvature, deviation, or deflexion: "They turned not when they went" (ver. 17). Each of the *Ḥayyot* moves in the direction of its face. Comp. "They went every one in the direction of his face" (ver. 9). Now, it is here clearly stated that each *Ḥayyah* went in the direction of its face, but since each *Ḥayyah* has several faces, I ask, in the direction of which face? In short, the four *Ḥayyot* do not move in the same direction; for, if this were the case, a special motion would not have been ascribed to each of them: it would not have been said, "They went each one towards the side of his face." The motion of these *Ḥayyot* is further described as a running, so also their returning is described as a running. Comp. "And the *Ḥayyot* ran, and returned as the appearance of a flash of lightning" (ver. 14), *raḥoh* being the infinitive of *ruḥ*, "to run," and *shob* the infinitive instead of *shub*, "to return." The ordinary words, *haloch* and *bo*, "to go" and "to come," are not used, but such words as indicate running to and fro: and these are further explained by the phrase, "As the appearance of a flash of lightning" (*bazak*, used by the prophet, is identical with *barak*), for the lightning appears to move very quickly; it seems to hasten and to run from a certain place, and then to turn back and to come again to the place from which it had started. This is repeated several times with the same velocity. Jonathan, the son of Uzziel, renders the phrase *raḥo vashob* thus: They move round the world and return at once, and are as swift as the appearance of lightning. This quick movement and return the *Ḥayyah* does not perform of its own accord, but through something outside of it, viz., the Divine Will; for "to whichever side it is the Divine Will that the *Ḥayyah* should move, thither the *Ḥayyah* moves," in that quick manner which is expressed by "running and returning." This is implied in the words, "Whithersoever the spirit was to go they went (ver. 20); "They turned not when they went" (ver. 17). By "the spirit" (*ruah*), the prophet does not mean "the wind," but "the intention," as we have explained when discussing the homonym *ruah*

p. 254

[paragraph continues] (spirit). The meaning of the phrase is, that whithersoever it is the Divine Will that the *Ḥayyah* shall go, thither it runs. Jonathan, the son of Uzziel, gives a similar explanation: Towards the place whither it is the will to go, they go; they do not turn when they go. The employment of the future tense of the verbs *yihyeh* and *yeleku* in this passage seems to imply that sometimes it will be the will of God that the *Ḥayyah* should move in one direction, in which it will in fact move, and at other times it will be His will that the *Ḥayyah* should move in the opposite direction, in which it will then move. An explanation is, however, added, which is contrary to this conclusion, and shows that the future form (*yihyeh*) of the verb has here the meaning of the preterite, as is frequently the case in Hebrew. The direction in which God desires the *Ḥayyah* to move has already been determined and fixed, and the *Ḥayyah* moves in that

direction which His will has determined long ago, without having ever changed. The prophet, therefore, in explaining, and at the same time concluding [this description of the *Hayyot*], says, "Whithersoever the spirit was to go they go, thither *was* the spirit to go" (ver. 20). Note this wonderful interpretation. This passage forms likewise part of the account of the motion of the four *Hayyot* which follows the description of their form.

Next comes the description of another part; for the prophet relates that he saw a body beneath the *Hayyot*, but closely joining them. This body, which is connected with the earth, consists likewise of four bodies, and has also four faces. But no distinct form is ascribed to it: neither that of man nor that of any other living being. The [four bodies] are described as great, tremendous, and terrible; no form is given to them, except that they are covered with eyes. These are the bodies called *Ofannim* (lit. wheels). The prophet therefore says: "Now, as I beheld the *Hayyot*, behold one wheel upon the earth beside the living creatures, with his four faces" (ver. 15). He thus distinctly states that the *Ofannim* form a body, of which the one part touches the *Hayyot*, and the other part the earth; and that the *Ofan* has four faces. But he continues--"The appearance of the *Ofannim* (wheels) and their work was like unto the colour of a beryl: and they four had one likeness" (ver. 16). By speaking of four *Ofannim*, after having mentioned only one *Ofan*, the prophet indicates that the "four faces" and the "four *Ofannim*" are identical. These four *Ofannim* have the same form; comp., "And they four had one likeness." The *Ofannim* are then described as partly inter-joined; for "their appearance and their work was as it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel" (ver. 16). In the description of the *Hayyot* such a phrase, with the term "in the middle of" (*tok*) is not employed. The *Hayyot* are partly joined, according to the words, "they were joined one to another" (ver. 11); whilst in reference to the *Ofannim* it is stated that they are partly intermixed, "as it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel" The body of the *Ofannim* is described as being covered with eyes; it is possible that a body covered with real eyes is here meant, or a body with different colours [*ayin* denoting "eye," also "colour"], as in the phrase "the colour thereof [*eno*] as the colour (*ke'en*) of bdellium" (Num. xi. 7); or a body filled with likenesses of things. In this latter sense the term *ayin* is used by our Sages in phrases like the following:--Like that [*ke'en*] which he has stolen, like that [*ke'en*] which he has robbed; or different

p. 255

properties and qualities are meant, according to the meaning of the word *ayin* in the passage, "It may be that the Lord will look (*be'enai*) on my condition" (2 Sam. xvi. 12). So much for the form of the *Ofannim*. Their motion is described as being without curvature and deviation; as being straight, without any change. This is expressed in the words, "When they went, they went upon their four sides: and they turned not when they went" (E.: ver. 117). The four *Ofannim* do not move of their own accord, as the *Hayyot*, and have no motion whatever of their own; they are set in motion by other beings, as is emphatically stated twice. The *Hayyot* are the moving agents of the *Ofannim*. The relation between the *Ofan* and the *Hayyah* may be compared to the relation between a lifeless body tied to the hand or the leg of a living animal; whithersoever the latter moves, thither moves also the piece of wood, or the stone, which is tied to the named limb of the

animal. This is expressed in the following words:--"And when the *Ḥayyot* went, the *Ofannim* went by them; and when the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, the *Ofannim* were lifted up" (ver. 19); "and the *Ofannim* were lifted up over against them" (ver. 20). And the cause of this is explained thus:--"The spirit of the *Hayyah* was in the *Ofannim*" (*ibid.*). For the sake of emphasis and further explanation the prophet adds, "When those went, these went; and when those stood, these stood; and when those were lifted up from the earth, the *Ofannim* were lifted up over against them; for the spirit of the *Ḥayyah* was in the *Ofannim*" (ver. 21). The order of these movements is therefore as follows:--Whithersoever it is the will of God that the *Ḥayyot* should move, thither they move of their own accord. When the *Ḥayyot* move the *Ofannim* necessarily follow them, because they are tied to them, and not because they move of their own accord in the direction in which the *Ḥayyot* move. This order is expressed in the words, "Whithersoever the spirit was to go, they went, thither was the spirit to go; and the *Ofannim* were lifted up over against them: for the spirit of the *Hayyah* was in the *Ofannim*" (ver. 20). I have told you that Jonathan, the son of Uzziel, translates the verse thus, "to the place whither it was the will that the *Ḥayyot* should go," etc.

After having completed the account of the *Ḥayyot*, with their form and motion, and of the *Ofannim*, which are beneath the *Ḥayyot*, connected with them and forced to move when the *Ḥayyot* move, the prophet begins to describe a third object which he perceived prophetically, and gives the account of a new thing, viz., of that which is above the *Ḥayyot*. He says that the firmament is above the four *Ḥayyot*, above the firmament is the likeness of a throne, and over the throne the likeness of the appearance of mar. This is the whole account of what the prophet perceived at first at the river Chebar.

CHAPTER III

WHEN Ezekiel recalled to memory the form of the Chariot, which he described in the beginning of the book, the same vision presented itself to him a second time; in this vision he was borne to Jerusalem. He explains in describing it things which have not been made clear at first, e.g., he substitutes the term "cherubim" for *Ḥayyot*, whereby he expresses that the

p. 256

[paragraph continues] *Ḥayyot* of the first vision are likewise angels like the cherubim. He says, therefore: "Where the cherubims went, the *Ofannim* went by them: and when the cherubims lifted up their wings to mount up from the earth, the same *Ofannim* also turned not from beside them" (x. 16). By these words he shows how closely connected the two motions are [viz., that of the *Ḥayyot* and that of the *Ofannim*]. The prophet adds, "This is the *Hayyah* that I saw under the God of Israel by the river of Chebar: and I knew that they were cherubims" (ver. 20). He thus describes the same forms and the same motions, and states that the *Ḥayyot* and the cherubim are identical. A second point is then made clear in this second description, namely, that the *Ofannim* are spherical; for the prophet says, "As for the *Ofannim*, it was cried unto them in my hearing, O

sphere" (ver. 13). A third point concerning the *Ofannim* is illustrated here in the following words: "To the place whither the head looked they followed it: they turned not as they went" (ver. 11). The motion of the *Ofannim* is thus described as involuntary, and directed "to the place whither the head looketh"; and of this it is stated that it moves "whither the spirit is to go" (i. 20). A fourth point is added concerning the *Ofannim*, namely, "And the *Ofannim* were full of eyes round about, even the *Ofannim* that they four had" (x. 12). This has not been mentioned before. In this second description there are further mentioned "their flesh, and their backs, and their hands, and their wings" (*ibid.*), whilst in the first account none of these is mentioned: and it is only stated that they are bodies. Though they are endowed in the second account with flesh, hands, and wings, no form is given to them. In the second account each *Ofan* is attributed to a cherub, "one *Ofan* by one cherub, and another *Ofan* by another cherub." The four *Hayyot* are then described as one *Hayyah* on account of their interjoining: "This is the *Hayyah* that I saw under the God of Israel by the river of Chebar" (ver. 20). Also the *Ofannim*, though being four in number, as has been mentioned, are called "one *ofan* upon the earth" (ver. 15), because they interjoin, and "they four have one likeness" (ver. 16). This is the additional explanation which the second vision gives of the form of the *Hayyot* and the *Ofannim*.

CHAPTER IV

IT is necessary to call your attention to an idea expressed by Jonathan, the son of Uzziel. When he saw that the prophet says in reference to the *Ofannim*, "It was cried unto them in my hearing, O *gilgal*" ("sphere") (x. 13), he assumed that by *Ofannim* the heavens are meant, and rendered *Ofan* by *gilgal*, "sphere," and *Ofannim* by *gilgelaya*, "spheres." I have no doubt that he found a confirmation of his opinion in the words of the prophet that the *Ofannim* were like unto the colour of *tarshish* (ver. 16), a colour ascribed to the heavens, as is well known. When he, therefore, noticed the passage, "Now as I beheld the *Hayyot*, behold one *Ofan* upon the earth" (i. 15), which clearly shows that the *Ofannim* were upon the earth, he had a difficulty in explaining it in accordance with his opinion. Following, however, his interpretation, he explains the terms *erez*, employed here as denoting the inner surface of the heavenly sphere, which may be considered as *erez* ("earth" or "below"), in relation to all that is above that surface. He

p. 257

therefore translates the words *ofan ehad ba-arez*, as follows: "One *ofan* was below the height of the heavens." Consider what his explanation of the passage must be. I think that he gave this explanation because he thought that *gilgal* denotes in its original meaning "heaven." My opinion is that *gilgal* means originally "anything rolling"; comp. "And I will roll thee (*ve-gilgaltika*) down from the rocks" (Jer. li. 25); "and rolled (*va-yagel*) the stone" (Gen. xxix. 10); the same meaning the word has in the phrase: "Like a rolling thing (*galgal*) before the whirlwind" (Isa. xvii. 13). The poll of the head, being round, is therefore called *gulgolet*; and because everything round rolls easily, every spherical thing is called *gilgal*; also the heavens are called *gilgallim* on account of their spherical form. Thus our Sages use the phrase, "It is a wheel (*gilgal*) that moves

round the world"; and a wooden ball, whether small or large, is called *gilgal*. If so, the prophet merely intended by the words, "As for the *Ofannim*, it is cried to them in my hearing, O sphere" (*gilgal*), to indicate the shape of the *Ofannim*, as nothing has been mentioned before respecting their form and shape; but he did not mean to say that the *Ofannim* are the same as the heavens. The term "like *tarshish*" is explained in the second account, in which it is said of the *Ofannim*: "And the appearance of the *Ofannim* was like the colour of *tarshish*." This latter passage is translated by Jonathan, the son of Uzziel, "like the colour of a precious stone," exactly in the same manner as Onkelos translates the phrase *ke-ma 'ase libnat ha-sappir*, "like the work of the whiteness of sapphire" (Exod. xxix. 10). Note this. You will not find it strange that I mention the explanation of Jonathan, son of Uzziel, whilst I gave a different explanation myself: for you will find many of the wise men and the commentators differ sometimes from him in the interpretation of words and in many things respecting the prophets. Why should it be otherwise in these profound matters? Besides, I do not decide in favour of my interpretation. It is for you to learn both--the whole of his explanation, from what I have pointed out to you, and also my own opinion. God knoweth which of the two explanations is in accordance with that which the prophet intended to say.

CHAPTER V

IT is necessary to notice that the plural *marot elohim*, "visions of God," is here used, and not the singular *mareh*, "vision," for there were several things, of different kinds, that were perceived by the prophet. The following three things were perceived by him: the *Ofannim*, the *Hayyot*, and the man above the *Hayyot*. The description of each of these visions is introduced by the word *va-ereh*, "and I beheld?" For the account of the *Hayyot*, begins, "And I looked (*va-ereh*), and behold a whirlwind," etc. (Ezek. i. 4). The account of the *Ofannim* begins: "Now as I beheld (*va-ereh*) the *Hayyot*, behold one ofan upon the earth" (ver. 15). The vision of that which is above the *Hayyot* in order and rank begins: "And I saw (*va-ereh*) as the colour of the amber, etc., from the appearance of his loins even upward" (ver. 27). The word *va-ereh*, "and I beheld," only occurs these three times in the description of the *Mercabah*. The doctors of the *Mishnah* have already explained this fact, and my attention was called to it by their remarks.

p. 258

[paragraph continues] For they said that only the two first visions, namely, that of the *Hayyot* and the *Ofannim*, might be interpreted to others; but of the third vision, viz., that of the *hashmal* and all that is connected with it, only the heads of the sections may be taught. Rabbi [Jehudah], the Holy, is of opinion that all the three visions are called *ma'aseh mercabah*, and nothing but the heads of the sections could be communicated to others. The exact words of the discussion are as follows:--Where does *maaseh mercabah* end? Rabbi says, with the last *va-ereh*; Rabbi Yizhak says it ends at the word *hashmal* (ver. 27). The portion from *va-ereh* to *hashmal* may be fully, taught; of that which follows, only the heads of the sections; according to some it is the passage from *va-ereh* to *hashmal*, of which the heads of the sections may be taught, but that which

follows may only be studied by those who possess the capacity, whilst those that cannot study it by themselves must leave it.--It is clear from the words of our Sages that different visions are described, as may also be inferred from the repetition of the word *va-ereh*, and that these visions are different from each other in degree: the last and highest of them is the vision commencing, "And I saw as the colour of *hashmal*": that is to say, the divided figure of the man, described as "the appearance of fire, etc., from the appearance of his loins even upward, and from the appearance of his loins even downward," etc. There is a difference of opinion among our Sages whether it is permitted to give by way of hints an exposition of any part of this third vision, or whether it is prohibited even to teach of it the heads of the sections, so that only the wise can arrive at understanding it by their own studies. You will also notice a difference of opinion among our Sages in reference to the two first visions, viz., that of the *Hayyot* and that of the *Ofannim* whether these may be taught explicitly or only by way of hints, dark sayings, and heads of sections. You must also notice the order of these three visions. First comes the vision of the *Hayyot*, because they are first in rank and in the causal relation, as it is said, "For the spirit of the Hayyah was in the *Ofannim*," and also for other reasons. The vision of the *Ofannim* [comes next, and] is followed by one which is higher than the *Hayyot*, as has been shown. The cause of this arrangement is, that in study the first two must necessarily precede the third, and in fact they lead to it.

CHAPTER VI

THE sublime and great subject which Ezekiel by prophetic impulse began to teach us in the description of the *Mercabah*, is exactly the same which Isaiah taught us in general outlines, because he did not require all the detail. Isaiah says, "I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood seraphims," etc. (Isa. vi. 1 *seq.*). Our Sages have already stated all this clearly, and called our attention to it. For they say that the vision of Ezekiel is the same as that of Isaiah, and illustrate their view by the following simile:-- Two men saw the king riding, the one a townsman, the other a countryman. The former, seeing that his neighbours know well how the king rides, simply tells them that he saw the king; but the villager, wishing to tell his friends things which they do not know, relates in detail how the king was riding, describes his followers, and

p. 259

the officers who execute his order and command. This remark is a most useful hint; it is contained in the following passage (*Hagigah*, 13 b): "Isaiah saw all that has been seen by Ezekiel: Isaiah is like a townsman that sees the king, Ezekiel like a countryman that sees the king." These words can be explained in the manner which I have just mentioned, viz., the generation of Isaiah did not require the detailed description: his account, "I saw the Lord," etc., sufficed. The generation of the Babylonian exile wanted to learn all the details. It is, however, possible that the author of this saying held Isaiah as more perfect than Ezekiel, so that the vision might have overawed Ezekiel and appeared fearful to him; but Isaiah was so familiar with it that

he did not consider it necessary to communicate it to others as a new thing, especially as it was well known to the intelligent.

CHAPTER VII

ONE Of the points that require investigation is the connexion between the vision of the mercabah and the year, month, and day, and also the place of the vision. A reason must be found for this connexion, and we must not think that it is an indifferent element in the vision. We must consider the words, "the heavens were opened" (Ezek. i. 1); they give the key to the understanding of the whole. The figure of opening, also that of opening the gates, occurs frequently in the books of the prophets: e.g., "Open ye the gates that the righteous nation may enter in" (Isa. xxvi. 2); "He opened the doors of heaven" (Ps. lxx-viii. 23); "Lift them up, ye everlasting doors" (*ibid.* xxiv. 9); "Open to me the gates of righteousness, I will go into them, and I will praise the Lord" (*ibid.* cxviii. 19). There are many other instances of this kind. You must further notice that the whole description refers undoubtedly to a prophetic vision, as it is said, "And the hand of the Lord was there upon him" (Ezek. i. 3); and yet there is a very great difference between the various parts of the description, for in the account of the *Hayyot* the prophet does not say four *Hayyot*, but "the likeness of the four *Hayyot*" (*ibid.* ver. 5); similarly he says, "And the likeness of a firmament was over the heads of the *Hayyot*" (ver. 22); "as the appearance of a sapphire stone, the likeness of a throne," and "the likeness of the appearance of man above it" (ver. 26). In all these instances the word "likeness" is used, whilst in the account of the *Ofannim* the phrases, "the likeness of *Ofannim*," the "likeness of an *Ofan*," are not employed, but they are described in a positive manner as beings in actual existence, with their real properties. The sentence "they four had one likeness" must not mislead you, for here the word "likeness" is not used in the same connexion or in the same sense as indicated above. In the description of the last vision the prophet confirms and explains this view. When he commences to describe the firmament in detail, he says, "the firmament," without adding the words "the likeness of," for he says, "And I looked, and behold, in the firmament that was above the head of the cherubims there appeared over them as it were a sapphire stone, as the appearance of the likeness of a throne" (x. 1). Here the prophet speaks of "the firmament" and not of "the likeness of the firmament," as he does when he connects the firmament with the

p. 260

heads of the likeness of the *Hayyot* (i. 22). But, as regards the throne, he says, "the likeness of a throne appeared over them," in order to indicate that the firmament was first perceived and then the likeness of the throne was seen over it. Consider this well.

You must further notice that in the description of the first vision the *Hayyot* have wings and at the same time human hands, whilst in the second vision, in which the term cherubim is substituted for *Hayyot*, at first only wings were perceived, and later on human hands were seen. Comp. "And there appeared in the cherubims the form of a man's hand under their wings" (x. 8).

Here "form" (*tabnit*) is used instead of "likeness" (*demut*); and the hands are placed under the wings. Note this.

Consider that in reference to the *ofannim*, the prophet says, *le-'ummatam*, "over against them," although he does not ascribe to them any form.

He further says, "As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory," etc. (i. 28). The substance and true essence of the bow described here is well known. The simile and comparison is in this case very extraordinary, and is undoubtedly part of the prophecy; and note it well.

It is also noteworthy that the likeness of man above the throne is divided, the upper part being like the colour of *hashmal*, the lower part like the appearance of fire. As regards the word *hashmal*, it has been explained to be a compound of two words *hash* and *mal*, including two different notions, viz., *hash* signifying "swiftness," and *mal* denoting "pause." The two different notions are here joined in one word in order to indicate figuratively the two different parts,--the upper part and the lower. We have already given a second explanation, namely, that *hashmal* includes the two notions of speech and silence: in accordance with the saying of our Sages, "At times they are silent, at times they speak," thus deriving *hash* of the same root as *heheshethi*, "I have been silent" (Isa. xlii. 14); the word *hashmal* thus includes two notions, and indicates "speech without sound." There is no doubt that the words, "at times they are silent, at times they speak," refer to a created object. Now consider how they clearly stated that the divided likeness of man over the throne does not represent God, who is above the whole chariot, but represents a part of the creation. The prophet likewise says "that is the likeness of the glory of the Lord"; but "the glory of the Lord" is different from "the Lord" Himself, as has been shown by us several times. All the figures in this vision refer to the glory of the Lord, to the chariot, and not to Him who rides upon the chariot; for God cannot be compared to anything. Note this. I have thus given you also in this chapter as much of the heads of the sections as will be useful to you for the comprehension of this subject, if you fill out [the sections of] these heads. If you consider all that has been said in this part up to this chapter, the greater part of this subject or the whole of it will be clear to you. except a few points and some repetitions the meaning of which is unknown. Perhaps further study will help to reveal even these things so that nothing will remain unintelligible.

Do not expect or hope to hear from me after this chapter a word on this subject, either explicitly or implicitly, for all that could be said on it has been

p. 261

said, though with great difficulty and struggle. I will now begin to treat of some of the other subjects which I hope to elucidate in this treatise.

CHAPTER VIII

TRANSIENT bodies are only subject to destruction through their substance and not through their form, nor can the essence of their form be destroyed; in this respect they are permanent. The generic forms, as you know, are all permanent and stable. Form can only be destroyed accidentally, i.e., on account of its connexion with substance, the true nature of which consists in the property of never being without a disposition to receive form. This is the reason why no form remains permanently in a substance; a constant change takes place, one form is taken off and another is put on. How wonderfully wise is the simile of King Solomon, in which he compares matter to a faithless wife: for matter is never found without form, and is therefore always like such a wife who is never without a husband, never single; and yet, though being wedded, constantly seeks another man in the place of her husband: she entices and attracts him in every possible manner till he obtains from her what her husband has obtained. The same is the case with matter. Whatever form it has, it is disposed to receive another form; it never leaves off moving and casting off the form which it has in order to receive another. The same takes place when this second form is received. It is therefore clear that all corruption, destruction, or defect comes from matter. Take, e.g., man; his deformities and unnatural shape of limbs; all weakness, interruption, or disorder of his actions, whether innate or not, originate in the transient substance, not in the form. All other living beings likewise die or become ill through the substance of the body and not through its form. Man's shortcomings and sins are all due to the substance of the body and not to its form; while all his merits are exclusively due to his form. Thus the knowledge of God, the formation of ideas, the mastery of desire and passion, the distinction between that which is to be chosen and that which is to be rejected, all these man owes to his form; but eating, drinking, sexual intercourse, excessive lust, passion, and all vices, have their origin in the substance of his body. Now it was clear that this was the case,--it was impossible, according to the wisdom of God, that substance should exist without form, or any of the forms of the bodies without substance, and it was necessary that the very noble form of man, which is the image and likeness of God, as has been shown by us, should be joined to the substance of dust and darkness, the source of all defect and loss. For these reasons the Creator gave to the form of man power, rule, and dominion over the substance;--the form can subdue the substance, refuse the fulfilment of its desires, and reduce them, as far as possible, to a just and proper measure. The station of man varies according to the exercise of this power. Some persons constantly strive to choose that which is noble, and to seek perpetuation in accordance with the direction of their nobler part,--their form: their thoughts are engaged in the formation of ideas, the acquisition of true knowledge about everything, and the union with the divine intellect which flows down upon them, and which is the source of man's form. Whenever they are led by the wants of the body to that which is low and avowedly disgraceful, they are grieved at their

p. 262

position, they feel ashamed and confounded at their situation. They try with all their might to diminish this disgrace, and to guard against it in every possible way. They feel like a person

whom the king in his anger ordered to remove refuse from one place to another in order to put him to shame; that person tries as much as possible to hide himself during the time of his disgrace; he perhaps removes a small quantity a short distance in such a manner that his hands and garments remain clean, and he himself be unnoticed by his fellow-men. Such would be the conduct of a free man, whilst a slave would find pleasure in such work;--he would not consider it a great burden, but throw himself into the refuse, smear his face and his hands, carry the refuse openly, laughing and singing. This is exactly the difference in the conduct of different men. Some consider, as we just said, all wants of the body as shame, disgrace, and defect to which they are compelled to attend: this is chiefly the case with the sense of touch, which is a disgrace to us according to Aristotle, and which is the cause of our desire for eating, drinking, and sensuality. Intelligent persons must, as much as possible, reduce these wants, guard against them, feel grieved when satisfying them, abstain from speaking of them, discussing them, and attending to them in company with others. Man must have control over all these desires, reduce them as much as possible, and only retain of them as much as is indispensable. His aim must be the aim of man as man, viz., the formation of ideas, and nothing else. The best and sublimest among them is the idea which man forms of God, angels, and the rest of the creation according to his capacity. Such men are always with God, and of them it is said, "Ye are princes, and all of you are children of the Most High" (Ps. lxxxii. 6). This is man's task and purpose. Others, however, that are separated from God form the multitude of fools, and do just the opposite. They neglect all thought and all reflection on ideas, and consider as their task the cultivation of the sense of touch,--that sense which is the greatest disgrace: they only think and reason about eating and love. Thus it is said of the wicked who are drowned in eating, drinking, and love, "They also have erred through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way," etc. (Isa. xxviii. 7), "for all tables are full of vomit and filthiness, so that there is no place clean" (ver. 8); again, "And women rule over them" (*ibid.* iii. 2),--the opposite of that which man was told in the beginning of the creation, "And for thy husband shall thy desire be, and he shall rule over thee" (Gen. iii. 16). The intensity of their lust is then described thus, "Every one neighed after his neighbour's wife," etc. (Jer. v. 8); "they are all adulterers, an assembly of treacherous men" (*ibid.* ix. 2). The whole book of the Proverbs of Solomon treats of this subject, and exhorts to abstain from lust and intemperance. These two vices ruin those that hate God and keep far from Him; to them the following passages may be applied, "They are not the Lord's" (*ibid.* v. 10); "Cast them out of my sight, and let them go forth" (*ibid.* xv. 1). As regards the portion beginning, "Who can find a virtuous woman?" it is clear what is meant by the figurative expression, "a virtuous woman." When man possesses a good sound body that does not overpower him nor disturb the equilibrium in him, he possesses a divine gift. In short, a good constitution facilitates the rule of the soul over the body, but it is not impossible to conquer a bad constitution by training. For this reason King

p. 263

[paragraph continues] Solomon and others wrote the moral lessons; also all the commandments and exhortations in the Pentateuch aim at conquering the desires of the body. Those who desire

to be men in truth, and not brutes, having only the appearance and shape of men, must constantly endeavour to reduce the wants of the body, such as eating, love, drinking, anger, and all vices originating in lust and passion; they must feel ashamed of them and set limits to them for themselves. As for eating and drinking in so far as it is indispensable, they will eat and drink only as much as is useful and necessary as food, and not for the purpose of pleasure. They will also speak little of these things, and rarely congregate for such purposes. Thus our Sages, as is well known, kept aloof from a banquet that was not part of a religious act, and pious men followed the example of R. Phinehas, son of Jair, who never dined with other persons, and even refused to accept an invitation of R. Jehudah, the Holy. Wine may be treated as food, if taken as such, but to form parties for the purpose of drinking wine together must be considered more disgraceful than the unrestrained conduct of persons who in daylight meet in the same house undressed and naked. For the natural action of the digestive organ is indispensable to man, he cannot do without it; whilst drunkenness depends on the free will of an evil man. To appear naked in the presence of other people is misconduct only according to public opinion, not according to the dictates of reason, whilst drunkenness, which ruins the mind and the body of man, reason stamps as a vice. You, therefore, who desire to act as human beings must keep away from it, and even from speaking of it. On sexual intercourse, I need not add anything after I have pointed out in the commentary on *Abot* (i. 17) how it is treated by our Law, which is the teaching of pure wisdom--no excuse whatever should induce us to mention it or to speak of it. Thus our Sages said, that Elisha the prophet is called holy, because he did not think of it, and consequently never found himself polluted with semen. In a similar manner they say that Jacob had the first issue of semen for the conception of Reuben. All these traditional stories have the object of teaching the nation humane conduct. There is a well-known saying of our Sages, "The thoughts about the sin are more dangerous than the sin itself." I can offer a good explanation of this saying: When a person is disobedient, this is due to certain accidents connected with the corporeal element in his constitution; for man sins only by his animal nature, whereas thinking is a faculty of man connected with his form,--a person who thinks sinfully sins therefore by means of the nobler portion of his self: and he who wrongly causes a foolish slave to work does not sin as much as he who wrongly causes a noble and free man to do the work of a slave. For this specifically human element, with all its properties and powers, should only be employed in suitable work, in attempts to join higher beings, and not in attempts to go down and reach the lower creatures. You know how we condemn lowness of speech, and justly so, for speech is likewise peculiar to man and a boon which God granted to him that he may be distinguished from the rest of living creatures. Thus God says, "Who gave a mouth to man?" (Exod. iv. 11); and the prophet declares, "The Lord God hath given me a learned tongue" (Isa. l. 4). This gift, therefore, which God gave us in order to enable us to perfect ourselves, to learn and to teach, must not be employed in doing that which is for us most

degrading and perfectly disgraceful; we must not imitate the songs and tales of ignorant and lascivious people. It may be suitable to them, but is not fit for those who are told, "And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exod. xix. 6). Those who employ the faculty of thinking and speaking in the service of that sense which is no honour to us, who think more than necessary of drink and love, or even sing of these things: they employ and use the divine gift in acts of rebellion against the Giver, and in the transgression of His commandments. To them the following words may be applied: "And I multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal" (Hos. ii. 10). I have also a reason and cause for calling our language the holy language--do not think it is exaggeration or error on my part, it is perfectly correct--the Hebrew language has no special name for the organ of generation in females or in males, nor for the act of generation itself, nor for semen, nor for secretion. The Hebrew has no original expressions for these things, and only describes them in figurative language and by way of hints, as if to indicate thereby that these things should not be mentioned, and should therefore have no names; we ought to be silent about them, and when we are compelled to mention them, we must manage to employ for that purpose some suitable expressions, although these are generally used in a different sense. Thus the organ of generation in males is called in Hebrew *gid*, which is a figurative term, reminding of the words, "And thy neck is an iron sinew" (*gid*) (Isa. xlviii. 4). It is also called *shupka*, "pouring out" (Deut. xxiii. 2), on account of its function. The female organ is called *kobah* (Num. xxv. 8), from *kobah* (Deut. xviii. 3), which denotes "stomach"; *rehem*, "womb," is the inner organ in which the fœtus develops; *zōah* (Isa. xxviii. 8), "refuse," is derived from the verb *yaza*, "he went out"; for "urine" the phrase *meme raglayim*, "the water of the feet" (2 Kings. xviii. 17), is used; semen is expressed by *shikbat zera* ' , "a layer of seed." For the act of generation there is no expression whatever in Hebrew: it is described by the following words only: *ba'al*, "he was master"; *shakab*, "he lay"; *laqah*, "he took"; *gillah 'ervah*, "he uncovered the nakedness." Be not misled by the word *yishgalennah* (Deut. xxviii. 30), to take it as denoting that act: this is not the case, for *shegal* denotes a female ready for cohabitation. Comp. "Upon thy right hand did stand the maiden" (*shegal*) "in gold of Ophir" (Ps. xlv. 10). *Yishgalennah*, according to the *Kethib*, denotes therefore "he will take the female for the purpose of cohabitation."

We have made in the greater part of this chapter a digression from the theme of this treatise, and introduced some moral and religious matter, although they do not entirely belong to the subject of this treatise, but the course of the discussion has led to it.

CHAPTER IX

THE corporeal element in man is a large screen and partition that prevents him from perfectly perceiving abstract ideals: this would be the case even if the corporeal element were as pure and superior as the substance of the spheres; how much more must this be the case with our dark and opaque body. However great the exertion of our mind may be to comprehend the Divine Being or any of the ideals, we find a screen and partition between Him

and ourselves. Thus the prophets frequently hint at the existence of a partition between God and us. They say He is concealed from us in vapours, in darkness, in mist, or in a thick cloud: or use similar figures to express that on account of our bodies we are unable to comprehend His essence. This is the meaning of the words, "Clouds and darkness are round about Him" (Ps. xcvi. 2). The prophets tell us that the difficulty consists in the grossness of our substance: they do not imply, as might be gathered from the literal meaning of their words, that God is corporeal, and is invisible because He is surrounded by thick clouds, vapours, darkness, or mist. This figure is also expressed in the passage, "He made darkness His secret place" (Ps. xviii. 12). The object of God revealing Himself in thick clouds, darkness, vapours, and mist was to teach this lesson; for every prophetic vision contains some lesson by means of allegory; that mighty vision, therefore, though the greatest of all visions, and above all comparison, viz., His revelation in a thick cloud, did not take place without any purpose, it was intended to indicate that we cannot comprehend Him on account of the dark body that surrounds us. It does not surround God, because He is incorporeal. A tradition is current among our people that the day of the revelation on Mount Sinai was misty, cloudy, and a little rainy. Comp. "Lord, when thou wentest forth from Seir, when thou marchest out of the field of Edom, the earth trembled, and the heavens dropped water" (Judges v. 4). The same idea is expressed by the words "darkness, clouds, and thick darkness" (Deut. iv. 11). The phrase does not denote that darkness surrounds God, for with Him there is no darkness, but the great, strong, and permanent light, which, emanating from Him, illuminates all darkness, as is expressed by the prophetic simile, "And the earth shined with His glory" (Ezek. xliii. 2).

CHAPTER X

THE Mutakallemim, as I have already told you, apply the term non-existence only to absolute non-existence, and not to the absence of properties. A property and the absence of that property are considered by them as two opposites, they treat, e.g., blindness and sight, death and life, in the same way as heat and cold. Therefore they say, without any qualification, nonexistence does not require any agent, an agent is required when something is produced. From a certain point of view this is correct. Although they hold that non-existence does not require an agent, they say in accordance with their principle that God causes blindness and deafness, and gives rest to anything that moves, for they consider these negative conditions as positive properties. We must now state our opinion in accordance with the results of philosophical research. You know that he who removes the obstacle of motion is to some extent the cause of the motion, e.g., if one removes the pillar which supports the beam he causes the beam to move, as has been stated by Aristotle in his *Physics* (VIII., chap. iv.); in this sense we say of him who removed a certain property that he produced the absence of that property, although absence of a property is nothing positive. Just as we say of him who puts out the light at night that he has produced darkness, so we say of him who destroyed the sight of any being that he produced blindness, although darkness and blindness are negative properties, and require no agent.

[paragraph continues] In accordance with this view we explain the following passage of Isaiah: "I form the light and create (bore) darkness: I make peace, and create (*bore*) evil" (Isa. xlv. 7), for darkness and evil are non-existing things. Consider that the prophet does not say, I make (*'oseh*) darkness, I make (*'oseh*) evil, because darkness and evil are not things in positive existence to which the verb "to make" would apply; the verb *bara* "he created" is used, because in Hebrew this verb is applied to non-existing things e.g., "In the beginning God created" (*bara*), etc.; here the creation took place from nothing. Only in this sense can non-existence be said to be produced by a certain action of an agent. In the same way we must explain the following passage: "Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or the deaf, or the seeing," etc. (Exod. iv. 11). The passage can also be explained as follows: Who has made man able to speak? or can create him without the capacity of speaking, i.e., create a substance that is incapable of acquiring this property? for he who produces a substance that cannot acquire a certain property may be called the producer of that privation. Thus we say, if any one abstains from delivering a fellow-man from death, although he is able to do so, that he killed him. It is now clear that according to an these different views the action of an agent cannot be directly connected with a thing that does not exist: only indirectly is non-existence described as the result of the action of an agent, whilst in a direct manner an action can only influence a thing really in existence; accordingly, whoever the agent may be, he can only act upon an existing thing.

After this explanation you must recall to memory that, as has been proved, the [so-called] evils are evils only in relation to a certain thing, and that which is evil in reference to a certain existing thing, either includes the nonexistence of that thing or the non-existence of some of its good conditions. The proposition has therefore been laid down in the most general terms, "All evils are negations." Thus for man death is evil: death is his non-existence. Illness, poverty, and ignorance are evils for man: all these are privations of properties. If you examine all single cases to which this general proposition applies, you will find that there is not one case in which the proposition is wrong except in the opinion of those who do not make any distinction between negative and positive properties, or between two opposites, or do not know the nature of things,--who, e.g., do not know that health in general denotes a certain equilibrium, and is a relative term. The absence of that relation is illness in general, and death is the absence of life in the case of any animal. The destruction of other things; is likewise nothing but the absence of their form.

After these propositions, it must be admitted as a fact that it cannot be said of God that He directly creates evil, or He has the direct intention to produce evil: this is impossible. His works are all perfectly good. He only produces existence, and all existence is good: whilst evils are of a negative character, and cannot be acted upon. Evil can only be attributed to Him in the way we have mentioned. He creates evil only in so far as He produces the corporeal element such as it actually is: it is always connected with negatives, and is on that account the source of all destruction and all evil. Those beings that do not possess this corporeal element are not subject to destruction or evil: consequently the true work of God is all good, since it

is existence. The book which enlightened the darkness of the world says therefore, "And God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good" (Gen. i. 31). Even the existence of this corporeal element, low as it in reality is, because it is the source of death and all evils, is likewise good for the permanence of the Universe and the continuation of the order of things, so that one thing departs and the other succeeds. Rabbi Meir therefore explains the words "and behold it was very good" (*tob me'od*); that even death was good in accordance with what we have observed in this chapter. Remember what I said in this chapter, consider it, and you will understand all that the prophets and our Sages remarked about the perfect goodness of all the direct works of God. In *Bereshit Rabba* (chap. i.) the same idea is expressed thus: "No evil comes down from above."

CHAPTER XI

ALL the great evils which men cause to each other because of certain intentions, desires, opinions, or religious principles, are likewise due to non-existence, because they originate in ignorance, which is absence of wisdom. A blind man, for example, who has no guide, stumbles constantly, because he cannot see, and causes injury and harm to himself and others. In the same manner various classes of men, each man in proportion to his ignorance, bring great evils upon themselves and upon other individual members of the species. If men possessed wisdom, which stands in the same relation to the form of man as the sight to the eye, they would not cause any injury to themselves or to others: for the knowledge of truth removes hatred and quarrels, and prevents mutual injuries. This state of society is promised to us by the prophet in the words: "And the wolf shall dwell with the lamb," etc.; "and the cow and the bear shall feed together," etc.; and "the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp," etc. (Isa. xi. 6 *seq.*). The prophet also points out what will be the cause of this change: for he says that hatred, quarrel, and fighting will come to an end, because men will then have a true knowledge of God. "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (*ibid.* ver. 9). Note it.

CHAPTER XII

MEN frequently think that the evils in the world are more numerous than the good things; many sayings and songs of the nations dwell on this idea. They say that a good thing is found only exceptionally, whilst evil things are numerous and lasting. Not only common people make this mistake, but even many who believe that they are wise. Al-Razi wrote a well-known book *On Metaphysics* [or Theology]. Among other mad and foolish things, it contains also the idea, discovered by him, that there exists more evil than good. For if the happiness of man and his pleasure in the times of prosperity be compared with the mishaps that befall him,--such as grief, acute pain, defects, paralysis of the limbs, fears, anxieties, and troubles,--it would seem as if the

existence of man is a punishment and a great evil for him. This author commenced to verify his opinion by counting all the evils one by one; by

p. 268

this means he opposed those who hold the correct view of the benefits bestowed by God and His evident kindness, viz., that God is perfect goodness, and that all that comes from Him is absolutely good. The origin of the error is to be found in the circumstance that this ignorant man, and his party among the common people, judge the whole universe by examining one single person. For an ignorant man believes that the whole universe only exists for him; as if nothing else required any consideration. If, therefore, anything happens to him contrary to his expectation, he at once concludes that the whole universe is evil. If, however, he would take into consideration the whole universe, form an idea of it, and comprehend what a small portion he is of the Universe, he will find the truth. For it is clear that persons who have fallen into this widespread error as regards the multitude of evils in the world, do not find the evils among the angels, the spheres and stars, the elements, and that which is formed of them, viz., minerals and plants, or in the various species of living beings, but only in some individual instances of mankind. They wonder that a person, who became leprous in consequence of bad food, should be afflicted with so great an illness and suffer such a misfortune; or that he who indulges so much in sensuality as to weaken his sight, should be struck With blindness! and the like. What we have, in truth, to consider is this:--The whole mankind at present in existence, and *a fortiori*, every other species of animals, form an infinitesimal portion of the permanent universe. Comp. "Man is like to vanity" (Ps. cxliv. 4); "How much less man, that is a worm; and the son of man, which is a worm" (Job xxv. 6); "How much less in them who dwell in houses of clay" (*ibid.* iv. 19); "Behold, the nations are as a drop of the bucket" (Isa. xl. 15). There are many other passages in the books of the prophets expressing the same idea. It is of great advantage that man should know his station, and not erroneously imagine that the whole universe exists only for him. We hold that the universe exists because the Creator wills it so; that mankind is low in rank as compared with the uppermost portion of the universe, viz., with the spheres and the stars: but, as regards the angels, there cannot be any real comparison between man and angels, although man is the highest of all beings on earth; i.e., of all beings formed of the four elements. Man's existence is nevertheless a great boon to him, and his distinction and perfection is a divine gift. The numerous evils to which individual persons are exposed are due to the defects existing in the persons themselves. We complain and seek relief from our own faults: we suffer from the evils which we, by our own free will, inflict on ourselves and ascribe them to God, who is far from being connected with them! Comp. "Is destruction his [work]? No. Ye [who call yourselves] wrongly his sons, you who are a perverse and crooked generation" (Deut. xxxii. 5). This is explained by Solomon, who says, "The foolishness of man perverteth his way, and his heart fretteth against the Lord" (Prov. xix. 3).

I explain this theory in the following manner. The evils that befall an are of three kinds:--

(1) The first kind of evil is that which is caused to man by the circumstance that he is subject to genesis and destruction, or that he possesses a body. It is on account of the body that some persons happen to have great deformities or paralysis of some of the organs. This evil may be part of the natural constitution

p. 269

of these persons, or may have developed subsequently in consequence of changes in the elements, e.g., through bad air, or thunderstorms or landslips. We have already shown that, in accordance with the divine wisdom, genesis can only take place through destruction, and without the destruction of the individual members of the species the species themselves would not exist permanently. Thus the true kindness, and beneficence, and goodness of God is clear. He who thinks that he can have flesh and bones without being subject to any external influence, or any of the accidents of matter, unconsciously wishes to reconcile two opposites, viz., to be at the same time subject and not subject to change. If man were never subject to change there could be no generation: there would be one single being, but no individuals forming a species. Galen, in the third section of his book, *The Use of the Limbs*, says correctly that it would be in vain to expect to see living beings formed of the blood of menstruous women and the semen virile, who will not die, will never feel pain, or will move perpetually, or will shine like the sun. This dictum of Galen is part of the following more general proposition:--Whatever is formed of any matter receives the most perfect form possible in that species of matter: in each individual case the defects are in accordance with the defects of that individual matter. The best and most perfect being that can be formed of the blood and the semen is the species of man, for as far as man's nature is known, he is living, reasonable, and mortal. It is therefore impossible that man should be free from this species of evil. You will, nevertheless, find that the evils of the above kind which befall man are very few and rare: for you find countries that have not been flooded or burned for thousands of years: there are thousands of men in perfect health, deformed individuals are a strange and exceptional occurrence, or say few in number if you object to the term exceptional,--they are not one-hundredth, not even one-thousandth part of those that are perfectly normal.

(2) The second class of evils comprises such evils as people cause to each other, when, e.g., some of them use their strength against others. These evils are more numerous than those of the first kind: their causes are numerous and known; they likewise originate in ourselves, though the sufferer himself cannot avert them. This kind of evil is nevertheless not widespread in any country of the whole world. It is of rare occurrence that a man plans to kill his neighbour or to rob him of his property by night. Many persons are, however, afflicted with this kind of evil in great wars: but these are not frequent, if the whole inhabited part of the earth is taken into consideration.

(3) The third class of evils comprises those which every one causes to himself by his own action. This is the largest class, and is far more numerous than the second class. It is especially of these

evils that all men complain, only few men are found that do not sin against themselves by this kind of evil. Those that are afflicted with it are therefore justly blamed in the words of the prophet, "This hath been by your means" (Mal. i. 9); the same is expressed in the following passage, "He that doeth it destroyeth his own soul" (Prov. vi. 32). In reference to this kind of evil, Solomon says, "The foolishness of man perverteth his way" (*ibid.* xix. 3). In the following passage he explains also that this kind of evil is man's own work, "Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright, but they have thought out many inventions" (Eccles. vii. 29), and these inventions bring the

p. 270

evils upon him. The same subject is referred to in Job (v. 6), "For affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground." These words are immediately followed by the explanation that man himself is the author of this class of evils, "But man is born unto trouble." This class of evils originates in man's vices, such as excessive desire for eating, drinking, and love; indulgence in these things in undue measure, or in improper manner, or partaking of bad food. This course brings diseases and afflictions upon body and soul alike. The sufferings of the body in consequence of these evils are well known; those of the soul are twofold:--First, such evils of the soul as are the necessary consequence of changes in the body, in so far as the soul is a force residing in the body; it has therefore been said that the properties of the soul depend on the condition of the body. Secondly, the soul, when accustomed to superfluous things, acquires a strong habit of desiring things which are neither necessary for the preservation of the individual nor for that of the species. This desire is without a limit, whilst things which are necessary are few in number and restricted within certain limits; but what is superfluous is without end--e.g., you desire to have your vessels of silver, but golden vessels are still better: others have even vessels of sapphire, or perhaps they can be made of emerald or rubies, or any other substance that could be suggested, Those who are ignorant and perverse in their thought are constantly in trouble and pain, because they cannot get as much of superfluous things as a certain other person possesses. They as a rule expose themselves to great dangers, e.g., by sea-voyage, or service of kings, and all this for the purpose of obtaining that which is superfluous and not necessary. When they thus meet with the consequences of the course which they adopt, they complain of the decrees and judgments of God; they begin to blame the time, and wonder at the want of justice in its changes; that it has not enabled them to acquire great riches, with which they could buy large quantities of wine for the purpose of making themselves drunk, and numerous concubines adorned with various kind of ornaments of gold, embroidery, and jewels, for the purpose of driving themselves to voluptuousness beyond their capacities, as if the whole Universe existed exclusively for the purpose of giving pleasure to these low people. The error of the ignorant goes so far as to say that God's power is insufficient, because He has given to this Universe the properties which they imagine cause these great evils, and which do not help all evil-disposed persons to obtain the evil which they seek, and to bring their evil souls to the aim of their desires, though these, as we have shown, are really without limit. The virtuous

and wise, however, see and comprehend the wisdom of God displayed in the Universe. Thus David says, "All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto such as keep His covenant and His testimonies" (Ps. xxv. 10). For those who observe the nature of the Universe and the commandments of the Law, and know their purpose, see clearly God's mercy and truth in everything; they seek, therefore, that which the Creator intended to be the aim of man, viz., comprehension. Forced by the claims of the body, they seek also that which is necessary for the preservation of the body, "bread to eat and garment to clothe," and this is very little; but they seek nothing superfluous: with very slight exertion man can obtain it, so long as he is contented with that which is indispensable. All the difficulties

p. 271

and troubles we meet in this respect are due to the desire for superfluous things: when we seek unnecessary things, we have difficulty even in finding that which is indispensable. For the more we desire to have that which is superfluous, the more we meet with difficulties; our strength and possessions are spent in unnecessary things, and are wanting when required for that which is necessary. Observe how Nature proves the correctness of this assertion. The more necessary a thing is for living beings, the more easily it is found and the cheaper it is; the less necessary it is, the rarer and clearer it is. E.g., air, water, and food are indispensable to man: air is most necessary, for if man is without air a short time he dies; whilst he can be without water a day or two. Air is also undoubtedly found more easily and cheaper [than water]. Water is more necessary than food; for some people can be four or five days without food, provided they have water; water also exists in every country in larger quantities than food, and is also cheaper. The same proportion can be noticed in the different kinds of food; that which is more necessary in a certain place exists there in larger quantities and is cheaper than that which is less necessary. No intelligent person, I think, considers musk, amber, rubies, and emerald as very necessary for man except as medicines: and they, as well as other like substances, can be replaced for this purpose by herbs and minerals. This shows the kindness of God to His creatures, even to us weak beings. His righteousness and justice as regards all animals are well known; for in the transient world there is among the various kinds of animals no individual being distinguished from the rest of the same species by a peculiar property or an additional limb. On the contrary, all physical, psychical, and vital forces and organs that are possessed by one individual are found also in the other individuals. If any one is somehow different it is by accident, in consequence of some exception, and not by a natural property; it is also a rare occurrence. There is no difference between individuals of a species in the due course of Nature; the difference originates in the various dispositions of their substances. This is the necessary consequence of the nature of the substance of that species: the nature of the species is not more favourable to one individual than to the other. It is no wrong or injustice that one has many bags of finest myrrh and garments embroidered with gold, while another has not those things, which are not necessary for our maintenance; he who has them has not thereby obtained control over anything that could be an essential addition to his nature, but has only obtained something illusory or deceptive. The other,

who does not possess that which is not wanted for his maintenance, does not miss anything indispensable: "He that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack: they gathered every man according to his eating" (Exod. xvi. 18). This is the rule at all times and in all places; no notice should be taken of exceptional cases, as we have explained.

In these two ways you will see the mercy of God toward His creatures, how He has provided that which is required, in proper proportions, and treated all individual beings of the same species with perfect equality. In accordance with this correct reflection the chief of the wise men says, "All his ways are judgment" (Deut. xxxii. 4); David likewise says: "All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth" (Ps. xxv. 10); he also says expressly "The Lord is good to all; and his tender mercies are over all his works"

p. 272

[paragraph continues] (*ibid.* cxlv. 9); for it is an act of great and perfect goodness that He gave us existence: and the creation of the controlling faculty in animals is a proof of His mercy towards them, as has been shown by us.

CHAPTER XIII

INTELLIGENT persons are much perplexed when they inquire into the purpose of the Creation. I will now show how absurd this question is, according to each one of the different theories [above-mentioned]. An agent that acts with intention must have a certain ulterior object in that which he performs. This is evident, and no philosophical proof is required. It is likewise evident that that which is produced with intention has passed over from non-existence to existence. It is further evident, and generally agreed upon, that the being which has absolute existence, which has never been and will never be without existence, is not in need of an agent. We have explained this before. The question, "What is the purpose thereof?" cannot be asked about anything which is not the product of an agent; therefore we cannot ask what is the purpose of the existence of God. He has not been created. According to these propositions it is clear that the purpose is sought for everything produced intentionally by an intelligent cause; that is to say, a final cause must exist for everything that owes its existence to an intelligent being: but for that which is Without a beginning, a final cause need not be sought, as has been stated by us. After this explanation you will understand that there is no occasion to seek the final cause of the whole Universe, neither according to our theory of the Creation, nor according to the theory of Aristotle, who assumes the Eternity of the Universe. For according to Aristotle, who holds that the Universe has not had a beginning, an ultimate final cause cannot be sought even for the various parts of the Universe. Thus it cannot be asked, according to his opinion, What is the final cause of the existence of the heavens? Why are they limited by this measure or by that number? Why is matter of this description? What is the purpose of the existence of this species of animals or plants? Aristotle considers all this as the result of a permanent order of things. Natural Philosophy investigates into the object of everything in Nature, but it does not treat of the

ultimate final cause, of which we speak in this chapter. It is a recognized fact in Natural Philosophy that everything in Nature has its object, or its final cause, which is the most important of the four causes, though it is not easily recognized in most species. Aristotle repeatedly says that Nature produces nothing in vain, for every natural action has a certain object. Thus, Aristotle says that plants exist for animals; and similarly he shows of other parts of the Universe for what purpose they exist. This is still more obvious in the case of the organs of animals. The existence of such a final cause in the various parts of Nature has compelled philosophers to assume the existence of a primal cause apart from Nature; it is called by Aristotle the intellectual or divine cause, and this cause creates one thing for the purpose of another. Those who acknowledge the truth will accept as the best proof for the Creation the fact that everything in Nature serves a certain purpose, so that one thing exists for the benefit of another; this fact is supported by numerous instances, and shows that there is design in Nature; but the existence of

p. 273

design in Nature cannot be imagined unless it be assumed that Nature has been produced.

I will now return to the subject of this chapter, viz., the final cause. Aristotle has already explained that in Nature the efficient cause of a thing, its form, and its final cause are identical: that is to say, they are one thing in relation to the whole species. E.g., the form of Zeid produces the form of his son Amr; its action consists in imparting the form of the whole species [of man] to the substance of Amr, and the final cause is Amr's possession of human form. The same argument is applied by Aristotle to every individual member of a class of natural objects which is brought to existence by another individual member. The three causes coincide in all such cases. All this refers only to the immediate purpose of a thing; but the existence of an ultimate purpose in every species, which is considered as absolutely necessary by every one who investigates into the nature of things, is very difficult to discover: and still more difficult is it to find the purpose of the whole Universe. I infer from the words of Aristotle that according to his opinion the ultimate purpose of the genera is the preservation of the course of genesis and destruction: and this course is absolutely necessary (in the first instance) for the successive formation of material objects, because individual beings formed of matter are not permanent; [secondly], for the production of the best and the most perfect beings that can be formed of matter, because the ultimate purpose [in these productions] is to arrive at perfection. Now it is clear that man is the most perfect being formed of matter; he is the last and most perfect of earthly beings, and in this respect it can truly be said that all earthly things exist for man, i.e., that the changes which things undergo serve to produce the most perfect being that can be produced. Aristotle, who assumes the Eternity of the Universe, need therefore not ask to what purpose does man exist, for the immediate purpose of each individual being is, according to his opinion, the perfection of its specific form. Every individual thing arrives at its perfection fully and completely when the actions that produce its form are complete. The ultimate purpose of the species is the perpetuation of this form by the repeated succession of genesis and destruction, so that there might always be a being capable of the greatest possible perfection. It seems therefore clear that,

according to Aristotle, who assumes the Eternity of the Universe, there is no occasion for the question what is the object of the existence of the Universe. But of those who accept our theory that the whole Universe has been created from nothing, some hold that the inquiry after the purpose of the Creation is necessary, and assume that the Universe was only created for the sake of man's existence, that he might serve God. Everything that is done they believe is done for man's sake; even the spheres move only for his benefit, in order that his wants might be supplied. The literal meaning of some passages in the books of the prophets greatly support this idea. Comp. "He formed it (viz., the earth) to be inhabited" (Isa. xlv. 18); "If my covenant of day and night were not," etc. (Jer. xxxiii. 25); "And spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in" (Isa. xl. 22). If the sphere existed for the sake of man, how much more must this be the case with all other living beings and the plants. On examining this opinion as intelligent persons ought to examine all different opinions, we shall discover the errors it includes. Those who hold this view, namely,

p. 274

that the existence of man is the object of the whole creation, may be asked whether God could have created man without those previous creations, or whether man could only have come into existence after the creation of all other things. If they answer in the affirmative, that man could have been created even if, e.g., the heavens did not exist, they will be asked what is the object of all these things, since they do not exist for their own sake but for the sake of something that could exist without them? Even if the Universe existed for man's sake and man existed for the purpose of serving God, as has been mentioned, the question remains, What is the end of serving God? He does not become more perfect if all His creatures serve Him and comprehend Him as far as possible; nor would He lose anything if nothing existed beside Him. It might perhaps be replied that the service of God is not intended for God's perfection; it is intended for our own perfection,—it is good for us, it makes us perfect. But then the question might be repeated, What is the object of our being perfect? We must in continuing the inquiry as to the purpose of the creation at last arrive at the answer, It was the Will of God, or His Wisdom decreed it; and this is the correct answer. The wise men in Israel have, therefore, introduced in our prayers (for Ne'ilah of the Day of Atonement) the following passage:—"Thou hast distinguished man from the beginning, and chosen him to stand before Thee; who can say unto Thee, What dost Thou? And if he be righteous, what does he give Thee?" They have thus clearly stated that it was not a final cause that determined the existence of all things, but only His will. This being the case, we who believe in the Creation must admit that God could have created the Universe in a different manner as regards the causes and effects contained in it, and this would lead to the absurd conclusion that everything except man existed without any purpose, as the principal object, man, could have been brought into existence without the rest of the creation. I consider therefore the following opinion as most correct according to the teaching of the Bible, and best in accordance with the results of philosophy; namely, that the Universe does not exist for man's sake, but that each being exists for its own sake, and not because of some other thing. Thus we believe in the Creation, and yet need not inquire what purpose is served by each species of the existing things,

because we assume that God created all parts of the Universe by His will; some for their own sake, and some for the sake of other beings, that include their own purpose in themselves. In the same manner as it was the will of God that man should exist, so it was His will that the heavens with their stars should exist, that there should be angels, and each of these beings is itself the purpose of its own existence. When anything can only exist provided some other thing has previously existed, God has caused the latter to precede it; as, e.g., sensation precedes comprehension. We meet also with this view in Scripture "The Lord hath made everything (*la-ma'anehu*) for its purpose (Prov. xvi. 4). It is possible that the pronoun in *la-ma'anehu* refers to the object; but it can also be considered as agreeing with the subject; in which case the meaning of the word is, for the sake of Himself, or His will which is identical with His self [or essence], as has been shown in this treatise. We have also pointed out that His essence is also called His glory. The words, "The Lord hath made everything for Himself, "express therefore the

p. 275

same idea as the following verse, "Everything that is called by my name: I have created it for my glory, I have formed it; yea, I have made it" (Isa. xliii. 7); that is to say, everything that is described as My work has been made by Me for the sake of My will and for no other purpose. The words, "I have formed it," "I have made it," express exactly what I pointed out to you, that there are things whose existence is only possible after certain other things have come into existence. To these reference is made in the text, as if to say, I have formed the first thing which must have preceded the other things, e.g., matter has been formed before the production of material beings; I have then made out of that previous creation, or after it, what I intended to produce, and there was nothing but My will. Study the book which leads all who want to be led to the truth, and is therefore called Torah (Law or Instruction), from the beginning of the account of the Creation to its end, and you will comprehend the opinion which we attempt to expound. For no part of the creation is described as being in existence for the sake of another part, but each part is declared to be the product of God's will, and to satisfy by its existence the intention [of the Creator]. This is expressed by the phrase, "And God saw that it was good" (Gen. i. 4, etc.). You know our interpretation of the saying of our Sages, "Scripture speaks the same language as is spoken by man." But we call "good" that which is in accordance with the object we seek. When therefore Scripture relates in reference to the whole creation (Gen. i. 31), "And God saw all that He had made, and behold it was exceedingly good," it declares thereby that everything created was well fitted for its object, and would never cease to act, and never be annihilated. This is especially pointed out by the word "exceedingly"; for sometimes a thing is temporarily good; it serves its purpose, and then it fails and ceases to act. But as regards the Creation it is said that everything was fit for its purpose, and able continually to act accordingly. You must not be misled by what is stated of the stars [that God put them in the firmament of the heavens] to give light upon the earth, and to rule by day and by night. You might perhaps think that here the purpose of their creation is described. This is not the case; we are only informed of the nature of the stars, which God desired to create with such properties that they should be able to give light

and to rule. In a similar manner we must understand the passage, "And have dominion over the fish of the sea" (ibid. i. 28). Here it is not meant to say that man was created for this purpose, but only that this was the nature which God gave man. But as to the statement in Scripture that God gave the plants to man and other living beings, it agrees with the opinion of Aristotle and other philosophers. It is also reasonable to assume that the plants exist only for the benefit of the animals, since the latter cannot live without food. It is different with the stars, they do not exist only for our sake, that we should enjoy their good influence; for the expressions "to give light" and "to rule" merely describe, as we have stated above, the benefit which the creatures on earth derive from them. I have already explained to you the character of that influence that causes continually the good to descend from one being to another. To those who receive the good flowing down upon them, it may appear as if the being existed for them alone that sends forth its goodness and kindness unto them. Thus some citizen may imagine that it was for

p. 276

the purpose of protecting his house by night from thieves that the king was chosen. To some extent this is correct: for when his house is protected, and he has derived this benefit through the king whom the country had chosen, it appears as if it were the object of the king to protect the house of that man. In this manner we must explain every verse, the literal meaning of which would imply that something superior was created for the sake of something inferior, viz., that it is part of the nature of the superior thing [to influence the inferior in a certain manner]. We remain firm in our belief that the whole Universe was created in accordance with the will of God, and we do not inquire for any other cause or object. just as we do not ask what is the purpose of God's existence, so we do not ask what was the object of His will, which is the cause of the existence of all things with their present properties, both those that have been created and those that will be created.

You must not be mistaken and think that the spheres and the angels were created for our sake. Our position has already been pointed out to us, "Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket" (Isa. xl. 15). Now compare your own essence with that of the spheres, the stars, and the Intelligences, and you will comprehend the truth, and understand that man is superior to everything formed of earthly matter, but not to other beings; he is found exceedingly inferior when his existence is compared with that of the spheres, and *a fortiori* when compared with that of the Intelligences. Comp. "Behold, he putteth no trust in his servants: and his messengers he charged with folly: how much less in them that dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, which are crushed before the moth?" (Job iv. 18, 19). The expression "his servants," occurring in this passage, does not denote human beings; this may be inferred from the words, "How much less in them that dwell in houses of clay?" The "servants" referred to in this place are the angels; whilst by the term "his messengers" the spheres are undoubtedly meant. Eliphaz himself, who uttered the above words, explains this [in the second speech] when he refers to it in one of his replies in other words, saying, "Behold, he putteth no trust in his holy ones; yea, the heavens are not clean in his sight, how much more abominable and filthy is man, who drinketh

iniquity like water" (*ibid.* xv. 15, 16). He thus shows that "his servants" and "his holy ones" are identical, and that they are not human beings; also that" his messengers, "mentioned in the first passage, are the same as "the heavens." The term "folly" is explained by the phrase "they are not clean in his sight, "i.e., they are material; although their substance is the purest and the most luminous, compared with the Intelligences it appears dark, turbid, and impure. The phrase, "Behold, he putteth no trust in his servants," is employed in reference to the angels, indicating that these do not possess perpetual existence, since, as we believe, they have had a beginning; and even according to those who assume the Eternity of the Universe, the existence of the angels is at all events dependent on and therefore inferior to, the absolute existence of God. The words, "How much more abominable and filthy is man," in the one passage, correspond to the phrase "How much less in those who dwell in houses of clay" in the other passage. Their meaning is this: How much less in man who is abominable and filthy, in whose person crookedness or corporeality is mixed up and spread through all his parts. "Iniquity" (*'avlah*) is identical with

p. 277

[paragraph continues] "crookedness," as may be inferred from the passage, "In the land of uprightness he will act with iniquity" (Isa. xxvi. 10), and *ish*, "man," is here used in the same sense as *adam*, "human being"; for "man" in a general sense is sometimes expressed in Scripture by *ish*. Comp. "He who smiteth a man (*ish*) and he die" (Exod. xxi. 12).

This must be our belief when we have a correct knowledge of our own self, and comprehend the true nature of everything; we must be content, and not trouble our mind with seeking a certain final cause for things that have none, or have no other final cause but their own existence, which depends on the Will of God, or, if you prefer, on the Divine Wisdom.

CHAPTER XIV

IN order to obtain a correct estimate of ourselves, we must reflect on the results of the investigations which have been made into the dimensions and the distances of the spheres and the stars. The distances are clearly stated in radii of the earth, and are well known, since the circumference and the radius of the earth are known. It has been proved that the distance between the centre of the earth and the outer surface of the sphere of Saturn is a journey of nearly eight thousand seven hundred solar years. Suppose a day's journey to be forty legal miles of two thousand ordinary cubits, and consider the great and enormous distance! or in the words of Scripture, "Is not God in the height of heaven? and behold the height of the stars, how high they are!" (Job xxii. 12); that is to say, learn from the height of the heavens how far we are from comprehending God, for there is an enormous distance between ourselves and these corporeal objects, and the latter are greatly distinguished from us by their position, and hidden from us as regards their essence and most of their actions. How much more incomprehensible therefore is their Maker, who is incorporeal! The great distance which has been proved is, in fact, the least that can be assumed. The distance between the centre of the earth and the surface of the sphere of

the fixed stars can by no means be less, but it may possibly be many times as great: for the measure of the thickness of the body of the spheres has not been proved, and the least possible has been assumed, as appears from the treatises *On the Distances*. The same is the case with the substances which are between every two spheres. According to logical inference, as has been mentioned by Thabit, the thickness of these substances cannot be accurately stated, since they do not contain any star, which might serve as a means of obtaining it. As to the thickness of the sphere of the fixed stars, it is at least four years' journey, as may be inferred from the measure of the stars contained in the sphere. The body of each of these stars is more than ninety times as big as the globe of the earth, and it is possible that the thickness of the sphere is still greater. Of the ninth sphere, that causes the daily revolution of the whole system of spheres, we do not know the dimensions; it contains no stars, and therefore we have no means of finding out its magnitude. Now consider the enormous dimensions and the large number of these material beings. If the whole earth is infinitely small in comparison with the sphere of the stars, what is man compared with all these created beings! How, then, could any one of us imagine that these things exist for his sake

p. 278

and benefit, and that they are his tools! This is the result of an examination of the corporeal beings: how much more so will this be the result of an examination into the nature of the Intelligences!

The following question may be asked against the opinion of philosophers on this subject: There is no doubt that from a philosophical point of view it would be a mistake to assume that the spheres exist for the purpose of regulating the fate of one individual person or community; but it is not absurd to think that they serve to regulate the affairs of mankind, since these mighty individual beings would serve to give existence to the individual members of the species, the number of which, according to the philosophers, will never come to an end. We can best illustrate this by the following simile: An artisan makes iron tools of a hundred-weight for the purpose of making a small needle of the weight of a grain. If only one needle had to be produced, we admit that it would certainly be bad management, though it would not be entirely a failure: but if with those enormous tools needle after needle is produced, even many hundred-weights of needles, the preparation of those tools would be a wise act and excellent management. In a similar manner the object of the spheres may be the continuance of successive genesis and destruction; and the succession of genesis and destruction serves, as has already been said, to give existence to mankind. This idea is supported by Biblical texts and sayings [of our Sages]. The philosopher replies thus: If the difference between the heavenly bodies and the transient individual members of the species consisted in their different sizes, this opinion could be maintained: but as the difference consists in their essence, it remains improbable that the superior beings should be the means of giving existence to the lower ones. In short, this question supports our belief in the Creation; and this is the principal object of this chapter. [It serves] besides [a second purpose]. I frequently hear from those who know something about astronomy, that our

Sages exaggerated the distances [of the heavenly bodies] when they said that the thickness of each sphere is five hundred years' journey; the distance of the seven spheres from each other five hundred years' journey, so that the distance of the outer surface of the seventh sphere from the centre of the earth is seven thousand years' journey. Those who hear such statements consider them [at first thought] as exaggeration, and believe that the distance is not so great. But you may ascertain from the data proved in scientific treatises on the distances, that the centre of the earth is distant from the inner surface of the seventh sphere, that of Saturn, nearly seven thousand and twenty-four years' journey. The number eight thousand and seven hundred given by us, refers to the distance of the centre of the earth from the inner surface of the eighth sphere. The distance of the spheres from each other, mentioned by astronomers, is identical with the thickness of the substance that intervenes between one sphere and the other, and does not imply that there is a vacuum. You must, however, not expect that everything our Sages say respecting astronomical matters should agree with observation, for mathematics were not fully developed in those days: and their statements were not based on the authority of the Prophets, but on the knowledge which they either themselves possessed or derived from contemporary men of science. But I will not on that account denounce what they say correctly in accordance with real fact, as untrue or

p. 279

accidentally true. On the contrary, whenever the words of a person can be interpreted in such a manner that they agree with fully established facts, it is the duty of every educated and honest man to do so.

CHAPTER XV

THAT which is impossible has a permanent and constant property, which is not the result of some agent, and cannot in any way change, and consequently we do not ascribe to God the power of doing what is impossible. No thinking man denies the truth of this maxim; none ignore it, but such as have no idea of Logic. There is, however, a difference of opinion among philosophers with reference to the existence of any particular thing. Some of them consider its existence to be impossible, and hold that God cannot produce the thing in question, whilst others think that it is possible, and that God can create it if He pleases to do so. E.g., all philosophers consider that it is impossible for one substratum to have at the same moment two opposite properties, or for the elementary components of a thing, substance and accident, to interchange, so that the substance becomes accident, and the accident becomes substance, or for a material substance to be without accident. Likewise it is impossible that God should produce a being like Himself, or annihilate, corporify, or change Himself. The power of God is not assumed to extend to any of these impossibilities. But the existence of accidents independent of substance is possible according to one class of philosophers, the Mutazilah, whilst according to others it is impossible; it must, however, be added that those who admit the existence of an accident independent of substance, have not arrived at this conclusion by philosophical research alone: but it was mainly by the desire to defend certain religious principles, which speculation had

greatly shaken, that they had recourse to this theory. In a similar manner the creation of corporeal things, otherwise than from a substance, is possible according to our view, whilst the philosophers say that it is impossible. Again, whilst philosophers say that it is impossible to produce a square with a diagonal equal to one of the sides, or a solid angle that includes four right angles, or similar things, it is thought possible by some persons who are ignorant of mathematics, and who only know the words of these propositions, but have no idea of that which is expressed by them. I wonder whether this gate of research is open, so that all may freely enter, and whilst one imagines a thing and considers it possible, another is at liberty to assert that such a thing is impossible by its very nature; or whether the gate is closed and guarded by certain rules, so that we are able to decide with certainty whether a thing is physically impossible. I should also like to know, in the latter case, whether imagination or reason has to examine and test objects as to their being possible or not; likewise how things imagined, and things conceived intellectually, are to be distinguished from each other. For it occurs that we consider a thing as physically possible, and then some one objects, or we ourselves fear that our opinion is only the result of imagination, and not that of reason. In such a case it would be desirable to ascertain whether there exists some faculty to distinguish between imagination and intellect, [and if so,] whether this faculty is different from both, or whether it is part of the intellect itself to distinguish between intellectual and imaginary

p. 280

objects. All this requires investigation, but it does not belong to the theme of this chapter.

We have thus shown that according to each one of the different theories there are things which are impossible, whose existence cannot be admitted, and whose creation is excluded from the power of God, and the assumption that God does not change their nature does not imply weakness in God, or a limit to His power. Consequently things impossible remain impossible, and do not depend on the action of an agent. It is now clear that a difference of opinion exists only as to the question to which of the two classes a thing belongs; whether to the class of the impossible, or to that of the possible. Note it.

CHAPTER XVI

THE philosophers have uttered very perverse ideas as regards God's Omniscience of everything beside Himself; they have stumbled in such a manner that they cannot rise again, nor can those who adopt their views. I will further on tell you the doubts that led them to these perverse utterances on this question; and I will also tell you the opinion which is taught by our religion, and which differs from the evil and wrong principles of the philosophers as regards God's Omniscience.

The principal reason that first induced the philosophers to adopt their theory is this: at first thought we notice an absence of system in human affairs. Some pious men live a miserable and painful life, whilst some wicked people enjoy a happy and pleasant life. On this account the

philosophers assumed as possible the cases which you will now hear. They said that only one of two things is possible, either God is ignorant of the individual or particular things on earth, and does not perceive them, or He perceives and knows them. These are all the cases possible. They then continued thus: If He perceives and knows all individual things, one of the following three cases must take place: (1) God arranges and manages human affairs well, perfectly and faultlessly; (2) He is overcome by obstacles, and is too weak and powerless to manage human affairs; (3) He knows [all things] and can arrange and manage them, but leaves and abandons them, as too base, low, and vile, or from jealousy; as we may also notice among ourselves some who are able to make another person happy, well knowing what he wants for his happiness, and still in consequence of their evil disposition, their wickedness and jealousy against him, they do not help him to his happiness.--This is likewise a complete enumeration of all possible cases. For those who have a knowledge of a certain thing necessarily either (1) take care of the thing which they know, and manage it, or (2) neglect it (as we, e.g., neglect and forget the cats in our house, or things of less importance); or (3) while taking care of it, have not sufficient power and strength for its management, although they have the will to do so. Having enumerated these different cases, the philosophers emphatically decided that of the three cases possible [as regards the management of a thing] by one who knows that thing], two are inadmissible in reference to God viz., want of power, or absence of will; because they imply either evil disposition or weakness, neither of which can by any means be attributed to

p. 281

[paragraph continues] Him. Consequently there remains only the alternative that God is altogether ignorant of human affairs, or that He knows them and manages them well. Since we, however, notice that events do not follow a certain order, that they cannot be determined by analogy, and are not in accordance with what is wanted, we conclude that God has no knowledge of them in any way or for any reason. This is the argument which led the philosophers to speak such blasphemous words. In the treatise *On Providence*, by Alexander Aphrodisiensis, you will find the same as I have said about the different views of the philosophers, and as I have stated as to the source of their error.

You must notice with surprise that the evil into which these philosophers have fallen is greater than that from which they sought to escape, and that they ignore the very thing which they constantly pointed out and explained to us. They have fallen into a greater evil than that from which they sought to escape, because they refuse to say that God neglects or forgets a thing, and yet they maintain that His knowledge is imperfect, that He is ignorant of what is going on here on earth, that He does not perceive it. They also ignore, what they constantly point out to us, in as much as they judge the whole universe by that which befalls individual men, although, according to their own view, frequently stated and explained, the evils of man originate in himself, or form part of his material nature. We have already discussed this sufficiently. After having laid this foundation, which is the ruin of all good principles, and destroys the majesty of all true knowledge, they sought to remove the opprobrium by declaring that for many reasons it

is impossible that God should have a knowledge of earthly things, for the individual members of a species can only be perceived by the senses, and not by reason: but God does not perceive by means of any of the senses. Again, the individuals are infinite, but knowledge comprehends and circumscribes the object of its action, and the infinite cannot be comprehended or circumscribed: furthermore, knowledge of individual beings, that are subject to change, necessitates some change in him who possesses it, because this knowledge itself changes constantly. They have also raised the following two objections against those who hold, in accordance with the teaching of Scripture, that God knows things before they come into existence. First, this theory implies that there can be knowledge of a thing that does not exist at all; secondly, it leads to the conclusion that the knowledge of an object *in potentia* is identical with the knowledge of that same object in reality. They have indeed come to very evil conclusions, and some of them assumed that God only knows the species, not the individual beings, whilst others went as far as to contend that God knows nothing beside Himself, because they believe that God cannot have more than one knowledge.

Some of the great philosophers who lived before Aristotle agree with us, that God knows everything, and that nothing is hidden from Him. Alexander also refers to them in the above-mentioned treatise; he differs from them, and says that the principal objection against this theory is based on the fact that we clearly see evils befalling good men, and wicked men enjoying happiness.

In short, you see that if these philosophers would find human affairs managed according to rules laid down by the common people, they would not venture or presume to speak on this subject. They are only led to this

p. 282

speculation because they examine the affairs of the good and the wicked, and consider them as being contrary to all rule, and say in the words of the foolish in our nation, "The way of the Lord is not right" (Ezek. xxxiii. 17).

After having shown that knowledge and Providence are connected with each other, I will now proceed to expound the opinions of thinkers on Providence, and then I shall attempt to remove their doubts as to God's know-ledge of individual beings.

CHAPTER XVII

THERE are four different theories concerning Divine Providence; they are all ancient, known since the time of the Prophets, when the true Law was revealed to enlighten these dark regions.

First Theory.--There is no Providence at all for anything in the Universe; all parts of the Universe, the heavens and what they contain, owe their origin to accident and chance; there exists no being that rules and governs them or provides for them. This is the theory of Epicurus,

who assumes also that the Universe consists of atoms, that these have combined by chance, and have received their various forms by mere accident. There have been atheists among the Israelites who have expressed the same view; it is reported of them: "They have denied the Lord, and said he is not" (Jer. v. 12). Aristotle has proved the absurdity of the theory, that the whole Universe could have originated by chance; he has shown that, on the contrary, there is a being that rules and governs the Universe. We have already touched upon this subject in the present treatise.

Second Theory.--Whilst one part of the Universe owes its existence to Providence, and is under the control of a ruler and governor, another part is abandoned and left to chance. This is the view of Aristotle about Providence, and I will now explain to you his theory. He holds that God controls the spheres and what they contain: therefore the individual beings in the spheres remain permanently in the same form. Alexander has also expressed it in his writings that Divine Providence extends down to, and ends with, the sphere of the moon. This view results from his theory of the Eternity of the Universe; he believes that Providence is in accordance with the nature of the Universe: consequently in the case of the spheres with their contents, where each individual being has a permanent existence, Providence gives permanency and constancy. From the existence of the spheres other beings derive existence, which are constant in their species but not in their individuals: in the same manner it is said that Providence sends forth [from the spheres to the earth] sufficient influence to secure the immortality and constancy of the species, without securing at the same time permanence for the individual beings of the species. But the individual beings in each species have not been entirely abandoned, that portion of the *materia prima* which has been purified and refined, and has received the faculty of growth, is endowed with properties that enable it to exist a certain time, to attract what is useful and to repel what is useless. That portion of the *materia prima* which has been subject to a further development, and has received the faculty of sensation, is endowed with other properties for its protection and preservation; it has a new faculty of moving freely toward

p. 283

that which is conducive to, and away from that which is contrary to its well-being. Each individual being received besides such properties as are required for the preservation of the species to which it belongs. The portion of the *materia prima* which is still more refined, and is endowed with the intellectual faculty, possesses a special property by which each individual, according to the degree of his perfection, is enabled to manage, to calculate, and to discover what is conducive both to the temporary existence of the individual and to the preservation of the species. All other movements, however, which are made by the individual members of each species are due to accident; they are not, according to Aristotle, the result of rule and management; e.g., when a storm or gale blows, it causes undoubtedly some leaves of a tree to drop, breaks off some branches of another tree, tears away a stone from a heap of stones, raises dust over herbs and spoils them, and stirs up the sea so that a ship goes down with the whole or part of her contents. Aristotle sees no difference between the falling of a leaf or a stone and the

death of the good and noble people in the ship; nor does he distinguish between the destruction of a multitude of ants caused by an ox depositing on them his excrement and the death of worshippers killed by the fall of the house when its foundations give way; nor does he discriminate between the case of a cat killing a mouse that happens to come in her way, or that of a spider catching a fly, and that of a hungry lion meeting a prophet and tearing him. In short, the opinion of Aristotle is this: Everything is the result of management which is constant, which does not come to an end and does not change any of its properties, as e.g., the heavenly beings, and everything which continues according to a certain rule, and deviates from it only rarely and exceptionally, as is the case in objects of Nature. All these are the result of management, i.e., in a close relation to Divine Providence. But that which is not constant, and does not follow a certain rule, as e.g., incidents in the existence of the individual beings in each species of plants or animals, whether rational or irrational, is due to chance and not to management; it is in no relation to Divine Providence. Aristotle holds that it is even impossible to ascribe to Providence the management of these things. This view is closely connected with his theory of the Eternity, of the Universe, and with his opinion that everything different from the existing order of things in Nature is impossible. It is the belief of those who turned away from our Law, and said: "God hath forsaken the earth" (Ezek. ix. 9).

Third Theory.--This theory is the reverse of the second. According to this theory, there is nothing in the whole Universe, neither a class nor an individual being, that is due to chance; everything is the result of will, intention, and rule. It is a matter of course that he who rules must know [that which is under his control]. The Mohammedan Ashariyah adhere to this theory, notwithstanding evident absurdities implied in it; for they admit that Aristotle is correct in assuming one and the same cause [viz., the wind] for the fall of leaves [from the tree] and for the death of a man [drowned in the sea]. But they hold at the same time that the wind did not blow by chance; it is God that caused it to move; it is not therefore the wind that caused the leaves to fall; each leaf falls according to the Divine decree; it is God who caused it to fall at a certain time and in a certain place; it could not have fallen before or after that time or in another place, as this has previously

p. 284

been decreed. The Ashariyah were therefore compelled to assume that motion and rest of living beings are predestined, and that it is not in the power of man to do a certain thing or to leave it undone. The theory further implies a denial of possibility in these things: they can only be either necessary or impossible. The followers of this theory accepted also the last-mentioned proposition, and say, that we call certain things possible, as e.g., the facts that Zeid stands, and that Amr is coming; but they are only possible for us, whilst in their relation to God they cannot be called possible; they are either necessary or impossible. It follows also from this theory, that precepts are perfectly useless, since the people to whom any law is given are unable to do anything: they can neither do what they are commanded nor abstain from what they are forbidden. The supporters of this theory hold that it was the will of God to send prophets, to

command, to forbid, to promise, and to threaten, although we have no power [over our actions]. A duty would thus be imposed upon us which is impossible for us to carry out, and it is even possible that we may suffer punishment when obeying the command and receive reward when disobeying it. According to this theory, it must also be assumed that the actions of God have no final cause. All these absurdities are admitted by the Ashariyah for the purpose of saving this theory. When we see a person born blind or leprous, who could not have merited a punishment for previous sins, they say, It is the will of God; when a pious worshipper is tortured and slain, it is likewise the will of God; and no injustice can be asserted to Him for that, for according to their opinion it is proper that God should afflict the innocent and do good to the sinner. Their views on these matters are well known.

Fourth Theory.--Man has free will; it is therefore intelligible that the Law contains commands and prohibitions, with announcements of reward and punishment. All acts of God are due to wisdom; no injustice is found in Him, and He does not afflict the good. The Mu'tazila profess this theory, although they do not believe in man's absolute free will. They hold also that God takes notice of the falling of the leaf and the destruction of the ant, and that His Providence extends over all things. This theory likewise implies contradictions and absurdities. The absurdities are these: The fact that some persons are born with defects, although they have not sinned previously, is ascribed to the wisdom of God, it being better for those persons to be in such a condition than to be in a normal state, though we do not see why it is better; and they do not suffer thereby any punishment at all, but, on the contrary, enjoy God's goodness. In a similar manner the slaughter of the pious is explained as being for them the source of an increase of reward in future life. They go even further in their absurdities. We ask them why is God only just to man and not to other beings, and how has the irrational animal sinned, that it is condemned to be slaughtered? and they reply it is good for the animal, for it will receive reward for it in the world to come; also the flea and the louse will there receive compensation for their untimely death: the same reasoning they apply to the mouse torn by a cat or vulture; the wisdom of God decreed this for the mouse, in order to reward it after death for the mishap. I do not consider it proper to blame the followers of any of the [last named] three theories on Providence, for they have been driven to accept them by weighty considerations. Aristotle was

p. 285

guided by that which appears to be the nature of things. The Ashariyah refused to ascribe to God ignorance about anything, and to say that God whilst knowing one individual being or one portion of the Universe is ignorant of another portion; they preferred to admit the above-mentioned absurdities. The Mu'tazilites refused to assume that God does what is wrong and unjust; on the other hand, they would not contradict common sense and say that it was not wrong to inflict pain on the guiltless, or that the mission of the Prophets and the giving of the Law had no intelligible reason. They likewise preferred to admit the above-named absurdities. But they even contradicted themselves, because they believe on the one hand that God knows everything, and on the other that man has free will. By a little consideration we discover the contradiction.

Fifth Theory.--This is our theory, or that of our Law. I will show you [first] the view expressed on this subject in our prophetic books, and generally accepted by our Sages. I will then give the opinion of some later authors among us, and lastly, I will explain my own belief. The theory of man's perfectly free will is one of the fundamental principles of the Law of our Teacher Moses, and of those who follow the Law. According to this principle man does what is in his power to do, by his nature, his choice, and his will; and his action is not due to any faculty created for the purpose. All species of irrational animals likewise move by their own free will. This is the Will of God; that is to say, it is due to the eternal divine will that all living beings should move freely, and that man should have power to act according to his will or choice within the limits of his capacity. Against this principle we hear, thank God, no opposition on the part of our nation. Another fundamental principle taught by the Law of Moses is this: Wrong cannot be ascribed to God in any way whatever; all evils and afflictions as well as all kinds of happiness of man, whether they concern one individual person or a community, are distributed according to justice; they are the result of strict judgment that admits no wrong whatever. Even when a person suffers pain in consequence of a thorn having entered into his hand, although it is at once drawn out, it is a punishment that has been inflicted on him [for sin], and the least pleasure he enjoys is a reward [for some good action]; all this is meted out by strict justice; as is said in Scripture, "all his ways are judgment" (Deut. xxxii. 4); we are only ignorant of the working of that judgment.

The different theories are now fully explained to you; everything in the varying human affairs is due to chance, according to Aristotle, to the Divine Will alone according to the Ashariyah, to Divine Wisdom according to the Mu'tazilites, to the merits of man according to our opinion. It is therefore possible, according to the Ashariyah, that God inflicts pain on a good and pious man in this world, and keeps him for ever in fire, which is assumed to rage in the world to come, they simply say it is the Will of God. The Mu'tazilites would consider this as injustice, and therefore assume that every being, even an ant, that is stricken with pain [in this world], has compensation for it, as has been mentioned above; and it is due to God's Wisdom that a being is struck and afflicted in order to receive compensation. We, however, believe that all these human affairs are managed with justice; far be it from God to do wrong, to punish any one unless the punishment is necessary and merited. It is distinctly stated in the Law, that all is done in

p. 286

accordance with justice; and the words of our Sages generally express the same idea. They clearly say: "There is no death without sin, no sufferings without transgression." (B. T. Shabbath, 55a.) Again, "The deserts of an are meted out to him in the same measure which he himself employs." (Mish. Sotah, i. 7.) These are the words of the Mishnah. Our Sages declare it wherever opportunity is given, that the idea of God necessarily implies justice; that He will reward the most pious for all their pure and upright actions, although no direct commandment was given them through a prophet; and that He will punish all the evil deeds of men, although they have not been prohibited by a prophet, if common sense warns against them, as e.g., injustice and violence. Thus our Sages say: "God does not deprive any being of the full reward [of its good

deed]" (B. T. Pes. 118a) again, "He who says that God remits part of a punishment;, will be punished severely; He is long-suffering, but is sure to exact payment." (B. T. Baba K. 50a.) Another saying is this: "He who has received a commandment and acts accordingly is not like him who acts in the same manner without being commanded to do so" (B. T. Kidd. 31a); and it is distinctly added that he who does a good thing without being commanded, receives nevertheless his reward. The same principle is expressed in all sayings of our Sages. But they contain an additional doctrine which is not found in the Law; viz., the doctrine of "afflictions of love," as taught by some of our Sages. According to this doctrine it is possible that a person be afflicted without having previously committed any sin, in order that his future reward may be increased; a view which is held by the Mu'tazilites, but is not supported by any Scriptural text. Be not misled by the accounts of trials, such as "God tried Abraham" (Gen. xxii. 1); "He afflicted thee and made thee hungry," etc. (Deut. viii. 3); for you will hear more on this subject later on (chap. xxiv.). Our Law is only concerned with the relations of men; but the idea that irrational living beings should receive a reward, has never before been heard of in our nation: the wise men mentioned in the Talmud do not notice it; only some of the later Geonim were pleased with it when they heard it from the sect of the Mu'tazilites, and accepted it.

My opinion on this principle of Divine Providence I will now explain to you. In the principle which I now proceed to expound I do not rely on demonstrative proof, but on my conception of the spirit of the Divine Law, and the writings of the Prophets. The principle which I accept is far less open to objections, and is more reasonable than the opinions mentioned before. It is this: In the lower or sublunary portion of the Universe Divine Providence does not extend to the individual members of species except in the case of mankind. It is only in this species that the incidents in the existence of the individual beings, their good and evil fortunes, are the result of justice, in accordance with the words, "For all His ways are judgment." But I agree with Aristotle as regards all other living beings, and *à fortiori* as regards plants and all the rest of earthly creatures. For I do not believe that it is through the interference of Divine Providence that a certain leaf drops [from a tree], nor do I hold that when a certain spider catches a certain fly, that this is the direct result of a special decree and will of God in that moment; it is not by a particular Divine decree that the spittle of a certain person moved, fell on a certain gnat in a certain place, and killed it; nor is it by the

p. 287

direct will of God that a certain fish catches and swallows a certain worm on the surface of the water. In all these cases the action is, according to my opinion, entirely due to chance, as taught by Aristotle. Divine Providence is connected with Divine intellectual influence, and the same beings which are benefited by the latter so as to become intellectual, and to comprehend things comprehensible to rational beings, are also under the control of Divine Providence, which examines all their deeds in order to reward or punish them. It may be by mere chance that a ship goes down with all her contents, as in the above-mentioned instance, or the roof of a house falls upon those within; but it is not due to chance, according to our view, that in the one instance the

men went into the ship, or remained in the house in the other instance: it is due to the will of God, and is in accordance with the justice of His judgments, the method of which our mind is incapable of understanding. I have been induced to accept this theory by the circumstance that I have not met in any of the prophetic books with a description of God's Providence otherwise than in relation to human beings. The prophets even express their surprise that God should take notice of man, who is too little and too unimportant to be worthy of the attention of the Creator: how, then, should other living creatures be considered as proper objects for Divine Providence! Comp. "What is man, that thou takest knowledge of him?" (Ps. cxliv. 3); "What is man, that thou art mindful of him?" (*ibid.* viii. 8). It is clearly expressed in many Scriptural passages that God provides for all men, and controls all their deeds--e.g., "He fashioneth their hearts alike, he considereth all their works" (*ibid.* xxxiii. 15); "For thine eyes are open upon all the ways of the sons of men, to give every one according to his ways" (Jer. xxxii. 19). Again: "For his eyes are upon the ways of man, and he seeth all his goings" (Job xxxii. 21). In the Law there occur instances of the fact that men are governed by God, and that their actions are examined by him. Comp. "In the day when I visit I will visit their sin upon them" (Exod. xxxii. 34) "I will even appoint over you terror" (Lev. xxvi. 16); "Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book" (Exod. xxxii. 33); "The same soul will I destroy" (Lev. xxiii. 30); "I will even set my face against that soul" (*ibid.* xx. 6). There are many instances of this kind. All that is mentioned of the history of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is a perfect proof that Divine Providence extends to every man individually. But the condition of the individual beings of other living creatures is undoubtedly the same as has been stated by Aristotle. On that account it is allowed, even commanded, to kill animals; we are permitted to use them according to our pleasure. The view that other living beings are only governed by Divine Providence in the way described by Aristotle, is supported by the words of the Prophet Habakkuk. When he perceived the victories of Nebuchadnezzar, and saw the multitude of those slain by him, he said, "O God, it is as if men were abandoned, neglected, and unprotected like fish and like worms of the earth." He thus shows that these classes are abandoned. This is expressed in the following passage: "And makest men as the fishes of the sea, as the creeping things, that have no ruler over them. They take up all of them with the angle," etc. (Hab. i. 14, 15). The prophet then declares that such is not the case; for the events referred to are not the result of abandonment, forsaking, and

p. 288

absence of Providence, but are intended as a punishment for the people, who well deserved all that befell them. He therefore says: "O Lord, Thou hast ordained them for judgment, and O mighty God, Thou hast established them for correction" (*ibid.* ver. 12). Our opinion is not contradicted by Scriptural passages like the following: "He giveth to the beast his food" (Ps. cxlvii. 9); "The young lions roar after their prey, and seek their meat from God" (*ibid.* civ. 2 1); "Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing" (*ibid.* cxlv. 16); or by the saying of our Sages: "He sitteth and feedeth all, from the horns of the unicorns even unto the eggs of insects." There are many similar sayings extant in the writings of our Sages, but they

imply nothing that is contrary to my view. All these passages refer to Providence in relation to species, and not to Providence in relation to individual animals. The acts of God are as it were enumerated; how He provides for every species the necessary food and the means of subsistence. This is clear and plain. Aristotle likewise holds that this kind of Providence is necessary, and is in actual existence. Alexander also notices this fact in the name of Aristotle, viz., that every species has its nourishment prepared for its individual members; otherwise the species would undoubtedly have perished. It does not require much consideration to understand this. There is a rule laid down by our Sages that it is directly prohibited in the Law to cause pain to an animal, and is based on the words: "Wherefore hast thou smitten thine ass?" etc. (Num. xxii. 32). But the object of this rule is to make us perfect; that we should not assume cruel habits: and that we should not uselessly cause pain to others: that, on the contrary, we should be prepared to show pity and mercy to all living creatures, except when necessity demands the contrary: "When thy soul longeth to eat flesh," etc. (Deut. Xii. 20). We should not kill animals for the purpose of practising cruelty, or for the purpose of play. It cannot be objected to this theory, Why should God select mankind as the object of His special Providence, and not other living beings? For he who asks this question must also inquire, Why has man alone, of all species of animals, been endowed with intellect? The answer to this second question must be, according to the three afore-mentioned theories: It was the Will of God, it is the decree of His Wisdom, or it is in accordance with the laws of Nature. The same answers apply to the first question. Understand thoroughly my theory, that I do not ascribe to God ignorance of anything or any kind of weakness; I hold that Divine Providence is related and closely connected with the intellect, because Providence can only proceed from an intelligent being, from a being that is itself the most perfect Intellect. Those creatures, therefore, which receive part of that intellectual influence. will become subject to the action of Providence in the same proportion as they are acted upon by the Intellect. This theory is in accordance with reason and with the teaching of Scripture, whilst the other theories previously mentioned either exaggerate Divine Providence or detract from it. In the former case they lead to confusion and entire nonsense, and cause us to deny reason and to contradict that which is perceived with the senses. The latter case, viz., the theory that Divine Providence does not extend to man, and that there is no difference between man and other animals, implies very bad notions about God; it disturbs all social order, removes and destroys all the moral and intellectual virtues of man.

p. 289

CHAPTER XVIII

HAVING shown in the preceding chapter that of all living beings mankind alone is directly under the control of Divine Providence, I will now add the following remarks: It is an established fact that species have no existence except in our own minds. Species and other classes are merely ideas formed in our minds, whilst everything in real existence is an individual object, or an aggregate of individual objects. This being granted, it must further be admitted that the result of the existing Divine influence, that reaches mankind through the human intellect, is identical with

individual intellects really in existence, with which, e.g., Zeid, Amr, Kaled and Bekr, are endowed. Hence it follows, in accordance with what I have mentioned in the preceding chapter, that the greater the share is which a person has obtained of this Divine influence, on account of both his physical predisposition and his training, the greater must also be the effect of Divine Providence upon him, for the action of Divine Providence is proportional to the endowment of intellect, as has been mentioned above. The relation of Divine Providence is therefore not the same to all men; the greater the human perfection a person has attained, the greater the benefit he derives from Divine Providence. This benefit is very great in the case of prophets, and varies according to the degree of their prophetic faculty: as it varies in the case of pious and good men according to their piety and uprightness. For it is the intensity of the Divine intellectual influence that has inspired the prophets, guided the good in their actions, and perfected the wisdom of the pious. In the same proportion as ignorant and disobedient persons are deficient in that Divine influence, their condition is inferior, and their rank equal to that of irrational beings: and they are "like unto the beasts" (Ps. xlix. 21). For this reason it was not only considered a light thing to slay them, but it was even directly commanded for the benefit of mankind. This belief that God provides for every individual human being in accordance with his merits is one of the fundamental principles on which the Law is founded.

Consider how the action of Divine Providence is described in reference to every incident in the lives of the patriarchs, to their occupations, and even to their passions, and how God promised to direct His attention to them. Thus God said to Abraham, "I am thy shield" (Gen. xv. 1); to Isaac, "I will be with thee, and I will bless thee" (*ibid.* xxvi. 3); to Jacob, "I am with thee, and will keep thee" (*ibid.* xxviii. 15); to [Moses] the chief of the Prophets, "Certainly I will be with thee, and this shall be a token unto thee" (Exod. iii. 12); to Joshua, "As I was with Moses, so I shall be with thee" (Josh. i. 5). It is clear that in all these cases the action of Providence has been proportional to man's perfection. The following verse describes how Providence protects good and pious men, and abandons fools; "He Will keep the feet of his saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness; for by strength shall no man prevail" (1 Sam. ii. 9). When we see that some men escape plagues and mishaps, whilst others perish by them, we must not attribute this to a difference in the properties of their bodies, or in their physical constitution, "for by strength shall no man prevail"; but it must be attributed to their different degrees of perfection, some approaching God, whilst others moving away from Him. Those who approach Him are best protected,

p. 290

and "He will keep the feet of his saints"; but those who keep far away from Him are left exposed to what may befall them; there is nothing that could protect them from what might happen; they are like those who walk in darkness, and are certain to stumble. The protection of the pious by Providence is also expressed in the following passages:--"He keepeth all his bones," etc. (Ps. xxxiv. 21); "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous" (*ibid.* ver. 16); "He shall call upon me and I shall answer him" (*ibid.* ver. 15). There are in Scripture many more passages expressing the

principle that men enjoy Divine protection in proportion to their perfection and piety. The philosophers have likewise discussed this subject. Abu-nasr, in the Introduction to his *Commentary on Aristotle's Nikomachean Ethics*, says as follows:--Those who possess the faculty of raising their souls from virtue to virtue obtain, according to Plato, Divine protection to a higher degree.

Now consider how by this method of reasoning we have arrived at the truth taught by the Prophets, that every person has his individual share of Divine Providence in proportion to his perfection. For philosophical research leads to this conclusion, if we assume, as has been mentioned above, that Divine Providence is in each case proportional to the person's intellectual development. It is wrong to say that Divine Providence extends only to the species, and not to individual beings, as some of the philosophers teach. For only individual beings have real existence, and individual beings are endowed with Divine Intellect; Divine Providence acts, therefore, upon these individual beings.

Study this chapter as it ought to be studied; you will find in it all the fundamental principles of the Law; you will see that these are in conformity with philosophical speculation, and all difficulties will be removed; you will have a clear idea of Divine Providence.

After having described the various philosophical opinions on Providence, and on the manner how God governs the Universe, I will briefly state the opinion of our co-religionists on the Omniscience of God, and what I have to remark on this subject

CHAPTER XIX

IT is undoubtedly an innate idea that God must be perfect in every respect and cannot be deficient in anything. It is almost an innate idea that ignorance in anything is a deficiency, and that God can therefore not be ignorant of anything. But some thinkers assume, as I said before, haughtily and exultingly, that God knows certain things and is ignorant of certain other things. They did so because they imagined that they discovered a certain absence of order in man's affairs, most of which are not only the result of physical properties, but also of those faculties which he possesses as a being endowed with free will and reason. The Prophets have already stated the proof which ignorant persons offer for their belief that God does not know our actions: viz., the fact that wicked people are seen in happiness, ease, and peace. This fact leads also righteous and pious persons to think that it is of no use for them to aim at that which is good and to suffer for it through the opposition of other people. But the Prophets at the same time relate how their own thoughts were engaged on this question, and how they were at last

p. 291

convinced that in the instances to which these arguments refer, only the end and not the beginning ought to be taken into account. The following is a description of these reflections (Ps. lxxiii. 11, *seq.*): "And they say, How does God know? and is there knowledge in the Most High?"

Behold, these are the ungodly who prosper in the world; they increase in riches. Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency." He then continues, "When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me, until I went into the sanctuary of God then understood I their end. Surely thou didst set them in slippery places thou castedst them down into destruction. How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! They are utterly consumed with terrors." The very same ideas have also been expressed by the prophet Malachi, for he says thus (Mal. iii. 13-18): "Your words have been stout against me, saith the Lord. As you have said, It is vain to serve God; and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of hosts? And now we can the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up: yea, they that tempt God are even delivered. Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another, etc. Then shall ye return and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not." David likewise shows how general this view was in his time, and how it led and caused people to sin and to oppress one another. At first he argues against this theory, and then he declares that God is omniscient. He says as follows:--"They slay the widow and the stranger, and murder the fatherless. Yet they say, The Lord shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it. Understand, ye brutish among the people, and ye fools, when will you be wise? He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? He that formed the eye, shall he not see? He that chastiseth nations, shall not he correct? or he that teacheth man knowledge?" I will now show you the meaning of these arguments, but first I will point out how the opponents to the words of the Prophets misunderstood this passage. Many years ago some intelligent co-religionists--they were physicians--told me that they were surprised at the words of David; for it would follow from his arguments that the Creator of the mouth must eat and the Creator of the lungs must cry; the same applies to all other organs of our body. You who study this treatise of mine, consider how grossly they misunderstood David's arguments. Hear now what its true meaning is: He who produces a vessel must have had in his mind an idea of the use of that instrument, otherwise he could not have produced it. If, e.g., the smith had not formed an idea of sewing and possessed a knowledge of it, the needle would not have had the form so indispensable for sewing. The same is the case with all instruments. When some philosopher thought that God, whose perception is purely intellectual, has no knowledge of individual things, which are perceivable only by the senses, David takes his argument from the existence of the senses, and argues thus:--If the sense of sight had been utterly unknown to God, how could He have produced that organ of the sense of sight? Do you think that it was by chance that a transparent humour was formed, and then another humour with certain similar properties, and besides a membrane which by accident had a hole covered with a hardened transparent substance? in short, considering the humour of the eye, its membranes and

p. 292

nerves, with their well-known functions, and their adaptation to the purpose of sight, can any intelligent person imagine that all this is due to chance? Certainly not; we see here necessarily

design in nature, as has been shown by all physicians and philosophers; but as nature is not an intellectual being, and is not capable of governing [the universe], as has been accepted by all philosophers, the government [of the universe], which shows signs of design, originates, according to the philosophers, in an intellectual cause, but is according to our view the result of the action of an intellectual being, that endows everything with its natural properties. If this intellect were incapable of perceiving or knowing any of the actions of earthly beings, how could He have created, or, according to the other theory, caused to emanate from Himself, properties that bring about those actions of which He is supposed to have no knowledge? David correctly calls those who believe in this theory brutes and fools. He then proceeds to explain that the error is due to our defective understanding: that God endowed us with the intellect which is the means of our comprehension, and which on account of its insufficiency to form a true idea of God has become the source of great doubts: that He therefore knows what our defects are, and how worthless the doubts are which originate in our faulty reasoning. The Psalmist therefore says: "He who teaches man knowledge, the Lord, knoweth the thoughts of man that they are vanity" (*ibid.* xciv. 10-11).

My object in this chapter was to show how the belief of the ignorant, that God does not notice the affairs of man because they are uncertain and unsystematic, is very ancient. Comp. "And the Israelites uttered things that were not right against the Lord" (2 Kings xvii. 9). In reference to this passage the Midrash says: "What have they uttered? This Pillar [i.e., God] does not see, nor hear, nor speak"; i.e., they imagine that God takes no notice of earthly affairs, that the Prophets received of God neither affirmative nor negative precepts; they imagine so, simply because human affairs are not arranged as every person would think it desirable. Seeing that these are not in accordance with their wish, they say, "The Lord does not see us" (Ezek. viii. 12). Zephaniah (i. 12) also describes those ignorant persons "who say in their heart the Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil." I will tell you my own opinion as regards the theory that God knows all things on earth, but I will first state some propositions which are generally adopted, and the correctness of which no intelligent person can dispute.

CHAPTER XX

IT is generally agreed upon that God cannot at a certain time acquire knowledge which He did not possess previously; it is further impossible that His knowledge should include any plurality, even according to those who admit the Divine attributes. As these things have been fully proved, we, who assert the teaching of the Law, believe that God's knowledge of many things does not imply any plurality; His knowledge does not change like ours when the objects of His knowledge change. Similarly we say that the various events are known to Him before they take place; He constantly knows them, and therefore no fresh knowledge is acquired by Him. E.g., He knows that a certain person is non-existent at present, will come to existence at a certain

time, will continue to exist for sometime, and will then cease to exist. When this person, in accordance with God's foreknowledge concerning him, comes into existence, God's knowledge is not increased; it contains nothing that it did not contain before, but something has taken place that was known previously exactly as it has taken place. This theory implies that God's knowledge extends to things not in existence, and includes also the infinite. We nevertheless accept it, and contend that we may attribute to God the knowledge of a thing which does not yet exist, but the existence of which God foresees and is able to effect. But that which never exists cannot be an object of His knowledge; just as our knowledge does not comprise things which we consider as non-existing. A doubt has been raised, however, whether His knowledge includes the infinite. Some thinkers assume that knowledge has the species for its object, and therefore extends at the same time to all individual members of the species. This view is taken by every man who adheres to a revealed religion and follows the dictates of reason. Philosophers, however, have decided that the object of knowledge cannot be a non-existing thing, and that it cannot comprise that which is infinite. Since, therefore, God's knowledge does not admit of any increase, it is impossible that He should know any transient thing. He only knows that which is constant and unchangeable. Other philosophers raised the following objection: God does not know even things that remain constant; for His knowledge would then include a plurality according to the number of objects known; the knowledge of every thing being distinguished by a certain peculiarity of the thing. God therefore only knows His own essence.

My opinion is this: the cause of the error of all these schools is their belief that God's knowledge is like ours; each school points to something withheld from our knowledge, and either assumes that the same must be the case in God's knowledge, or at least finds some difficulty how to explain it. We must blame the philosophers in this respect more than any other persons, because they demonstrated that there is no plurality in God, and that He has no attribute that is not identical with His essence; His knowledge and His essence are one and the same thing; they likewise demonstrated, as we have shown, that our intellect and our knowledge are insufficient to comprehend the true idea of His essence. How then can they imagine that they comprehend His knowledge, which is identical with His essence; seeing that our incapacity to comprehend His essence prevents us from understanding the way how He knows objects? for His knowledge is not of the same kind as ours, but totally different from it and admitting of no analogy. And as there is an Essence of independent existence, which is, as the philosophers, call it, the Cause of the existence of all things, or, as we say, the Creator of everything that exists beside Him, so we also assume that this Essence knows everything, that nothing whatever of all that exists is hidden from it, and that the knowledge attributed to this essence has nothing in common with our knowledge, just as that essence is in no way like our essence. The homonymity of the term "knowledge" misled people; [they forgot that] only the words are the same, but the things designated by them are different: and therefore they came to the absurd conclusion that that which is required for our knowledge is also required for God's knowledge.

Besides, I find it expressed in various passages of Scripture that the fact

that God knows things while in a state of possibility, when their existence belongs to the future, does not change the nature of the possible in any way; that nature remains unchanged; and the knowledge of the realization of one of several possibilities does not yet effect that realization. This is likewise one of the fundamental principles of the Law of Moses, concerning which there is no doubt nor any dispute. Otherwise it would not have been said, "And thou shalt make a battlement for thy roof," etc. (Deut. xxii. 8), or "Lest he die in the battle, and another man take her" (*ibid.* xx. 7). The fact that laws were given to man, both affirmative and negative, supports the principle, that God's knowledge of future [and possible] events does not change their character. The great doubt that presents itself to our mind is the result of the insufficiency of our intellect. Consider in how many ways His knowledge is distinguished from ours according to all the teaching of every revealed religion. First, His knowledge is one, and yet embraces many different kinds of objects. Secondly, it is applied to things not in existence. Thirdly, it comprehends the infinite. Fourthly, it remains unchanged, though it comprises the knowledge of changeable things: whilst it seems [in reference to ourselves] that the knowledge of a thing that is to come into existence is different from the knowledge of the thing when it has come into existence; because there is the additional knowledge of its transition from a state of potentiality into that of reality. Fifthly, according to the teaching of our Law, God's knowledge of one of two eventualities does not determine it, however certain that knowledge may be concerning the future occurrence of the one eventuality.--Now I wonder what our knowledge has in common with God's knowledge, according to those who treat God's knowledge as an attribute. Is there anything else common to both besides the mere name? According to our theory that God's knowledge is not different from His essence, there is an essential distinction between His knowledge and ours, like the distinction between the substance of the heavens and that of the earth. The Prophets have clearly expressed this. Comp. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways" (Isa. lv. 8-9). In short, as we cannot accurately comprehend His essence, and yet we know that His existence is most perfect, free from all admixture of deficiency, change, or passiveness, so we have no correct notion of His knowledge, because it is nothing but His essence, and yet we are convinced that He does not at one time obtain knowledge which He had not before; i.e., He obtains no new knowledge, He does not increase it, and it is not finite; nothing of all existing things escapes His knowledge, but their nature is not changed thereby; that which is possible remains possible. Every argument that seems to contradict any of these statements is founded on the nature of our knowledge, that has only the name in common with God's knowledge. The same applies to the term intention; it is homonymously employed to designate our intention towards a certain thing, and the intention of God. The term "management" (Providence) is likewise homonymously used of our management of a certain thing, and of God's management. In fact management, knowledge, and intention are not the same when ascribed to us and when ascribed to God. When these three terms are taken in both cases in the same sense, great difficulties must arise: but

when it is noticed that there is a great difference whether a thing is predicated of God or of us, the truth will become clear. The difference between that which is ascribed to God and that which is ascribed to man is expressed in the words above mentioned, "And your ways are not my ways."

CHAPTER XXI

THERE is a great difference between the knowledge which the producer of a thing possesses concerning it, and the knowledge which other persons possess concerning the same thing. Suppose a thing is produced in accordance with the knowledge of the producer, the producer was then guided by his knowledge in the act of producing the thing. Other people, however, who examine this work and acquire a knowledge of the whole of it, depend for that knowledge on the work itself. E.g., An artisan makes a box in which weights move with the running of the water, and thus indicate how many hours have passed of the day and of the night. The whole quantity of the water that is to run out, the different ways in which it runs, every thread that is drawn, and every little ball that descends--all this is fully perceived by him who makes the clock; and his knowledge is not the result of observing the movements as they are actually going on; but, on the contrary, the movements are produced in accordance with his knowledge. But another person who looks at that instrument will receive fresh knowledge at every movement he perceives; the longer he looks on, the more knowledge does he acquire; he will gradually increase his knowledge till he fully understands the machinery. If an infinite number of movements were assumed for this instrument, he would never be able to complete his knowledge. Besides, he cannot know any of the movements before they take place, since he only knows them from their actual occurrence. The same is the case with every object, and its relation to our knowledge and God's knowledge of it. Whatever we know of the things is derived from observation: on that account it is impossible for us to know that which will take place in future, or that which is infinite.

Our knowledge is acquired and increased in proportion to the things known by us. This is not the case with God. His knowledge of things is not derived from the things themselves: if this were the case, there would be change and plurality in His knowledge; on the contrary, the things are in accordance with His eternal knowledge, which has established their actual properties, and made part of them purely spiritual, another part material and constant as regards its individual members, a third part material and changeable as regards the individual beings according to eternal and constant laws. Plurality, acquisition, and change in His knowledge is therefore impossible. He fully knows His unchangeable essence, and has thus a knowledge of all that results from any of His acts. If we were to try to understand in what manner this is done, it would be the same as if we tried to be the same as God, and to make our knowledge identical with His knowledge. Those who seek the truth, and admit what is true, must believe that nothing is hidden from God; that everything is revealed to His knowledge, which is identical with His essence; that

this kind of knowledge cannot be comprehended by us; for if we knew its method, we would possess that intellect by which such

p. 296

knowledge could be acquired. Such intellect does not exist except in God, and is at the same time His essence. Note this well, for I think that this is an excellent idea, and leads to correct views: no error will be found in it; no dialectical argument; it does not lead to any absurd conclusion, nor to ascribing any defect to God. These sublime and profound themes admit of no proof whatever, neither according to our opinion who believe in the teaching of Scripture, nor according to the philosophers who disagree and are much divided on this question. In all questions that cannot be demonstrated, we must adopt the method which we have adopted in this question about God's Omniscience. Note it.

CHAPTER XXII

THE strange and wonderful Book of Job treats of the same subject as we are discussing; its basis is a fiction, conceived for the purpose of explaining the different opinions which people hold on Divine Providence. You know that some of our Sages clearly stated Job has never existed, and has never been created, and that he is a poetic fiction. Those who assume that he has existed, and that the book is historical, are unable to determine when and where Job lived. Some of our Sages say that he lived in the days of the Patriarchs; others hold that he was a contemporary of Moses; others place him in the days of David, and again others believe that he was one of those who returned from the Babylonian exile. This difference of opinion supports the assumption that he has never existed in reality. But whether he has existed or not, that which is related of him is an experience of frequent occurrence, is a source of perplexity to all thinkers, and has suggested the above-mentioned opinions on God's Omniscience and Providence. This perplexity is caused by the account that a simple and perfect person, who is upright in his actions, and very anxious to abstain from sin, is afflicted by successive misfortunes, namely, by loss of property, by the death of his children, and by bodily disease, though he has not committed any sin. According to both theories, viz., the theory that Job did exist, and the theory that he did not exist, the introduction to the book is certainly a fiction; I mean the portion which relates to the words of the adversary, the words of God to the former, and the handing over of Job to him. This fiction, however, is in so far different from other fictions that it includes profound ideas and great mysteries, removes great doubts, and reveals the most important truths. I will discuss it as fully as possible; and I will also tell you the words of our Sages that suggested to me the explanation of this great poem.

First, consider the words: "There was a man in the land Uz." The term Uz. has different meanings; it is used as a proper noun. Comp. "Uz, his first-born" (Gen. xxii. 21); it is also imperative of the verb *Uz*, "to take advice." Comp. *uzu*, "take counsel" (Isa. viii. 10). The name *Uz* therefore expresses the exhortation to consider well this lesson, study it, grasp its ideas, and comprehend them, in order to see which is the right view. "The sons of God then came to present

themselves before the Lord, and the adversary came also among them and in their number" (chap. i. 6, ii. 1). It is not said: "And the sons of God and the adversary came to present themselves before the Lord"; this sentence would have implied that the

p. 297

existence of all that came was of the same kind and rank. The words used are these: "And the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and the adversary came also among them." Such a phrase is only used in reference to one that comes without being expected or invited; he only comes among others whose coming has been sought. The adversary is then described as going to and fro on the earth, and walking up and down thereon. He is in no relation to the beings above, and has no place among them. For this reason it is said, "from going to and fro on the earth, and walking up and down on it," for his "going" and "walking" can only take place on the earth. [Job], the simple and righteous man, is given and handed over to the adversary; whatever evils and misfortunes befell Job as regards his property, children, and health, were all caused by this adversary. When this idea is sufficiently indicated, the author begins to reflect on it: one opinion Job is represented to hold, whilst other opinions are defended by his friends. I will further on expound these opinions which formed the substance of the discussion on the misfortunes of Job, caused by the adversary alone. Job, as well as his friends, were of opinion that God Himself was the direct agent of what happened, and that the adversary was not the intermediate cause. It is remarkable in this account that wisdom is not ascribed to Job. The text does not say he was an intelligent, wise, or clever man; but virtues and uprightness, especially in actions, are ascribed to him. If he were wise he would not have any doubt about the cause of his suffering, as will be shown later on. Besides, his misfortunes are enumerated in the same order as they rank in man's estimation. There are some who are not perplexed or discouraged by loss of property, thinking little of it: but are terrified when they are threatened with the death of their children and are killed by their anxiety. There are others who bear without shock or fainting even the loss of their children, but no one endowed with sensation is able to bear bodily pain. We generally extol God in words, and praise Him as righteous and benevolent, when we prosper and are happy, or when the grief we have to bear is moderate. But [it is otherwise] when such troubles as are described in Job come over us. Some of us deny God, and believe that there is no rule in the Universe, even if only their property is lost. Others retain their faith in the existence of justice and order, even when suffering from loss of property, whereas loss of children is too much affliction for them. Others remain firm in their faith, even with the loss of their children; but there is no one who can patiently bear the pain that reaches his own person: he then murmurs and complains of injustice either in his heart or with his tongue.

Now consider that the phrase, "to present themselves before the Lord," is used in reference to the sons of God, both the first and the second times, but in reference to the adversary, who appeared on either occasion among them and in their number, this phrase is not used the first time, whilst in his second appearance "the adversary also came among them to present himself before the Lord." Consider this, and see how very extraordinary it is!--These ideas presented themselves

like an inspiration to me.--The phrase, "to present themselves before the Lord," implies that they are beings who are forced by God's command to do what He desires. This may be inferred from the words of the prophet Zechariah concerning the four chariots that came forth. He says: "And the angel answered and said to me, These four

p. 298

winds of the heavens come forth from presenting themselves before the Lord of the whole earth" (Zech. vi. 5). It is clear that the relation of the sons of God to the Universe is not the same as that of the adversary. The relation of the sons of God is more constant and more permanent. The adversary has also some relation to the Universe, but it is inferior to that of the sons of God. It is also remarkable in this account that in the description of the adversary's wandering about on the earth, and his performing certain actions, it is distinctly stated that he has no power over the soul: whilst power has been given to him over all earthly affairs, there is a partition between him and the soul; he has not received power over the soul. This is expressed in the words, "But keep away from his soul" (Job. ii. 6). I have already shown you the homonymous use of the term "soul" (*nefesh*) in Hebrew (Part I., chap. xli.). It designates that element in man that survives him; it is this Portion over which the adversary has no power.--After these remarks of mine listen to the following useful instruction given by our Sages, who in truth deserve the title of "wise men"; it makes clear that which appears doubtful, and reveals that which has been hidden, and discloses most of the mysteries of the Law. They said in the Talmud as follows: R. Simeon, son of Lakish, says: "The adversary (*satan*), evil inclination (*yezer ha-ra'*), and the angel of death, are one and the same being." Here we find all that has been mentioned by us in such a clear manner that no intelligent person will be in doubt about it. It has thus been shown to you that one and the same thing is designated by these three different terms, and that actions ascribed to these three are in reality the actions of one and the same agent. Again, the ancient doctors of the Talmud said: "The adversary goes about and misleads, then he goes up and accuses, obtains permission, and takes the soul." You have already been told that when David at the time of the plague was shown the angel "with the sword drawn in his hand stretched out over Jerusalem" (2 Sam. xxiv. 17), it was done for the purpose of conveying a certain idea to him. The same idea was also expressed in the vision concerning the sins of the sons of Joshua, the high priest, by the words, "And the adversary stood on his right hand to accuse him" (Zech. iii. 1). The vision then reveals that [the adversary] is far from God, and continues thus: "The Lord will rebuke thee, O adversary, the Lord who hath chosen Jerusalem will rebuke thee" (*ibid.* ver. 2). Balaam saw prophetically the same vision in his journey, addressing him with the words, "Behold I have come forth to be a hindrance to thee" (Num. xxii. 32). The Hebrew, *satan*, is derived from the same root as *séteh*, "turn away" (Prov. iv. 15); it implies the notion of turning and moving away from a thing; he undoubtedly turns us away from the way of truth, and leads us astray in the way of error. The same idea is contained in the passage, "And the imagination of the heart of man is evil from his youth" (Gen. Viii. 21). The theory of the good and the evil inclinations (*yezer ha-tob*, *ve-yezer ha-ra'*) is frequently referred to in our religion. Our Sages also say, "Serve God with your good

and your evil inclinations." (B. T. Ber. 57a.) They also say that the evil inclination we receive at our birth: for "at the door sin croucheth" (Gen. iv. 7), as is distinctly said in the Law, "And the imagination of the heart of man is evil from his youth" (*ibid.* Viii. 21). The good inclination, however, comes when the mini is developed. In explaining the allegory representing the body

p. 299

of man and his different faculties, our Sages (B. T. Ned. 32b) said: "The evil inclination is called a great king, whilst the good inclination is a child, poor, though wise" (Eccles. ix. 14). All these sayings of our Sages are contained in their writings, and are well known. According to our Sages the evil inclination, the adversary (*satan*), and the angel [of death], are undoubtedly identical; and the adversary being called "angel," because he is among the sons of God, and the good inclination being in reality an angel, it is to the good and the evil inclinations that they refer in their well-known words, "Every person is accompanied by two angels, one being on his right side, one on his left." In the Babylonian Gemara (Shabbath 119b), they say distinctly of the two angels that one is good and one bad. See what extraordinary ideas this passage discloses, and how many false ideas it removes.

I believe that I have fully explained the idea contained in the account of Job; but I will now show the character of the opinion attributed to Job, and of the opinions attributed to his friends, and support my statement by proofs gathered from the words of each of them. We need not take notice of the remaining passages which are only required for the context, as has been explained to you in the beginning of this treatise.

CHAPTER XXIII

ASSUMING the first part of the history of Job as having actually taken place, the five, viz., Job and his friends, agreed that the misfortune of Job was known to God, and that it was God that caused Job's suffering. They further agree that God does no wrong, and that no injustice can be ascribed to Him. You will find these ideas frequently repeated in the words of Job. When you consider the words of the five who take part in the discussion, you will easily notice that things said by one of them are also uttered by the rest. The arguments are repeated, mixed up, and interrupted by Job's description of his acute pain and troubles, which had come upon him in spite of his strict righteousness, and by an account of his charity, humane disposition, and good acts. The replies of the friends to Job are likewise interrupted by exhortations to patience, by words of comfort, and other speeches tending to make him forget his grief. He is told by them to be silent; that he ought not to let loose the bridle of his tongue, as if he were in dispute with another man; that he ought silently to submit to the judgments of God. Job replies that the intensity of his pains did not permit him to bear patiently, to collect his thoughts and to say what he ought to say. The friends, on the other hand, contend that those who act well receive reward, and those who act wickedly are punished. When a wicked and rebellious person is seen in prosperity, it may be assumed for certain that a change will take place; he will die, or troubles will afflict him and his

house. When we find a worshipper of God in misfortune, we may be certain that God will heal the stroke of his wound. This idea is frequently repeated in the words of the three friends, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zofar, who agree in this opinion. It is, however, not the object of this chapter to describe in what they agree, but to define the distinguishing characteristic of each of them, and to elucidate the opinion of each as regards the question why the most simple and upright man is afflicted with the greatest and acutest pain. Job found in this fact a proof that the righteous

p. 300

and the wicked are equal before God, who holds all mankind in contempt. Job therefore says (ix. 22, 23): "This is one thing, therefore I said it, He destroyeth the perfect and the wicked. If the scourge slay suddenly, he will laugh at the trial of the innocent." He thus declares that when a scourge comes suddenly, killing and destroying all it meets, God laughs at the trial of the innocent. He further confirms this view in the following passage: "One dieth in his full strength, being wholly at ease and quiet. His vessels are full of milk, etc. And another dieth in the bitterness of his soul, and never eateth with pleasure. They shall lie down alike in the dust, and the worms shall cover them" (*ibid.* xxi. 23-26). In a similar manner he shows the good condition and prosperity of wicked people; and is even very explicit on this point. He speaks thus: "Even when I remember I am afraid, and trembling taketh hold on my flesh. Wherefore do the wicked live, become old, yea, are mighty in power? Their seed is established in their sight with them," etc. (*ibid.* 6-8). Having thus described their prosperity he addresses his opponents, and says to them: "Granted that as you think, the children of this prosperous atheist will perish after his death, and their memory will be blotted out, what harm will the fate of his family cause him after his death? For what pleasure hath he in his house after him, when the number of his months is cut off in the midst?" (*ibid.* 21). Job then explains that there is no hope after death, so that the cause [of the misfortune of the righteous man] is nothing else but entire neglect on the part of God. He is therefore surprised that God has not abandoned the creation of man altogether; and that after having created him, He does not take any notice of him. He says in his surprise: "Hast thou not poured me out as milk, and curdled me like cheese?" etc. (*ibid.* x. 10, *seq.*). This is one of the different views held by some thinkers on Providence. Our Sages (B. T. Baba B. 16a) condemned this view of Job as mischievous, and expressed their feeling in words like the following: "dust should have filled the mouth of Job"; "Job wished to upset the dish"; "Job denied the resurrection of the dead"; "He commenced to blaspheme." When, however, God said to Eliphaz and his colleagues, "You have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath" (xlii. 7), our Sages assume as the cause of this rebuke, the maxim "Man is not punished for that which he utters in his pain"; and that God ignored the sin of Job [in his utterances], because of the acuteness of his suffering. But this explanation does not agree with the object of the whole allegory. The words of God are justified, as I will show, by the fact that Job abandoned his first very erroneous opinion, and himself proved that it was an error. It is the opinion which suggests itself as plausible at first thought, especially in the minds of those who

meet with mishaps, well knowing that they have not merited them through sins. This is admitted by all, and therefore this opinion was assigned to Job. But he is represented to hold this view only so long as he was without wisdom, and knew God only by tradition, in the same manner as religious people generally know Him. As soon as he had acquired a true knowledge of God, he confessed that there is undoubtedly true felicity in the knowledge of God; it is attained by all who acquire that knowledge, and no earthly trouble can disturb it. So long as Job's knowledge of God was based on tradition and communication, and not on research, he believed that such imaginary good

p. 301

as is possessed in health, riches, and children, was the utmost that men can attain: this was the reason why he was in perplexity, and why he uttered the above-mentioned opinions, and this is also the meaning of his words: "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent because of dust and ashes" (xlii. 5, 6); that is to say he abhorred all that he had desired before, and that he was sorry that he had been in dust and ashes; comp. "and he sat down among the ashes" (ii. 8). On account of this last utterance, which implies true perception, it is said afterwards in reference to him, "for you have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath."

The opinion set forth by Eliphaz in reference to Job's suffering is likewise one of the current views on Providence. He holds that the fate of Job was in accordance with strict justice. Job was guilty of sins for which he deserved his fate. Eliphaz therefore says to Job: "Is not thy wickedness great, and thine iniquities infinite?" (xxii. 5). He then points out to him that his upright actions and his good ways, on which he relies, need not be so perfect in the eyes of God that no punishment should be inflicted on him. "Behold, he putteth no trust in his servants: and his angels he chargeth with folly: how much less in them that dwell in houses of clay," etc. (iv. 17-18). Eliphaz never abandoned his belief that the fate of man is the result of justice, that we do not know all our shortcomings for which we are punished, nor the way how we incur the punishment through them.

Bildad the Shuhite defends in this question the theory of reward and compensation. He therefore tells Job that if he is innocent and without sin, his terrible misfortunes will be the source of great reward, will be followed by the best compensation, and will prove a boon to him as the cause of great bliss in the future world. This idea is expressed in the words: "If thou be pure and upright, surely now he will awake for thee, and make the habitation of thy righteousness prosperous. Though thy beginning was small, yet thy latter end will greatly increase" (viii. 6-8). This opinion concerning Providence is widespread, and we have already explained it.

Zofar the Naamathite holds that the Divine Will is the source of everything that happens: no further cause can be sought for His actions, and it cannot be asked why He has done this and why He has not done that. That which God does can therefore not be explained by the way of justice

or the result of wisdom. His true Essence demands that He does what He wills; we are unable to fathom the depth of His wisdom, and it is the law and rule of this wisdom that whatever He does is done because it is His will and for no other cause. Zofar therefore says to Job: "But oh that God would speak, and open his lips against thee; and that he would show thee the secrets of wisdom, for wisdom hath two portions I Know, therefore, that God exacteth of thee less than thine iniquity deserveth. Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?" (xi. 6-7).

In this manner consider well how the Book of Job discusses the problem, which has perplexed many people and led them to adopt in reference to Divine Providence some one of the theories which I have explained above: all possible different theories are mentioned therein. The problem is described either by way of fiction or in accordance with real fact, as having

p. 302

manifested itself in a man famous for his excellency and wisdom. The view ascribed to Job is the theory of Aristotle. Eliphaz holds the opinion taught in Scripture, Bildad's opinion is identical with that of the Mu'tazilah, whilst Zofar defends the theory of the Asha'riyah. These were the ancient views on Providence; later on a new theory was set forth, namely, that ascribed to Elihu. For this reason he is placed above the others, and described as younger in years but greater in wisdom. He censures Job for his foolishly exalting himself, expressing surprise at such great troubles befalling a good man, and dwelling on the praises of his own deeds. He also tells the three friends that their minds have been weakened by great age. A profound and wonderful discourse then follows. Reflecting on his words we may at first thought be surprised to find that he does not add anything to the words of Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zofar; and that he only repeats their ideas in other terms and more explicitly. For he likewise censures and rebukes Job, attributes justice to God, relates His wonders in nature, and holds that God is not affected by the service of the worshipper, nor by the disobedience of the rebellious. All this has already been said by His colleagues. But after due consideration we see clearly the new idea introduced by Elihu, which is the principal object of his speech, an idea which has not been uttered by those who spoke before him. In addition to this he mentions also other things set forth by the previous speakers, in the same manner as each of the rest, viz., Job and his three friends, repeat what the others have said. The purpose of this repetition is to conceal the opinion peculiar to each speaker, and to make all appear in the eyes of the ordinary reader to utter one and the same view, although in reality this is not the case. The new idea, which is peculiar to Elihu and has not been mentioned by the others, is contained in his metaphor of the angel's intercession. It is a frequent occurrence, he says, that a man becomes ill, approaches the gates of death, and is already given up by his neighbours. If then an angel, of any kind whatever, intercedes on his behalf and prays for him, the intercession and prayers are accepted; the patient rises from his illness, is saved, and returns to good health. This result is not always obtained: intercession and deliverance do not always follow each other: it happens only twice, or three times. Elihu therefore says: "If there be an angel with him, an interpreter, one among a thousand, to show unto man his uprightness," etc.

(xxxiii. 29). He then describes man's condition when convalescent and the rejoicing at his recovery, and continues thus: "Lo, all these things worketh God twice, three times with man" (*ibid.* 29). This idea occurs only in the words of Elihu. His description of the method of prophecy in preceding verses is likewise new. He says: "Surely God speaketh in one way, yea in two ways, yet man perceiveth it not. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon man, in slumberings upon the bed" (*ibid.* 14, 15). He afterwards supports and illustrates his theory by a description of many natural phenomena, such as thunder, lightning, rain, and winds; with these are mixed up accounts of various incidents of life, e.g., an account of pestilence contained in the following passage: "In a moment they die, and at midnight; the people become tumultuous and pass away" (xxxiv. 20). Great wars are described in the following verse: "He breaketh in pieces mighty men without number, and setteth others in their stead" (*ibid.* 24).

p. 303

[paragraph continues] There are many more passages of this kind. In a similar manner the Revelation that reached Job (chap. xxxviii., chap. xli.), and explained to him the error of his whole belief, constantly describes natural objects, and nothing else; it describes the elements, meteorological phenomena, and peculiarities of various kinds of living beings. The sky, the heavens, Orion and Pleiades are only mentioned in reference to their influence upon our atmosphere, so that Job's attention is in this prophecy only called to things below the lunar sphere. Elihu likewise derives instruction from the nature of various kinds of animals. Thus he says: "He teacheth us through the beasts of the earth, and maketh us wise through the fowls of heaven" (xxxv. 11). He dwells longest on the nature of the Leviathan, which possesses a combination of bodily peculiarities found separate in different animals, in those that walk, those that swim, and those that fly. The description of all these things serves to impress on our minds that we are unable to comprehend how these transient creatures come into existence, or to imagine how their natural properties commenced to exist, and that these are not like the things which we are able to produce. Much less can we compare the manner in which God rules and manages His creatures with the manner in which we rule and manage certain beings. We must content ourselves with this, and believe that nothing is hidden from God, as Elihu says: "For his eyes are upon the ways of man, and he seeth all his goings. There is no darkness nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves" (xxxiv. 21, 22). But the term management, when applied to God, has not the same meaning which it has when applied to us; and when we say that He rules His creatures we do not mean that He does the same as we do when we rule over other beings. The term "rule" has not the same definition in both cases: it signifies two different notions, which have nothing in common but the name. In the same manner, as there is a difference between works of nature and productions of human handicraft, so there is a difference between God's rule, providence, and intention in reference to all natural forces, and our rule, providence, and intention in reference to things which are the objects of our rule, providence, and intention. This lesson is the principal object of the whole Book of Job; it lays down this principle of faith, and recommends us to derive a proof from nature, that we

should not fall into the error of imagining His knowledge to be similar to ours, or His intention, providence, and rule similar to ours. When we know this we shall find everything that may befall us easy to bear; mishap will create no doubts in our hearts concerning God, whether He knows our affairs or not, whether He provides for us or abandons us. On the contrary, our fate will increase our love of God; as is said in the end of this prophecy: "Therefore I abhor myself and repent concerning the dust and ashes" (xlii. 6); and as our Sages say: "The pious do everything out of love, and rejoice in their own afflictions." (B. T. Shabb. 88*b*.) If you pay to my words the attention which this treatise demands, and examine all that is said in the Book of Job, all will be clear to you, and you will find that I have grasped and taken hold of the whole subject; nothing has been left unnoticed, except such portions as are only introduced because of the context and the whole plan of the allegory. I have explained this method several times in the course of this treatise.

p. 304

CHAPTER XXIV

THE doctrine of trials is open to great objections: it is in fact more exposed to objections than any other thing taught in Scripture. It is mentioned in Scripture six times, as I will show in this chapter. People have generally the notion that trials consist in afflictions and mishaps sent by God to man, not as punishments for past sins, but as giving opportunity for great reward. This principle is not mentioned in Scripture in plain language, and it is only in one of the six places referred to that the literal meaning conveys this notion. I will explain the meaning of that passage later on. The principle taught in Scripture is exactly the reverse; for it is said: "He is a God of faithfulness, and there is no iniquity in him" (Deut. xxxii. 4).

The teaching of our Sages, although some of them approve this general belief (concerning trials), is on the whole against it. For they say, "There is no death without sin, and no affliction without transgression." (See p. 285.) Every intelligent religious person should have this faith, and should not ascribe any wrong to God, who is far from it; he must not assume that a person is innocent and perfect and does not deserve what has befallen him. The trials mentioned in Scripture in the [six] passages, seem to have been tests and experiments by which God desired to learn the intensity of the faith and the devotion of a man or a nation. [If this were the case] it would be very difficult to comprehend the object of the trials, and yet the sacrifice of Isaac seems to be a case of this kind, as none witnessed it, but God and the two concerned [Abraham and Isaac]. Thus God says to Abraham, "For now I know that thou fearest God," etc. (Gen. xxii. 12). In another passage it is said: "For the Lord your God proveth you to know whether ye love," etc. (Deut. xiii. 4). Again, "And to prove thee to know what was in thine heart," etc. (*ibid.* Viii. 2). I will now remove all the difficulties.

The sole object of all the trials mentioned in Scripture is to teach man what he ought to do or believe; so that the event which forms the actual trial is not the end desired: it is but an example

for our instruction and guidance. Hence the words "to know (*la-da'at*) whether ye love," etc., do not mean that God desires to know whether they loved God; for He already knows it; but *la-da'at*, "to know," has here the same meaning as in the phrase "to know (*la-da'at*) that I am the Lord that sanctifieth you" (Exod. xxxi. 13), i.e., that all nations shall know that I am the Lord who sanctifieth you. In a similar manner Scripture says:--If a man should rise, pretend to be a prophet, and show you his signs by which he desired to convince you that his words are true, know that God intends thereby to prove to the nations how firmly you believe in the truth of God's word, and how well you have comprehended the true Essence of God; that you cannot be misled by any tempter to corrupt your faith in God. Your religion will then afford a guidance to all who seek the truth, and of all religions man will choose that which is so firmly established that it is not shaken by the performance of a miracle. For a miracle cannot prove that which is impossible; it is useful only as a confirmation of that which is possible, as we have explained in our Mishneh-torah. (Yesode ha-torah vii. f. viii. 3.)

Having shown that the term "to know" means "that all people may know," we apply this interpretation to the following words said in reference to the

p. 305

manna: "To humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldst keep his commandments, or not" (Deut. viii. 2). All nations shall know, it shall be published throughout the world, that those who devote themselves to the service of God are supported beyond their expectation. In the same sense it was said when the manna commenced to come down, "that I may prove them whether they will walk in my law or no" (Exod. xvi. 4); i.e., let every one who desires try and see whether it is useful and sufficient to devote himself to the service of God. It is, however, said a third time in reference to the manna: "Who fed thee in the wilderness with manna, which thy fathers knew not, that he might humble thee, and that he might prove thee, to do thee good at thy latter end" (Deut. viii. 16). This might induce us to think that God sometimes afflicts man for the purpose of increasing his reward. But in truth this is not the case. We may rather assume one of the two following explanations: either this passage expresses the same idea as is expressed in the first and second passages, viz., to show [to all people] whether faith in God is sufficient to secure man's maintenance and his relief from care and trouble, or not. Or the Hebrew term *le-nassoteka* means "to accustom thee"; the word is used in this sense in the following passage: "She has not *accustomed* (*nisseta*) the sole of her foot to set it upon the ground" (*ibid.* xxviii. 56). The meaning of the above passage would then be: "God has first trained you in the hardships of the wilderness, in order to increase your welfare when you enter the land of Canaan." It is indeed a fact that the transition from trouble to ease gives more pleasure than continual ease. It is also known that the Israelites would not have been able to conquer the land and fight with its inhabitants, if they had not previously undergone the trouble and hardship of the wilderness. Scripture says in reference to this: "For God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt. But God led the people about, through the way of the wilderness of the Red Sea; and the children of Israel went

up harnessed out of the land of Egypt" (Exod. xiii. 17, 18). Ease destroys bravery, whilst trouble and care for food create strength; and this was [also for the Israelites] the good that ultimately came out of their wanderings in the wilderness. The passage, "For God is come to *prove* you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not" (*ibid.* xx. 20), expresses the same idea as is expressed in Deuteronomy (xiii. 4) in reference to a person who prophesies in the name of idols, namely in the words: "For the Lord your God *proveth* you to know whether ye love the Lord." We have already explained the meaning of the latter passage. In the same sense Moses said to the Israelites when they stood round Mount Sinai: "Do not fear; the object of this great sight which you perceived is that you should see the truth with your own eyes. When the Lord your God, in order to show your faithfulness to Him, will prove you by a false prophet, who will tell you the reverse of what you have heard, you will remain firm and your steps will not slide. If I had come as a messenger as you desired, and had told you that which had been said unto me and which you had not heard, you would perhaps consider as true what another might tell you in opposition to that which you heard from me. But it is different now, as you have heard it in the midst of the great sight."

p. 306

The account of Abraham our father binding his son, includes two great ideas or principles of our faith. First, it shows us the extent and limit of the fear of God. Abraham is commanded to perform a certain act, which is not equalled by any surrender of property or by any sacrifice of life, for it surpasses everything that can be done, and belongs to the class of actions which are believed to be contrary to human feelings. He had been without child, and had been longing for a child; he had great riches, and was expecting that a nation should spring from his seed. After all hope of a son had already been given up, a son was born unto him. How great must have been his delight in the child! how intensely must he have loved him! And yet because he feared God, and loved to do what God commanded, he thought little of that beloved child, and set aside all his hopes concerning him, and consented to kill him after a journey of three days. If the act by which he showed his readiness to kill his son had taken place immediately when he received the commandment, it might have been the result of confusion and not of consideration. But the fact that he performed it three days after he had received the commandment, proves the presence of thought, proper consideration, and careful examination of what is due to the Divine command and what is in accordance with the love and fear of God. There is no necessity to look for the presence of any other idea or of anything that might have affected his emotions. For Abraham did not hasten to kill Isaac out of fear that God might slay him or make him poor, but solely because it is man's duty to love and to fear God, even without hope of reward or fear of punishment. We have repeatedly explained this. The angel, therefore, says to him, "For now I know," etc. (*ibid.* ver. 12), that is, from this action, for which you deserve to be truly called a God-fearing man, all people shall learn how far we must go in the fear of God. This idea is confirmed in Scripture: it is distinctly stated that one sole thing, fear of God, is the object of the whole Law with its affirmative and negative precepts, its promises and its historical examples,

for it is said, "If thou wilt not observe to do all the words of this Law that are written in this book, that thou mayest fear this glorious and fearful name, the Lord thy God," etc. (Deut. xxviii. 58). This is one of the two purposes of the *'akedah* (sacrifice or binding of Isaac).

The second purpose is to show how the prophets believed in the truth of that which came to them from God by way of inspiration. We shall not think that what the prophets heard or saw in allegorical figures may at times have included incorrect or doubtful elements, since the Divine communication was made to them, as we have shown, in a dream or a vision and through the imaginative faculty. Scripture thus tells us that whatever the Prophet perceives in a prophetic vision, he considers as true and correct and not open to any doubt; it is in his eyes like all other things perceived by the senses or by the intellect. This is proved by the consent of Abraham to slay "his only son whom he loved," as he was commanded, although the commandment was received in a dream or a vision. If the Prophets had any doubt or suspicion as regards the truth of what they saw in a prophetic dream or perceived in a prophetic vision, they would not have consented to do what is unnatural, and Abraham would not have found in his soul strength enough to perform that act, if he had any doubt [as regards the truth of the commandment]. It was just the right thing that this lesson derived from the

p. 307

[paragraph continues] *'akedah* ("sacrifice") should be taught through Abraham and a man like Isaac. For Abraham was the first to teach the Unity of God, to establish the faith (in Him), to cause it to remain among coming generations, and to win his fellow-men for his doctrine; as Scripture says of him: "I know him, that he will command," etc. (Gen. viii. 19). In the same manner as he was followed by others in his true and valuable opinions when they were heard from him, so also the principles should be accepted that may be learnt from his actions; especially from the act by which he confirmed the principle of the truth of prophecy, and showed how far we must go in the fear and the love of God.

This is the way how we have to understand the accounts of trials; we must not think that God desires to examine us and to try us in order to know what He did not know before. Far is this from Him; He is far above that which ignorant and foolish people imagine concerning Him, in the evil of their thoughts. Note this.

CHAPTER XXV

[MAN'S] actions are divided as regards their object into four classes; they are either *purposeless*, *unimportant*, *in vain*, or *good*. An action is *in vain* if the object which is sought by it is not obtained on account of some obstacles. Thus people frequently use the phrase "thou hast worked in vain" in reference to a person who looks out for some one and cannot find him: or who undertakes the troubles of a journey for his business without profit. Our endeavours and exertions are *in vain* as regards a patient that is not cured. This applies to all actions which are intended for certain purposes that are not realized. *Purposeless* are such actions, which serve no

purpose at all. Some persons, e.g., do something with their hands whilst thinking of something else. The actions of the insane and confused are of this kind. *Unimportant* are such actions by which a trivial object is sought, an object that is not necessary and is not of great use. This is the case when a person dances without seeking to benefit his digestion by that exercise, or performs certain actions for the purpose of causing laughter. Such actions are certainly mere pastimes. Whether an action belongs to this class or not depends on the intention of those who perform it, and on the degree of their perfection. For many things are necessary or very useful in the opinion of one person and superfluous in the opinion of another. E.g., bodily exercise, in its different kinds, is necessary for the proper preservation of health in the opinion of him who understands the science of medicine; writing is considered as very useful by scholars. When people take exercise by playing with the ball, wrestling, stretching out the hands or keeping back the breathing, or do certain things as preparation for writing, shape the pen and get the paper ready, such actions are mere pastimes in the eyes of the ignorant, but the wise do not consider them as unimportant. *Useful* are such actions as serve a proper purpose: being either necessary or useful for the purpose which is to be attained. This division [of man's actions] is, as I believe, not open to any objection. For every action is either intended for a certain purpose or is not intended; and if intended for a certain purpose, that purpose

p. 308

may be important or unimportant, is sometimes attained and sometimes missed. This division is therefore complete.

After having explained this division, I contend that no intelligent person can assume that any of the actions of God can be in vain, purposeless, or unimportant. According to our view and the view of all that follow the Law of Moses, all actions of God are "exceedingly good." Thus Scripture says, "And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good" (Gen. i. 31). And that which God made for a certain thing is necessary or [at least] very useful for the existence of that thing. Thus food is necessary for the existence of living beings: the possession of eyes is very useful to man during his life, although food only serves to sustain living beings a certain time, and the senses are only intended to procure to animals the advantages of sensation. The philosophers likewise assume that in Nature there is nothing in vain, so that everything that is not the product of human industry serves a certain purpose, which may be known or unknown to us. There are thinkers that assume that God does not create one thing for the sake of another, that existing things are not to each other in the relation of cause and effect; that they are all the direct result of the Will of God, and do not serve any purpose. According to this opinion we cannot ask why has He made this and not that; for He does what pleases Him, without following a fixed system. Those who defend this theory must consider the actions of God as purposeless, and even as inferior to purposeless actions: for when we perform purposeless actions, our attention is engaged by other things and we do not know what we are doing; but God, according to these theorists, knows what He is doing, and knowingly does it for no purpose or use whatever. The absurdity of assuming that some of God's actions are trivial, is apparent even at

first sight, and no notice need be taken of the nonsensical idea that monkeys were created for our pastime. Such opinions originate only in man's ignorance of the nature of transient beings, and in his overlooking the principle that it was intended by the Creator to produce in its present form everything whose existence is possible; a different form was not decreed by the Divine Wisdom, and the existence [of objects of a different form] is therefore impossible, because the existence of all things depends on the decree of God's wisdom. Those who hold that God's works serve no purpose whatever believe that an examination of the totality of existing things compels them to adopt this theory. They ask what is the purpose of the whole Universe? they necessarily answer, like all those who believe in the Creation, that it was created because God willed it so, and for no other purpose. The same answer they apply to all parts of the Universe, and do not admit that the hole in the uvea and the transparency of the cornea are intended for the purpose of allowing the *spiritus visus* to pass and to perceive certain objects; they do not assume that these circumstances are causes for the sight; the hole in the uvea and the transparent matter over it are not there because of the sight, but because of the Will of God, although the sense of sight could have been created in a different form. There are passages in the Bible which at first sight we might understand to imply this theory. E.g., "The Lord hath done whatever he pleased" (Ps. cxxxv. 6); "His soul desired it and he made it" (Job xxiii. 13); "Who will say unto thee, What doest thou?" (Eccles. viii. 4). The meaning of these and similar

p. 309

verses is this: whatever God desires to do is necessarily done; there is nothing that could prevent the realization of His will. The object of His will is only that which is possible, and of the things possible only such as His wisdom decrees upon. When God desires to produce the best work, no obstacle or hindrance intervenes between Him and that work. This is the opinion held by all religious people, also by the philosophers; it is also our opinion. For although we believe that God created the Universe from nothing, most of our wise and learned men believe that the Creation was not the exclusive result of His will; but His wisdom, which we are unable to comprehend, made the actual existence of the Universe necessary. The same unchangeable wisdom found it as necessary that non-existence should precede the existence of the Universe. Our Sages frequently express this idea in the explanation of the words, "He hath made everything beautiful in his time" (Eccles. iii. 11), only in order to avoid that which is objectionable, viz., the opinion that God does things without any purpose whatever. This is the belief of most of our Theologians: and in a similar manner have the Prophets expressed the idea that all parts of natural products are well arranged, in good order, connected with each other, and stand to each other in the relation of cause and effect; nothing of them is purposeless, trivial, or in vain; they are all the result of great wisdom. Comp. "O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches" (Ps. civ. 24); "And all his works are done in truth" (*ibid.* 4) "The Lord by wisdom hath founded the earth" (Prov. iii. 19). This idea occurs frequently; there is no necessity to believe otherwise; philosophic speculation leads to the same result; viz., that in the whole of Nature there is nothing purposeless, trivial, or unnecessary,

especially in the Nature of the spheres, which are in the best condition and order, in accordance with their superior substance.

Know that the difficulties which lead to confusion in the question what is the purpose of the Universe or of any of its parts, arise from two causes: firstly, man has an erroneous idea of himself, and believes that the whole world exists only for his sake; secondly, he is ignorant both about the nature of the sublunary world, and about the Creator's intention to give existence to all beings whose existence is possible, because existence is undoubtedly good. The consequences of that error and of the ignorance about the two things named, are doubts and confusion, which lead many to imagine that some of God's works are trivial, others purposeless, and others in vain. Those who adopt this absurd idea that God's actions are utterly purposeless, and refuse to consider them as the result of His wisdom, are afraid they might otherwise be compelled to admit the theory of the Eternity of the Universe, and guard themselves against it by the above theory I have already told you the view which is set forth in Scripture on this question, and which it is proper to accept. It is this: it is not unreasonable to assume that the works of God, their existence and preceding non-existence, are the result of His wisdom, but we are unable to understand many of the ways of His wisdom in His works. On this principle the whole Law of Moses is based; it begins with this principle: "And God saw all that He had made, and, behold, it was very good" (Gen. i. 31); and it ends with this principle: "The Rock, perfect is His work" (Deut. xxxii. 4). Note it. When you examine this

p. 310

view and that of the philosophers, taking into consideration all preceding chapters which are connected with this subject, you will find that there is no other difference of opinion as regards any portions of the Universe, except that the philosophers believe in the Eternity of the Universe and we believe in the Creation. Note this.

CHAPTER XXVI

As Theologians are divided on the question whether the actions of God are the result of His wisdom, or only of His will without being intended for any purpose whatever, so they are also divided as regards the object of the commandments which God gave us. Some of them hold that the commandments have no object at all; and are only dictated by the will of God. Others are of opinion that all commandments and prohibitions are dictated by His wisdom and serve a certain aim; consequently there is a reason for each one of the precepts: they are enjoined because they are useful. All of us, the common people as well as the scholars, believe that there is a reason for every precept, although there are commandments the reason of which is unknown to us, and in which the ways of God's wisdom are incomprehensible. This view is distinctly expressed in Scripture; comp. "righteous statutes and judgments" (Deut. iv. 8); "the judgments of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether" (Ps. xix. 10). There are commandments which are called *hukkim*, "ordinances," like the prohibition of wearing garments of wool and linen (*sha'atnez*), boiling

meat and milk together, and the sending of the goat [into the wilderness on the Day of Atonement]. Our Sages use in reference to them phrases like the following: "These are things which I have fully ordained for thee: and you dare not criticize them"; "Your evil inclination is turned against them"; and "non-Jews find them strange." But our Sages generally do not think that such precepts have no cause whatever, and serve no purpose; for this would lead us to assume that God's actions are purposeless. On the contrary, they hold that even these ordinances have a cause, and are certainly intended for some use, although it is not known to us; owing either to the deficiency of our knowledge or the weakness of our intellect. Consequently there is a cause for every commandment: every positive or negative precept serves a useful object; in some cases the usefulness is evident, e.g., the prohibition of murder and theft; in others the usefulness is not so evident, e.g., the prohibition of enjoying the fruit of a tree in the first three years (Lev. xix. 73), or of a vineyard in which other seeds have been growing (Deut. xxii. 9). Those commandments, whose object is generally evident, are called "judgments" (*mishpatim*); those whose object is not generally clear are called "ordinances" (*hukkim*). Thus they say [in reference to the words of Moses]: *Ki lo dabar rek hu mi-kem* (lit. "for it is not a vain thing for you, "Deut. xxxii. 74); "It is not in vain, and if it is in vain, it is only so through you." That is to say, the giving of these commandments is not a vain thing and without any useful object; and if it appears so to you in any commandment, it is owing to the deficiency in your comprehension. You certainly know the famous saying that Solomon knew the reason for all commandments except that of the "red heifer." Our Sages also said that God concealed

p. 311

the causes of commandments, lest people should despise them, as Solomon did in respect to three commandments, the reason for which is clearly stated. In this sense they always speak; and Scriptural texts support the idea. I have, however, found one utterance made by them in *Bereshit-rabba* (sect. xliv.), which might at first sight appear to imply that some commandments have no other reason but the fact that they are commanded, that no other object is intended by them, and that they do not serve any useful object I mean the following passage: What difference does it make to God whether a beast is killed by cutting the neck in front or in the back? Surely the commandments are only intended as a means of trying man; in accordance with the verse, "The word of God is a test" (lit. tried) (Ps. xviii. 31). Although this passage is very strange, and has no parallel in the writings of our Sages, I explain it, as you shall soon hear, in such a manner that I remain in accord with the meaning of their words and do not depart from the principle which we agreed upon, that the commandments serve a useful object; "for it is not a vain thing for you"; "I have not said to the seed of Jacob, seek me in vain. I the Lord speak righteousness, declare that which is right" (Isa. xlv. 19). I will now tell you what intelligent persons ought to believe in this respect; namely, that each commandment has necessarily a cause, as far as its general character is concerned, and serves a certain object; but as regards its details we hold that it has no ulterior object. Thus killing animals for the purpose of obtaining good food is certainly useful, as we intend to show (below, ch. xlvi.); that, however, the killing should not be performed by *nehirah*

(poleaxing the animal), but by *shehitah* (cutting the neck), and by dividing the œsophagus and the windpipe in a certain place; these regulations and the like are nothing but tests for man's obedience. In this sense you will understand the example quoted by our Sages [that there is no difference] between killing the animal by cutting its neck in front and cutting it in the back. I give this instance only because it has been mentioned by our Sages; but in reality [there is some reason for these regulations]. For as it has become necessary to eat the flesh of animals, it was intended by the above regulations to ensure an easy death and to effect it by suitable means; whilst decapitation requires a sword or a similar instrument, the *shehitah* can be performed with any instrument; and in order to ensure an easy death our Sages insisted that the knife should be well sharpened.

A more suitable instance can be cited from the detailed commandments concerning sacrifices. The law that sacrifices should be brought is evidently of great use, as will be shown by us (*infra*, chap. xlvi.); but we cannot say why one offering should be a lamb, whilst another is a ram; and why a fixed number of them should be brought. Those who trouble themselves to find a cause for any of these detailed rules, are in my eyes void of sense: they do not remove any difficulties, but rather increase them. Those who believe that these detailed rules originate in a certain cause, are as far from the truth as those who assume that the whole law is useless. You must know that Divine Wisdom demanded it--or, if you prefer, say that circumstances made it necessary--that there should be parts [of His work] which have no certain object: and as regards the Law, it appears to be impossible that it should not include some matter of this kind. That it cannot be avoided

p. 312

may be seen from the following instance. You ask why must a lamb be sacrificed and not a ram? but the same question would be asked, why a ram had been commanded instead of a lamb, so long as one particular kind is required. The same is to be said as to the question why were seven lambs sacrificed and not eight; the same question might have been asked if there were eight, ten, or twenty lambs, so long as some definite number of lambs were sacrificed. It is almost similar to the nature of a thing which can receive different forms, but actually receives one of them. We must not ask why it has this form and not another which is likewise possible, because we should have to ask the same question if instead of its actual form the thing had any of the other possible forms. Note this, and understand it. The repeated assertion of our Sages that there are reasons for all commandments, and the tradition that Solomon knew them, refer to the general purpose of the commandments, and not to the object of every detail. This being the case, I find it convenient to divide the six hundred and thirteen precepts into classes: each class will include many precepts of the same kind, or related to each other by their character. I will [first] explain the reason of each class, and show its undoubted and undisputed object, and then I shall discuss each commandment in the class, and expound its reason. Only very few will be left unexplained, the reason for which I have been unable to trace unto this day. I have also been able to comprehend in some cases even the object of many of the conditions and details as far as these can be

discovered. You will hear all this later on. But in order to fully explain these reasons I must premise several chapters; in these I will discuss principles which form the basis of my theory. I will now begin these chapters.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE general object of the Law is twofold: the well-being of the soul, and the well-being of the body. The well-being of the soul is promoted by correct opinions communicated to the people according to their capacity. Some of these opinions are therefore imparted in a plain form, others allegorically: because certain opinions are in their plain form too strong for the capacity of the common people. The well-being of the body is established by a proper management of the relations in which we live one to another. This we can attain in two ways: first by removing all violence from our midst: that is to say, that we do not do every one as he pleases, desires, and is able to do; but every one of us does that which contributes towards the common welfare. Secondly, by teaching every one of us such good morals as must produce a good social state. Of these two objects, the one, the well-being of the soul, or the communication of correct opinions, comes undoubtedly first in rank, but the other, the well-being of the body, the government of the state, and the establishment of the best possible relations among men, is anterior in nature and time. The latter object is required first; it is also treated [in the Law] most carefully and most minutely, because the well-being of the soul can only be obtained after that of the body has been secured. For it has already been found that man has a double perfection: the first perfection is that of the body, and the second perfection is that of

p. 313

the soul. The first consists in the most healthy condition of his material relations, and this is only possible when man has all his wants supplied, as they arise; if he has his food, and other things needful for his body, e.g., shelter, bath, and the like. But one man alone cannot procure all this; it is impossible for a single man to obtain this comfort; it is only possible in society, since man, as is well known, is by nature social.

The second perfection of man consists in his becoming an actually intelligent being; i.e., he knows about the things in existence all that a person perfectly developed is capable of knowing. This second perfection certainly does not include any action or good conduct, but only knowledge, which is arrived at by speculation, or established by research.

It is clear that the second and superior kind of perfection can only be attained when the first perfection has been acquired; for a person that is suffering from great hunger, thirst, heat, or cold, cannot grasp an idea even if communicated by others, much less can he arrive at it by his own reasoning. But when a person is in possession of the first perfection, then he may possibly acquire the second perfection, which is undoubtedly of a superior kind, and is alone the source of eternal life. The true Law, which as we said is one, and beside which there is no other Law, viz., the Law of our teacher Moses, has for its purpose to give us the twofold perfection. It aims first

at the establishment of good mutual relations among men by removing injustice and creating the noblest feelings. In this way the people in every land are enabled to stay and continue in one condition, and every one can acquire his first perfection. Secondly, it seeks to train us in faith, and to impart correct and true opinions when the intellect is sufficiently developed. Scripture clearly mentions the twofold perfection, and tells us that its acquisition is the object of all the divine commandments. Comp. "And the Lord commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive as it is this day" (Deut. vi. 24). Here the second perfection is first mentioned because it is of greater importance, being, as we have shown, the ultimate aim of man's existence. This perfection is expressed in the phrase, "for our good always." You know the interpretation of our Sages, "'that it may be well with thee' (*ibid.* xxii. 7), namely, in the world that is all good, 'and that thou mayest prolong thy days' (*ibid.*), i.e., in the world that is all eternal." In the same sense I explain the words, "for our good always," to mean that we may come into the world that is all good and eternal, where we may live permanently; and the words, "that he might preserve us alive as it is this day," I explain as referring to our first and temporal existence, to that of our body, which cannot be in a perfect and good condition except by the co-operation of society, as has been shown by us.

CHAPTER XXVIII

IT is necessary to bear in mind that Scripture only teaches the chief points of those true principles which lead to the true perfection of man, and only demands in general terms faith in them. Thus Scripture teaches the Existence, the Unity, the Omniscience, the Omnipotence, the Will, and the Eternity of God. All this is given in the form of final results, but they

p. 314

cannot be understood fully and accurately except after the acquisition of many kinds of knowledge. Scripture further demands belief in certain truths, the belief in which is indispensable in regulating our social relations: such is the belief that God is angry with those who disobey Him, for it leads us to the fear and dread of disobedience [to the will of God]. There are other truths in reference to the whole of the Universe which form the substance of the various and many kinds of speculative sciences, and afford the means of verifying the above-mentioned principles as their final result. But Scripture does not so distinctly prescribe the belief in them as it does in the first case; it is implied in the commandment, "to love the Lord" (Deut. xi. 13). It may be inferred from the words, "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might" (*ibid.* vi. 5), what stress is laid on this commandment to love God. We have already shown in the Mishneh-torah (*Yes. ha-torah* ii. 2) that this love is only possible when we comprehend the real nature of things, and understand the divine wisdom displayed therein. We have likewise mentioned there what our Sages remark on this subject.

The result of all these preliminary remarks is this: The reason of a commandment, whether positive or negative, is clear, and its usefulness evident, if it directly tends to remove injustice, or

to teach good conduct that furthers the well-being of society, or to impart a truth which ought to be believed either on its own merit or as being indispensable for facilitating the removal of injustice or the teaching of good morals. There is no occasion to ask for the object of such commandments: for no one can, e.g., be in doubt as to the reason why we have been commanded to believe that God is one; why we are forbidden to murder, to steal, and to take vengeance, or to retaliate, or why we are commanded to love one another. But there are precepts concerning which people are in doubt, and of divided opinions, some believing that they are mere commands, and serve no purpose whatever, whilst others believe that they serve a certain purpose, which, however, is unknown to man. Such are those precepts which in their literal meaning do not seem to further any of the three above-named results: to impart some truth, to teach some moral, or to remove injustice. They do not seem to have any influence upon the well-being of the soul by imparting any truth, or upon the well-being of the body by suggesting such ways and rules as are useful in the government of a state, or in the management of a household. Such are the prohibitions of wearing garments containing wool and linen; of sowing divers seeds, or of boiling meat and milk together; the commandment of covering the blood [of slaughtered beasts and birds], the ceremony of breaking the neck of a calf [in case of a person being found slain, and the murderer being unknown]; the law concerning the first-born of an ass, and the like. I am prepared to tell you my explanation of all these commandments, and to assign for them a true reason supported by proof, with the exception of some minor rules, and of a few commandments, as I have mentioned above. I will show that all these and similar laws must have some bearing upon one of the following three things, viz., the regulation of our opinions, or the improvement of our social relations, which implies two things, the removal of injustice, and the teaching of good morals. Consider what we said of the opinions [implied in the laws]; in some cases the law contains a truth which is itself the only

p. 315

object of that law, as e.g., the truth of the Unity, Eternity, and Incorporeality of God; in other cases, that truth is only the means of securing the removal of injustice, or the acquisition of good morals; such is the belief that God is angry with those who oppress their fellow-men, as it is said, "Mine anger will be kindled, and I will slay," etc. (Exod. xxii. 23); or the belief that God hears the crying of the oppressed and vexed, to deliver them out of the hands of the oppressor and tyrant, as it is written, "And it shall come to pass, when he will cry unto me, that I will hear, for I am gracious" (Exod. xxii. 25).

CHAPTER XXIX

IT is well known that the Patriarch Abraham was brought up in the religion and the opinion of the Sabeans, that there is no divine being except the stars. I will tell you in this chapter their works which are at present extant in Arabic translations, and also in their ancient chronicles; and I will show you their opinion and their practice according to these books. You will then see clearly that they consider the stars as deities, and the sun as the chief deity. They believe that all

the seven stars are gods, but the two luminaries are greater than all the rest. They say distinctly that the sun governs the world, both that which is above and that which is below; these are exactly their expressions. In these books, and in their chronicles, the history of Abraham our father is given in the following manner. Abraham was brought up in Kutha; when he differed from the people and declared that there is a Maker besides the sun, they raised certain objections, and mentioned in their arguments the evident and manifest action of the sun in the Universe. "You are right," said Abraham; "[the sun acts in the same manner] as 'the axe in the hand of him that hews with it.'" Then some of his arguments against his opponents are mentioned. In short, the king put him in prison; but he continued many days, while in prison, to argue against them. At last the king was afraid that Abraham might corrupt the kingdom, and turn the people away from their religion; he therefore expelled Abraham into Syria, after having deprived him of all his property.

This is their account which you find clearly stated in the book called *The Nabatean Agriculture*. Nothing is said there of the account given in our trustworthy books, nor do they mention what he learnt by way of prophecy; for they refused to believe him, because he attacked their evil doctrine. I do not doubt that when he attacked the doctrine of all his fellowmen, he was cursed, despised, and scorned by these people who adhered to their erroneous opinions. When he submitted to this treatment for the sake of God, as ought to be done for the sake of His glory, God said to him, "And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse them that curse thee" (Gen. xii. 3). The result of the course which Abraham took, is the fact that most people, as we see at present, agree in praising him, and being proud of him; so that even those who are not his descendants call themselves by his name. No one opposes him, and no one ignores his merits, except some ignoble remnants of the nations left in the remote corners of the earth, like the savage Turks in the extreme North, and the Indians in the extreme South. These are remnants of the Sabeans, who once filled the earth.

p. 316

[paragraph continues] Those who were able to think, and were philosophers in those days, could only raise themselves to the idea that God is the spirit of the spheres: the spheres with their stars being the body, and God the spirit. Abu-becr al-Zaig mentions this in his Commentary on the book of Physics.

All the Sabeans thus believed in the eternity of the Universe, the heavens being in their opinion God. Adam was in their belief a human being born from male and female, like the rest of mankind; he was only distinguished from his fellow-men by being a prophet sent by the moon; he accordingly called men to the worship of the moon, and he wrote several works on agriculture. The Sabeans further relate that Noah was an agriculturist, and that he was not pleased with the worship of idols; they blame him for that, and say that he did not worship any image. In their writings we meet even with the statement that Noah was rebuked and imprisoned because he worshipped God, and with many other accounts about him. The Sabeans contend that

Seth differed from his father Adam, as regards the worship of the moon. They manufactured ridiculous stories, which prove that their authors were very deficient in knowledge, that they were by no means philosophers, but on the contrary were extremely ignorant persons. Adam, they say, left the torrid zone near India and entered the region of Babylon, bringing with him wonderful things, such as a golden tree, that was growing, and had leaves and branches: a stone tree of the same kind, and a fresh leaf of a tree proof against fire. He related that there was a tree which could shelter ten thousand men, although it had only the height of a man; two leaves he brought with him, each of which was sufficient to cover two men. Of these stories the Sabeans have a wonderful abundance. I am surprised that persons who think that the Universe is eternal, can yet believe in these things which nature cannot produce, as is known to every student of Natural Science. They only mention Adam, and relate the above stories about him, in order to support their theory of the Eternity of the Universe; from this theory they then derive the doctrine that the stars and the spheres are deities. When [Abraham] the "Pillar of the World" appeared, he became convinced that there is a spiritual Divine Being, which is not a body, nor a force residing in a body, but is the author of the spheres and the stars: and he saw the absurdity of the tales in which he had been brought up. He therefore began to attack the belief of the Sabeans, to expose the falsehood of their opinions, and to proclaim publicly in opposition to them, "the name of the Lord, the God of the Universe" (Gen. xxi. 33), which proclamation included at the same time the Existence of God, and the Creation of the Universe by God.

In accordance with the Sabean theories images were erected to the stars, golden images to the sun, images of silver to the moon, and they attributed the metals and the climates to the influence of the planets, saying that a certain planet is the god of a certain zone. They built temples, placed in them images, and assumed that the stars sent forth their influence upon these images, which are thereby enabled (to speak) to understand, to comprehend, to inspire human beings, and to tell them what is useful to them. They apply the same to trees which fall to the lot of these stars. When, namely, a certain tree, which is peculiar to a certain star, is dedicated to the name of this star, and certain things are done for the tree and to the tree, the

p. 317

spiritual force of that star which influences that tree, inspires men, and speaks to them when they are asleep. All this is written in their works, to which I will call your attention. It applies to the "prophets of Baal," and the "prophets of Asherah," mentioned in Scripture, in whose hearts the Sabean theories had taken root, who forsook God, and called, "Baal, hear us" (1 Kings xviii. 26); because these theories were then general, ignorance had spread, and the madness with which people adhered to this kind of imaginations had increased in the world. When such opinions were adopted among the Israelites, they had observers of clouds, enchanter, witches, charmers, consultants with familiar spirits, wizards, and necromancers.

We have shown in our large work, *Mishneh-torah* (Hilkot, *'Abodah-zarah*, i. 3), that Abraham was the first that opposed these theories by arguments and by soft and persuasive speech. He

induced these people, by showing kindness to them, to serve God. Afterwards came the chief of the prophets, and completed the work by the commandment to slay those unbelievers, to blot out their name, and to uproot them from the land of the living. Comp. "Ye shall destroy their altars," etc. (Exod. xxxiv. 13). He forbade us to follow their ways; he said, "Ye shall not walk in the manners of the heathen", etc. (Lev. XX. 23). You know from the repeated declarations in the Law that the principal purpose of the whole Law was the removal and utter destruction of idolatry, and all that is connected therewith, even its name, and everything that might lead to any such practices, e.g., acting as a consulter with familiar spirits, or as a wizard, passing children through the fire, divining, observing the clouds, enchanting, charming, or inquiring of the dead. The law prohibits us to imitate the heathen in any of these deeds, and *a fortiori* to adopt them entirely. It is distinctly said in the Law that everything which idolaters consider as service to their gods, and a means of approaching them, is rejected and despised by God; comp. "for every abomination to the Lord, which he hateth, have they done unto their gods" (Deut. xii. 3 1). In the books which I shall name to you later on, it is stated that on certain occasions they offered to the sun, their greatest god, seven beetles, and seven mice, and seven bats. This alone suffices to show how disgusting their practice must be to human nature. Thus all precepts cautioning against idolatry, or against that which is connected therewith, leads to it, or is related to it, are evidently useful. They all tend to save us from the evil doctrines that deprive us of everything useful for the acquisition of the twofold perfection of man, by leading to those absurd practices in which our fathers and ancestors have been brought up. Comp. "And Joshua said unto all the people, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, your fathers dwelt on the other side of the river in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nahor, and they served other gods" (Josh. xxiv. 2). It is in reference to these [idolatrous ideas] that the true prophets exclaim, "They walked after [vain] things, which do not profit." How great is the usefulness of every precept that delivers us from this great error, and leads us back to the true faith: that God, the Creator of all things, rules the Universe: that He must be served, loved, and feared, and not those imaginary deities. According to this faith we approach the true God, and obtain His favour without having recourse to burdensome means: for nothing else is required but to love and fear Him; this is the aim in serving

p. 318

[paragraph continues] God, as will be shown. Comp. "And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee but to fear the Lord"? etc. (Deut. x. 12). I shall complete this subject later on: now let us return to the theme [of this chapter].

I say that my knowledge of the belief, practice, and worship of the Sabeans has given me an insight into many of the divine precepts, and has led me to know their reason. You will confirm it when I shall give the reason of commandments which are seemingly purposeless. I will mention to you the works from which you may learn all that I know of the religion and the opinions of the Sabeans; you will thereby obtain a true knowledge of my theory as regards the purpose of the divine precepts.

The great book on this subject is the book *On the Nabatean Agriculture*, translated by Ibn Wahshiya. In a succeeding chapter I shall explain why the Sabeans had their religious doctrines written in a work on agriculture. The book is full of the absurdities of idolatrous people, and with those things to which the minds of the multitude easily turn and adhere [perseveringly]; it speaks of talismans, the means of directing the influence [of the stars]; witchcraft, spirits, and demons that dwell in the wilderness. There occur also in this book great absurdities, which are ridiculous in the eyes of intelligent people. They were intended as a criticism and an attack on the evident miracles by which all people learnt that there exists a God who is judge over all people. Comp. "That thou mayest know how that the earth is the Lord's" (Exod. ix. 29), "That I am the Lord in the midst of the earth" (*ibid.* viii. 18).

The book describes things as having been mentioned by Adam, in his book; a tree which is found in India, and has the peculiarity that any branch taken from it and thrown to the ground creeps along and moves like serpents; it also mentions a tree which in its root resembles a human being, utters a loud sound, and speaks a word or words; a plant is mentioned which has this peculiarity, that a leaf of it put on the neck of a person conceals that person from the sight of men, and enables him to enter or leave a place without being seen, and if any part of it is burnt in open air a noise and terrible sounds are heard whilst the smoke ascends. Numerous fables of this kind are introduced in the description of the wonders of plants and the properties of agriculture. This leads the author to argue against the [true] miracles, and to say that they were the result of artifice.

Among other fables we read there that the plant althea, one of the Asherot, which they made, as I told you, stood in Nineveh twelve thousand years. This tree had once a quarrel with the mandragora, which wanted to take the place of the former. The person who had been inspired by this tree ceased to receive inspiration: when after some time the prophetic power had returned to him, he was told by the althea that the latter had been engaged in a dispute with the mandragora. He was then commanded to write to the magicians that they should decide whether the althea or the mandragora was better and more effective in witchcraft. It is a long story, and you may learn from it, when you read it, the opinions and the wisdom of the men of that time. Such were in those days of darkness the wise men of Babel, to whom reference is made in Scripture, and such were the beliefs in which they were trained. And were it not that the theory of the Existence

p. 319

of God is at present generally accepted, our days would now have been darker than those days, though in other respects. I return now to my subject.

In that book the following story is also related: One of the idolatrous prophets, named Tammuz, called upon the king to worship the seven planets and the twelve constellations of the Zodiac: whereupon the king killed him in a dreadful manner. The night of his death the images from all

parts of the land came together in the temple of Babylon which was devoted to the image of the Sun, the great golden image. This image, which was suspended between heaven and earth, came down into the midst of the temple, and surrounded by all other images commenced to mourn for Tammuz, and to relate what had befallen him. All other images cried and mourned the whole night; at dawn they flew away and returned to their temples in every corner of the earth. Hence the regular custom arose for the women to weep, lament, mourn, and cry for Tammuz on the first day of the month of Tammuz.

Consider what opinions people had in these days. The legend of Tammuz is very old among the Sabeans. This book will disclose to you most of the perverse ideas and practices of the Sabeans, including their feasts. But you must be careful and must not be misled to think that we have real incidents in the life of Adam, or of any other person, or any real fact in the stories which they relate about Adam, the serpent, the tree of knowledge of good and evil, and the allusion to the garment of Adam which he had not been accustomed to wear. A little consideration will lay open the falsehood of all these accounts; it will show that they have been invented in imitation of the Pentateuch when it became known among the nations. The account of the Creation was heard, and it was taken entirely in its literal sense. They have done this in order that the ignorant may hear it, and be persuaded to assume the Eternity of the Universe, and to believe that the Scriptural account contained facts which happened in the manner as has been assumed by the Sabeans.

It is by no means necessary to point this out to men like you. You have acquired sufficient knowledge to keep your mind free from the absurdities of the Kasdim, Chaldeans, and Sabeans, who are bare of every true science. But I wish to exhort you that you should caution others, for ordinary people are very much inclined to believe these fables.

To the same class of books we count the book Istimachis, attributed to Aristotle, who can by no means have been its author; also the books on Talismans, such as the book of Tomtom; the book al-Sarb: the book on the degrees of the sphere and the constellations rising with each degree: a book on Talismans attributed to Aristotle, a book ascribed to Hermes, a book of the Sabean Ishak in defence of the Sabean religion, and his large work on Sabean customs, details of their religion, ceremonies, festivals, offerings, prayers and other things relating to their faith.

All these books which I have mentioned are works on idolatry translated into Arabic; there is no doubt that they form a very small portion in comparison to that which has not been translated, and that which is no longer extant, but has been lost in the course of time. But those works which are at present extant, include most of the opinions of the Sabeans and their practices, which are to some degree still in vogue in the world.

p. 320

They describe how temples are built and images of metal and stone placed in them, altars erected and sacrifices and various kinds of food are offered thereon, festivals celebrated, meetings held

in the temples for prayer and other kinds of service: how they select certain very distinguished places and call them temples of Intellectual Images (or Forms); how they make images "on the high mountains" (Deut. xii. 2), rear *asherot*, erect pillars, and do many other things which you can learn from the books mentioned by us. The knowledge of these theories and practices is of great importance in explaining the reasons of the precepts. For it is the principal object of the Law and the axis round which it turns, to blot out these opinions from man's heart and make the existence of idolatry impossible. As regards the former Scripture says: "Lest your heart be persuaded," etc. (Deut. xi. 16), "whose heart turneth away to-day," etc. (*ibid.* xxix. 17). The actual abolition of idolatry is expressed in the following passage: "Ye shall destroy their altars, and burn their groves in fire" (Deut. vii. 5), "and ye shall destroy their name," etc. (xii. 3). These two things are frequently repeated; they form the principal and first object of the whole Law, as our Sages distinctly told us in their traditional explanation of the words "all that God commanded you by the hand of Moses" (Num. xv. 25); for they say, "Hence we learn that those who follow idolatry deny as it were their adhesion to the whole Law, and those who reject idolatry follow as it were the whole Law." (B. T. Kidd, 40a.) Note it.

CHAPTER XXX

ON examining these old and foolish doctrines we find that it was most generally believed by the people that by the worship of stars the earth will become inhabited, and the ground fertilized. The wise, pious, and sin-fearing men among them reprov'd the people and taught them that agriculture, on which the preservation of mankind depended, would become perfect and satisfy man's wishes, when he worshipp'd the sun and the stars. If man provok'd these beings by his rebelliousness, the towns would become empty and waste. In the above-named books it is stated that Mars was angry with [lands, that form now] deserts and wastes, and in consequence of that anger they were deprived of water and trees, and have become the habitation of demons. Tillers of the ground and husbandmen are praised in those books, because they are engaged with the cultivation of the land in accordance with the will and desire of the stars. The idolaters also held cattle in esteem on account of their use in agriculture, and went even so far as to say, that it is not allowed to slay them, because they combine in themselves strength and willingness to do the work of man in tilling the ground. The oxen, notwithstanding their great strength, do this, and submit to man, because it is the will of God that they should be employed in agriculture. When these views became generally known, idolatry was connected with agriculture, because the latter is indispensable for the maintenance of man, and of most animals. The idolatrous priests then preached to the people who met in the temples, and taught them that by certain religious acts, rain would come down, the trees of the field would yield their fruit, and the land would be fertile and inhabited. See what is said in the

p. 321

[paragraph continues] *Nabatean Agriculture* in the chapter on vineyards. The following words of the Sabeans are quoted there: "All ancient wise men advised, and prophets likewise commanded

and enjoined to play before the images on certain instruments during the festivals. They also said--and what they said is true--that the deities are pleased with it, and reward those who do it. They promise, indeed, very great reward for these things; e.g., length of life, protection from illness, exemption from great bodily deformities, plenty of the produce of the earth, and of the fruits of the trees." These are the words of the Sabeans. When these ideas spread, and were considered as true, God, in His great mercy for us, intended to remove this error from our minds, and to protect our bodies from trouble; and therefore desired us to discontinue the practice of these useless actions. He gave us His Law through Moses, our teacher, who told us in the name of God, that the worship of stars and other corporeal beings would effect that rain would cease, the land be waste, and would not produce anything, and the fruit of the trees would wither; calamities would befall the people, their bodies would be deformed, and life would be shortened. These are the contents of "the words of the covenant which God made" (Deut. xxviii. 6-9). It is frequently expressed in all parts of Scripture, that the worship of the stars would be followed by absence of rain, devastation of the land, bad times, diseases, and shortness of life. But abandonment of that worship, and the return to the service of God, would be the cause of the presence of rain, fertility of the ground, good times, health and length of life. Thus Scripture teaches, in order that man should abandon idolatry, the reverse of that which idolatrous priests preached to the people, for, as has been shown by us, the principal object of the Law is to remove this doctrine, and to destroy its traces.

CHAPTER XXXI

THERE are persons who find it difficult to give a reason for any of the commandments, and consider it right to assume that the commandments and prohibitions have no rational basis whatever. They are led to adopt this theory by a certain disease in their soul, the existence of which they perceive, but which they are unable to discuss or to describe. For they imagine that these precepts, if they were useful in any respect, and were commanded because of their usefulness, would seem to originate in the thought and reason of some intelligent being. But as things which are not objects of reason and serve no purpose, they would undoubtedly be attributed to God, because no thought of man could have produced them. According to the theory of those weak-minded persons, man is more perfect than his Creator. For what man says or does has a certain object, whilst the actions of God are different; He commands us to do what is of no use to us, and forbids us to do what is harmless. Far be this! On the contrary, the sole object of the Law is to benefit us. Thus we explained the Scriptural passage, "for our good always, that He might preserve us alive, as it is this day" (Deut. vi. 24). Again, "which shall hear all those statutes (*hukkim*), and say, surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people" (*ibid.* iv. 6). He thus says that even every one of these "statutes" convinces all nations of the wisdom and understanding it includes. But if no reason could be found for

these statutes, if they produced no advantage and removed no evil, why then should he who believes in them and follows them be wise, reasonable, and so excellent as to raise the admiration of all nations? But the truth is undoubtedly as we have said, that every one of the six hundred and thirteen precepts serves to inculcate some truth, to remove some erroneous opinion, to establish proper relations in society, to diminish evil, to train in good manners or to warn against bad habits. All this depends on three things: opinions, morals, and social conduct. We do not count words, because precepts, whether positive or negative, if they relate to speech, belong to those precepts which regulate our social conduct, or to those which spread truth, or to those which teach morals. Thus these three principles suffice for assigning a reason for every one of the Divine commandments.

CHAPTER XXXII

ON considering the Divine acts, or the processes of Nature, we get an insight into the prudence and wisdom of God as displayed in the creation of animals, with the gradual development of the movements of their limbs and the relative positions of the latter, and we perceive also His wisdom and plan in the successive and gradual development of the whole condition of each individual. The gradual development of the animals' movements and the relative position of the limbs may be illustrated by the brain. The front part is very soft, the back part is a little hard, the spinal marrow is still harder, and the farther it extends the harder it becomes. The nerves are the organs of sensation and motion. Some nerves are only required for sensation, or for slight movements, as, e.g., the movement of the eyelids or of the jaws; these nerves originate in the brain. The nerves which are required for the movements of the limbs come from the spinal marrow. But nerves, even those that come directly from the spinal cord, are too soft to set the joints in motion; therefore God made the following arrangement: the nerves branch out into fibres which are covered with flesh, and become muscles: the nerves that come forth at the extremities of the muscles and have already commenced to harden, and to combine with hard pieces of ligaments, are the sinews which are joined and attached to the limbs. By this gradual development the nerves are enabled to set the limbs in motion. I quote this one instance because it is the most evident of the wonders described in the book *On the use of the limbs*; but the use of the limbs is clearly perceived by all who examine them with a sharp eye. In a similar manner did God provide for each individual animal of the class of mammalia. When such an animal is born it is extremely tender, and cannot be fed with dry food. Therefore breasts were provided which yield milk, and the young can be fed with moist food which corresponds to the condition of the limbs of the animal, until the latter have gradually become dry and hard.

Many precepts in our Law are the result of a similar course adopted by the same Supreme Being. It is, namely, impossible to go suddenly from one extreme to the other: it is therefore according to the nature of man impossible for him suddenly to discontinue everything to which he has been accustomed. Now God sent Moses to make [the Israelites] a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Exod. xix. 6) by means of the knowledge of God.

[paragraph continues] Comp. "Unto thee it was showed that thou mightest know that the Lord is God (Deut. iv. 35); "Know therefore this day, and consider it in thine heart, that the Lord is God" (*ibid.* v. 39). The Israelites were commanded to devote themselves to His service; comp. "and to serve him with all your heart" (*ibid.* xi. 13); "and you shall serve the Lord your God" (Exod. xxiii. 25); "and ye shall serve him" (Deut. xiii. 5). But the custom which was in those days general among all men, and the general mode of worship in which the Israelites were brought up, consisted in sacrificing animals in those temples which contained certain images, to bow down to those images, and to bum incense before them; religious and ascetic persons were in those days the persons that were devoted to the service in the temples erected to the stars, as has been explained by us. It was in accordance with the wisdom and plan of God, as displayed in the whole Creation, that He did not command us to give up and to discontinue all these manners of service; for to obey such a commandment it would have been contrary to the nature of man, who generally cleaves to that to which he is used; it would in those days have made the same impression as a prophet would make at present if he called us to the service of God and told us in His name, that we should not pray to Him, not fast, not seek His help in time of trouble; that we should serve Him in thought, and not by any action. For this reason God allowed these kinds of service to continue; He transferred to His service that which had formerly served as a worship of created beings, and of things imaginary and unreal, and commanded us to serve Him in the same manner; viz., to build unto Him a temple; comp. "And they shall make unto me a sanctuary" (Exod. xxv. 8); to have the altar erected to His name; comp. "An altar of earth thou shalt make unto me" (*ibid.* xx. 21); to offer the sacrifices to Him; comp. "If any man of you bring an offering unto the Lord" (Lev. i. 2), to bow down to Him and to bum incense before Him. He has forbidden to do any of these things to any other being; comp. "He who sacrificeth unto any God, save the Lord only, he shall be utterly destroyed" (Exod. xxii. 19); "For thou shalt bow down to no other God" (*ibid.* xxxiv. 14). He selected priests for the service in the temple; comp. "And they shall minister unto me in the priest's office" (*ibid.* xxviii. 41). He made it obligatory that certain gifts, called the gifts of the Levites and the priests, should be assigned to them for their maintenance while they are engaged in the service of the temple and its sacrifices. By this Divine plan it was effected that the traces of idolatry were blotted out, and the truly great principle of our faith, the Existence and Unity of God, was firmly established; this result was thus obtained without deterring or confusing the minds of the people by the abolition of the service to which they were accustomed and which alone was familiar to them. I know that you will at first thought reject this idea and find it strange; you will put the following question to me in your heart: How can we suppose that Divine commandments, prohibitions, and important acts, which are fully explained, and for which certain seasons are fixed, should not have been commanded for their own sake, but only for the sake of some other thing: as if they were only the means which He employed for His primary object? What prevented Him from making His primary object a direct commandment to us, and to give us the capacity of obeying it? Those precepts which in your opinion are only the means and not the

object would then have been unnecessary. Hear my answer, which will cure your heart of this disease and will show you the truth of that which I have pointed out to you. There occurs in the Law a passage which contains exactly the same idea; it is the following: "God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt; but God led the people about, through the way of the wilderness of the Red Sea," etc. (Exod. xiii. 17). Here God led the people about, away from the direct road which He originally intended, because He feared they might meet on that way with hardships too great for their ordinary strength; He took them by another road in order to obtain thereby His original object. In the same manner God refrained from prescribing what the people by their natural disposition would be incapable of obeying, and gave the above-mentioned commandments as a means of securing His chief object, viz., to spread a knowledge of Him [among the people], and to cause them to reject idolatry. It is contrary to man's nature that he should suddenly abandon all the different kinds of Divine service and the different customs in which he has been brought up, and which have been so general, that they were considered as a matter of course; it would be just as if a person trained to work as a slave with mortar and bricks, or similar things, should interrupt his work, clean his hands, and at once fight with real giants. It was the result of God's wisdom that the Israelites were led about in the wilderness till they acquired courage. For it is a well-known fact that travelling in the wilderness, and privation of bodily enjoyments, such as bathing, produce courage, whilst the reverse is the source of faint-heartedness: besides, another generation rose during the wanderings that had not been accustomed to degradation and slavery. All the travelling in the wilderness was regulated by Divine commands through Moses; comp. "At the commandment of the Lord they rested, and at the commandment of the Lord they journeyed; they kept the charge of the Lord and the commandment of the Lord by the hand of Moses" (Num. ix. 23). In the same way the portion of the Law under discussion is the result of divine wisdom, according to which people are allowed to continue the kind of worship to which they have been accustomed, in order that they might acquire the true faith, which is the chief object [of God's commandments]. You ask, What could have prevented God from commanding us directly, that which is the chief object, and from giving us the capacity of obeying it? This would lead to a second question, What prevented God from leading the Israelites through the way of the land of the Philistines, and endowing them with strength for fighting? The leading about by a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night would then not have been necessary. A third question would then be asked in reference to the good promised as reward for the keeping of the commandments, and the evil foretold as a punishment for sins. It is the following question: As it is the chief object and purpose of God that we should believe in the Law, and act according to that which is written therein, why has He not given us the capacity of continually believing in it, and following its guidance, instead of holding out to us reward for obedience, and punishment for disobedience, or of actually giving all the predicted reward and punishment? For [the promises and the threats] are

but the means of leading to this chief object. What prevented Him from giving us, as part of our nature, the will to do that which He desires us to do, and to abandon the kind of worship which He rejects? There is one general answer to these three questions, and to all questions of the same character: it is this: Although in every one of the signs [related in Scripture] the natural property of some individual being is changed, the nature of man is never changed by God by way of miracle. It is in accordance with this important principle that God said, "O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me," etc. (Deut. v. 26). It is also for this reason that He distinctly stated the commandments and the prohibitions, the reward and the punishment. This principle as regards miracles has been frequently explained by us in our works: I do not say this because I believe that it is difficult for God to change the nature of every individual person; on the contrary, it is possible, and it is in His power, according to the principles taught in Scripture; but it has never been His will to do it, and it never will be. If it were part of His will to change [at His desire] the nature of any person, the mission of prophets and the giving of the Law would have been altogether superfluous.

I now return to my theme. As the sacrificial service is not the primary object [of the commandments about sacrifice], whilst supplications, prayers, and similar kinds of worship are nearer to the primary object, and indispensable for obtaining it, a great difference was made in the Law between these two kinds of service. The one kind, which consists in offering sacrifices, although the sacrifices are offered to the name of God, has not been made obligatory for us to the same extent as it had been before. We were not commanded to sacrifice in every place, and in every time, or to build a temple in every place, or to permit any one who desires to become priest and to sacrifice. On the contrary, all this is prohibited unto us. Only one temple has been appointed, "in the place which the Lord shall choose" (Deut. xii. 26); in no other place is it allowed to sacrifice: comp. "Take heed to thyself, that thou offer not thy burnt-offerings in every place that thou seest" (*ibid.* v. 13); and only the members of a particular family were allowed to officiate as priests. All these restrictions served to limit this kind of worship, and keep it within those bounds within which God did not think it necessary to abolish sacrificial service altogether. But prayer and supplication can be offered everywhere and by every person. The same is the case with the commandment of *zizit* (Num. xv. 38); *mezuzah* (Deut. vi. 9; xi. 20); *tefillin* (Exod. xiii. 9, 16); and similar kinds of divine service.

Because of this principle which I explained to you, the Prophets in their books are frequently found to rebuke their fellow-men for being over-zealous and exerting themselves too much in bringing sacrifices: the prophets thus distinctly declared that the object of the sacrifices is not very essential, and that God does not require them. Samuel therefore said, "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord" (1 Sam. xv. 22)? Isaiah exclaimed, "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord" (Isa. i. 11); Jeremiah declared: "For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in

the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt-offering or sacrifices. But this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my, voice, and

p. 326

[paragraph continues] I will be your God, and ye shall be my people" (Jer. vii. 22, 23). This passage has been found difficult in the opinion of all those whose words I read or heard; they ask, How can Jeremiah say that God did not command us about burnt-offering and sacrifice, seeing so many precepts refer to sacrifice? The sense of the passage agrees with what I explained to you. Jeremiah says [in the name of God] the primary object of the precepts is this, Know me, and serve no other being; "I will be your God, and ye shall be my people" (Lev. xxvi. 12). But the commandment that sacrifices shall be brought and that the temple shall be visited has for its object the success of that principle among you; and for its sake I have transferred these modes of worship to my name; idolatry shall thereby be utterly destroyed, and Jewish faith firmly established. You, however, have ignored this object, and taken hold of that which is only the means of obtaining it; you have doubted my existence, "ye have denied the Lord, and said he is not" (Jer. v. 12); ye served idols; "burnt incense unto Baal, and walked after other gods whom ye know not. And come and stand before me in this house" (*ibid.* vii. 9-10); i.e., you do not go beyond attending the temple of the Lord, and offering sacrifices: but this is not the chief object.-- I have another way of explaining this passage with exactly the same result. For it is distinctly stated in Scripture, and handed down by tradition, that the first commandments communicated to us did not include any law at an about burnt-offering and sacrifice. You must not see any difficulty in the Passover which was commanded in Egypt; there was a particular and evident reason for that, as will be explained by me (chap. xlvi.). Besides it was revealed in the land of Egypt; whilst the laws to which Jeremiah alludes in the above passage are those which were revealed after the departure from Egypt. For this reason it is distinctly added, "in the day that I brought them out from the land of Egypt." The first commandment after the departure from Egypt was given at Marah, in the following words, "If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, and wilt do that which is right in His sight, and wilt give ear to His commandments" (Exod. xv. 26)." There he made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there he proved them" (*ibid.* ver. 25). According to the true traditional explanation, Sabbath and civil laws were revealed at Marah: "statute" alludes to Sabbath, and "ordinance" to civil laws, which are the means of removing injustice. The chief object of the Law, as has been shown by us, is the teaching of truths; to which the truth of the *creatio ex nihilo* belongs. It is known that the object of the law of Sabbath is to confirm and to establish this principle, as we have shown in this treatise (Part. II. chap. xxxi.). In addition to the teaching of truths the Law aims at the removal of injustice from mankind. We have thus proved that the first laws do not refer to burnt-offering and sacrifice, which are of secondary importance. The same idea which is contained in the above passage from Jeremiah is also expressed in the Psalms, where the people are rebuked that they ignore the chief object, and make no distinction between chief and subsidiary lessons. The Psalmist says: "Hear, O my people, and I will speak; O Israel, and I will testify against thee: I am

God, even thy God. I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices or thy burnt-offerings, they have been continually before me. I will take no bullock out of thy house, nor he-goats out of thy folds" (Ps. l. 29).--

p. 327

[paragraph continues] Wherever this subject is mentioned, this is its meaning. Consider it well, and reflect on it.

CHAPTER XXXIII

IT is also the object of the perfect Law to make man reject, despise, and reduce his desires as much as is in his power. He should only give way to them when absolutely necessary. It is well known that it is intemperance in eating, drinking, and sexual intercourse that people mostly rave and indulge in; and these very things counteract the ulterior perfection of man, impede at the same time the development of his first perfection, and generally disturb the social order of the country and the economy of the family. For by following entirely the guidance of lust, in the manner of fools, man loses his intellectual energy, injures his body, and perishes before his natural time; sighs and cares multiply; there is an increase of envy, hatred, and warfare for the purpose of taking what another possesses. The cause of all this is the circumstance that the ignorant considers physical enjoyment as an object to be sought for its own sake. God in His wisdom has therefore given us such commandments as would counteract that object, and prevent us altogether from directing our attention to it, and has debarred us from everything that leads only to excessive desire and lust. This is an important thing included in the objects of our Law. See how the Law commanded to slay a person from whose conduct it is evident that he will go too far in seeking the enjoyment of eating and drinking. I mean "the rebellious and stubborn son"; he is described as "a glutton and a drunkard" (Deut. xxi. 20). The Law commands to stone him and to remove him from society lest he grow up in this character, and kill many, and injure the condition of good men by his great lust.

Politeness is another virtue promoted by the Law. Man shall listen to the words of his neighbour; he shall not be obstinate, but shall yield to the wish of his fellow-men, respond to their appeal, act according to their desire, and do what they like. Thus the Law commands, "Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiff-necked" (Deut. x. 16); "Take heed and hearken" (*ibid.* xxvii. 9). "If you be willing and obedient" (Isa. i. 19). Those who listen [to the words of others] and accept as much as is right are represented as saying, "We will hear and do" (Deut. v. 24), or in a figurative style, "Draw me, we will run after thee" (Song i. 4).

The Law is also intended to give its followers purity and holiness; by teaching them to suppress sensuality, to guard against it and to reduce it to a minimum, as will be explained by us. For when God commanded [Moses] to sanctify the people for the receiving of the Law, and said, "Sanctify them to-day and to-morrow" (Exod. xix. 10), Moses [in obedience to this command] said to the people, "Come not at your wives" (*ibid.* ver. 15). Here it is clearly stated that

sanctification consists in absence of sensuality. But abstinence from drinking wine is also called holiness; in reference to the Nazarite it is therefore said, "He shall be holy" (Num. vi. 5). According to Siphra the words, "sanctify yourselves and be ye holy" (Lev. xx. 7), refer to the sanctification effected by performing the divine commands. As the obedience to such precepts as have been mentioned above is called by

p. 328

the Law sanctification and purification, so is defilement applied to the transgression of these precepts and the performance of disgraceful acts, as will be shown. Cleanliness in dress and body by washing and removing sweat and dirt is included among the various objects of the Law, but only if connected with purity of action, and with a heart free from low principles and bad habits. It would be extremely bad for man to content himself with a purity obtained by washing and cleanliness in dress, and to be at the same time voluptuous and unrestrained in food and lust. These are described by Isaiah as follows: "They that sanctify themselves and purify themselves in the gardens, but continue their sinful life, when they, are in the innermost [of their houses], eating swine's flesh, and the abomination, and the mouse" (Isa. lxvi. 17): that is to say, they purify and sanctify themselves outwardly as much as is exposed to the sight of the people, and when they are alone in their chambers and the inner parts of their houses, they continue their rebelliousness and disobedience, and indulge in partaking of forbidden food, such as [the flesh of] swine, worms, and mice. The prophet alludes perhaps in the phrase "behind one tree in the midst" to indulgence in forbidden lust. The sense of the passage is therefore this: They appear outwardly clean, but their heart is bent upon their desires and bodily enjoyments, and this is contrary to the spirit of the Law. For the chief object of the Law is to [teach man to] diminish his desires, and to cleanse his outer appearance after he has purified his heart. Those who wash their body and cleanse their garments whilst they remain dirty by bad actions and principles, are described by Solomon as "a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet are not washed from their filthiness; a generation, oh how lofty are their eyes!" etc. (Prov. xxx. 12-13). Consider well the principles which we mentioned in this chapter as the final causes of the Law: for there are many precepts, for which you will be unable to give a reason unless you possess a knowledge of these principles, as will be explained further on.

CHAPTER XXXIV

IT is also important to note that the Law does not take into account exceptional circumstances; it is not based on conditions which rarely occur. Whatever the Law teaches, whether it be of an intellectual, a moral, or a practical character, is founded on that which is the rule and not on that which is the exception: it ignores the injury that might be caused to a single person through a certain maxim or a certain divine precept. For the Law is a divine institution, and [in order to understand its operation] we must consider how in Nature the various forces produce benefits which are general, but in some solitary cases they cause also injury. This is clear from what has been said by ourselves as well as by others. We must consequently not be surprised when we

find that the object of the Law does not fully appear in every individual; there must naturally be people who are not perfected by the instruction of the Law, just as there are beings which do not receive from the specific forms in Nature all that they require. For all this comes from one God, is the result of one act; "they are all given from one shepherd" (Eccles. xii. 11). It is impossible to be otherwise; and we have already explained (chap. xv.) that that which is impossible always remains

p. 329

impossible and never changes. From this consideration it also follows that the laws cannot like medicine vary according to the different conditions of persons and times; whilst the cure of a person depends on his particular constitution at the particular time, the divine guidance contained in the Law must be certain and general, although it may be effective in some cases and ineffective in others. If the Law depended on the varying conditions of man, it would be imperfect in its totality, each precept being left indefinite. For this reason it would not be right to make the fundamental principles of the Law dependent on a certain time or a certain place; on the contrary, the statutes and the judgments must be definite, unconditional and general, in accordance with the divine words: "As for the congregation, one ordinance shall be for you and for the stranger" (Num. xv. 15); they are intended, as has been stated before, for all persons and for all times.

After having Premised these introductory remarks I will now proceed to the exposition of that which I intended to explain

CHAPTER XXXV

IN accordance with this intention I find it convenient to divide all precepts into fourteen classes.

The first class comprises those precepts which form fundamental principles, such as we have enumerated in *Hilkot yesode ha-torah*. Repentance and fasts belong also to this class, as will be shown.

The second class comprises the precepts which are connected with the prohibition of idolatry, and which have been described by us in *Hilkot a'bodah-zarah*. The laws concerning garments of linen and wool, concerning the fruit of trees in the first three years after they have been planted, and concerning divers seeds in a vineyard, are likewise contained in this class. The object of these precepts is to establish certain true principles and to perpetuate them among the people.

The third class is formed by commandments which are connected with the improvement of the moral condition [of mankind]; these are mentioned in *Hilkot de'ot*. It is known that by a good moral state those social relations, which are indispensable for the well-being of mankind, are brought to perfection.

The fourth class includes precepts relating to charity, loans, gifts, and the like, e.g., the rules respecting "valuations," (*scil.*, of things devoted to sacred purposes, Lev. xxvii. 1-27); "things devoted" (*ibid.* ver. 28); laws concerning loans and servants, and all the laws enumerated in the section *Zera'im*, except the rules of "mixtures" and "the fruit of trees in the first three years." The object of these precepts is clear; their benefit concerns an people by turns; for he who is rich to-day may one day be poor--either he himself or his descendants; and he who is now poor, he himself or his son may be rich to-morrow.

The fifth class contains those precepts which relate to the prevention of wrong and violence; they are included in our book in the section *Nezikin*. Their beneficial character is evident.

The sixth class is formed of precepts respecting fines, e.g., the laws on theft and robbery, on false witnesses, and most of the laws contained in the

p. 330

section *Shofetim* belong to this class. Their benefit is apparent; for if sinners and robbers were not punished, injury would not be prevented at all: and persons scheming evil would not become rarer. They are wrong who suppose that it would be an act of mercy to abandon the laws of compensation for injuries; on the contrary, it would be perfect cruelty and injury to the social state of the country. It is an act of mercy that God commanded "judges and officers thou shalt appoint to thee in all thy gates" (Deut. xvi. 118).

The seventh class comprises those laws which regulate the business transactions of men with each other; e.g., laws about loans, hire, trust, buying, selling, and the like; the rules about inheritance belong to this class. We have described these precepts in the sections *Kinyan* and *Mishpatim*. The object of these precepts is evident, for monetary transactions are necessary for the peoples of all countries, and it is impossible to have these transactions without a proper standard of equity and without useful regulations.

The eighth class includes those precepts which relate to certain days, as Sabbaths and holydays: they are enumerated in the section *Zemannim*. The Law states clearly the reason and object of each of these precepts; they are to serve as a means for establishing a certain principle among us, or securing bodily recreation, or effecting both things at the same time, as will be shown by me.

The ninth class comprises the general laws concerning religious rites and ceremonies, e.g., laws concerning prayers, the reading of Shema', and the other rules given in the section *Ahabah*, with the exception of the law concerning circumcision. The object of these laws is apparent; they all prescribe actions which firmly establish the love of God in our minds, as also the right belief concerning Him and His attributes.

The tenth class is formed of precepts which relate to the Sanctuary, its vessels, and its ministers; they are contained in the section '*Abodah*. The object of these precepts has already been mentioned by us (supra, chap. xxxii.).

The eleventh class includes those precepts which relate to Sacrifices. Most of these laws we have mentioned in the sections '*Abodah* and *Korbanot*. We have already shown the general use of the sacrificial laws, and their necessity in ancient time.

The twelfth class comprises the laws concerning things unclean and clean. The general object of these laws is, as will be explained by me, to discourage people from [frequently] entering the Sanctuary; in order that their minds be impressed with the greatness of the Sanctuary, and approach it with respect and reverence.

The thirteenth class includes the precepts concerning forbidden food and the like; we have given them in *Hilkot maakalot asurot*; the laws about vows and temperance belong also to this class. The object of all these laws is to restrain the growth of desire, the indulgence in seeking that which is pleasant, and the disposition to consider the appetite for eating and drinking as the end [of man's existence]. We have explained this in our Commentary on the Mishnah, in the Introduction (chap. iv.) to *The Sayings of the Fathers*.

The fourteenth class comprises the precepts concerning forbidden sexual intercourse; they are given in the section *Nashim* and *Hilkot issure-biah*.

p. 331

[paragraph continues] The laws concerning the intermixture of cattle belong to this class. The object of these precepts is likewise to diminish sexual intercourse, to restrain as much as possible indulgence in lust, and [to teach] that this enjoyment is not, as foolish people think, the final cause of man's existence. We have explained this in our Commentary on *The Sayings of the Fathers* (Introd., chap. viii.). The laws about circumcision belong to this class.

As is well known, the precepts are also divided into two classes, viz., precepts concerning the relation between man and God, and precepts concerning the relation between man and man. Of the classes into which we divide the precepts and which we have enumerated, the fifth, sixth, and seventh, and part of the third, include laws concerning the relation of man to man. The other classes contain the laws about the relation of man to God, i.e., positive or negative precepts, which tend to improve the moral or intellectual condition of mankind, or to regulate such of each man's actions which [directly] only concern him and lead him to perfection. For these are called laws concerning man's relation to God, although in reality they lead to results which concern also his fellow-men; because these results become only apparent after a long series of intermediate links, and from a general point of view; whilst directly these laws are not intended to prevent man from injuring his fellow-man. Note this.

Having described the laws of these classes, I will now again consider the precepts of each class, and explain the reason and use of those which are believed to be useless or unreasonable, with the exception of a few, the object of which I have not yet comprehended.

CHAPTER XXXVI

THE reason of all precepts of the first class, viz., of the principles enumerated by us in the *Hilkot yesode ha-torah*, is obvious. Consider them one by one, and you will find that the lesson which every one of them contains is correct and demonstrable. It is also evident that the precepts which exhort and command us to learn and to teach are useful; for without wisdom there cannot be any good act or any true knowledge. The law which prescribes to honour the teachers of the Law is likewise useful; for if they were not considered by the people as great and honourable men, they would not be followed as guides in their principles and actions. The Law demands also that we be humble and modest [in their presence]. "Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head" (Lev. xix. 32). This class includes also the commandment to swear by the name of God and the prohibition of swearing falsely or in vain. The reason for all these precepts is evident; they aim at the glorification of God: they prescribe acts which lead to the belief in God's greatness. Likewise the commandment to cry to God in time of trouble, "to blow an alarm with the trumpets" (Num. x. 9), belongs to this class. We are told to offer up prayers to God, in order to establish firmly the true principle that God takes notice of our ways, that He can make them successful if we worship Him, or disastrous if we disobey Him, that [success and failure] are not the result of chance or accident. In this sense we must understand the passage, "If ye walk with me by chance" (*beḳeri*, Lev. xxvi. 21); i.e., if I bring troubles upon you for punishment, and you consider

p. 332

them as mere accidents, I will again send you some of these accidents as you call them, but of a more serious and troublesome character. This is expressed in the words: "If ye walk with me by chance: then I will walk with you also in the fury of chance" (*ibid.* vers. 27, 28). For the belief of the people that their troubles are mere accidents causes them to continue in their evil principles and their wrong actions, and prevents them from abandoning their evil ways. Comp. "Thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved" (Jer. v. 3). For this reason God commanded us to pray to Him, to entreat Him, and to cry before Him in time of trouble. It is clear that repentance is likewise included in this class; that is to say, it is one of those principles which are an indispensable element in the creed of the followers of the Law. For it is impossible for man to be entirely free from error and sin; he either does not know the opinion which he has to choose, or he adopts a principle, not for its own merits, but in order to gratify his desire or passion. If we were convinced that we could never make our crooked ways straight, we should for ever continue in our errors, and perhaps add other sins to them since we did not see that any remedy was left to us. But the belief in the effect of repentance causes us to improve, to return to the best of the ways, and to become more perfect than we were before we sinned. For this reason many things are prescribed for the promotion of this very useful principle: e.g., confessions and

sacrifices for sins committed unknowingly, and in some cases even for sins committed intentionally, and fasts, and that which is common to all cases of repentance from sin, the resolve to discontinue sinning. For that is the aim of this principle. Of all these precepts the use is obvious.

CHAPTER XXXVII

THE precepts of the second class are those which we have enumerated in the section "On idolatry." It is doubtless that they all tend to save man from the error of idolatry and the evil practices connected with it; e.g., observing the times, enchantment, witchcraft, incantation, consulting with familiar spirits, and the like. When you read the books which I mentioned to you, you will find that witchcraft, which will be described to you, is part of the customs of the Sabaeans, Kasdim, Chaldeans, and to a higher degree of the Egyptians and Canaanites. They caused others to believe, or they themselves believed, that by means of these arts they would perform wonderful things in reference to an individual person, or to the inhabitants of a whole country, although no analogy and no reasoning can discover any relation between these performances of the witches and the promised result. Thus they are careful to collect certain plants at a particular time, and to take a definite number of certain objects. There are many things comprised by witchcraft; they may be divided into three classes: first, witchcraft connected with objects in Nature, viz., plants, animals, or minerals. Secondly, witchcraft dependent for its performance on a certain time; and thirdly, witchcraft dependent on the performance of certain acts of man, such as dancing, clapping, laughing, jumping with one leg, lying on the ground with the face upward, burning a thing, fumigating with a certain material, or speaking intelligible or unintelligible words.

p. 333

These are the various kinds of witchcraft. In some cases all these various performances are required. Thus the witches sometimes order: take a leaf of a certain plant, when the moon is seen in a certain degree [of the Zodiac] in the east point or in one of the other cardinal points [of the horizon], also a certain quantity of the horn, the sweat, the hair and the blood of a certain animal when the sun is, e.g., in the middle of the sky, or in some other definite place; and a portion of a certain mineral or minerals, melted at a certain conjunction of sun and moon, and at a definite position of the stars; speak then, and say certain words, and fumigate with those leaves or similar ones to that molten image, and such and such a thing will happen. In other instances of witchcraft it is assumed that one of the above performances suffices. In most cases the condition is added that women must perform these actions. Thus it is stated in reference to the means of obtaining rain, that ten virgins dressed with diadems and red garments should dance, push each other, moving backwards and forwards, and make signs to the sun: the result of this long process was believed [by the idolaters] to be a downpour of rain.

It is further stated that if four women lay on their back, with their feet spread and lifted up, said certain words and did certain things whilst in this disgraceful position, hail would discontinue coming down in that place. The number of these stupid and mad things is great; in all of them without exception women are required to be the agent. Witchcraft is intimately connected with astrology; those that practise it assign each plant, animal, or mineral to a certain star, and believe that the above processes of witchcraft are different forms of worship offered to that star, which is pleased with that act, word, or offering of incense, and fulfils their wishes.

After this remark, which you will understand when you have read such of their works as are at present extant, and have been mentioned by me, hear what I will tell you. It is the object and centre of the whole Law to abolish idolatry and utterly uproot it, and to overthrow the opinion that any of the stars could interfere for good or evil in human matters, because it leads to the worship of stars. It was therefore necessary to slay all witches as being undoubtedly idolaters, because every witch is an idolater: they only have their own strange ways of worship, which are different from the common mode of worship offered to those deities. But in all performances of witchcraft it is laid down as a rule that women should be employed in the chief operation; and therefore the Law says, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live" (Exod. xxii. 17). Another reason is the natural reluctance of people to slay women. This is also the cause why in the law of idolatry it is said "man or woman" (Deut. xvii. 2), and again repeated a second time, "the man or the woman" (*ibid.* ver. 5)--a phrase which does not occur in the law about the breaking of Sabbath, or in any other law; for great sympathy is naturally shown to women. Now the witches believed that they produced a certain result by their witchcraft; that they were able through the above-mentioned actions to drive such dangerous animals as lions, serpents, and the like out of the cities, and to remove various kinds of damage from the products of the earth. Thus they imagine that they are able by certain acts to prevent hail from coming down, and by certain other acts to kill the worms in the vineyards, whereby the latter are protected from injury; in fact, the killing of the

p. 334

worms in vineyards, and other superstitions mentioned in the *Nabatean Agriculture*, are fully described by the Sabeans. They likewise imagine that they know certain acts by which they can prevent the dropping of leaves from the trees and the untimely falling of their fruit. On account of these ideas, which were general in those days, the Law declares in "the words of the covenant" as follows: The same idolatry and superstitious performances which, in your belief, keep certain misfortunes far from you, will cause those very misfortunes to befall you. "I will also send wild beasts among you" (Lev. xxvi. 22), "I will also send the teeth of wild beasts upon them, with the poison of those that creep in dust" (Deut. xxxii. 24)." The fruit of thy land, and all thy labours, shall a nation, which thou knowest not, eat up" (*ibid.* xxviii. 33). "Thou shalt plant vineyards and dress them, but shalt neither drink of the wine nor gather the grapes, etc. Thou shalt have olive trees throughout all thy coasts, but thou shalt not anoint thyself with the oil" (Deut. xxviii. 39, 40). In short, in spite of the schemes of idolaters to support and firmly establish their doctrine,

and to make people believe that by idolatry certain misfortunes could be averted and certain benefits gained, worship of idols will, on the contrary, as is stated in "the words of the covenant," prevent the advantages and bring the troubles. The reader will now understand why, of all kinds of curses and blessings, those mentioned in "the words of the covenant" have been selected by the Law, and particularly pointed out. Note also the greatness of the benefit [of these laws].

In order that we may keep far from all kinds of witchcraft, we are warned not to adopt any of the practices of the idolaters, even such as are connected with agriculture, the keeping of cattle, and similar work. [The Law prohibits] everything that the idolaters, according to their doctrine, and contrary to reason, consider as being useful and acting in the manner of certain mysterious forces. Comp. "Neither shall ye walk in their ordinances" (Lev. xviii. 3). "And ye shall not walk in the manners of the nation which I cast out before you" (*ibid.* xx. 23). Our Sages call such acts "the ways of the Amorite"; they are kinds of witchcraft, because they are not arrived at by reason, but are similar to the performances of witchcraft, which is necessarily connected with the influences of the stars; thus ["the manners of the nations"] lead people to extol, worship, and praise the stars. Our Sages say distinctly, "whatever is used as medicine" does not come under the law of "the ways of the Amorite"; for they hold that only such cures as are recommended by reason are permitted, and other cures are prohibited. When, therefore, the dictum was quoted: a tree that casts off its fruit may be laden with stone or dyed with red colour, the following objection was raised: The loading of the tree with stones may be justified on the plea that it serves to weaken the strength of the tree, but why should it be permitted to dye the tree with red colour? This question shows that the dyeing of the tree with red colour, and all similar things which are not explained by analogy from nature, are prohibited as "ways of the Amorite." For the same reason our Sages said, "The uterus of animals which have been selected for the Sanctuary must be buried; it must not be suspended from a tree, and not buried in the cross-road, because this is one of 'the ways of the Amorite.'" Hence you may learn how to treat similar cases.

p. 335

It is not inconsistent that a nail of the gallows and the tooth of a fox have been permitted to be used as cures: for these things have been considered in those days as facts established by experiment. They served as cures, in the same manner as the hanging of the peony over a person subject to epileptic fits, or the application of a dog's refuse to the swellings of the throat, and of the vapours of vinegar and marcasite to the swelling of hard tumours. For the Law permits as medicine everything that has been verified by experiment, although it cannot be explained by analogy. The above-named cures are permitted in the same way as the application of purgatives. Learn, reader, these noteworthy lessons from this my work, and keep them; "for they are a diadem of grace for thy head" (Prov. iv.).

We have explained in our large work that it is prohibited to round the corners of the head, and to mar the corners of the beard, because it was the custom of idolatrous priests. For the same reason, the wearing of garments made of linen and wool is prohibited: the heathen priests

adorned themselves with garments containing vegetable and animal material, whilst they held in their hand a seal made of a mineral. This you find written in their books. The same is also the reason of the precept, "The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man" (Deut. xxii. 5). You find it in the book Tomtom, that a male person should wear coloured woman's dress when he stands before Venus, and a female, when standing before Mars, should wear a buckler and other armour. I think that this precept has also another reason; namely, that the interchange of dress creates lust and leads to immorality.

It is easily understood why it is prohibited to derive any benefit whatever from an idol. For sometimes a person buys it with the intention to break it, but keeps it, and it becomes a snare to him. Even if he broke it, recast it, and sold it to a heathen, he must not use the money which he received in exchange for the idol: because people frequently mistake accidental circumstances for essential causes: thus most people say of a certain person that he has become rich and wealthy after having dwelt in a certain house, or bought a certain animal or vessel; and that these things were a blessing to him. In the same way a person may be successful and make a good profit on the business in which he employed the money received for the idol; he might then think that the idol was the cause of his success, and that the blessing of the money received for it brought him the profit; he would then believe in the idol: a belief which is just the reverse of the chief object of the Law, as is clearly seen in every word of it. For this same reason, we are forbidden to turn to our use the covering of the idol, its offerings and vessels. We are thus guarded against the idea [of ascribing our success to idols]. In those days the belief in the stars was very strong; it was generally assumed that life and death, good and evil, depended on the stars. The Law employed therefore strong means, as covenant, witnesses, great oaths, and the abovementioned [blessings and] curses, in order to overthrow that belief. We are thus commanded to abstain from taking any portion of the idol, and deriving any benefit from it: and God tells us that if money received for idols be mixed with any person's property, it will bring loss and ruin to that property. This warning is contained in the words: "Neither shalt thou bring an abomination into thine house, lest thou be a cursed thing like it" (Deut. vii. 26).

p. 336

[paragraph continues] How much more wrong must it be to believe that there is a blessing in idols. When you examine all the precepts that relate to idolatry, you will find that their reason is obvious, and that they serve to make us abandon this evil belief, and keep at the greatest possible distance from it.

We must also point out that originators of false, baseless, and useless principles scheme and plan for the firm establishment of their faith; and tell their fellow-men that a certain plague will befall those who will not perform the act by which that faith is supported and confirmed for ever; this plague may one day accidentally befall a person, who will then direct his attention to the performance of that act, and adopt idolatry. It being well known that people are naturally most in fear and dread of the loss of their property and their children, the worshippers of fire spread the

tale, that if any one did not pass his son and daughter through the fire, he will lose his children by death. There is no doubt that on account of this absurd menace every one at once obeyed, out of pity and sympathy for the child; especially as it was a trifling and a light thing that was demanded, in passing the child over the fire. We must further take into account that the care of young children is intrusted to women, who are generally weak-minded, and ready to believe everything, as is well known. The Law makes, therefore, an earnest stand against this practice, and uses in reference to it stronger terms than in any other kind of idolatry; namely, "he defileth my sanctuary, and profaneth my holy name" (Lev. xx. 3). The true prophet then declares in the name of God that the very act which is performed for the purpose of keeping the child alive, will bring death upon him who performs it, and destruction upon his seed. Comp. "And I will set my face against that man and against his family," etc. (*ibid.* xx. 5). Know that traces of this practice have survived even to the present day, because it was widespread in the world. You can see how midwives take a young child wrapped in its swaddling-clothes, and after having placed incense of a disagreeable smell on the fire, swing the child in the smoke over that fire. This is certainly a kind of passing children through the fire, and we must not do it. Reflect on the evil cunning of the author of this doctrine; how people continued to adhere to this doctrine, and how, in spite of the opposition of the Law during thousands of years, its name is not blotted out, and its traces are still in existence.

Idolaters have acted similarly in reference to property. They made it a law that a certain tree, the *asherah*, should be worshipped, and that of its fruit one part should be offered, and the rest consumed in the temple of the idol: this is stated in the regulations concerning the *asherah*. In the same manner, they made it a rule, that the first-fruit of every fruit-tree should be partly offered as a sacrifice and partly consumed in the idol's temple. It was also a widespread belief that if the first-fruit of any tree was not treated in this manner, the tree would dry up, its fruit would be cast off, its increase would be diminished, or some disease would come over it; just as they spread the belief that every child, that was not passed through the fire, must die. People in their anxiety for their property obeyed also this precept unhesitatingly. The Law, in opposition to this doctrine, commanded us to burn the produce of fruit-trees the first three years; for some trees bear fruit after one year, whilst some begin to yield fruit after two, and others after three years. The law is based upon the nature of trees grown in an ordinary

p. 337

way, namely, in one of the three well-known methods: planting, propagation, and inoculation (*neti'ah, habrakah, and harcabah*). The Law does not take notice of the case that a kernel or stone is sown; for the ordinances of the Law are based on the usual condition of things, and as a rule a young tree in Palestine bears fruit for the first time not later than the third year after it has been planted. According to the divine promise, the waste and destruction of this first-fruit of the tree will be followed by years of plenty of fruit; for it is said, "that it may increase unto you the fruit thereof" (Lev. xix. 25). The fruit of the fourth year we are commanded to eat before God,

instead of [the heathen custom of] eating *'orlab*, "the fruit of the preceding years," in the temples of the idols, as has been described by us.

It is further mentioned in the *Nabatean Agriculture* that the ancient idolaters caused certain things named in that work to rot, waited till the sun stood in a certain degree [of the ecliptic], and then they performed many acts of witchcraft. They believed that that substance should be kept ready by every one, and when a fruit-tree is planted, a portion of that rotten substance should be scattered round the tree or under it; the tree would then grow quicker and produce more fruit than is generally the case. They say that this process is very extraordinary; it acts like a talisman, and is more efficient than any kind of witchcraft in accelerating the productiveness of fruit-trees. I have already shown and explained to you how the Law opposes all kinds of witchcraft. The Law, therefore, prohibits us to use the fruit yielded by a tree in the first three years after it has been planted, so that there should be no opportunity for accelerating, according to their imagination, the productiveness of any tree. After three years most fruit-trees in Palestine yield fruit by the ordinary course of nature, without the application of those magical performances which were very general in those days. Note this remarkable fact.

Another belief which was very common in those days, and survived the Sabeans, is this: When a tree is grafted into another in the time of a certain conjunction of sun and moon, and is fumigated with certain substances whilst a formula is uttered, that tree will produce a thing that will be found exceedingly useful. More general than anything mentioned by the heathen writers was the ceremony of grafting an olive branch upon a citron tree, as described in the beginning of the *Nabatean Agriculture*. I am of opinion that the book of medicines which Hezekiah put away (B: T. Pes. 56a) was undoubtedly of this kind. They also said that when one species is grafted upon another, the branch which is to be grafted must be in the hand of a beautiful damsel, whilst a male person has disgraceful and unnatural sexual intercourse with her; during that intercourse the woman grafts the branch into the tree. There is no doubt that this ceremony was general, and that nobody refused to perform it, especially as the pleasure of love was added to the (supposed) future results of the grafting. The Law, therefore, prohibits us to mix different species together, i.e., to graft one tree into another, because we, must keep away from the opinions of idolaters and the abominations of their unnatural sexual intercourse. In order to guard against the grafting of trees, we are forbidden to sow any two kinds of seed together or near each other. When you study the traditional explanation of this precept, you will find that the prohibition of grafting, the principal element in this commandment,

p. 338

holds good for all countries, and is punishable by forty stripes: but the sowing of seeds one near the other is only prohibited in Palestine. In the *Nabatean Agriculture* it is further distinctly stated that it was the custom of the people in those days to sow barley and stones of grapes together, in the belief that the vineyard could only prosper in this way. Therefore the Law prohibits us to use seed that has grown in a vineyard, and commands us to bum both the barley and the produce of

the vineyard. For the practices of the heathen, which they considered as of a magic and talismanic character, even if not containing any idolatrous element, are prohibited, as we have stated above (p. 334) in reference to the dictum of our Sages, "We must not hang upon a tree the foetus of an animal belonging to the Sanctuary." The Law prohibits all heathen customs, called by our Sages "the ways of the Amorite," because they are connected with idolatry. On considering the customs of the heathen in their worship, you will find that in certain kinds of worship they turn toward stars, in others to the two great luminaries; frequently they choose the rise of signs in the Zodiac for sowing and fumigating; and as to the circuits made by those who plant or sow, some complete five circles, corresponding to the five planets, with the exclusion of the two luminaries: others go seven times round, according to the number of the planets, when including sun and moon. They believe that all these practices are magic charms of great efficiency in agriculture. Thus those practices lead to the worship of stars: and therefore all practices of those nations have been prohibited, in the words, "Ye shall not walk in the manners of the nation which I cast out before you" (Lev. xx. 23). Those practices which were more general and common, or were distinctly connected with idolatry, are particularly pointed out as prohibited; e.g., eating the fruit of a tree during the first three years, intermixing of species and the mixed species sown in a vineyard. I am surprised as the dictum of Rabbi Joshiyah, which has been adopted as legally binding, in reference to the mixed seed in a vineyard, viz., that the law is only transgressed when wheat, barley, and the stone of a grape are sown simultaneously. He must undoubtedly have seen the source of that kind of the ways of the Amorite. It must now be clear to you, and no room can be left for any doubt, that the prohibition of wearing garments of wool and linen, of using the fruit of a tree in the first three years, and of mixing divers species, are directed against idolatry, and that the prohibition against adopting heathen manners serves to remove anything which leads to idolatry, as has been shown by us.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

THE precepts of the third class are identical with those which we have enumerated in *Hilkot de'ot*. Their use is evident; they are rules concerning moral conduct by which the social relations of men are regulated. This is sufficiently clear, and I need not dwell long on it. Know that some precepts prescribe certain acts which are considered as arbitrary decrees without any purpose, but are nevertheless the means of acquiring some moral principle. We shall explain every one of them in its proper place. But of all those precepts which are mentioned in *Hilkot dew*, it is distinctly stated that their object is to inculcate good moral principles.

p. 339

CHAPTER XXXIX

THE precepts in the fourth class include the laws which in our work are contained in the section *Zera'im*, excepting the laws on the mixture of species: the rules about things to be "valued" and things "devoted" (*Hilkot 'erekin va-haramim*), and those concerning lender and borrower (*Hilkot*

malveh ve-loveh) and slaves (*Hilkot 'abadim*). When you examine these precepts you will clearly see the use of every one of them: they teach us to have sympathy with the poor and infirm, to assist the needy in various ways; not to hurt the feelings of those who are in want, and not to vex those who are in a helpless condition [viz., the widow, the orphan, and the like]. The purpose of the laws concerning the portions which are to be given to the poor is likewise obvious; the reason of the laws concerning the heave-offerings and the tithe is distinctly stated: "for he hath no portion and inheritance with thee" (Deut. xiv. 29). You certainly know that the Levites had no portion, because their whole tribe was to be exclusively engaged in the service of God and the study of the Law. They shall not plow or cut the corn, but shall only minister to God." They shall teach Jacob thy judgments and Israel thy law: they shall put incense before thee" (Deut. xxxiii. 10). In the Law we meet frequently with the phrase, "the Levite, the stranger, and the orphan and the widow"; for the Levite is reckoned among the poor because he had no property. The second tithe was commanded to be spent on food in Jerusalem: in this way the owner was compelled to give part of it away as charity. As he was not able to use it otherwise than by way of eating and drinking, he must have easily been induced to give it gradually away. This rule brought multitudes together in one place, and strengthened the bond of love and brotherhood among the children of men. The law concerning the fruit of a tree in its fourth year has some relation to idolatrous customs, as has been stated by us (chap. xxxvii.), and is connected with the law concerning the fruit of a tree in its first three years. But it has in addition the same object as the law concerning the heave-offering (Deut. xviii. 4), the dough-offering (*hallah*) (Num. xv. 20), the first-fruit (Exod. xxiii. 19), and the first of the shearing (Deut. xviii. 4). For the first of everything is to be devoted to the Lord; and by doing so man accustoms himself to be liberal, and to limit his appetite for eating and his desire for property. The same is the reason why the priest took the shoulder, the two cheeks, and the maw (Deut. xviii. 3); the cheek being the first part of the body of animals, the right shoulder the first of the extremities of the body, and the maw the first of all inwards.

The reciting of a certain portion of the Law when the first-fruits are brought to the temple, tends also to create humility. For he who brings the first-fruits takes the basket upon his shoulders and proclaims the kindness and goodness of God. This ceremony teaches man that it is essential in the service of God to remember the times of trouble and the history of past distress, in days of comfort. The Law lays stress on this duty in several places; comp. "And thou shalt remember that thou hast been a slave," etc. (Deut. v. 15). For it is to be feared that those who become great in riches and comfort might, as is generally the case, fall into the vices of insolence and haughtiness, and abandon all good principles. Comp. "Lest thou eat and

p. 340

be full, etc., and thine heart be lifted up and thou forget the Lord" (*ibid.* viii. 12-14); "And Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked" (*ibid.* xxx. 15). On account of this fear the Law commanded us to read each year a certain portion before the Lord and His glory, when we offer the first-fruit. You know how much the Law insists that we shall always remember the plagues that have

befallen the Egyptians; comp. "That thou mayest remember the day when thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt all the days of thy life" (*ibid.* xvi. 3); "That thou mayest tell in the ears of thy son what things I have wrought in Egypt" (Exod. x. 2). Such a law was necessary in order to perpetuate the memory of the departure from Egypt; because such events verify prophecy and the doctrine of reward and punishment. The benefit of every commandment that serves to keep certain miracles in remembrance, or to perpetuate true faith, is therefore obvious.

In reference to the law concerning the first-born of man and cattle it is distinctly said, "And it came to pass, when Pharaoh would hardly let us go, that the Lord slew all the first-born in the land of Egypt, etc., therefore I sacrifice to the Lord," etc. (Exod. xiii. 15). But it can easily be explained why only cattle, sheep, and asses are mentioned in this law; these are kept as domestic animals, and are found in most places, especially in Palestine, where the Israelites were shepherds, they, their fathers, and forefathers; comp. "Thy servants are shepherds, both we and also our fathers" (Gen. xlvii. 3). Horses and camels, however, are not wanted by shepherds, and are not found in all places; thus in the booty of Midian (Num. xxxi.) no other animals are mentioned but oxen, sheep, and asses. But asses alone are indispensable to all people, especially to those who are engaged in the field or in the forest. Thus Jacob says, "I have oxen and asses" (Gen. xxxii. 5). Camels and horses are not possessed by many people, but only by a few, and are only found in a few places. The law that the first-born of an ass was to have its neck broken [in case it is not redeemed], will only ensure the redemption of the ass. It has, therefore, been said that the act of redeeming the ass is to be preferred to that of breaking its neck.

As to the precepts enumerated in the laws concerning the year of release and the jubilee (*Hilkot shemittah ve-yohel*) some of them imply sympathy with our fellow-men, and promote the well-being of mankind; for in reference to these Precepts it is stated in the Law, "That the poor of thy people may eat" (Exod. xxiii. 11); and besides, the land will also increase its produce and improve when it remains fallow for some time. Other precepts of this class prescribe kindness to servants and to the poor, by renouncing an claims to debts [in the year of release] and relieving the slaves of their bondage [in the seventh year]. There are some precepts in this class that serve to secure for the people a permanent source of maintenance and support by providing that the land should remain the permanent property of its owners, and that it could not be sold." And the land shall not be sold for ever" (Lev. xxv. 23). In this way the property of a person remains intact for him and his heirs, and he can only enjoy the produce thereof. I have thus explained the reason of all precepts contained in our work in the Section *Zera'im*, with the exception of the laws concerning the intermixture of different species of beasts the reason of which will be given (chap. xlix.).

In the same manner we find that all the precepts comprised in "the laws

on valuations," and on "things devoted" are based on the principle of charity: some of them prescribe what should be given to the priests; others tell us what must be devoted to the repairs of the temple. The practice of all these things accustoms man to act liberally and to spend money unhesitatingly to the glory of God. For it is in the nature of man to strive to gain money and to increase it; and his great desire to add to his wealth and honour is the chief source of misery for man. Also the precepts contained in "the laws concerning the relation between lender and borrower" (*Hilkot malveh veloveh*) will be found, on being carefully examined, to be nothing but commands to be lenient, merciful and kind to the needy, not to deprive them of the use of anything indispensable in the preparation of food. "No man shall take the nether or the upper millstone to pledge: for he taketh a man's life to pledge" (Deut. xxiv. 6).

The precepts contained in "the laws concerning slaves" (*Hilkot 'abadim*), likewise prescribe only acts of pity, mercy and kindness to the poor. It is an act of mercy to give liberty to a Canaanite servant for the loss of one of his limbs (Exod. xxi. 26, 27), in order that he should not suffer from slavery and illness at the same time. The law applies even to the case that a tooth of a slave has been knocked out, much more to the mutilation of other limbs. He could only be corrected with a rod or reed or the like, as we have stated in Mishneh-torah. Besides, if the master strikes the slave too hard and kills him, he is punished with death as for ordinary murder. Mercy is also the object of the law, "Thou shalt not deliver unto his master the servant that is escaped from his master" (Deut. xxiii. 15); but it teaches besides a very useful lesson, namely, that we must always practise this virtue, help and protect those who seek our help, and not deliver them unto those from whom they flee; and it is not sufficient to give assistance to those who are in need of our help; we must look after their interests, be kind to them, and not hurt their feeling by words. Thus the Law says: "He shall dwell with thee, even among you, in that place which he shall choose in one of thy gates, where it liketh him best: thou shalt not vex him" (*ibid.* ver. 16). This we owe to the lowest among men, to the slave; how much more must we do our duty to the freeborn, when they seek our assistance? But, on the other hand, when sinners and evildoers seek our help, it must not be granted; no mercy must be shown to them, and the course of justice must not be interfered with, even if they claim the protection of that which is noblest and highest; for "Thou shalt take him from mine altar that he may die" (Exod. xxi. 14). Here a person comes to seek the help of God, and claims the protection of that which is devoted to his name; God, however, does not help him, and commands that he be delivered up to the prosecutor, from whom he fled. Much less need any one of us help or pity his fellow-men [under such circumstances]; because mercy on sinners is cruelty to all creatures. These are undoubtedly the right ways designated "righteous statutes and judgments" (Deut. iv. 8), and different from the ways of the fools, who consider a person praiseworthy when he helps and protects his fellow-men, without discriminating between the oppressor and the oppressed. This is well known from their words and songs.

The reason and usefulness of every precept of this class has thus been clearly demonstrated.

CHAPTER XL

THE precepts of the fifth class, enumerated in the Section--"On Damages" (*Sepher nezikin*), aim at the removal of wrong and the prevention of injury. As we are strongly recommended to prevent damage, we are responsible for every damage caused by our property or through our work in so far as it is in our power to take care and to guard it from becoming injurious. We are, therefore, responsible for all damage caused by our cattle; we must guard them. The same is the case with fire and pits; they are made by man, and he can be careful that they do not cause damage. I will point out the equity of the various laws in this respect. No compensation is enforced for damage caused by the mouth or the foot of an animal in a public thoroughfare; because this cannot be guarded against, and the damage caused there is not very large. Those who place their things in a public place are themselves guilty of neglect, and expose their property to injury. But compensation is given for damage caused to the property of a person in his own field by the tooth or the foot of an animal. It is different in the case of damage caused by the horn of animals or the like. The animal can be guarded everywhere [land prevented from causing injury], whilst those who pass public thoroughfares cannot sufficiently take care against accidents of this kind. In this case the law is the same for all places: but there is a difference whether the owner of the animal has been warned concerning it or not (*mu'ad* or *tam*). If the animal has not been in the habit of causing damage, the owner need only pay half the damage; but damage caused by an animal which has been in the habit of doing so, and has been known as savage, must be paid in full. The compensation for a slave is uniformly estimated at half the value fixed for a free man. For in the law concerning the valuation of man you find the highest valuation at sixty shekels, whilst the money to be paid for a slave is fixed at thirty shekels silver. The killing of an animal that has killed a human being (Exod. xxi. 28, 29) is not a punishment to the animal, as the dissenters insinuate against us, but it is a fine imposed on the owner of that animal. For the same reason the use of its flesh is prohibited. The owner of an animal will, therefore, take the greatest possible care in guarding it; he will know that if any person is killed by the animal, whether that person be grown up or young, free or in bondage, he forfeits at least the animal; and in case he has already received a warning concerning it, he will have to pay a ransom in addition to the loss of the animal. This is also the reason why a beast is killed that has been used by a human being for an immoral purpose (Lev. xx. 15, 16); its owner will be more careful as regards his beast, will guard it, and never lose sight of it, just as he watches his household: for people fear the loss of their property as much as that of their own life: some even more, but most people hold both in the same estimation. Comp. "and to take us for bondmen, and our asses" (Gen. xliii. 18).

This class includes also the duty of killing him who pursues another person; that is to say, if a person is about to commit a crime we may prevent it by killing him. Only in two cases is this permitted; viz., when a person runs after another in order to murder him, or in order to commit fornication: because in these two cases the crime, once committed; cannot be remedied. In the case of other sins, punished with death by the court of law, such as

idolatry and profanation of the Sabbath, by which the sinner does no harm to another person, and which concern only his own principles, no person may be killed for the mere intention, if he has not carried it out.

It is known that desire is denounced because it leads to coveting, and the latter is prohibited because it leads to robbery, as has been said by our Sages.

The object of the law of restoring lost property to its owner (Deut. xxii. 1-3) is obvious. In the first instance, it is in itself a good feature in man's character. Secondly, its benefit is mutual; for if a person does not return the lost property of his fellow-man, nobody will restore to him what he may lose, just as those who do not honour their parents cannot expect to be honoured by their children.

A person who killed another person unknowingly must go into exile (Exod. xii. 13: Num. xxxv. 11-28); because the anger of "the avenger of the blood" (Num. xxxv. 19) cools down while the cause of the mischief is out of sight. The chance of returning from the exile depends on the death of [the high-priest], the most honoured of men, and the friend of all Israel. By his death the relative of the slain person becomes reconciled (*ibid.* ver. 25); for it is a natural phenomenon that we find consolation in our misfortune when the same misfortune or a greater one has befallen another person. Amongst us no death causes more grief than that of the high-priest.

The beneficial character of the law concerning "the breaking of the neck of a heifer" (Deut. xii. 1-8) is evident. For it is the city that is nearest to the slain person that brings the heifer, and in most cases the murderer comes from that place. The elders of the place call upon God as their witness, according to the interpretation of our Sages, that they have always kept the roads in good condition, have protected them, and have directed every one that asked his way; that the person has not been killed because they were careless in these general provisions, and they do not know who has slain him. As a rule the investigation, the procession of the elders, the measuring, and the taking of the heifer, make people talk about it, and by making the event public, the murderer may be found out, and he who knows of him, or has heard of him, or has discovered him by any due, will now name the person that is the murderer, and as soon as a man, or even a woman or handmaid, rises up and names a certain person as having committed the murder, the heifer is not killed. It is well known that it is considered great wickedness and guilt on the part of a person who knows the murderer, and is silent about him whilst the elders call upon God as witness that they know nothing about the murderer. Even a woman will, therefore, communicate whatever knowledge she has of him. When the murderer is discovered, the benefit of the law is apparent. If the court of justice cannot sentence him to death, the king may find him guilty, who has the power to sentence to death on circumstantial evidence; and if the king does not put him to death, the avenger of blood may scheme and plan his death, and at last kill him. We have thus shown the use of the law concerning the breaking of the neck of the heifer in

discovering the murderer. Force is added to the law by the rule that the place in which the neck of the heifer is broken should never be cultivated or sown. The owner of the land will therefore use all means in his power to search and to find the murderer, in order that the heifer be not killed and his land be not made useless to him.

p. 344

CHAPTER XLI

THE precepts of the sixth class comprise the different ways of punishing the sinner. Their general usefulness is known and has also been mentioned by us. I will here describe them one by one and point out their nature in detail.

The punishment of him who sins against his neighbour consists in the general rule that there shall be done unto him exactly as he has done: if he injured any one personally, he must suffer personally; if he damaged the property of his neighbour, he shall be punished by loss of property. But the person whose property has been damaged should be ready to resign his claim totally or partly. Only to the murderer we must not be lenient because of the greatness of his crime; and no ransom must be accepted of him. "And the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein but by the blood of him that shed it" (Num. xxxi. 33). Hence even if the murdered person continued to live after the attack for an hour or for days, was able to speak and possessed complete consciousness, and if he himself said, "Pardon my murderer, I have pardoned and forgiven him," he must not be obeyed. We must take life for life, and estimate equally the life of a child and that of a grown-up person, of a slave and of a freeman, of a wise man and of a fool. For there is no greater sin than this. And he who mutilated a limb of his neighbour, must himself lose a limb. "As he hath caused a blemish in a man, so shall it be done to him again" (Lev. xxiv. 20). You must not raise an objection from our practice of imposing a fine in such cases. For we have proposed to ourselves to give here the reason for the precepts mentioned in the Law, and not for that which is stated in the Talmud. I have, however, an explanation for the interpretation given in the Talmud, but it will be communicated *vivâ voce*. Injuries that cannot be reproduced exactly in another person, are compensated for by payment; "only he shall pay for the loss of his time, and shall cause him to be thoroughly healed" (Exod. xxi. 19). If any one damaged the property of another, he must lose exactly as much of his own property: "whom the judges shall condemn he shall pay double unto his neighbour" (Exod. xxii. 8); namely, he restores that which he has taken, and adds just as much [to it] of his own property. It is right that the more frequent transgressions and sins are, and the greater the probability of their being committed, the more severe must their punishment be, in order to deter people from committing them; but sins which are of rare occurrence require a less severe punishment. For this reason one who stole a sheep had to pay twice as much as for other goods, i.e., four times the value of the stolen object: but this is only the case when he has disposed of it by sale or slaughter (Exod. xxi. 37). As a rule, the sheep remained always in the fields, and could therefore not be watched so carefully as things kept in town. The thief of a sheep used therefore to sell it quickly before the theft became known,

or to slaughter it and thereby change its appearance. As such theft happened frequently, the punishment was severe. The compensation for a stolen ox is still greater by one-fourth, because the theft is easily carried out. The sheep keep together when they feed, and can be watched by the shepherd, so that theft when it is committed can only take place by night. But oxen when feeding are very widely scattered,

p. 345

as is also mentioned in the *Nabatean Agriculture*, and a shepherd cannot watch them properly; theft of oxen is therefore a more frequent occurrence.

The law concerning false witnesses (Deut. xix. 19) prescribes that they shall suffer exactly the same loss which they intended to inflict upon another. If they intended to bring a sentence of death against a person, they are killed; if they aimed at the punishment of stripes, they receive stripes; and if they desire to make a person pay money, they are sentenced to pay exactly the same sum. The object of all these laws is to make the punishment equal to the crime: and it is also on this account that the judgments are "righteous" (Deut. iv. 8). A robber with violence is not ordered to pay anything as fine (Lev. v. 24); the additional fifth part (of the value of the robbed goods) is only an atonement-offering for his perjury. The reason of this rule is to be found in the rare occurrence of robbery: theft is committed more frequently than robbery, for theft can be committed everywhere; robbery is not possible in towns, except with difficulty; besides, the thief takes things exposed as well as things hidden away; robbery applies only to things exposed; against robbery we can guard and defend ourselves; we cannot do so against theft; again, the robber is known, can be sought, and forced to return that which he has robbed, whilst the thief is not known. On account of all these circumstances the law fines the thief and not the robber.

Preliminary Remark.--Whether the punishment is great or small, the pain inflicted intense or less intense, depends on the following four conditions.

1. The greatness of the sin. Actions that cause great harm are punished severely, whilst actions that cause little harm are punished less severely.
2. The frequency of the crime. A crime that is frequently committed must be put down by severe punishment; crimes of rare occurrence may be suppressed by a lenient punishment considering that they are rarely committed.
3. The amount of temptation. Only fear of a severe punishment restrains us from actions for which there exists a great temptation, either because we have a great desire for these actions, or are accustomed to them, or feel unhappy without them.
4. The facility of doing the thing secretly, and unseen and unnoticed. From such acts we are deterred only by the fear of a great and terrible punishment.

After this preliminary remark, I say that the precepts of the Law may be divided into the following four classes with respect to the punishment for their transgression:--(1) Precepts whose transgression is followed by sentence of death pronounced by a court of law. (2) Precepts whose transgression is punished with excision, such transgression being held to be a very great sin. (3) In some cases the transgression is punished by stripes administered with a strap (such transgression not being considered a grievous sin, as it concerns only a simple prohibition); or by "death by Heaven." (4) Precepts the transgression of which is not punished [even] by stripes. Prohibitions of this kind are all those that involve no act. But there are the following exceptions: [First], Swearing falsely, because it is gross neglect of man's duty, who ought to bear constantly in mind the greatness

p. 346

of God. [Secondly], Changing an animal devoted to the sanctuary for another (Lev. xxvii. 10), because this change leads to contemning sacrifices devoted to the name of God. [Thirdly], Cursing a person by the name of God (*ibid.* xix. 14); because many dread the effect of a curse more than bodily harm. The transgression of other negative commandments that involve no act causes little harm, and cannot always be avoided, as it consists in mere words: moreover, man's back would be inflicted with stripes an the year round if he were to be punished with stripes for each transgression of this kind. Besides, previous warning is impossible in this case. There is also wisdom in the number of stripes; for although the number of their maximum is given, there is no fixed number how many are to be applied to each person; each man receives only as many stripes as he can bear, but not more than forty (Deut. xxv. 3), even if he be strong enough for a hundred.

The "death by the court of law" is not inflicted for the transgression of any of the dietary laws: because in such a case no great harm is done, and the temptation of man to transgress these laws is not so great as the temptation to the enjoyment of sexual intercourse. In some of the dietary laws the punishment is excision. This is the case with the prohibition of eating blood (Lev. xvii. 26). For in ancient days people were very eager and anxious to eat blood as a kind of idolatrous ceremony, as is explained in the book Tomtom, and therefore the prohibition of eating blood is made very stringent. Excision is also the punishment for eating fat; because people enjoy it, and because it was distinguished and sanctified by its use in the offerings. The eating of leavened bread on Passover (Exod. xii. 15), and breaking the fast on the Day of Atonement (Lev. xxiii. 29), are likewise punished with excision: [first] on account of the great discomfort which the obedience to the law causes in these cases; [secondly] on account of the principles of faith which the laws of Passover and of the Day of Atonement inculcate: they confirm fundamental principles of the Law, viz., the belief in the wonderful departure [of Israel] from Egypt, and in the effect of repentance, according to the words, "For on this day will he forgive you" (Lev. xvi. 3 1). just as in the case of eating fat, so is excision also announced as a punishment when a person eats that which is left [of a sacrifice beyond its limited time], or partakes of a sacrifice which has been made abominable; or when an unclean person eats of holy things (*ibid.* vii. 16-

21). The object of this severity is to increase the estimation of the offering in the eyes of the people, as has been shown.

Death by the court of law is decreed in important cases: when faith is undermined, or a great crime is committed, viz., idolatry, incest, murder, or actions that lead to these crimes. It is further decreed for breaking the Sabbath (Exod. xxxi. 15); because the keeping of Sabbath is a confirmation of our belief in the Creation; a false prophet and a rebellious elder are put to death on account of the mischief which they cause; he who strikes his father or his mother is killed on account of his great audacity, and because he undermines the constitution of the family, which is the foundation of the state. A rebellious and disobedient son is put to death (Deut. xxi. 18 *seq.*) on account of what he might become, because he will likely be a murderer; he who steals a human being is killed, because he is also prepared to kill him

p. 347

whom he steals (Exod. xxi. 16). Likewise he who is found breaking into a house is prepared for murder (*ibid.* xxii. 1), as our Sages stated. These three, the rebellious and disobedient son, he who steals and sells a human being, and he who breaks into a house, become murderers in the course of time, as is well known. Capital punishment is only decreed for these serious crimes, and in no other case. Not all forbidden sexual intercourse is visited with the penalty of death, but only in those cases in which the criminal act can easily be done, is of frequent occurrence, is base and disgraceful, and of a tempting character; otherwise excision is the punishment. Likewise not all kinds of idolatry are capital crimes, but only the principal acts of idolatry, such as praying to an idol, prophesying in its name, passing a child through the fire, consulting with familiar spirits, and acting as a wizard or witch.

As punishments and judgments are evidently indispensable, it was necessary to appoint judges throughout the country in every town; witnesses must be heard; and a king is required whom all fear and respect, who is able to restrain the people by various means, and who can strengthen and support the authority of the judges. Although I have shown the reason of an the laws contained in "the Section of Judges" (*Sefer Shofetim*), I find it necessary, in accordance with the object of this treatise, to explain a few of these laws, e.g., the laws concerning a rebellious elder.

God knew that the judgments of the Law will always require an extension in some cases and curtailment in others, according to the variety of places, events, and circumstances. He therefore cautioned against such increase and diminution, and commanded, "Thou shalt not add thereto nor diminish from it" (Deut. xiii. 1); for constant changes would tend to disturb the whole system of the Law, and would lead people to believe that the Law is not of Divine origin. But permission is at the same time given to the wise men, i.e., the great court (Synhedrion) of every generation to make fences round the judgments of the Law for their protection, and to introduce bye-laws (fences) in order to ensure the keeping of the Law. Such fences once erected remain in force for ever. The Mishnah therefore teaches: "And make a fence round the Law" (Abot i. 1). In the same

manner they have the power temporarily to dispense with some religious act prescribed in the Law, or to allow that which is forbidden, if exceptional circumstances and events require it; but none of the laws can be abrogated permanently, as has been explained by us in the Introduction to the Commentary on the Mishnah in treating of temporary legislation. By this method the Law will remain perpetually the same, and will yet admit at all times and under an circumstances such temporary modifications as are indispensable. If every scholar had the power to make such modifications, the multitude of disputes and differences of opinion would have produced an injurious effect. Therefore it was commanded that of the Sages only the great Synhedrion, and none else, should have this power; and whoever would oppose their decision should be killed. For if any critic were allowed to dispute the decision of the Synhedrion, the object of this law would not be attained; it would be useless.

Transgressions may be divided into four classes, viz.--(1) involuntary transgressions, (2) sins committed in ignorance, (3) sins done knowingly, and (4) sins done spitefully. He who sins involuntarily is, according to the distinct declaration of the Law, exempt from punishment, and free from all

p. 348

blame; comp. "Unto the damsel thou shalt do nothing; there is in the damsel no sin worthy of death" (Deut. xxii. 26). If a person sins in ignorance, he is blamable: for if he had been more considerate and careful, he would not have erred. Although he is not punished, his sin must be atoned for, and for this reason he brings a sin-offering. The Law distinguishes in this respect between a private person and a king, a high-priest or Teacher of Halakah. Hence we conclude that a person who acts wrongly, or who teaches wrongly, guided by his own reasoning--except in the case of the great Synhedrion or the high-priest--is treated as *mezid* (as one who sins knowingly), and does not belong to the category of *shogegim* (of those who sin by error). A rebellious elder is therefore put to death, although he acted and taught according to his view. But the great Synhedrion must teach according to its opinion, and if the opinion is wrong, the sin is considered as due to error. In reference to such a case the Law says, "And if the whole congregation of Israel err," etc. (Lev. iv. 13). It is on this principle that our Sages say, "The error in learning amounts to intentional sin" (Abot iv. 13); he who has studied insufficiently, and teaches and acts according to his defective knowledge, is to be considered as if he sinned knowingly. For if a person eats of the fat of the kidneys in the belief that it is the fat of the rump, his error is not so grave as the error of him who, eating of the fat of the kidneys, knows that it is that fat, but is ignorant of the fact that it is prohibited. The latter brings a sin-offering although he is almost an intentional transgressor. But this is only the case as far as he acts according to his knowledge: but if he decides a religious question [wrongly], he is undoubtedly an intentional sinner. The Law admits the plea of error in a religious decision only in the case of the great Synhedrion.

He who has sinned knowingly must pay the penalty prescribed in the Law; he is put to death or receives stripes, or--for transgression of prohibitions not punishable by stripes--other corporal punishment, or pays a fine. There are some sins for which the punishment is the same, whether they have been committed knowingly or unknowingly; because they are frequent, and are easily done, consisting only in the utterance of words, and involving no action besides; e.g., false swearing by witnesses, or by trustees. Intercourse with a betrothed handmaid is likewise easy and frequent; she is exposed unprotected, being in reality neither handmaid nor a free person, nor a married woman, according to the traditional interpretation of this precept.

If a person sins presumptuously, so that in sinning he shows impudence and seeks publicity, if he does not sin only to satisfy his appetite, if he does what is prohibited by the Law, not only because of his evil inclinations, but in order to oppose and resist the Law, he "reproacheth the Lord" (Num. xv. 30), and must undoubtedly be put to death. None will act in such a manner but such as have conceived the idea to act contrary to the Law. According to the traditional interpretation, therefore, the above passage speaks of an idolater who opposes the fundamental principles of the Law; for no one worships a star unless he believes [--contrary to the teachings of Scripture--] that the star is eternal, as we have frequently stated in our work. I think that the same punishment [viz., sentence of death] applies to every sin which involves the rejection of the Law, or opposition to it. Even if an Israelite eats meat [boiled] in milk, or wears garments of wool and linen, or

p. 349

rounds the corners of his head, out of spite against the Law, in order to show clearly that he does not believe in its truth, I apply to him the words, "he reproacheth the Lord," and [I am of opinion] that he must suffer death as an unbeliever, though not for a punishment, but in the same manner as the inhabitants of a "city misled to idolatry" are slain for their unbelief, and not by way of punishment for crime; wherefore their property is destroyed by fire, and is not given to their heirs, as is the case with the property of other criminals condemned to death. According to my opinion, all the members of an Israelitish community which has insolently and presumptuously transgressed any of the divine precepts, must be put to death. This is proved by the history of "the sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad" (Josh. xxii.), against whom the whole congregation of Israel decided to make war. When warning was given to the supposed offenders, it was explained to them that they had relinquished their faith, because by agreeing to transgress one particular law they rejected the truth of the whole Law. For they were addressed as follows: "What trespass is this that ye have committed against the God of Israel, to turn away this day from following the Lord?" (Josh. xxii. 16); and they replied: "The Lord knoweth, etc., if it be in rebellion, or if in transgression against the Lord," etc. (*ibid.* 27). Take well notice of these principles in respect to punishments.

The Section on judges includes also the commandment to blot out the memory of Amalek (Deut. xxv. 17-19). In the same way as one individual person is punished, so must also a whole family

or a whole nation be punished, in order that other families shall hear it and be afraid, and not accustom themselves to practise mischief. For they will say, we may suffer in the same way as those people have suffered; and if there be found among them a wicked, mischievous man, who cares neither for the evil he brings upon himself nor for that which he causes to others, he will not find in his family any one ready to help him in his evil designs. As Amalek was the first to attack Israel with the sword (Exod. xvii. 8-16), it was commanded to blot out his name by means of the sword; whilst Ammon and Moab, who have not been friendly simply from meanness, and have caused them injury by cunning, were only punished by exclusion from intermarriage with the Israelites, and from their friendship. All these things which God has commanded as a punishment are not excessive nor inadequate, but, as is distinctly stated, "according to the fault" (Deut. xxv. 2).

This section contains also the law concerning preparing "a place without the camp," and "having a paddle upon the weapon" (Deut. xxiii. 12, 13). As I have told you, it is one of the objects of the Law to train Israel to cleanliness: that they should keep free from dirt and filth, and that men should not be degraded to the condition of cattle. Another object of this law is to confirm by these preparations the belief of the warriors that God dwells in their midst. The reason of the law is therefore stated thus: "For the Lord thy God walketh in the midst of thy camp" (*ibid.* ver. 14). The mention of this reason gave occasion to add another lesson: "That he see no unclean thing in thee and turn away from thee" (*ibid.*). These words warn and caution us against the usual inclination of soldiers to fornication, when they are away from their homes a long time. God therefore commanded us to do certain things which remind us that He is in our midst; we will thereby

p. 350

be saved from those evil practices; as it is said, "and thy camp shall be holy, that he see no unclean thing in thee" (*ibid.*). Even those who are unclean by pollution were compelled to stop outside the camp till the evening, and "then he shall come into the camp again." It will thus be confirmed in the heart of every one of the Israelites that their camp must be like a sanctuary of the Lord, and it must not be like the camps of the heathen, whose sole object is corruption and sin; who only seek to cause injury to others and to take their property; whilst our object is to lead mankind to the service of God, and to a good social order. I have told you already that I only propose to give here such reasons as are apparent from the text of the Law.

To the same class belongs also the law concerning "the marriage of a captive woman" (Deut. xxi. 10 *seq.*). There is a well-known saying of our Sages: "This law is only a concession to human weakness." This law contains, nevertheless, even for the nobler class of people, some moral lessons to which I will call your attention. For although the soldier may be overcome by his desire which he is unable to suppress or to restrain, he must take the object of his lust to a private place, "into the inner of his house" (Deut. xxi. 12), and he is not permitted to force her in the camp. Similarly our Sages say, that he may not cohabit with her a second time before she leaves

off her mourning, and is at ease about her troubles. She must not be prevented from mourning and crying, and she must be permitted to abstain from bathing, in accordance with the words, "and she shall weep for her father and for her mother" (*ibid.*); for mourners find comfort in crying and in excitement till, the body has not sufficient strength to bear the inner emotions; in the same manner as happy persons find rest in various kinds of play. Thus the Lord is merciful to her and gives her permission to continue her mourning and weeping till she is worn out. You know certainly that he married her as a heathen, and that during the thirty days she openly keeps her religion and even continues her idolatrous practices; no interference with her faith was allowed during that time; and after all that she could not be sold, nor treated as a handmaid, if she could not be induced to accept the statutes of the Law. Thus the Law does not ignore the cohabitation of the Israelite with the captive woman, although it involved disobedience to God to some extent, having taken place when she was still a heathen. The Law prescribes: "Thou shalt not make merchandise of her, because thou hast humbled her" (*ibid.* 14). We have thus shown the moral lessons contained in these laws, and we have explained the reason of every precept of this section.

CHAPTER XLII

THE precepts of the seventh class are the civil laws enumerated in the Section on judgments, and part of the Section on Property. The object of these precepts is obvious. They define the ways of equity in the various transactions which must take place between man and man. Those that are engaged in such transactions must mutually promote each other's interests; neither of the parties must strive to increase only his own profit, and that he alone should enjoy the whole benefit of the transaction. In the first place, no overcharge is permitted; only the ordinary and known rate of profit may

p. 351

be taken. The law fixes the limits of profits within which the transaction is valid. Even imposition in mere words [where no material harm is inflicted] is forbidden, as is well known. Next comes the law of the four kinds of bailees: the fairness of the law is evident. If one keeps the property of his neighbour for nothing, without deriving therefrom any benefit for himself, and is only obliging his neighbour, he is free from all responsibility, and if any injury is done to the property, the owner alone must bear the loss. He who borrows a thing keeps it only for his own advantage, whilst the owner lends it to him to oblige him; he is therefore responsible for everything; any loss in the property must be borne by the borrower. If one takes wages for keeping the property or pays for using it, he as well as the owner profit thereby; the losses must therefore be divided between them. It is done in this manner; the bailee pays for any loss caused through want of care, namely, when the property is stolen or lost; for this happens only when the bailee does not take sufficient precaution. The owner, on the other hand, bears such losses as cannot be prevented; namely, if by accident the animal falls and breaks its limbs, or is carried away by armed men as booty, or if it dies. The Law further ordains merciful conduct towards

hired workmen because of their poverty. Their wages should be paid without delay, and they must not be wronged in any of their rights; they must receive their pay according to their work. Another instance of kindness to workmen is this: according to the regulations of this law, workmen, and even animals, must be permitted to partake of the food in the preparation of which they have been engaged. The laws which relate to property include laws concerning inheritance. They are based on the sound principle that man must not "withhold good from those to whom it is due" (Prov. iii. 27), and when he is about to die, he must not conceive ill-will against his heirs, by squandering his property, but leave it to the one who has the greatest claim on it, that is, to him who is his nearest relation, "unto his kinsman that is next to him of his family" (Num. xxvii. 11). It is clearly stated that the son has the first claim, then comes the daughter, then the brother, and then the father's brothers, as is well known. The father must leave the right of the first-born to his eldest son, because his love for this son came first: he must not be guided by his inclination. He may not make the son of the beloved firstborn before the son of the hated (Deut. xxi. 16). Thus our highly equitable Law preserves and strengthens the virtue of respecting all kinsmen, and doing well unto them, as the prophet says: "He that is cruel troubleth his own flesh" (Prov. xi. 17). The Law correctly says, "Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, unto thy poor" (Deut. xv. 11). Our Sages bestow much praise upon him who is kind to his relatives, and him who marries the daughter of his sister. The Law has taught us how far we have to extend this principle of favouring those who are near to us, and of treating kindly every one with whom we have some relationship, even if he offended or wronged us; even if he is very bad, we must have some consideration for him. Thus the Law says: "Thou shalt not abhor an Edomite, for he is thy brother" (*ibid.* xxiii. 7). Again, if we find a person in trouble, whose assistance we have once enjoyed, or of whom we have received some benefit, even if that person has subsequently done evil to us, we must bear in mind his previous [good] conduct. Thus the Law tells us: "Thou shalt not abhor an Egyptian,

p. 352

because thou wast a stranger in his land" (*ibid.*), although the Egyptians have subsequently oppressed us very much, as is well-known. See how many moral lessons we have derived from these precepts. The last two precepts do not belong to the seventh class: but the discussion of the preference due to relatives as regards inheritance led us to speak of the Egyptians and the Edomites.

CHAPTER XLIII

THE precepts of the eighth class are enumerated in "the Section on Seasons" (*Sefer zemannim*). With a few exceptions, the reasons for all of them are stated in the Law. The object of Sabbath is obvious, and requires no explanation. The rest it affords to man is known; one-seventh of the life of every man, whether small or great, passes thus in comfort, and in rest from trouble and exertion. This the Sabbath effects in addition to the perpetuation and confirmation of the grand doctrine of the Creation. The object of the Fast of Atonement is evident. The Fast creates the

sense of repentance; it is the same day on which the chief of all prophets came down [from Mount Sinai] with the second tables, and announced to the people the divine pardon of their great sin; the day was therefore appointed for ever as a day devoted to repentance and true worship of God. For this reason all material enjoyment, all trouble and care for the body, are interdicted, no work may be done; the day must be spent in confession; every one shall confess his sins and abandon them.

Other holy days are appointed for rejoicing and for such pleasant gathering as people generally need. They also promote the good feeling that men should have to each other in their social and political relations. The appointment of the special days for such purposes has its cause. The reason for the Passover is well known. It is kept seven days, because the period of seven days is the unit of time intermediate between a day and a month. It is also known how great is the importance of this period in Nature, and in many religious duties. For the Law always follows Nature, and in some respects brings it to perfection; for Nature is not capable of designing and thinking, whilst the Law is the result of the wisdom and guidance of God, who is the author of the intellect of all rational beings. This, however, is not the theme of the present chapter: let us return to our subject.

The Feast of Weeks is the anniversary of the Revelation on Mount Sinai. In order to raise the importance of this day, we count the days that pass since the preceding festival, just as one who expects his most intimate friend on a certain day counts the days and even the hours. This is the reason why we count the days that pass since the offering of the Omer, between the anniversary of our departure from Egypt and the anniversary of the Lawgiving. The latter was the aim and object of the exodus from Egypt, and thus God said, "I brought you unto myself" (Exod. xix. 4). As that great revelation took place only on one day, so we keep its anniversary only one day: but if the eating of unleavened bread on Passover were only commanded for one day, we should not have noticed it, and its object would not have been manifest. For it frequently happens that we take the same kind of food for two

p. 353

or three days. But by our continuing for a whole period [of seven days] to eat unleavened bread, its object becomes clear and evident.

New-Year is likewise kept for one day; for it is a day of repentance, on which we are stirred up from our forgetfulness. For this reason the shofar is blown on this day, as we have shown in Mishneh-torah. The day is, as it were, a preparation for and an introduction to the day of the Fast, as is obvious from the national tradition about the days between New-Year and the Day of Atonement.

The Feast of Tabernacles, which is a feast of rejoicing and gladness, is kept seven days, in order that the idea of the festival may be more noticeable. The reason why it is kept in the autumn is stated in the Law, "When thou hast gathered in thy labours out of the field" (Exod. xxiii. 16); that

is to say, when you rest and are free from pressing labours. Aristotle, in the ninth book of his Ethics, mentions this as a general custom among the nations. He says: "In ancient times the sacrifices and assemblies of the people took place after the ingathering of the corn and the fruit, as if the sacrifices were offered on account of the harvest." Another reason is this--in this season it is possible to dwell in tabernacles, as there is neither great heat nor troublesome rain.

The two festivals, Passover and the Feast of Tabernacles, imply also the teaching of certain truths and certain moral lessons. Passover teaches us to remember the miracles which God wrought in Egypt, and to perpetuate their memory; the Feast of Tabernacles reminds us of the miracles wrought in the wilderness. The moral lessons derived from these feasts is this: man ought to remember his evil days in his days of prosperity. He will thereby be induced to thank God repeatedly, to lead a modest and humble life. We eat, therefore, unleavened bread and bitter herbs on Passover in memory of what has happened unto us, and leave [on Succoth] our houses in order to dwell in tabernacles, as inhabitants of deserts do that are in want of comfort. We shall thereby remember that this has once been our condition; [comp.] "I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths" (Lev. xxiii. 43); although we dwell now in elegant houses, in the best and most fertile land, by the kindness of God, and because of His promises to our forefathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who were perfect in their opinions and in their conduct. This idea is likewise an important element in our religion; that whatever good we have received and ever will receive of God, is owing to the merits of the Patriarchs, who "kept the way of the Lord to do justice and judgment" (Gen. xviii. 19). We join to the Feast of Tabernacles the Feast of the Eighth Day, in order to complete our rejoicings, which cannot be perfect in booths, but in comfortable and well-built houses. As regards the four species [the branches of the palm tree, the citron, the myrtle, and the willows of the brook] our Sages gave a reason for their use by way of Agadic interpretation, the method of which is well known to those who are acquainted with the style of our Sages. They use the text of the Bible only as a kind of poetical language [for their own ideas], and do not intend thereby to give an interpretation of the text. As to the value of these Midrashic interpretations, we meet with two different opinions. For some think that the Midrash contains the real explanation of the text, whilst others, finding that it cannot be reconciled with the words quoted, reject and ridicule it. The former

p. 354

struggle and fight to prove and to confirm such interpretations according to their opinion, and to keep them as the real meaning of the text; they consider them in the same light as traditional laws. Neither of the two classes understood it, that our Sages employ biblical texts merely as poetical expressions, the meaning of which is clear to every reasonable reader. This style was general in ancient days; all adopted it in the same way as poets [adopt a certain style]. Our Sages say, in reference to the words, "and a paddle (*yated*) thou shalt have upon thy weapon" [*azeneka*, Deut. xxiii. 14]: Do not read *azeneka*, "thy weapon," but *ozneka*, "thy ear." You are thus told, that if you hear a person uttering something disgraceful, put your fingers into your ears. Now, I wonder whether those ignorant persons [who take the Midrashic interpretations literally] believe

that the author of this saying gave it as the true interpretation of the text quoted, and as the meaning of this precept: that in truth *yated*, "the paddle," is used for "the finger," and *azeneka* denotes "thy ear." I cannot think that any person whose intellect is sound can admit this. The author employed the text as a beautiful poetical phrase, in teaching an excellent moral lesson, namely this: It is as bad to listen to bad language as it is to use it. This lesson is poetically connected with the above text. In the same sense you must understand the phrase, "Do not read so, but so," wherever it occurs in the Midrash. I have departed from my subject, but it was for the purpose of making a remark useful to every intellectual member of the Rabbanites. I now return to our theme. I believe that the four species are a symbolical expression of our rejoicing that the Israelites changed the wilderness, "no place of seed, or of figs, or of vines, or of pomegranates, or of water to drink" (Num. xx. 5), with a country full of fruit-trees and rivers. In order to remember this we take the fruit which is the most pleasant of the fruit of the land, branches which smell best, most beautiful leaves, and also the best of herbs, i.e., the willows of the brook. These four kinds have also those three purposes: First, they were plentiful in those days in Palestine, so that every one could easily get them. Secondly, they have a good appearance, they are green; some of them, viz., the citron and the myrtle, are also excellent as regards their smell, the branches of the palm-tree and the willow having neither good nor bad smell. Thirdly, they keep fresh and green for seven days, which is not the case with peaches, pomegranates, asparagus, nuts, and the like.

CHAPTER XLIV

THE precepts of the ninth class are those enumerated in the Section on Love. Their reason is obvious. The actions prescribed by them serve to remind us continually of God, and of our duty to fear and to love Him, to keep all His commandments, and to believe concerning God that which every religious person must believe. This class includes the laws of Prayer, Reading of Shema, Grace, and duties connected with these, Blessing of the priests, Tefillin, Mezuzah, Zizit, acquiring a scroll of the Law, and reading in it at certain times. The performance of all these precepts inculcates into our heart useful lessons. All this is clear, and a further explanation is superfluous, as being a mere repetition and nothing else.

p. 355

CHAPTER XLV

THE precepts of the tenth class are those enumerated in the laws on the Temple (*Hilkot bet ha-behira*), the laws on the vessels of the temple and on the ministers in the temple [*Hilkot kele ha-mikdash veba- 'obedim bo*]. The use of these precepts we have stated in general terms. It is known that idolaters selected the highest possible places on high mountains where to build their temples and to place their images. Therefore Abraham, our father, chose Mount Moriah, being the highest mount in that country, and proclaimed there the Unity of God. He selected the west of the mount as the place toward which he turned during his prayers, because [he thought that]

the most holy place was in the West; this is the meaning of the saving of our Sages, "The *Shekinah*" (the Glory of God) is in the West" (B. T. Baba B 25a); and it is distinctly stated in the Talmud Yoma that our father Abraham chose the west side, the place where the Most Holy was built. I believe that he did so because it was then a general rite to worship the sun as a deity. Undoubtedly all people turned then to the East [worshipping the Sun]. Abraham turned therefore on Mount Moriah to the West, that is, the site of the Sanctuary, and turned his back toward the sun; and the Israelites, when they abandoned their God and returned to the early bad principles, stood "with their backs toward the Temple of the Lord and their faces toward the East, and they worshipped the sun toward the East" (Ezek. viii. 16). Note this strange fact. I do not doubt that the spot which Abraham chose in his prophetic spirit, was known to Moses our Teacher, and to others: for Abraham commanded his children that on this place a house of worship should be built. Thus the Targum says distinctly, "And Abraham worshipped and prayed there in that place, and said before God, 'Here shall coming generations worship the Lord'" (Gen. xxii. 14). For three practical reasons the name of the place is not distinctly stated in the Law, but indicated in the phrase "To the place which the Lord will choose" (Deut. xii. 11, etc.). First, if the nations had learnt that this place was to be the centre of the highest religious truths, they would occupy it, or fight about it most perseveringly. Secondly, those who were then in possession of it might destroy and ruin the place with all their might. Thirdly, and chiefly, every one of the twelve tribes would desire to have this place in its borders and under its control; this would lead to divisions and discord, such as were caused by the desire for the priesthood. Therefore it was commanded that the Temple should not be built before the election of a king who would order its erection, and thus remove the cause of discord. We have explained this in the Section on Judges (ch. xli.).

It is known that the heathen in those days built temples to stars, and set up in those temples the image which they agreed upon to worship; because it was in some relation to a certain star or to a portion of one of the spheres. We were, therefore, commanded to build a temple to the name of God, and to place therein the ark with two tables of stone, on which there were written the commandments "I am the Lord," etc., and "Thou shalt have no other God before me," etc. Naturally the fundamental belief in prophecy precedes the belief in the Law, for without the belief in prophecy there can be no belief in the Law. But a prophet only receives divine inspiration through

p. 356

the agency of an angel. Comp. "The angel of the Lord called" (Gen. xxii. 15); "The angel of the Lord said unto her" (*ibid.* xvi. 11); and other innumerable instances. Even Moses our Teacher received his first prophecy through an angel. "And an angel of the Lord appeared to him in the flame of fire" (Exod. iii.). It is therefore clear that the belief in the existence of angels precedes the belief in prophecy, and the latter precedes the belief in the Law. The Sabaeans, in their ignorance of the existence of God, believed that the spheres with their stars were beings without beginning and without end, that the images and certain trees, the Asherot, derived certain powers

from the spheres, that they inspired the prophets, spoke to them in visions, and told them what was good and what bad. I have explained their theory when speaking of the prophets of the Ashera. But when the wise men discovered and proved that there was a Being, neither itself corporeal nor residing as a force in a corporeal body, viz., the true, one God, and that there existed besides other purely incorporeal beings which God endowed with His goodness and His light, namely, the angels, and that these beings are not included in the sphere and its stars, it became evident that it was these angels and not the images or *Asherot* that charged the prophets. From the preceding remarks it is clear that the belief in the existence of angels is connected with the belief in the Existence of God; and the belief in God and angels leads to the belief in Prophecy and in the truth of the Law. In order to firmly establish this creed, God commanded [the Israelites] to make over the ark the form of two angels. The belief in the existence of angels is thus inculcated into the minds of the people, and this belief is in importance next to the belief in God's Existence; it leads us to believe in Prophecy and in the Law, and opposes idolatry. If there had only been one figure of a cherub, the people would have been misled and would have mistaken it for God's image which was to be worshipped, in the fashion of the heathen; or they might have assumed that the angel [represented by the figure] was also a deity, and would thus have adopted a Dualism. By making two cherubim and distinctly declaring "the Lord is our God, the Lord is One," Moses clearly proclaimed the theory of the existence of a number of angels; he left no room for the error of considering those figures as deities, since [he declared that] God is one, and that He is the Creator of the angels, who are more than one.

A candlestick was then put in front of the curtain, as a sign of honour and distinction for the Temple. For a chamber in which a continual light burns, hidden behind a curtain, makes a great impression on man, and the Law lays great stress on our holding the Sanctuary in great estimation and regard, and that at the sight of it we should be filled with humility, mercy, and softheartedness. This is expressed in the words, "And ye shall reverence my sanctuary" (Lev. xix. 30), and in order to give these words more weight, they are closely joined to the command to keep the Sabbath.

The use of the altar for incense and the altar for burnt-offering and their vessels is obvious; but I do not know the object of the table with the bread upon it continually, and up to this day I have not been able to assign any reason to this commandment.

The commandment that the stones of the altar shall not be hewn and that no iron tool shall be lifted up upon them (Deut. xxvii. 5), has been explained

p. 357

by our Sages as follows: It is not right that the tool that shortens man's life should be lifted up upon that which gives length of life. As an Agadic explanation this is good: but the real reason is this: the heathen used to build their altars with hewn stones: we ought not to imitate them. For this reason we have to make an altar of earth: "Thou shalt make unto me an altar of earth" (Exod.

xx. 24); if it should be impossible to dispense altogether with stones, they must not be hewn, but employed in their natural state. Thus the Law also prohibits from worshipping over painted stones (Lev. xxvi. 1), or from planting any tree near the altar of the Lord (Deut. xvi. 21). The object of all these commandments is the same, namely, that we shall not employ in the worship of God anything which the heathen employed in the worship of their idols. In general terms this is repeated in the following passage: "Take heed, that thou inquire not after their gods, saying, How did these nations serve their gods? even so will I do likewise" (Deut. xii. 30), the Israelites shall not do this, because--as is expressly added--"every abomination unto the Lord, which he hateth, have they done unto their gods."

The mode of worshipping Peor, then very general among the heathen, consisted in uncovering the nakedness. The priests were therefore commanded to make breeches for themselves to cover their nakedness during the service, and, besides, no steps were to lead up to the altar, "that thy nakedness be not discovered thereon" (Exod. xx. 23)

The Sanctuary was constantly guarded and surrounded [by Levites] as a mark of respect and honour: and at the same time the layman, the unclean, and mourners, were prevented from entering the Sanctuary, as will be explained. Among other things that tend to display the greatness and the glory of the Temple and to inspire us with awe, is the rule that none shall approach it in a state of drunkenness or uncleanness, or in a disorderly state, i.e., the hair undressed and the garments rent; and that every one who officiated as priest should first wash his hands and his feet.

In order to raise the estimation of the Temple, those who ministered therein received great honour: and the priests and Levites were therefore distinguished from the rest. It was commanded that the priests should be clothed properly with beautiful and good garments, "holy garments for glory and for beauty" (Exod. xxviii. 2). A priest that had a blemish was not allowed to officiate; and not only those that had a blemish were excluded from the service, but also--according to the Talmudic interpretation of this precept--those that had an abnormal appearance; for the multitude does not estimate man by his true form but by the perfection of his bodily limbs and the beauty of his garments, and the temple was to be held in great reverence by all.

The Levites did not sacrifice; they were not considered as being agents in the atonement of sins, for it was only the priest who was commanded "to make atonement for him" (Lev. iv. 26) and "to make atonement for her" (Lev. xii. 8). The duty of the Levites was the performance of vocal music; and a Levite became therefore disabled for service when he lost his voice. The object of the singing is to produce certain emotions; this object can only be attained by pleasing sounds and melodies accompanied by music, as was always the case in the Temple.

Again, the priests, even when fit for service, and actually officiating in the

[paragraph continues] Temple, were not allowed to sit down, or enter it whenever they liked; the Most Holy was only entered by the high-priest four times on the Day of Atonement, and on no other occasion. The object of all these rules was to raise the estimation of the Sanctuary in the eyes of the people.

Since many beasts were daily slaughtered in the holy place, the flesh cut in pieces and the entrails and the legs burnt and washed, the smell of the place would undoubtedly have been like the smell of slaughter-houses, if nothing had been done to counteract it. They were therefore commanded to burn incense there twice every day, in the morning and in the evening (Exod. xxx. 7, 8), in order to give the place and the garments of those who officiated there a pleasant odour. There is a well-known saying of our Sages, "In Jericho they could smell the incense" [burnt in the Temple]. This provision likewise tended to support the dignity of the Temple. If there had not been a good smell, let alone if there had been a stench, it would have produced in the minds of the people the reverse of respect; for our heart generally feels elevated in the presence of good odour, and is attracted by it, but it abhors and avoids bad smell.

The anointing oil (Exod. xxx. 22-33) served a double purpose: to give the anointed object a good odour, and to produce the impression that it was something great, holy, and distinguished, and better than other objects of the same species; it made no difference whether that object was a human being, a garment, or a vessel. All this aimed at producing due respect towards the Sanctuary, and indirectly fear of God. When a person enters the Temple, certain emotions are produced in him; and obstinate hearts are softened and humbled. These plans and indirect means were devised by the Law, to soften and humble man's heart at entering the holy place, in order that he might entrust himself to the sure guidance of God's commandments. This is distinctly said in the Law: "And thou shalt eat before the Lord thy God, in the place which he shall choose to place his name there, the tithe of thy corn, of thy wine, and of thine oil, and the firstlings, of thy herds and of thy flocks; that thou mayest learn to fear the Lord thy God always" (Deut. xiv. 23). The object of all these ceremonies is now clear. The reason why we are not allowed to prepare [for common use] the anointing oil and the incense (*ibid.* ver. 32, 38) is obvious; for when the odour [of the oil and incense] is perceived only in the Sanctuary, the desired effect is great: besides [if it were allowed for every one to prepare the anointing oil], people might anoint themselves therewith and imagine themselves distinguished; much disorder and dissension would then follow.

It is clear that when the ark was carried on the shoulder, and was not put on a waggon, it was done out of respect towards it, and also to prevent its being damaged in its form and shape; even the staves were not moved out of the rings, for this reason. In order that the form of the ephod and the breastplate should not be spoiled, they were never separated. The garments were also entirely woven and not cut, in order not to spoil the work of the weaving.

Those that ministered in the Temple were strictly prohibited to interfere with each other's work; for if in public duties and offices, each one would not have assigned to him his particular task, general carelessness and neglect would soon be noticed.

p. 359

It is evident that the object of giving different degrees of sanctity to the different places, to the Temple mount, the place between the two walls, to the Hall of women, to the Hall, and so on up to the Most Holy, was to raise the respect and reverence of the Temple in the heart of every one that approached it.

We have thus described the reason of all precepts of this class.

CHAPTER XLVI

THE precepts of the eleventh class are enumerated in the Section on Divine Service (*Sefer 'abodah*) and the Section on Sacrifices (*Sefer ha-ḳorbanot*). We have described their use in general terms (chap. xxxii.). I will now proceed to give the reason of each precept separately.

Scripture tells us, according to the Version of Onkelos, that the Egyptians worshipped Aries, and therefore abstained from killing sheep, and held shepherds in contempt. Comp. "Behold we shall sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians," etc. (Exod. viii. 26); "For every shepherd is an abomination to the Egyptians" (Gen. xli. 34). Some sects among the Sabeans worshipped demons, and imagined that these assumed the form of goats, and called them therefore "goats" [*se'irim*]. This worship was widespread. Comp. "And they shall no more offer their sacrifices unto demons, after whom they have gone a whoring" (Lev. xvii. 7). For this reason those sects abstained from eating goats' flesh. Most idolaters objected to killing cattle, holding this species of animals in great estimation. Therefore the people of Hodu [Indians] up to this day do not slaughter cattle even in those countries where other animals are slaughtered. In order to eradicate these false principles, the Law commands us to offer sacrifices only of these three kinds: "Ye shall bring your offering of the cattle [viz.], of the herd and of the flock" (Lev. i. 2). Thus the very act which is considered by the heathen as the greatest crime, is the means of approaching God, and obtaining His pardon for our sins. In this manner, evil principles, the diseases of the human soul, are cured by other principles which are diametrically opposite.

This is also the reason why we were commanded to kill a lamb on Passover, and to sprinkle the blood thereof outside on the gates. We had to free ourselves of evil doctrines and to proclaim the opposite, viz., that the very act which was then considered as being the cause of death would be the cause of deliverance from death. Comp. "And the Lord will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come unto your houses to suite you" (Exod. xii. 23). Thus they were rewarded for performing openly a service every part of which was objected to by the idolaters.

To the above reason for the exclusive selection of the three kinds of animals for sacrifices, we may add the following, namely, that these species are animals which can be got very easily, contrary to the practice of idolaters that sacrifice lions, bears, and wild beasts, as is stated in the book Tomtom. As, however, many could not afford to offer a beast, the Law commanded that birds also should be sacrificed, but only of those species which are found abundantly in Palestine, are suitable, and can easily be obtained, namely, turtledoves and pigeons. Those who are too poor to offer a bird, may bring bread of any of the kinds then in use: baked in the oven, baked in a pan, or in a

p. 360

frying-pan. If the baking of the bread is too much trouble for a person, he may bring flour. All this concerns only those who desire to sacrifice; for we are distinctly told that the omission of the sacrificial service on our part will not be reckoned to us a sin: "If thou shalt forbear to vow, it shall be no sin in thee" (Deut. xxiii. 22). The idolaters did not offer any other bread but leavened, and chose sweet things for their sacrifices, which they seasoned with honey, as is fully described in the books which I named before: but salt is not mentioned in any of their sacrifices. Our Law therefore forbade us to offer leaven or honey, and commanded us to have salt in every sacrifice: "With all thine offerings thou shalt offer salt" (Lev. ii. 13). It is further ordained that the offerings must all be perfect and in the best condition, in order that no one should slight the offering or treat with contempt that which is offered to God's name: "Offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee?" (Mal. i. 8). This is the reason why no animal could be brought that was not yet seven days old (Lev. xxii. 26); it is imperfect and contemptible, like an untimely birth. Because of their degraded character it was prohibited to bring "the hire of a harlot and the price of a dog" (Deut. xxiii. 18) into the Sanctuary. In order to bring the offering in the best condition, we choose the old of the turtle-doves and the young of the pigeons, the old pigeons being less agreeable. The oblation must likewise be mingled with oil, and must be of fine flour (Lev. ii. 1), for in this condition it is good and pleasant. Frankincense is prescribed (*ibid.*) because its fumes are good in places filled with the odour of burnt flesh. The burnt-offering was flayed (Lev. i. 16), and its inwards and legs, although they were entirely burnt, had to be previously washed (*ibid.* ver. 9), in order that due respect should be shown to the sacrifice, and it should not appear despicable and contemptible. This object is constantly kept in view, and is often taught, "Ye say, The table of the Lord is polluted; and the fruit thereof, even his meat, is contemptible" (Mal. i. 12). For the same reason no body uncircumcised, or unclean (Lev. xxii. 4), was allowed to partake of any offering; nor could any offering be eaten that had become unclean (Lev. vii. 19), or was left till after a certain time (*ibid.* vii. 15-17), or concerning which an illegal intention had been conceived; and it had also to be consumed in a particular place. Of the burnt-offering, which is entirely devoted to God, nothing at all was eaten. Those sacrifices which are brought for a sin, viz., sin-offering and guilt-offering, must be eaten within the court of the Sanctuary (*'azarah*), and only on the day of their slaughtering and the night following, whilst peace-offerings, which are next in sanctity, being sacrifices of the second degree, may be eaten

in the whole of Jerusalem, on the day they have been offered and on the following day, but not later. After that time the sacrifices would become spoiled, and be unfit for food.

In order that we may respect the sacrifices and all that is devoted to the name of God, we are told that whosoever takes part of a holy thing for common use has committed a trespass, must bring a sin-offering, and restore what he has taken with an addition of the fifth part of its value, although he may have committed the trespass in ignorance. For the same reason animals reserved for holy purposes must not be employed in work; nor is the shearing of such animals permitted (Deut. xv. 19). The law concerning the change of a sacrifice must be considered as a preventive; for if it were permitted to substitute a good animal for a bad one, people would

p. 361

substitute a bad animal for a good one, and say that it was better than the original; it was therefore the rule that, if any such change had taken place, both the "original sacrifice and the exchange thereof should be holy" (Lev. xxvii. 9). When a person redeems a thing devoted by him to the Sanctuary, he must likewise add one-fifth (Lev. xxvii. 13, 15); the reason for this is plain. Man is usually selfish, and is naturally inclined to keep and save his property. He would therefore not take the necessary trouble in the interest of the Sanctuary: he would not expose his property sufficiently to the sight of the valuer, and its true value would not be fixed. Therefore the owner had to add one-fifth, whilst a stranger paid only the exact value. These rules were laid down in order that people should not despise that with which the name of God is connected, and which serves as a means of approaching God. The oblation of the priest was entirely burnt (Lev. vi. 16), because the priest offered up his oblation by himself, and if he were to offer it, and at the same time to eat it, it would appear as if he had not performed any service. For nothing was offered upon the altar of the ordinary oblations of any person except the frankincense and a handful of the flour or cake; and if, in addition to the fact that the offering was small, he who offered it were himself to eat it, nothing of a sacrificial service would be noticed. It is therefore entirely burnt (Lev. vi. 16).

The reason of the particular laws concerning the Passover lamb is clear. It was eaten roasted by fire (Exod. xii. 8-9) in one house, and without breaking the bones thereof (*ibid.* ver. 46). In the same way as the Israelites were commanded to eat unleavened bread, because they could prepare it hastily, so they were commanded, for the sake of haste, to roast the lamb, because there was not sufficient time to boil it, or to prepare other food; even the delay caused by breaking the bones and to extract their marrow was prohibited the one principle is laid down for all these rules, "Ye shall eat it in haste" (Exod. xii. 11). But when haste is necessary the bones cannot be broken, nor parts of it sent from house to house; for the company could not wait with their meal till he returned. Such things would lead to laxity and delay, whilst the object of these rules was to make a show of the hurry and haste, in order that none should be too late to leave Egypt with the main body of the people, and be thus exposed to the attacks and the evil [designs of the enemy]. These temporary commandments were then made permanent, in order that we may remember

what was done in those days. "And thou shalt keep this ordinance in his season from year to year" (Exod. xiii. 10). Each Passover lamb was only eaten by those who had previously agreed to consume it together, in order that people should be anxious to procure it, and should not rely on friends, relations, or on chance, without themselves taking any trouble about it before Passover. The reason of the prohibition that the uncircumcised should not eat of it (Exod. xii. 48) is explained by our Sages as follows:--The Israelites neglected circumcision during their long stay in Egypt, in order to make themselves appear like the Egyptians. When God gave them the commandment of the Passover, and ordered that no one should kill the Passover lamb unless he, his sons, and all the male persons in his household were circumcised, that only "then he could come near and keep it" (*ibid.* xii. 48), all performed this commandment, and the number

p. 362

of the circumcised being large the blood of the Passover and that of the circumcision flowed together. The Prophet Ezekiel (xvi. 6), referring to this event, says, "When I saw thee sprinkled with thine own blood I said unto thee, Live because of thy [two kinds of] blood, "i.e., because of the blood of the Passover and that of the circumcision.

Although blood was very unclean in the eyes of the Sabeans, they nevertheless partook of it, because they thought it was the food of the spirits; by eating it man has something in common with the spirits, which join him and tell him future events, according to the notion which people generally have of spirits. There were, however, people who objected to eating blood, as a thing naturally disliked by man; they killed a beast, received the blood in a vessel or in a pot, and ate of the flesh of that beast, whilst sitting round the blood. They imagined that in this manner the spirits would come to partake of the blood which was their food, whilst the idolaters were eating the flesh: that love, brotherhood, and friendship with the spirits were established, because they dined with the latter at one place and at the same time; that the spirits would appear to them in dreams, inform them of coming events, and be favourable to them. Such ideas people liked and accepted in those days; they were general, and their correctness was not doubted by any one of the common people. The Law, which is perfect in the eyes of those who know it, and seeks to cure mankind of these lasting diseases, forbade the eating of blood, and emphasized the prohibition exactly in the same terms as it emphasizes idolatry: "I will set my face against that soul that eateth blood" (Lev. xvii. 10). The same language is employed in reference to him "who giveth of his seed unto Molech"; "then I will set my face against that man" (*ibid.* xx. 5). There is, besides idolatry and eating blood, no other sin in reference to which these words are used. For the eating of blood leads to a kind of idolatry, to the worship of spirits. Our Law declared the blood as pure, and made it the means of purifying other objects by its touch. "And thou shalt take of the blood . . . and sprinkle it upon Aaron, and upon his garments, and upon his sons, and upon the garments of his sons with him. And he shall be hallowed, and his garments, and his sons," etc. (Exod. xxix. 21). Furthermore, the blood was sprinkled upon the altar, and in the whole service it was insisted upon pouring it out, and not upon collecting it. Comp. "And he shall pour out all the blood at the bottom of the altar" (Lev. iv. 18); "And the blood of thy sacrifices shall be

poured out upon the altar of the Lord thy God" (Deut. xii. 27). Also the blood of those beasts that were killed for common use, and not for sacrifices, must be poured out, "Thou shalt pour it upon the earth as water" (*ibid.* ver. 24). We are not allowed to gather and have a meal round the blood, "You shall not eat round the blood" (Lev. xix. 26). As the Israelites were inclined to continue their rebellious conduct, to follow the doctrines in which they had been brought up, and which were then general, and to assemble round the blood in order to eat there and to meet the spirits, God forbade the Israelites to eat ordinary meat during their stay in the wilderness: they could only partake of the meat of peace-offerings. The reason of this precept is distinctly stated, viz., that the blood shall be poured out upon the altar, and the people do not assemble round about. Comp. "To the end that the children of Israel may bring their sacrifices, which they offer in the open

p. 363

field, even that they may bring them unto the Lord. . . . And the priest shall sprinkle the blood upon the altar, . . . and they shall no more offer their sacrifices unto the spirits" (Lev. xvii. 5-7). Now there remained to provide for the slaughtering of the beasts of the field and birds, because those beasts were never sacrificed, and birds did never serve as peace-offerings (Lev. iii.). The commandment was therefore given that whenever a beast or a bird that may be eaten is killed, the blood thereof must be covered with earth (Lev. xvii. 13), in order that the people should not assemble round the blood for the purpose of eating there. The object was thus fully gained to break the connexion between these fools and their spirits. This belief flourished about the time of our Teacher Moses. People were attracted and misled by it. We find it in the Song of Moses (Deut. xxxii.): "They sacrificed unto spirits, not to God" (*ibid.* 17). According to the explanation of our Sages, the words *lo eloha* imply the following idea: They have not only not left off worshipping things in existence; they even worship imaginary things. This is expressed in Sifri as follows: "It is not enough for them to worship the sun, the moon, the stars; they even worship their *babuah*. The word *babuah* signifies "shadow." Let us now return to our subject. The prohibition of slaughtering cattle for common use applied only to the wilderness, because as regards the "spirits" it was then the general belief that they dwelt in deserts, that there they spoke and were visible, whilst in towns and in cultivated land they did not appear. In accordance with this belief those inhabitants of a town who wanted to perform any of those stupid practices, left the town and went to woods and waste places. The use of cattle for common food was therefore allowed when the Israelites entered Palestine. Besides, there were great hopes that the disease would become weakened, and the followers of the doctrines would decrease. Furthermore, it was almost impossible that every one who wanted to eat meat should come to Jerusalem. For these reasons the above restriction was limited to the stay of the Israelites in the wilderness.

The greater the sin which a person had committed, the lower was the species from which the sin-offering was brought. The offering for worshipping idols in ignorance was only a she-goat, whilst for other sins an ordinary person brought either a ewe-lamb or a she-goat (Lev. iv. 27-35), the females bring, as a rule, in every species, inferior to the males. There is no greater sin than

idolatry, and also no inferior species than a she-goat. The offering of a king for sins committed ignorantly was a he-goat (*ibid.* vers. 22-26), as a mark of distinction. The high priest and the Synhedrion, who only gave a wrong decision in ignorance, but have not actually committed a sin, brought a bull for their sin-offering (*ibid.* ver. 3-21), or a he-goat, when the decision referred to idolatry (Num. xv. 27-26). The sins for which guilt-offerings were brought were not as bad as transgressions that required a sin-offering. The guilt-offering was therefore a ram, or a lamb, so that the species as well as the sex were superior in this latter case, for the guilt-offering was a male sheep. For the same reason we see the burnt-offering, which was entirely burnt upon the altar, was selected from the superior sex; for only male animals were admitted as burnt-offerings. It is in accordance with the same principle that luxury and incense were absent from the oblations of a sinner (Lev. v.11), and of a *sotah*, i.e., a woman suspected of

p. 364

adultery (Num. v. 15). In these cases the oil and the frankincense were not added: this luxury was absent, because the persons that brought the oblation were not good and proper in their deeds, and they are, as it were, to be reminded by their offerings that they ought to repent; as if they were told, "Your offering is without any ornamental addition on account of the wickedness of your deeds." As the *sotah* acted more disgracefully than any person who sins in ignorance, her offering consisted of the lowest kind, viz., of barley flour (*ibid.*). Thus the reasons of all these particular laws are well connected, and show that the precepts are wonderful in their significance.

Our Sages say that the offering for the eighth day of dedication was "a calf, a young bullock, for a sin-offering" (Lev. xi. 2), in order to atone for the sin of the Israelites in making a golden calf. The sin-offering, which was brought on the Day of Atonement (*ibid.* xvi. 3), was likewise explained as being an atonement for that sin. From this argument of our Sages I deduce that he-goats were always brought as sin-offerings, by individual persons and also by the whole congregation, viz., on the Festivals, New-moon, Day of Atonement, and for idolatry, because most of the transgressions and sins of the Israelites were sacrifices to spirits (*se'irim*, lit., goats), as is clearly stated, "They shall no more offer their sacrifices unto spirits" (Lev. xvii. 7). Our Sages, however, explained the fact that goats were always the sin-offerings of the congregation, as an allusion to the sin of the whole congregation of Israel: for in the account of the selling of the pious Joseph we read, "And they killed a kid of the goats" (Gen. xxxvii. 31). Do not consider this as a weak argument; for it is the object of all these ceremonies to impress on the mind of every sinner and transgressor the necessity of continually remembering and mentioning his sins. Thus the Psalmist says, "And my sin is ever before me" (Ps. li. 3). The above-mentioned sin-offerings further show us that when we commit a sin, we, our children, and the children of our children, require atonement for that sin by some kind of service analogous to the sin committed. If a person has sinned in respect to property he must liberally spend his property in the service of God; if he indulged in sinful bodily enjoyments he must weary his body and trouble it by a service of privation and fasting, and rising early before daybreak. If he went astray in respect to

his moral conduct he must oppose his failings by keeping to the opposite extreme, as we have pointed out in Mishneh-torah *Hilkot De'ot* (chap. ii.) *et passim*. If his intellectual faculties have been concerned in the sin, if he has believed something false on account of the insufficiency of his intellect, and his neglect of research and proper study, he must remedy his fault by turning his thoughts entirely away from worldly affairs, and directing them exclusively to intellectual exercise, and by carefully reflecting on that which ought to form the subject of his belief. Comp. "And my heart hath been secretly enticed, but my hand touched my mouth" (Job xxxi. 27). These words express figuratively the lesson that we should pause and stop at that which appears doubtful, as has been pointed out by us in the beginning of this treatise. The same we notice in the case of Aaron. He had his share in the sin of the golden calf, and therefore a bullock and a calf were brought by him and his successors as an offering. Similarly, the sin connected with a kid of goats was atoned for by a kid of goats. When this theory has been well established in the minds of the people, they must certainly be led

p. 365

by it to consider disobedience to God as a disgraceful thing. Every one will then be careful that he should not sin, and require a protracted and burdensome atonement; he will be afraid he might not be able to complete it, and will therefore altogether abstain from sinning, and avoid it. This object [of the laws under discussion] is very clear, and note it likewise.

I will here call your attention to a very remarkable thing, although it does not seem at first thought to belong to our subject. It is only the goat brought on New-moon as a sin-offering that the law calls "a sin-offering unto the Lord" (Num. xxviii. 15). The sin-offerings brought on the three festivals (*ibid.* vers. 22, 30; xxix. 5, 11, etc.) are not called so, nor are any other sin-offerings. The reason thereof is, according to my opinion, undoubtedly this: The additional offerings brought by the congregation at certain periods were all burnt-offerings; only "one kid of goats to make an atonement" was offered on every one of these exceptional days. The latter was eaten [by the priests], whilst the burnt-offerings were entirely consumed by fire, and are called "an offering made by fire unto the Lord." The phrases "a sin-offering unto the Lord" and "a peace-offering unto the Lord" do not occur in the law, because these were eaten by man; but even those sin-offerings that were entirely burnt (Lev. iv. 12, 21) cannot be called "an offering made by fire unto the Lord," as will be explained in the course of this chapter. It is therefore impossible that the goats which are eaten [by the priests], and are not entirely burnt, should be called "sin-offerings unto the Lord." But as it was found that the kid offered on New-moon might be mistaken as an offering brought to the moon, in the manner of the Egyptians, who sacrificed to the moon on the days of New-moon, it was distinctly stated that this goat is offered in obedience to God's command, and not in honour of the moon. This fear did not apply to the sin-offerings on the Festivals, nor to any other sin-offering, because they were not offered on the days of New-moon, or on any other day marked out by Nature, but on such days as were selected by the Divine Will. Not so the days of New-moon: they are not fixed by the Law [but by Nature]. On the New-moon the idolaters sacrificed to the moon, in the same manner as they sacrificed to

the sun when it rose and set in certain particular degrees. This is described in the works [mentioned above]. On this account the extraordinary phrase "A sin-offering unto the Lord" is exceptionally introduced in reference to the goat brought on New-moon, in order to remove the idolatrous ideas that were still lingering in the sorely diseased hearts. Note this exception likewise. A sin-offering which is brought in the hope to atone for one or more great sins, as, e.g., the sin-offering [of the Synhedrion or the high-priest] for a sin committed in ignorance, and the like, are not burnt upon the altar, but without the camp; upon the altar only the burnt-offering, and the like, are burnt, wherefore it was called the altar of the burnt-offering. The burning of the holocaust, and of every "memorial," is called "a sweet savour unto the Lord"; and so it undoubtedly is, since it serves to remove idolatrous doctrines from our hearts, as we have shown. But the burning of these sin-offerings is a symbol that the sin [for which the offering is brought] is utterly removed and destroyed, like the body that is being burnt; of the sinful seed no trace shall remain, as no trace is left of the sin-offering, which is entirely destroyed by fire: the smoke thereof is not "a sweet savour unto

p. 366

the Lord," but, on the contrary, a smoke despised and abhorred. For this reason the burning took place without the camp. Similarly we notice that the oblations of a sotah is called "an offering of memorial, bringing iniquity to remembrance" (Num. v. 15); it is not a pleasing thing [to the Lord]. The goat [of the Day of Atonement] that was sent [into the wilderness] (Lev. xvi. 20, seq.) served as an atonement for all serious transgressions more than any other sin-offering of the congregation. As it thus seemed to carry off all sins, it was not accepted as an ordinary sacrifice to be slaughtered, burnt, or even brought near the Sanctuary; it was removed as far as possible, and sent forth into a waste, uncultivated, uninhabited land. There is no doubt that sins cannot be carried like a burden, and taken off the shoulder of one being to be laid on that of another being. But these ceremonies are of a symbolic character, and serve to impress men with a certain idea, and to induce them to repent; as if to say, we have freed ourselves of our previous deeds, have cast them behind our backs, and removed them from us as far as possible.

As regards the offering of wine (Num. xv. 5, seq.), I am at a loss to find a reason why God commanded it, since idolaters brought wine as an offering. But though I am unable to give a reason, another person suggested the following one: Meat is the best nourishment for the appetitive faculty, the source of which is the liver; wine supports best the vital faculty, whose centre is the heart: music is most agreeable to the psychic faculty, the source of which is in the brain. Each one of our faculties approaches God with that which it likes best. Thus the sacrifice consists of meat, wine, and music.

The use of keeping festivals is plain. Man derives benefit from such assemblies: the emotions produced renew the attachment to religion; they lead to friendly and social intercourse among the people. This is especially the object of the commandment to gather the people together on the Feast of Tabernacles, as is plainly stated: "that they may hear, and that they may learn and fear

the Lord" (Deut. xxxi. 12). The same is the object of the rule that the money for the second tithe must be spent by all in one place (*ibid.* xiv. 22-26), as we have explained (chap. xxxix. p. 184). The fruit of trees in their fourth year, and the tithe of the cattle, had to be brought to Jerusalem. There would therefore be in Jerusalem the meat of the tithes, the wine of the fruit of the fourth year, and the money of the second tithe. Plenty of food would always be found there. Nothing of the above things could be sold; nothing could be set aside for another year; the Law orders that they should be brought "year by year" (Deut. xiv. 22); the owner was thus compelled to spend part of them in charity. As regards the Festivals it is especially enjoined: "And thou shalt rejoice in thy feast, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy man-servant, and thy maid-servant, and the Levite, the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow" (*ibid.* xvi. 14). We have thus explained the reason of every law belonging to this class, and even many details of the laws.

CHAPTER XLVII

THE precepts of the twelfth class are those which we have enumerated in the section on "Purity" (*Sefer tohorah*). Although we have mentioned their use in general, we will here offer an additional explanation, and [first] fully

p. 367

discuss the object of the whole class, and then show the reason of each single commandment, as far as we have been able to discover it. I maintain that the Law which was revealed to Moses, our Teacher, and which is called by his name, aims at facilitating the service and lessening the burden, and if a person complains that certain precepts cause him pain and great trouble, he cannot have thought of the habits and doctrines that were general in those days. Let him consider the difference between a man burning his own son in serving his god, and our burning a pigeon to the service of our God. Scripture relates, for even their sons and their daughters they burn in the fire to their gods (Deut. xii. 31). This was the way in which the heathen worshipped their gods, and instead of such a sacrifice we have the burning of a pigeon or a handful of flour in our worship. In accordance with this fact, the Israelites, when disobedient, were rebuked by God as follows: "O My people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? Testify against me" (Mic. vi. 3). Again, "Have I been a wilderness unto Israel? a land of darkness? Wherefore say my people, We are miserable; we will come no more unto thee" (Jer. ii. 31); that is to say, Through which of the commandments has the Law become burdensome to the Israelites, that they renounce it? In the same manner God asks the people, "What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me?" etc. (*ibid.* ii. 5). All these passages express one and the same idea.

This is the great principle which you must never lose sight of. After having stated this principle, I repeat that the object of the Sanctuary was to create in the hearts of those who enter it certain feelings of awe and reverence, in accordance with the command, "You shall reverence my sanctuary" (Lev. xix. 30). But when we continually see an object, however sublime it may be,

our regard for that object will be lessened, and the impression we have received of it will be weakened. Our Sages, considering this fact, said that we should not enter the Temple whenever we liked, and pointed to the words: "Make thy foot rare in the house of thy friend" (Prov. xxv. 17). For this reason the unclean were not allowed to enter the Sanctuary, although there are so many kinds of uncleanness, that [at a time] only a few people are clean. For even if a person does not touch a beast that died of its own accord (Lev. xi. 27), he can scarcely avoid touching one of the eight kinds of creeping animals (*ibid.* 29, seq.), the dead bodies of which we find at all times in houses, in food and drink, and upon which we frequently tread wherever we walk; and, if he avoids touching these, he may touch a woman in her separation (*ibid.* xv. 18), or a male or female that have a running issue (*ibid.* ver. 1, seq. and 25, seq.), or a leper (*ibid.* xiii. 46), or their bed (*ibid.* xv. 5). Escaping these, he may become unclean by cohabitation with his wife, or by pollution (*ibid.* 15), and even when he has cleansed himself from any of these kinds of uncleanness, he cannot enter the Sanctuary till after sunset; but not being enabled to enter the Sanctuary at night time, although he is clean after sunset, as may be inferred from *Middot* and *Tamid*, he is again, during the night, subject to becoming unclean either by cohabiting with his wife or by some other source of uncleanness, and may rise in the morning in the same condition as the day before. All this serves to keep people away from the Sanctuary, and to prevent them from entering it whenever they liked. Our Sages, as is well known, said, "Even a clean person may not enter the

p. 368

[paragraph continues] Sanctuary for the purpose of performing divine service, unless he takes previously a bath." By such acts the reverence [for the Sanctuary] will continue, the right impression will be produced which leads man, as is intended, to humility.

The easier the diffusion of uncleanness is, the more difficult and the more retarded is its purification. Most easily is uncleanness communicated by the dead body to those who are under the same roof, especially to relatives. The purification can only be completed by means of the ashes of the red heifer, however scarce it may be, and only in seven days (Num. xix. 11). The uncleanness caused by a woman having running issue or during her separation is more frequent than that caused by contact with unclean objects: seven days are therefore required for their purification (Lev. xv. 19, 28), whilst those that touch them are only unclean one day (*ibid.* vii. 18). Males or females that are unclean through running issue, and a woman after childbirth, must in addition bring a sacrifice, because their uncleanness occurs less frequently than that of women in their separation. All these cases of uncleanness, viz., running issue of males or females, menstruations, leprosy, dead bodies of human beings, carcasses of beasts and creeping things, and issue of semen, are sources of dirt and filth. We have thus shown that the above precepts are very useful in many respects. First, they keep us at a distance from dirty and filthy objects; secondly, they guard the Sanctuary; thirdly, they pay regard to an established custom (for the Sabians submitted to very troublesome restrictions when unclean, as you will soon hear); fourthly, they lightened that burden for us; for we are not impeded through these laws in our ordinary

occupations by the distinction the Law makes between that which is unclean and that which is clean. For this distinction applies only in reference to the Sanctuary and the holy objects connected with it: it does not apply to other cases. "She shall touch no hallowed thing, nor come into the Sanctuary" (Lev. xii. 4). Other persons [that do not intend to enter the Sanctuary or touch any holy thing], are not guilty of any sin if they remain unclean as long as they like, and eat, according to their pleasure, ordinary food that has been in contact with unclean things. But the practice of the Sabeans, even at present general in the East, among the few still left of the Magi, was to keep a menstruous woman in a house by herself, to burn that upon which she treads, and to consider as unclean every one that speaks with her: even if a wind passed over her and a clean person, the latter was unclean in the eyes of the Sabeans. See the difference between this practice and our rule, that "whatever services a wife generally does to her husband, she may do to him in her separation"; only cohabitation is prohibited during the days of her uncleanness. Another custom among the Sabeans, which is still widespread, is this: whatever is separated from the body, as hair, nail, or blood, is unclean; every barber is therefore unclean in their estimation, because he touches blood and hair; whenever a person passes a razor over his skin he must take a bath in running water. Such burdensome practices were numerous among the Sabeans, whilst we apply the laws that distinguish between the unclean and the clean only with regard to hallowed things and to the Sanctuary. The divine words, "And ye shall sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy" (Lev. xi. 44), do not refer to these laws at all. According to Sifra, they refer to sanctity by obedience to God's commandments.

p. 369

[paragraph continues] The same interpretation is given in Sifra of the words, "Ye shall be holy, i.e. obedient to His commandments (xix. 2). Hence the transgression of commandments is also called uncleanness or defilement. This term is especially used of the chief and principal crimes, which are idolatry, adultery, and murder. In reference to idolatry it is said, "He hath given of his seed unto Molech to defile my sanctuary, and to profane my holy name" (*ibid.* xx. 3). In reference to adultery we read, "Defile not ye yourselves in any of these things" (*ibid.* xviii. 24), and Defile not the land" (Num. xxxv. 34) in reference to murder. It is therefore clear that the term "defilement" [or uncleanness] is used homonymously of three things: 1. Of man's violation and transgression of that which he is commanded as regards his actions and his opinions. 2. Of dirt and filth: comp. "Her filthiness in her skirts" (Lam. i. 9). 3. Of the above-named imaginary defilement such as touching and carrying certain objects, or being with them under the same roof. In reference to the third kind, our Sages said, The words of the Law are not subject to becoming unclean (B. T. Ber. 224). In the same manner the term "holiness" is used homonymously of three things corresponding to the three kinds of uncleanness. As uncleanness caused by a dead body could only be removed after seven days, by means of the ashes of the red heifer, and the priests had constantly occasion to enter the Sanctuary, the Law exceptionally forbids them to defile themselves by a dead body (Lev. xxi. 1), except in cases where defilement is necessary, and the contrary would be unnatural. For it would be unnatural to abstain from

approaching the dead body of a parent, child, or brother. As it was very necessary that the high-priest should always be in the Sanctuary, in accordance with the Divine command, "And it shall always be on his forehead" (Exod. xxviii. 38), he was not permitted to defile himself by any dead body whatever, even of the above-named relatives (Lev. xxi. 10-12). Women were not engaged in sacrificial service; the above law consequently does not apply to women; it is addressed to "the sons of Aaron," and not to "the daughters of Aaron." It was, however, impossible to assume that none of the Israelites made a mistake, by entering the Sanctuary, or eating hallowed things in a state of uncleanness. It was even possible that there were persons who did this knowingly, since there are wicked people who commit knowingly even the greatest crimes; for this reason certain sacrifices were commanded as an atonement for the defilement of the Sanctuary and its hallowed things. They were of different kinds; some of them atoned for defilement caused ignorantly, others for defilement caused knowingly. For this purpose were brought the goats on the Festivals and the New-moon days (Num. xxviii. 15, 27, etc.), and the goat sent away on the Day of Atonement (Lev. xvi. 16), as is explained in its place (Mishnah Shebnot, i. 4). These sacrifices serve to prevent those who defiled the Sanctuary of the Lord knowingly from thinking that they had not done a great wrong; they should know that they obtained atonement by the sacrifice of the goat, as the Law says, "That they die not in their uncleanness" (Lev. xv. 31); "That Aaron may bear the iniquity of the holy things" (Exod. xxviii. 38). This idea is frequently repeated.

The uncleanness through leprosy we have already explained. Our Sages have also clearly stated the meaning thereof. All agree that leprosy is a

p. 370

punishment for slander. The disease begins in the walls of the houses (Lev. xiv. 33, *seq.*). If the sinner repents, the object is attained: if he remains in his disobedience, the disease affects his bed and house furniture: if he still continues to sin, the leprosy attacks his own garments, and then his body. This is a miracle received in our nation by tradition, in the same manner as the effect of the trial of a faithless wife (Num. v. ii, *seq.*). The good effect of this belief is evident. Leprosy is besides a contagious disease, and people almost naturally abhor it, and keep away from it. The purification was effected by cedar-wood, hyssop, scarlet thread, and two birds (Lev. xiv. 4); their reason is stated in various Midrashic sayings, but the explanation does not agree with our theory. I do not know at present the reason of any of these things; nor why cedar-wood, hyssop, and scarlet were used in the sacrifice of the red heifer (Num. xix. 6); nor why a bundle of hyssop was commanded for the sprinkling of the blood of the Passover-lamb (Exod. xii. 22). I cannot find any principle upon which to found an explanation why these particular things have been chosen.

The red heifer is called a sin-offering, because it effects the purification of persons that have become unclean through the dead body of a human being, and enables them to enter the Sanctuary [and to eat of hallowed things]. The idea taught by this law is this: Those who have defiled themselves would never be allowed to enter the Sanctuary, or to partake of holy things,

were it not for the sacrifice of the red heifer, by which this sin is removed; in the same manner as the plate [which the high-priest wears on his forehead] atones for uncleanness, and as a similar object is attained by the goats that are burnt. For this reason those were unclean who were engaged in the sacrifice of the heifer or the goats which were burnt, and even their garments were unclean. The same was the law in the case of the goat that was sent away [on the Day of Atonement]; for it was believed that it made unclean those who touched it, because it carried off so many sins.

We have now mentioned the reasons for those commandments of this class, for which we were able to give a satisfactory reason according to our view.

CHAPTER XLVIII

THE precepts of the thirteenth class are those which we have enumerated in the "Laws concerning forbidden food" (*Hilkot ma'akalot asurot*), "Laws concerning killing animals for food" (*Hilkot shehitah*), and "Laws concerning vows and Nazaritism" (*Hilkot nedarim u-nezirot*). We have fully and very explicitly discussed the object of this class in this treatise, and in our Commentary on the Sayings of the Fathers. We will here add a few remarks in reviewing the single commandments which are mentioned there.

I maintain that the food which is forbidden by the Law is unwholesome. There is nothing among the forbidden kinds of food whose injurious character is doubted, except pork (Lev. xi. 7), and fat (*ibid.* vii. 23). But also in these cases the doubt is not justified. For pork contains more moisture than necessary [for human food], and too much of superfluous matter. The principal reason why the Law forbids swine's flesh is to be found in the circumstance that its habits and its food are very dirty and loathsome. It has already been pointed out how emphatically the Law enjoins the removal of

p. 371

the sight of loathsome objects, even in the field and in the camp; how much more objectionable is such a sight in towns. But if it were allowed to eat swine's flesh, the streets and houses would be more dirty than any cesspool, as may be seen at present in the country of the Franks. A saying of our Sages declares: "The mouth of a swine is as dirty as dung itself" (B. T. Ber. 25a).

The fat of the intestines makes us full, interrupts our digestion, and produces cold and thick blood; it is more fit for fuel [than for human food].

Blood (Lev. xvii. 12), and *nebelah*, i.e., the flesh of an animal that died of itself (Deut. xiv. 21), are indigestible, and injurious as food; *Trefah*, an animal in a diseased state (Exod. xxii. 30), is on the way of becoming a *nebelah*.

The characteristics given in the Law (Lev. xi., and Deut. xiv.) of the permitted animals, viz., chewing the cud and divided hoofs for cattle, and fins and scales for fish, are in themselves

neither the cause of the permission when they are present, nor of the prohibition when they are absent; but merely signs by which the recommended species of animals can be discerned from those that are forbidden.

The reason why the sinew that shrank is prohibited is stated in the Law (Gen. xxxii. 33).

It is prohibited to cut off a limb of a living animal and eat it, because such act would produce cruelty, and develop it: besides, the heathen kings used to do it: it was also a kind of idolatrous worship to cut off a certain limb of a living animal and to eat it.

Meat boiled in milk is undoubtedly gross food, and makes overfull; but I think that most probably it is also prohibited because it is somehow connected with idolatry, forming perhaps part of the service, or being used on some festival of the heathen. I find a support for this view in the circumstance that the Law mentions the prohibition twice after the commandment given concerning the festivals "Three times in the year all thy males shall appear before the Lord God" (Exod. xxiii. 17, and xxxiv. 73), as if to say, "When you come before me on your festivals, do not seethe your food in the manner as the heathen used to do." This I consider as the best reason for the prohibition: but as far as I have seen the books on Sabean rites, nothing is mentioned of this custom.

The commandment concerning the killing of animals is necessary, because the natural food of man consists of vegetables and of the flesh of animals: the best meat is that of animals permitted to be used as food. No doctor has any doubts about this. Since, therefore, the desire of procuring good food necessitates the slaying of animals, the Law enjoins that the death of the animal should be the easiest. It is not allowed to torment the animal by cutting the throat in a clumsy manner, by poleaxing, or by cutting off a limb whilst the animal is alive.

It is also prohibited to kill an animal with its young on the same day (Lev. xxii. 28), in order that people should be restrained and prevented from killing the two together in such a manner that the young is slain in the sight of the mother; for the pain of the animals under such circumstances is very great. There is no difference in this case between the pain of man and the pain of other living beings, since the love and tenderness of the mother for her young ones is not produced by reasoning, but by imagination, and this faculty exists not only in man but in most living beings. This law applies only to ox and

p. 372

lamb, because of the domestic animals used as food these alone are permitted to us, and in these cases the mother recognises her young.

The same reason applies to the law which enjoins that we should let the mother fly away when we take the young. The eggs over which the bird sits, and the young that are in need of their mother, are generally unfit for food, and when the mother is sent away she does not see the

taking of her young ones, and does not feel any pain. In most cases, however, this commandment will cause man to leave the whole nest untouched, because [the young or the eggs], which he is allowed to take, are, as a rule, unfit for food. If the Law provides that such grief should not be caused to cattle or birds, how much more careful must we be that we should not cause grief to our fellowmen. When in the Talmud (Ber. p. 33*b*) those are blamed who use in their prayer the phrase, "Thy mercy extendeth to young birds," it is the expression of the one of the two opinions mentioned by us, namely, that the precepts of the Law have no other reason but the Divine will. We follow the other opinion.

The reason why we cover the blood when we kill animals, and why we do it only when we kill clean beasts and clean birds, has already been explained by us (*supra*, chap. xlvi., p. 362).

In addition to the things prohibited by the Law, we are also commanded to observe the prohibitions enjoined by our own vows (Num. xxx.). If we say, This bread or this meat is forbidden for us, we are not allowed to partake of that food. The object of that precept is to train us in temperance, that we should be able to control our appetites for eating and drinking. Our Sages say accordingly, "Vows are a fence for abstinence." As women are easily provoked to anger, owing to their greater excitability and the weakness of their mind, their oaths, if entirely under their own control, would cause great grief, quarrel, and disorder in the family; one kind of food would be allowed for the husband, and forbidden for the wife; another kind forbidden for the daughter, and allowed for the mother. Therefore the Law gives the father of the family control over the vows of those dependent on him. A woman that is independent, and not under the authority of a chief of the family, is, as regards vows, subject to the same laws as men; I mean a woman that has no husband, or that has no father, or that is of age, i.e., twelve years and six months.

The object of Nazaritism (Num. vi.) is obvious. It keeps away from wine that has ruined people in ardent and modern times. "Many strong men have been slain by it" (Prov. xxvii. 26). "But they also have erred through wine. . . . the priest and the prophet" (Isa. xxviii. 7). In the law about the Nazarite we notice even the prohibition, "he shall eat nothing that is made of the vine tree" (Num. vi. 4), as an additional precaution, implying the lesson that man must take of wine only as much as is absolutely necessary. For he who abstains from drinking it is called "holy"; his sanctity is made equal to that of the high-priest, in not being allowed to defile himself even to his father, to his mother, and the like. This honour is given him because he abstains from wine.

CHAPTER XLIX

THE precepts of the fourteenth class are those which we enumerated in the Section on Women, the Laws concerning forbidden sexual intercourse, and

cross-breeding of cattle (*Sefer nashim, Hilkot issure biah ve-kaleë behemah*). The law concerning circumcision belongs also to this class. The general purpose of these precepts has already been described by us. We will now proceed to explain them singly.

It is well known that man requires friends all his lifetime. Aristotle explains this in the ninth book of his *Nikomachean Ethics*. When man is in good health and prosperous, he enjoys the company of his friends; in time of trouble he is in need of them; in old age, when his body is weak, he is assisted by them. This love is more frequent and more intense between parents and children, and among [other] relations. Perfect love, brotherhood, and mutual assistance is only found among those near to each other by relationship. The members of a family united by common descent from the same grandfather, or even from some more distant ancestor, have towards each other a certain feeling of love, help each other, and sympathize with each other. To effect this is one of the chief purposes of the Law. Professional harlots were therefore not tolerated in Israel (Deut. xxiii. 18), because their existence would disturb the above relationship between man and man. Their children are strangers to everybody; no one knows to what family they belong; nor does any person recognize them as relatives. And this is the greatest misfortune that can befall any child or father. Another important object in prohibiting prostitution is to restrain excessive and continual lust; for lust increases with the variety of its objects. The sight of that to which a person has been accustomed for a long time does not produce such an ardent desire for its enjoyment as is produced by objects new in form and character. Another effect of this prohibition is the removal of a cause for strife; for if the prohibition did not exist, several persons might by chance come to one woman, and would naturally quarrel with each other; they would in many cases kill one another, or they would kill the woman. This is known to have occurred in days of old, "And they assembled themselves by troops in a harlot's house" (Jer. v. 7). In order to prevent these great evils, and to effect the great boon that all men should know their relationship to each other, prostitutes (Deut. xxiii. 17) were not tolerated, and sexual intercourse was only permitted when man has chosen a certain female, and married her openly; for if it sufficed merely to choose her, many a person would bring a prostitute into his house at a certain time agreed upon between them, and say that she was his wife. Therefore it is commanded to perform the act of engagement by which he declares that he has chosen her to take her for his wife, and then to go through the public ceremony of marriage. Comp. "And Boaz took ten men," etc. (Ruth iv. 2). It may happen that husband and wife do not agree, live without love and peace, and do not enjoy the benefit of a home; in that case he is permitted to send her away. If he had been allowed to divorce her by a mere word, or by turning her out of his house, the wife would wait for some negligence [on the part of the husband], and then come out and say that she was divorced; or having committed adultery, she and the adulterer would contend that she had then been divorced. Therefore the law is that divorce can only take place by means of a document which can serve as evidence, "He shall write her a bill of divorcement" (Deut. xxiv. 1). There are frequently occasions for suspicion of adultery and doubts concerning the conduct of the wife. Laws

concerning a wife suspected of adultery (*sotah*) are therefore prescribed (Num. v.); the effect of which is that the wife, out of fear of the "bitter waters," is most careful to prevent any ill-feeling on the part of her husband against her. Even of those that felt quite innocent and safe most were rather willing to lose all their property than to submit to the prescribed treatment; even death was preferred to the public disgrace of uncovering the head, undoing the hair, rending the garments and exposing the heart, and being led round through the Sanctuary in the presence of all, of women and men, and also in the presence of the members of the Synhedrion. The fear of this trial keeps away great diseases that ruin the home comfort.

As every maiden expects to be married, her seducer therefore is only ordered to marry her; for he is undoubtedly the fittest husband for her. He will better heal her wound and redeem her character than any other husband. If, however, he is rejected by her or her father, he must give the dowry (Exod. xxii. 15). If he uses violence he has to submit to the additional punishment, "he may not put her away all his days" (Deut. xxii. 29).

The reason of the law concerning marrying the deceased brother's wife is stated in the Bible (Deut. xxv. 5). It was a custom in force before the Law was given, and the Law perpetuated it. The ceremony of *halizah* (*ibid.* 6, seq.), "taking off the shoe," has been introduced, because in those days it was considered disgraceful to go through that ceremony, and in order to avoid the disgrace, a person might perhaps be induced to marry his deceased brother's wife. This is evident from the words of the Law: "So shall it be done unto that man that will not build up his brother's house. And his name shall be called in Israel, The house of him that hath his shoe loosed" (Deut. xxv. 9). In the action of Judah we may perhaps notice an example of a noble conduct, and uprightness in judgment. He said: "Let her take it to her, lest we be shamed: behold, I sent this kid, and thou hast not found her" (Gen. xxxviii. 23). For before the Lawgiving, the intercourse with a harlot was as lawful as cohabitation of husband and wife since the Lawgiving; it was perfectly permitted, nobody considered it wrong. The hire which was in those days paid to the harlot in accordance with a previous agreement, corresponds to the *ketubah* which in our days the husband pays to his wife when he divorces her. It is a just claim on the part of the wife, and the husband is bound to pay it. The words of Judah, "Let her take it to her, lest we be shamed," etc., show that conversation about sexual intercourse, even of that which is permitted, brings shame upon us; it is proper to be silent about it, to keep it secret, even if the silence would lead to loss of money. In this sense Judah said: It is better for us to lose property, and to let her keep what she has, than to make our affair public by inquiring after her, and bring still more shame upon us. This is the lesson, as regards conduct, to be derived from this incident. As to the uprightness to be learned therefrom, it is contained in the words of Judah when he wanted to show that he had not robbed her, that he has not in the least departed from his agreement with her. For he said, "Behold, I sent this kid, and thou hast not found her." The kid was probably very good, therefore he points to it, saying, "this kid." This is the uprightness which he had

inherited from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: that man must not depart from his given word, nor deviate from what he agreed upon; but he must give to others all that

p. 375

is due to them. It makes no difference whether he holds a portion of his neighbour's property as a loan or a trust, or whether he is in any other way his neighbour's debtor, owing him wages or the like.

The sum which the husband settles upon his wife (*ketubah*) is to be treated in the same way as the wages of a hired servant. There is no difference whether a master withholds the wages of a hired servant, or deprives his wife of that which is due to her; whether a master wrongs a hired servant, and brings charges against him with the intention to send him away without payment, or a husband treats his wife in a manner that would enable him to send her away without the payment of the promised sum.

The equity of the statutes and judgments of the Law in this regard may be noticed in the treatment of a person accused of spreading an evil report about his wife (Deut. xxii. 13, *seq.*). There is no doubt that the man that did this is bad, does not love his wife, and is not pleased with her. If he desired to divorce her in a regular manner, there is nothing to prevent him, but he would be bound to give her what is due unto her; but instead of this, "he gives occasion of speech against her" (*ibid.* xxii. 14), in order to get rid of his wife without paying anything; he slanders her, and utters falsehood in order to keep in his possession the fifty shekels of silver, the dowry fixed in the Law for maidens, which he is obliged to pay unto her. He is therefore sentenced to pay one hundred shekels of silver, in accordance with the principle, "Whom the judges shall condemn, he shall pay double unto his neighbour" (Exod. xxii. 9). The Law is also analogous to that about false witnesses, which we have explained above (chap. xli. p. 195). For he intended to cheat her of her fifty shekels of silver, he must therefore [add fifty, and] pay her a hundred shekels. This is his punishment for withholding from her her due, and endeavouring to keep it. But in so far as he degraded her, and spread the rumour that she was guilty of misconduct, he was also degraded, and received stripes, as is implied in the words, "and they shall chastise him" (Deut. xxii. 15). But he sinned besides in clinging to lust, and seeking only that which gave pleasure to him: he was therefore punished by being compelled to keep his wife always, "he may not put her away all his days" (*ibid.* 19); for he has been brought to all this only because he may have found her ugly. Thus are these bad habits cured when they are treated according to the divine Law; the ways of equity are never lost sight of; they are obvious and discernible in every precept of the Law by those who consider it well. See how, according to the Law, the slanderer of his wife, who only intended to withhold from her what he is bound to give her, is treated in the same manner as a thief who has stolen the property of his neighbour; and the false witness (Deut. xix. 16, *seq.*) who schemes to injure, although the injury was in reality not inflicted, is punished like those who have actually caused injury and wrong, viz., like the thief and the slanderer. The three kinds of sinners are tried and judged by one and the same law. See

how wonderful are the divine laws, and admire His wonderful deeds. Scripture says: "The Rock, His work is perfect; for all His ways are judgment" (Deut. xxxii. 4), i.e., as His works are most perfect, so are His laws most equitable; but our mind is too limited to comprehend the perfection of all His works, or the equity of all His laws; and as we are able to comprehend some of His wonderful works in the organs of living

p. 376

beings and the motions of the spheres, so we understand also the equity of some of His laws; that which is unknown to us of both of them is far more than that which is known to us. I will now return to the theme of the present chapter.

The law about forbidden sexual intercourse seeks in all its parts to inculcate the lesson that we ought to limit sexual intercourse altogether, hold it in contempt, and only desire it very rarely. The prohibition of pederasty (Lev. xviii. 22) and carnal intercourse with beasts (*ibid.* 73) is very clear. If in the natural way the act is too base to be performed except when needed, how much more base is it if performed in an unnatural manner, and only for the sake of pleasure.

The female relatives whom a man may not marry are alike in this respect--that as a rule they are constantly together with him in his house: they would easily listen to him, and do what he desires; they are near at hand, and he would have no difficulty in procuring them. No judge could blame him if found in their company. If to these relatives the same law applied as to all other unmarried women, if we were allowed to marry any of them, and were only precluded from sexual intercourse with them without marriage, most people would constantly have become guilty of misconduct with them. But as they are entirely forbidden to us, and sexual intercourse with them is most emphatically denounced unto us as a capital crime, or a sin punishable with extinction (*karet*), and as there is no means of ever legalizing such intercourse, there is reason to expect that people will not seek it, and win not think of it. That the persons included in that prohibition are, as we have stated, at hand and easily accessible, is evident. For as a rule, the mother of the wife, the grandmother, the daughter, the granddaughter, and the sister-in-law, are mostly with her; the husband meets them always when he goes out, when he comes in, and when he is at his work. The wife stays also frequently in the house of her husband's brother, father, or son. It is also well known that we are often in the company of our sisters, our aunts, and the wife of our uncle, and are frequently brought up together with them. These are all the relatives which we must not marry. This is one of the reasons why intermarriage with a near relative is forbidden. But according to my opinion the prohibition serves another object, namely, to inculcate chastity into our hearts. Licence between the root and the branch, between a man and his mother, or his daughter, is outrageous. The intercourse between root and branch is forbidden, and it makes no difference whether the male element is the root or the branch, or both root and branch combine in the intercourse with a third person, so that the same individual cohabits with the root and with the branch. On this account it is prohibited to marry a woman and her mother,

the wife of the father or of the son; for in all these cases there is the intercourse between one and the same person on the one side and root and branch on the other.

The law concerning brothers is like the law concerning root and branch. The sister is forbidden, and so is also the sister of the wife and the wife of the brother; because in the latter cases two persons who are considered like root and branch, cohabit with the same person. But in these prohibitions brothers and sisters are partly considered as root and branch and partly as one body; the sister of the mother is therefore like the mother, and the

p. 377

sister of the father like the father, and both are prohibited: and since the daughter of the parent's brother or sister is not included in the number of prohibited relatives, so may we also marry the daughter of the brother or the sister. The apparent anomaly, that the brother of the father may marry a woman that has been the wife of his brother's son, whilst the nephew must not marry a woman that has been the wife of his father's brother, can be explained according to the above-mentioned first reason. For the nephew is frequently in the house of his uncle, and his conduct towards the wife of his uncle is the same as that towards his brother's wife. The uncle, however, is not so frequent in the house of his nephew, and he is consequently less intimate with the wife of his nephew; whilst in the case of father and son, the familiarity of the father with his daughter-in-law is the same as that of the son with the wife of his father, and therefore the law and punishment is the same for both [father and son]. The reason why it is prohibited to cohabit with a menstruous woman (Lev. xviii. 19) or with another man's wife (*ibid.* 20), is obvious, and requires no further explanation.

It is well known that we must not indulge in any sensual enjoyment whatever with the persons included in the above prohibitions: we must not even look at them if we intend to derive pleasure therefrom. We have explained this in "the laws about forbidden sexual intercourse" (*Hilkot issure bi'ah*, xxi. 1-2), and shown that according to the Law we must not even engage our thoughts with the act of cohabitation (*ibid.* 19) or irritate the organ of generation; and when we find ourselves unintentionally in a state of irritation, we must turn our mind to other thoughts, and reflect on some other thing till we are relieved. Our Sages (B. T. Kidd 30*b*), in their moral lessons, which give perfection to the virtuous, say as follows: "My son, if that monster meets you, drag it to the house of study. It will melt if it is of iron; it will break in pieces if it is of stone: as is said in Scripture, 'Is not my word like a fire? saith the Lord, and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?'" (Jer. xxiii. 29). The author of this saying thus exhorts his son to go to the house of study when he finds his organ of generation in an irritated state. By reading, disputing, asking, and listening to questions, the irritation will certainly cease. See how properly the term monster is employed, for that irritation is indeed like a monster. Not only religion teaches this lesson, the philosophers teach the same. I have already quoted verbatim the words of Aristotle. He says: "The sense of touch which is a disgrace to us, leads us to indulge in eating and sensuality," etc. He calls people degraded who seek carnal pleasures and devote themselves

to gastronomy: he denounces *in extenso* their low and objectionable conduct, and ridicules them. This passage occurs in his Ethics and in his Rhetoric.

In accordance with this excellent principle, which we ought strictly to follow, our Sages teach us that we ought not to look at beasts or birds in the moment of their copulation. According to my opinion, this is the reason why the cross-breeding of cattle is prohibited (Lev. xix. 19). It is a fact that animals of different species do not copulate together, unless by force. It is well known that the low class of breeders of mules are regularly engaged in this work. Our Law objected to it that any Israelite should degrade himself by doing these things, which require so much vulgarity and indecency, and doing that which religion forbids us even to mention, how

p. 378

much more to witness or to practise, except when necessary. Crossbreeding, however, is not necessary. I think that the prohibition to bring together two species in any kind of work, as included in the words, "Thou shalt not plow with an ox and an ass together" (Deut. xxii. 10), is only a preventive against the intercourse of two species. For if it were allowed to join such together in any work, we might sometimes also cause their intercourse. That this is the reason of the commandment is proved by the fact that it applies to other animals besides ox and ass; it is prohibited to plow not only with ox and ass together, but with any two kinds. But Scripture mentions as an instance that which is of regular occurrence.

As regards circumcision, I think that one of its objects is to limit sexual intercourse, and to weaken the organ of generation as far as possible, and thus cause man to be moderate. Some people believe that circumcision is to remove a defect in man's formation; but every one can easily reply: How can products of nature be deficient so as to require external completion, especially as the use of the fore-skin to that organ is evident. This commandment has not been enjoined as a complement to a deficient physical creation, but as a means for perfecting man's moral shortcomings. The bodily injury caused to that organ is exactly that which is desired; it does not interrupt any vital function, nor does it destroy the power of generation. Circumcision simply counteracts excessive lust; for there is no doubt that circumcision weakens the power of sexual excitement, and sometimes lessens the natural enjoyment: the organ necessarily becomes weak when it loses blood and is deprived of its covering from the beginning. Our Sages (Beresh. Rabba, c. 80) say distinctly: It is hard for a woman, with whom an uncircumcised had sexual intercourse, to separate from him. This is, as I believe, the best reason for the commandment concerning circumcision. And who was the first to perform this commandment? Abraham, our father! of whom it is well known how he feared sin; it is described by our Sages in reference to the words, "Behold, now I know that thou art a fair woman to look upon" (Gen. xii. 11).

There is, however, another important object in this commandment. It gives to all members of the same faith, i.e., to all believers in the Unity of God, a common bodily sign, so that it is impossible for any one that is a stranger, to say that he belongs to them. For sometimes people

say so for the purpose of obtaining some advantage, or in order to make some attack upon the Jews. No one, however, should circumcise himself or his son for any other reason but pure faith; for circumcision is not like an incision on the leg, or a burning in the arm, but a very difficult operation. It is also a fact that there is much mutual love and assistance among people that are united by the same sign when they consider it as [the symbol of] a covenant. Circumcision is likewise the [symbol of the] covenant which Abraham made in connexion with the belief in God's Unity. So also every one that is circumcised enters the covenant of Abraham to believe in the unity of God, in accordance with the words of the Law, "To be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee" (Gen. xvii. 7). This purpose of the circumcision is as important as the first, and perhaps more important.

This law can only be kept and perpetuated in its perfection, if circumcision is performed when the child is very young, and this for three good reasons. First, if the operation were postponed till the boy had grown up,

p. 379

he would perhaps not submit to it. Secondly, the young child has not much pain, because the skin is tender, and the imagination weak; for grown-up persons are in dread and fear of things which they imagine as coming, some time before these actually occur. Thirdly, when a child is very young, the parents do not think much of him; because the image of the child, that leads the parents to love him, has not yet taken a firm root in their minds. That image becomes stronger by the continual sight; it grows with the development of the child, and later on the image begins again to decrease and to vanish. The parents' love for a new-born child is not so great as it is when the child is one year old; and when one year old, it is less loved by them than when six years old. The feeling and love of the father for the child would have led him to neglect the law if he were allowed to wait two or three years, whilst shortly after birth the image is very weak in the mind of the parent, especially of the father who is responsible for the execution of this commandment. The circumcision must take place on the eighth day (Lev. xii. 3), because all living beings are after birth, within the first seven days, very weak and exceedingly tender, as if they were still in the womb of their mother; not until the eighth day can they be counted among those that enjoy the light of the world. That this is also the case with beasts may be inferred from the words of Scripture: "Seven days shall it be under the dam" (Lev. xxii. 27), as if it had no vitality before the end of that period. In the same manner man is circumcised after the completion of seven days. The period has been fixed, and has not been left to everybody's judgment.

The precepts of this class include also the lesson that we must not injure in any way the organs of generation in living beings (*ibid.* xxii. 24). The lesson is based on the principle of "righteous statutes and judgments" (Deut. iv. 8); we must keep in everything the golden mean; we must not be excessive in love, but must not suppress it entirely; for the Law commands, "Be fruitful, and multiply" (Gen. i. 22). The organ is weakened by circumcision, but not destroyed by the

operation. The natural faculty is left in full force, but is guarded against excess. It is prohibited for an Israelite "that is wounded in the stones, or hath his privy member cut off" (Deut. xxiii. 2), to marry an Israelitish woman; because the sexual intercourse is of no use and of no purpose; and that marriage would be a source of ruin to her, and to him who would claim her. This is very clear.

In order to create a horror of illicit marriages, a bastard was not allowed to marry an Israelitish woman (*ibid.* xxiii. 3); the adulterer and the adulteress were thus taught that by their act they bring upon their seed irreparable injury. In every language and in every nation the issue of licentious conduct has a bad name; the Law therefore raises the name of the Israelites by keeping them free from the admixture of bastards. The priests, who have a higher sanctity, are not allowed to marry a harlot, or a woman that is divorced from her husband, or that is profane (Lev. xxi 7); the high-priest, the noblest of the priests, must not marry even a widow, or a woman that has had sexual intercourse of any kind (*ibid.* xxi. 14). Of all these laws the reason is obvious. If bastards were prohibited to marry any member of the congregation of the Lord, how much more rigidly had slaves and handmaids to be excluded. The reason of the prohibition of inter-marriage

p. 380

with other nations is stated in the Law: "And thou take of their daughters unto thy sons, and their daughters go a whoring after their gods, and make thy sons go a whoring after their gods" (Exod. xxxiv. 16).

Most of the "statutes" (*hukkim*), the reason of which is unknown to us serve as a fence against idolatry. That I cannot explain some details of the above laws or show their use is owing to the fact that what we hear from others is not so clear as that which we see with our own eyes. Thus my knowledge of the Sabean doctrines, which I derived from books, is not as complete as the knowledge of those who have witnessed the public practice of those idolatrous customs, especially as they have been out of practice and entirely extinct since two thousand years. If we knew all the particulars of the Sabean worship, and were informed of all the details of those doctrines, we would clearly see the reason and wisdom of every detail in the sacrificial service, in the laws concerning things that are unclean, and in other laws, the object of which I am unable to state. I have no doubt that all these laws served to blot out wrong principles from man's heart, and to exterminate the practices which are useless, and merely a waste of time in vain and purposeless things. Those principles have turned the mind of the people away from intellectual research and useful actions. Our prophets therefore describe the ways of the idolaters as follows: "(They go) after vain things which cannot profit nor deliver; for they are vain" (1 Sam. xii. 21); "Surely our fathers have inherited lies, vanity and things wherein there is no profit" (Jer. xvi. 19). Consider how great the evil consequences of idolatry are, and say whether we ought with all our power to oppose it or not! Most of the precepts serve, as has been stated by us, as a mere fence against those doctrines [of idolatry], and relieve man from the great and heavy burdens, from the pains and inflictions which formed part of the worship of idols. Every positive or negative

precept, the reason of which is unknown to thee, take as a remedy against some of those diseases with which we are unacquainted at present, thank God. This should be the belief of educated men who know the true meaning of the following divine dictum: "I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek me in vain" (Isa. xlv. 19).

I have now mentioned all the commandments of these fourteen classes one by one, and pointed out the reason of each of them, with the exception of a few for which I was unable to give the reason, and of some details of less importance; but implicitly we have given the reason even of these, and every intelligent reader will easily find it.

The reasons of the Precepts are now complete.

CHAPTER L

THERE are in the Law portions which include deep wisdom, but have been misunderstood by many persons.; they require, therefore, an explanation. I mean the narratives contained in the Law which many consider as being of no use whatever; e.g., the list of the various families descended from Noah, with their names and their territories (Gen. x.); the sons of Seir the Horite (*ibid.* xxxvi. 20-30); the kings that reigned in Edom (*ibid.* 31, seq.); and the like. There is a saying of our Sages (B Ṭ. Sanh. 99b) that the wicked king Manasse frequently held disgraceful meetings for the sole purpose of criticising such passages of the Law. "He held meetings and made blasphemous

p. 381

observations on Scripture, saying, Had Moses nothing else to write than, And the sister of Lotan was Timna" (Gen. xxxvi. 22)? With reference to such passages, I will first give a general principle, and then discuss them *seriatim*, as I have done in the exposition of the reasons of the precepts.

Every narrative in the Law serves a certain purpose in connexion with religious teaching. It either helps to establish a principle of faith, or to regulate our actions, and to prevent wrong and injustice among men; and I will show this in each case.

It is one of the fundamental principles of the Law that the Universe has been created *ex nihilo*, and that of the human race, one individual being, Adam, was created. As the time which elapsed from Adam to Moses was not more than about two thousand five hundred years, people would have doubted the truth of that statement if no other information had been added, seeing that the human race was spread over all parts of the earth in different families and with different languages, very unlike the one to the other. In order to remove this doubt the Law gives the genealogy of the nations (Gen. v. and x.), and the manner how they branched off from a common root. It names those of them who were well known, and tells who their fathers were, how long and where they lived. It describes also the cause that led to the dispersion of men over all parts of

the earth, and to the formation of their different languages, after they had lived for a long time in one place, and spoken one language (*ibid.* xi.), as would be natural for descendants of one person. The accounts of the flood (*ibid.* vi.-viii.) and of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (*ibid.* xix.), serve as an illustration of the doctrine that "Verily there is a reward for the righteous; verily He is a God that judgeth in the earth" (Ps. lviii. 12).

The narration of the war among the nine kings (*ibid.* xiv.) shows how, by means of a miracle, Abraham, with a few undisciplined men, defeated four mighty kings. It illustrates at the same time how Abraham sympathized with his relative, who had been brought up in the same faith, and how he exposed himself to the dangers of warfare in order to save him. We further learn from this narrative how contented and satisfied Abraham was, thinking little of property, and very much of good deeds; he said, "I will not take from a thread even to a shoe-latchet" (Gen. xiv. 23)

The list of the families of Seir and their genealogy is given in the Law (*ibid.* xxxvi. 20-36), because of one particular commandment. For God distinctly commanded the Israelites concerning Amalek to blot out his name (Deut. xxv. 17-19). Amalek was the son of Eliphaz and Timna, the sister of Lotan (*ibid.* xxxvi. 12). The other sons of Esau were not included in this commandment. But Esau was by marriage connected with the Seirites, as is distinctly stated in Scripture: and Seirites were therefore his children: he reigned over them; his seed was mixed with the seed of Seir, and ultimately all the countries and families of Seir were called after the sons of Esau who were the predominant family, and they assumed more particularly the name Amalekites, because these were the strongest in that family. If the genealogy of these families of Seir had not been described in full they would all have been killed, contrary to the plain words of the commandment. For this reason the Seirite families are fully described, as if to say, the people that live in Seir and in the kingdom of Amalek are not all Amalekites: they

p. 382

are the descendants of some other man, and are called Amalekites because the mother of Amalek was of their tribe. The justice of God thus prevented the destruction of an [innocent] people that lived in the midst of another people [doomed to extirpation]; for the decree was only pronounced against the seed of Amalek. The reason of this decree has already been stated by us (p. 205)

The kings that have reigned in the land of Edom are enumerated (Gen xxxvi. 51, seq.) on account of the law, "Thou mayst not set a stranger over thee, which is not thy brother" (Deut. xvii. 15). For of these kings none was an Edomite; wherefore each king is described by his native land; one king from this place, another king from that place. Now I think that it was then well known how these kings that reigned in Edom conducted themselves, what they did, and how they humiliated and oppressed the sons of Esau. Thus God reminded the Israelites of the fate of the Edomites, as if saying unto them, Look unto your brothers, the sons of Esau, whose kings were so and so, and whose deeds are well known. [Learn therefrom] that no nation ever chose a

foreigner as king without inflicting thereby some great or small injury upon the country. In short, what I remarked in reference to our ignorance of the Sabeian worship, applies also to the history of those days. If the religious rules of the Sabeans and the events of those days were known to us, we should be able to see plainly the reason for most of the things mentioned in the Pentateuch.

It is also necessary to note the following observations. The view we take of things described by others is different from the view we take of things seen by us as eye-witnesses. For that which we see contains many details which are essential, and must be fully described. The reader of the description believes that it contains superfluous matter, or useless repetition, but if he had witnessed the event of which he reads, he would see the necessity of every part of the description. When we therefore notice narratives in the Torah, which are in no connexion with any of the commandments, we are inclined to think that they are entirely superfluous, or too lengthy, or contain repetitions; but this is only because we do not see the particular incidents which make those narratives noteworthy. Of this kind is the enumeration of the stations [of the Israelites in the wilderness] (Num. xxxiii.). At first sight it appears to be entirely useless; but in order to obviate such a notion Scripture says, "And Moses wrote their goings out according to their journeys by the commandment of the Lord" (*ibid.* ver. 2). It was indeed most necessary that these should be written. For miracles are only convincing to those who witnessed them; whilst coming generations, who know them only from the account given by others, may consider them as untrue. But miracles cannot continue and last for all generations; it is even inconceivable [that they should be permanent]. Now the greatest of the miracles described in the Law is the stay of the Israelites in the wilderness for forty years, with a daily supply of manna. This wilderness, as described in Scripture, consisted of places "wherein were fiery serpents and scorpions, and drought, where there was no water" (Deut. viii. 115); places very remote from cultivated land, and naturally not adapted for the habitation of man, "It is no place of seed, or of figs, or of vines, or of pomegranates, neither is there any water to drink" (Num. xx. 5); "A land that no man passed through, and where no man dwelt" (Jer. ii. 6). [In reference to the stay of

p. 383

the Israelites in the wilderness], Scripture relates, "Ye have not eaten bread, neither have ye drunk wine or strong drink" (Deut. xix. 5). All these miracles were wonderful, public, and witnessed by the people. But God knew that in future people might doubt the correctness of the account of these miracles. in the same manner as they doubt the accuracy of other narratives; they might think that the Israelites stayed in the wilderness in a place not far from inhabited land, where it was possible for man to live [in the ordinary way]; that it was like those deserts in which Arabs live at present; or that they dwelt in such places in which they could plow, sow, and reap, or live on some vegetable that was growing there; or that manna came always down in those places as an ordinary natural product; or that there were wells of water in those places. In order to remove all these doubts and to firmly establish the accuracy of the account of these miracles,

Scripture enumerates all the stations, so that coming generations may see them, and learn the greatness of the miracle which enabled human beings to live in those places forty years.

For this very reason Joshua cursed him who would ever build up Jericho (Josh. vi. 26); the effect of the miracle was to remain for ever, so that any one who would see the wall sunk in the ground would understand that it was not in the condition of a building pulled down by human hands, but sunk through a miracle. In a similar manner the words, "At the commandment of the Lord the children of Israel journeyed, and at the commandment of the Lord they pitched" (Num. ix. 18), would suffice as a simple statement of facts; and the reader might at first sight consider as unnecessary additions all the details which follow, viz., "And when the cloud tarried long. . . And so it was when the cloud was a few days. . . Or whether it were two days," etc. (*ibid.* ix. 19-22). But I will show you the reason why all these details are added. For they serve to confirm the account, and to contradict the opinion of the nations, both of ancient and modern times, that the Israelites lost their way, and did not know where to go; that "they were entangled in the land" (Exod. xiv. 3); wherefore the Arabs unto this day call that desert *Al-tih*, "the desert of going astray," imagining that the Israelites erred about, and did not know the way. Scripture, therefore, clearly states and emphatically declares that it was by God's command that the journeyings were irregular, that the Israelites returned to the same places several times, and that the duration of the stay was different in each station; whilst the stay in one place continued for eighteen years, in another place it lasted one day, and in another one night. There was no going astray, but the journey was regulated by "the rising of the pillar of cloud" (Num. ix. 17). Therefore all these details are given. Scripture clearly states that the way was near, known, and in good condition; I mean the way from Horeb, whither they came intentionally, according to the command of God, "Ye shall serve God upon this mountain" (Exod. ii. 12), to Kadesh-barnea, the beginning of inhabited land, as Scripture says, "Behold, we are now in Kadesh, a city in the uttermost of thy border" (Num. xx. 16). That way was a journey of eleven days; comp. "Eleven days' journey from Horeb, by the way of mount Seir, unto Kadesh-barnea" (Deut. i. 3). In such a journey it is impossible to err about for forty years: but Scripture states the cause of the delay.

p. 384

In like manner there is a good reason for every passage the object of which we cannot see. We must always apply the words of our Sages: "It is not a vain thing for you" (Deut. xxxii. 47), and if it seems vain, it seems your fault.

CHAPTER LI

THE present chapter does not contain any additional matter that has not been treated in the [previous] chapters of this treatise. It is a kind of conclusion, and at the same time it will explain in what manner those worship God who have obtained a true knowledge concerning God; it will direct them how to come to that worship, which is the highest aim man can attain, and show how God protects them in this world till they are removed to eternal life.

I will begin the subject of this chapter with a simile. A king is in his palace, and all his subjects are partly in the country, and partly abroad. Of the former, some have their backs turned towards the king's palace, and their faces in another direction; and some are desirous and zealous to go to the palace, seeking "to inquire in his temple," and to minister before him, but have not yet seen even the face of the wall of the house. Of those that desire to go to the palace, some reach it, and go round about in search of the entrance gate; others have passed through the gate, and walk about in the ante-chamber; and others have succeeded in entering into the inner part of the palace, and being in the same room with the king in the royal palace. But even the latter do not immediately on entering the palace see the king, or speak to him; for, after having entered the inner part of the palace, another effort is required before they can stand before the king--at a distance, or close by--hear his words, or speak to him. I will now explain the simile which I have made. The people who are abroad are all those that have no religion, neither one based on speculation nor one received by tradition. Such are the extreme Turks that wander about in the north, the Kushites who live in the south, and those in our country who are like these. I consider these as irrational beings, and not as human beings; they are below mankind, but above monkeys, since they have the form and shape of man, and a mental faculty above that of the monkey.

Those who are in the country, but have their backs turned towards the king's palace, are those who possess religion, belief, and thought, but happen to hold false doctrines, which they either adopted in consequence of great mistakes made in their own speculations, or received from others who misled them. Because of these doctrines they recede more and more from the royal palace the more they seem to proceed. These are worse than the first class, and under certain circumstances it may become necessary to day them, and to extirpate their doctrines, in order that others should not be misled.

Those who desire to arrive at the palace, and to enter it, but have never yet seen it, are the mass of religious people; the multitude that observe the divine commandments, but are ignorant. Those who arrive at the palace, but go round about it, are those who devote themselves exclusively to the study of the practical law; they believe traditionally in true principles of faith, and learn the practical worship of God, but are not trained in philosophical treatment of the principles of the Law, and do not endeavour to

p. 385

establish the truth of their faith by proof. Those who undertake to investigate the principles of religion, have come into the ante-chamber; and there is no doubt that these can also be divided into different grades. But those who have succeeded in finding a proof for everything that can be proved, who have a true knowledge of God, so far as a true knowledge can be attained, and are near the truth, wherever an approach to the truth is possible, they have reached the goal, and are in the palace in which the king lives.

My son, so long as you are engaged in studying the Mathematical Sciences and Logic, you belong to those who go round about the palace in search of the gate. Thus our Sages figuratively use the phrase: "Ben-zoma is still outside." When you understand Physics, you have entered the hall; and when, after completing the study of Natural Philosophy, you master Metaphysics, you have entered the innermost court, and are with the king in the same palace. You have attained the degree of the wise men, who include men of different grades of perfection. There are some who direct all their mind toward the attainment of perfection in Metaphysics, devote themselves entirely to God, exclude from their thought every other thing, and employ all their intellectual faculties in the study of the Universe, in order to derive therefrom a proof for the existence of God, and to learn in every possible way how God rules all things; they form the class of those who have entered the palace, namely, the class of prophets. One of these has attained so much knowledge, and has concentrated his thoughts to such an extent in the idea of God, that it could be said of him, "And he was with the Lord forty days," etc. (Exod. xxxiv. 28); during that holy communion he could ask Him, answer Him, speak to Him, and be addressed by Him, enjoying beatitude in that which he had obtained to such a degree that "he did neither eat bread nor drink water" (*ibid.*); his intellectual energy was so predominant that all coarser functions of the body, especially those connected with the sense of touch, were in abeyance. Some prophets are only able to see, and of these some approach near and see, whilst others see from a distance: comp. "The Lord hath appeared from far unto me" (Jer. xxxi, 3). We have already spoken of the various degrees of prophets; we will therefore return to the subject of this chapter, and exhort those who have attained a knowledge of God, to concentrate all their thoughts in God. This is the worship peculiar to those who have acquired a knowledge of the highest truths; and the more they reflect on Him, and think of Him, the more are they engaged in His worship. Those, however, who think of God, and frequently mention His name, without any correct notion of Him, but merely following some imagination, or some theory received from another person, are, in my opinion, like those who remain outside the palace and distant from it. They do not mention the name of God in truth, nor do they reflect on it. That which they imagine and mention does not correspond to any being in existence: it is a thing invented by their imagination, as has been shown by us in our discussion on the Divine Attributes (Part I. chap. 1.). The true worship of God is only possible when correct notions of Him have previously been conceived. When you have arrived by way of intellectual research at a knowledge of God and His works, then commence to devote yourselves to Him, try to approach Him and strengthen the intellect, which is the link that joins you to Him. Thus Scripture says, "Unto thee it was

p. 386

showed, that thou mightest know that the Lord He is God" (Deut. iv. 35); "Know therefore this day, and consider it in thine heart, that the Lord He is God" (*ibid.* 36); "Know ye that the Lord is God" (Ps. c. 3). Thus the Law distinctly states that the highest kind of worship to which we refer in this chapter, is only possible after the acquisition of the knowledge of God. For it is said, "To love the Lord your God, and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul" (Deut. xi.

13), and, as we have shown several times, man's love of God is identical with His knowledge of Him. The Divine service enjoined in these words must, accordingly, be preceded by the love of God. Our Sages have pointed out to us that it is a service in the heart, which explanation I understand to mean this: man concentrates all his thoughts on the First Intellect, and is absorbed in these thoughts as much as possible. David therefore commands his son Solomon these two things, and exhorts him earnestly to do them: to acquire a true knowledge of God, and to be earnest in His service after that knowledge has been acquired. For he says, "And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart . . . if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever" (1 Chron. xxviii. 9). The exhortation refers to, the intellectual conceptions, not to the imaginations: for the latter are not called "knowledge," but "that which cometh into your mind" (Ezek. xx. 32). It has thus been shown that it must be man's aim, after having acquired the knowledge of God, to deliver himself up to Him, and to have his heart constantly filled with longing after Him. He accomplishes this generally by seclusion and retirement. Every pious man should therefore seek retirement and seclusion, and should only in case of necessity associate with others.

Note.--I have shown you that the intellect which emanates from God unto us is the link that joins us to God. You have it in your power to strengthen that bond, if you choose to do so, or to weaken it gradually, till it breaks if you prefer this. It will only become strong when you employ it in the love of God, and seek that love: it will be weakened when you direct your thoughts to other things. You must know that even if you were the wisest man in respect to the true knowledge of God, you break the bond between you and God whenever you turn entirely your thoughts to the necessary food or any necessary business; you are then not with God, and He is not with you: for that relation between you and Him is actually interrupted in those moments. The pious were therefore particular to restrict the time in which they could not meditate upon the name of God, and cautioned others about it, saying, "Let not your minds be vacant from reflections upon God." In the same sense did David say, "I have set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved" (Ps. xvi. 8); i.e., I do not turn my thoughts away from God; He is like my right hand, which I do not forget even for a moment on account of the ease of its motions, and therefore I shall not be moved, I shall not fail.

We must bear in mind that all such religious acts as reading the Law, praying, and the performance of other precepts, serve exclusively as the means of causing us to occupy and fill our mind with the precepts of God, and free it from worldly business; for we are thus, as it were, in communication with God, and undisturbed by any other thing. If we, however,

p. 387

pray with the motion of our lips, and our face toward the wall, but at the same time think of our business; if we read the Law with our tongue, whilst our heart is occupied with the building of our house, and we do not think of what we are reading; if we perform the commandments only with our limbs, we are like those who are engaged in digging in the ground, or hewing wood in

the forest, without reflecting on the nature of those acts, or by whom they are commanded, or what is their object. We must not imagine that [in this way] we attain the highest perfection; on the contrary, we are then like those in reference to whom Scripture says, "Thou art near in their mouth, and far from their reins" (Jer. xii. 2).

I will now commence to show you the way how to educate and train yourselves in order to attain that great perfection.

The first thing you must do is this: Turn your thoughts away from everything while you read *Shema* or during the *Tefilláh*, and do not content yourself with being devout when you read the first verse of *Shema*, or the first paragraph of the prayer. When you have successfully practised this for many years, try in reading the Law or listening to it, to have all your heart and all your thought occupied with understanding what you read or hear. After some time when you have mastered this, accustom yourself to have your mind free from all other thoughts when you read any portion of the other books of the prophets, or when you say any blessing; and to have your attention directed exclusively to the perception and the understanding of what you utter. When you have succeeded in properly performing these acts of divine service, and you have your thought, during their performance, entirely abstracted from worldly affairs, take then care that your thought be not disturbed by thinking of your wants or of superfluous things. In short, think of worldly matters when you eat, drink, bathe, talk with your wife and little children, or when you converse with other people. These times, which are frequent and long, I think must suffice to you for reflecting on everything that is necessary as regards business, household, and health. But when you are engaged in the performance of religious duties, have your mind exclusively directed to what you are doing.

When you are alone by yourself, when you are awake on your couch, be careful to meditate in such precious moments on nothing but the intellectual worship of God, viz., to approach Him and to minister before Him in the true manner which I have described to you--not in hollow emotions. This I consider as the highest perfection wise men can attain by the above training.

When we have acquired a true knowledge of God, and rejoice in that knowledge in such a manner, that whilst speaking with others, or attending to our bodily wants, our mind is all that time with God; when we are with our heart constantly near God, even whilst our body is in the society of men; when we are in that state which the Song on the relation between God and man poetically describes in the following words: "I sleep, but my heart waketh: it is the voice of my beloved that knocketh" (Song v. 2):--then we have attained not only the height of ordinary prophets, but of Moses, our Teacher, of whom Scripture relates: "And Moses alone shall come near before the Lord" (*ibid.* xxxiv. 28); "But as for thee, stand thou here by me" (Deut. V. 28). The meaning of these verses has been explained by us.

The Patriarchs likewise attained this degree of perfection; they approached God in such a manner that with them the name of God became known in the world. Thus we read in Scripture: "The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. . . . This is My name for ever" (Exod. iii. 15). Their mind was so identified with the knowledge of God, that He made a lasting covenant with each of them: "Then will I remember my covenant with Jacob," etc. (Lev. xxvi. 42). For it is known from statements made in Scripture that these four, viz., the Patriarchs and Moses, had their minds exclusively filled with the name of God, that is, with His knowledge and love; and that in the same measure was Divine Providence attached to them and their descendants. When we therefore find them also, engaged in ruling others, in increasing their property, and endeavouring to obtain possession of wealth and honour, we see in this fact a proof that when they were occupied in these things, only their bodily limbs were at work, whilst their heart and mind never moved away from the name of God. I think these four reached that high degree of perfection in their relation to God, and enjoyed the continual presence of Divine Providence, even in their endeavours to increase their property, feeding the flock, toiling in the field, or managing the house, only because in all these things their end and aim was to approach God as much as possible. It was the chief aim of their whole life to create a people that should know and worship God. Comp. "For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him" (Gen. xviii. 19). The object of all their labours was to publish the Unity of God in the world, and to induce people to love Him; and it was on this account that they succeeded in reaching that high degree; for even those [worldly] affairs were for them a perfect worship of God. But a person like myself must not imagine that he is able to lead men up to this degree of perfection. It is only the next degree to it that can be attained by means of the above-mentioned training. And let us pray to God and beseech Him that He clear and remove from our way everything that forms an obstruction and a partition between us and Him, although most of these obstacles are our own creation, as has several times been shown in this treatise. Comp. "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God" (Isa. lix. 2).

An excellent idea presents itself here to me, which may serve to remove many doubts, and may help to solve many difficult problems in metaphysics. We have already stated in the chapters which treat of Divine Providence, that Providence watches over every rational being according to the amount of intellect which that being possesses. Those who are perfect in their perception of God, whose mind is never separated from Him, enjoy always the influence of Providence. But those who, perfect in their knowledge of God, turn their mind sometimes away from God, enjoy the presence of Divine Providence only when they meditate on God; when their thoughts are engaged in other matters, divine Providence departs from them. The absence of Providence in this case is not like its absence in the case of those who do not reflect on God at all: it is in this case less intense, because when a person perfect in his knowledge [of God] is busy with worldly matters, he has not knowledge in actuality, but only knowledge in potentiality [though ready to become actual]. This person is then like a trained scribe when he is not writing. Those who have no knowledge of God are like those who are

in constant darkness and have never seen light. We have explained in this sense the words: "The wicked shall be silent in darkness" (1 Sam. ii. 9), whilst those who possess the knowledge of God, and have their thoughts entirely directed to that knowledge, are, as it were, always in bright sunshine; and those who have the knowledge, but are at times engaged in other themes, have then as it were a cloudy day: the sun does not shine for them on account of the cloud that intervenes between them and God.

Hence it appears to me that it is only in times of such neglect that some of the ordinary evils befall a prophet or a perfect and pious man: and the intensity of the evil is proportional to the duration of those moments, or to the character of the things that thus occupy their mind. Such being the case, the great difficulty is removed that led philosophers to assert that Providence does not extend to every individual, and that man is like any other living being in this respect, viz., the argument based on the fact that good and pious men are afflicted with great evils. We have thus explained this difficult question even in accordance with the philosophers' own principles. Divine Providence is constantly watching over those who have obtained that blessing which is prepared for those who endeavour to obtain it. If man frees his thoughts from worldly matters, obtains a knowledge of God in the right way, and rejoices in that knowledge, it is impossible that any kind of evil should befall him while he is with God, and God with him. When he does not meditate on God, when he is separated from God, then God is also separated from him; then he is exposed to any evil that might befall him; for it is only that intellectual link with God that secures the presence of Providence and protection from evil accidents. Hence it may occur that the perfect man is at times not happy, whilst no evil befalls those who are imperfect; in these cases what happens to them is due to chance. This principle I find also expressed in the Law. Comp. "And I will hide my face from them, and they shall be devoured, and many evils and troubles shall befall them: so that they will say in that day, Are not these evils come upon us, because our God is not among us?" (Deut. xxxi. 17). It is clear that we ourselves are the cause of this hiding of the face, and that the screen that separates us from God is of our own creation. This is the meaning of the words: "And I will surely hide my face in that day, for all the evils which they shall have wrought" (*ibid.* ver. 18). There is undoubtedly no difference in this regard between one single person and a whole community. It is now clearly established that the cause of our being exposed to chance, and abandoned to destruction like cattle, is to be found in our separation from God. Those who have their God dwelling in their hearts, are not touched by any evil whatever. For God says: "Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God" (Isa. xli. 10). "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee" (*ibid.* xlii. 2). For if we prepare ourselves, and attain the influence of the Divine Intellect, Providence is joined to us, and we are guarded against all evils. Comp. "The Lord is on my side; I will not fear; what can man do unto me?" (Ps. cxviii. 6). "Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace" (Job xxii. 2 1); i.e., turn unto Him, and you will be safe from all evil.

Consider the Psalm on mishaps, and see how the author describes that

p. 390

great Providence, the protection and defence from all mishaps that concern the body, both from those that are common to all people, and those that concern only one certain individual; from those that are due to the laws of Nature, and those that are caused by our fellow-men. The Psalmist says: "Surely he will deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence. He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: His truth shall be thy shield and buckler. Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day" (Ps. xci. 3-5). The author then relates how God protects us from the troubles caused by men, saying, If you happen to meet on your way with an army fighting with drawn swords, killing thousands at your left hand and myriads at your right hand, you will not suffer any harm; you will behold and see how God judges and punishes the wicked that are being slain, whilst you remain unhurt. "A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee. Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked" (*ibid.* vers. 7, 8). The author then continues his description of the divine defence and shelter, and shows the cause of this great protection, saying that such a man is well guarded "Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name" (*ibid.* ver. 14). We have shown in previous chapters that by the "knowledge of God's name," the knowledge of God is meant. The above passage may therefore be paraphrased as follows: "This man is well guarded, because he hath known me, and then (*bi chashak*) loved me." You know the difference between the two Hebrew terms that signify "to love," *ahab* and *hashak*. When a man's love is so intense that his thought is exclusively engaged with the object of his love, it is expressed in Hebrew by the term *hashak*.

The philosophers have already explained how the bodily forces of man in his youth prevent the development of moral principles. In a greater measure this is the case as regards the purity of thought which man attains through the perfection of those ideas that lead him to an intense love of God. Man can by no means attain this so long as his bodily humours are hot. The more the forces of his body are weakened, and the fire of passion quenched, in the same measure does man's intellect increase in strength and light; his knowledge becomes purer, and he is happy with his knowledge. When this perfect man is stricken in age and is near death, his knowledge mightily increases, his joy in that knowledge grows greater, and his love for the object of his knowledge more intense, and it is in this great delight that the soul separates from the body. To this state our Sages referred, when in reference to the death of Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, they said that death was in these three cases nothing but a kiss. They say thus: We learn from the words, "And Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab by the mouth of the Lord" (Deut. xxxiv. 5), that his death was a kiss. The same expression is used of Aaron: "And Aaron the priest went up into Mount Hor . . . by the mouth of the Lord, and died there" (Num. xxxiii. 38) Our Sages said that the same was the case with Miriam; but the phrase "by the mouth of the Lord" is not employed, because it was not considered appropriate to use these words in the

description of her death as she was a female. The meaning of this saying is that these three died in the midst of

p. 391

the pleasure derived from the knowledge of God and their great love for Him. When our Sages figuratively call the knowledge of God united with intense love for Him a kiss, they follow the well-known poetical diction, "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth" (Song i. 2). This kind of death, which in truth is deliverance from death, has been ascribed by our Sages to none but to Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. The other prophets and pious men are beneath that degree: but their knowledge of God is strengthened when death approaches. Of them Scripture says, "Thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall be thy reward" (Isa. lviii. 8). The intellect of these men remains then constantly in the same condition, since the obstacle is removed that at times has intervened between the intellect and the object of its action: it continues for ever in that great delight, which is not like bodily pleasure. We have explained this in our work, and others have explained it before us.

Try to understand this chapter, endeavour with all your might to spend more and more time in communion with God, or in the attempt to approach Him; and to reduce the hours which you spend in other occupations, and during which you are not striving to come nearer unto Him. This instruction suffices for the object of this treatise.

CHAPTER LII

WE do not sit, move, and occupy ourselves when we are alone and at home, in the same manner as we do in the presence of a great king; we speak and open our mouth as we please when we are with the people of our own household and with our relatives, but not so when we are in a royal assembly. If we therefore desire to attain human perfection, and to be truly men of God, we must awake from our sleep, and bear in mind that the great king that is over us, and is always joined to us, is greater than any earthly king, greater than David and Solomon. The king that cleaves to us and embraces us is the Intellect that influences us, and forms the link between us and God. We perceive God by means of that light that He sends down unto us, wherefore the Psalmist says, "In Thy light shall we see light" (Ps. xxxvi. 9): so God looks down upon us through that same light, and is always with us beholding and watching us on account of this light." Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him?" (Jer. xxiii. 24). Note this particularly.

When the perfect bear this in mind, they will be filled with fear of God, humility, and piety, with true, not apparent, reverence and respect of God, in such a manner that their conduct, even when alone with their wives or in the bath, will be as modest as they are in public intercourse with other people. Thus it is related of our renowned Sages that even in their sexual intercourse with their wives they behaved with great modesty. They also said, "Who is modest? He whose conduct in the dark night is the same as in the day." You know also how much they warned us not to walk proudly, since "the fulness of the whole earth is His glory" (Isa. vi. 3). They thought

that by these rules the above-mentioned idea will be firmly established in the hearts of men, viz., that we are always before God, and it is in the presence of His glory that we go to and fro. The great men among our Sages would not uncover their heads because they believed that God's glory was round them

p. 392

and over them; for the same reason they spoke little. In our Commentary on the Sayings of the Fathers (chap. i. 17) we have fully explained how we have to restrict our speech. Comp. "For God is in heaven and thou upon earth, therefore let thy words be few" (Eccles. v. i).

What I have here pointed out to you is the object of all our religious acts. For by [carrying out] all the details of the prescribed practices, and repeating them continually, some few pious men may attain human perfection. They will be filled with respect and reverence towards God; and bearing in mind who is with them, they will perform their duty. God declares in plain words that it is the object of all religious acts to produce in man fear of God and obedience to His word--the state of mind which we have demonstrated in this chapter for those who desire to know the truth, as being our duty to seek. Comp. "If thou wilt not observe to do all the words of this law that are written in this book, that thou mayest fear this glorious and fearful name, the Lord thy God" (Deut. xxviii. 58). Consider how clearly it is stated here that the only object and aim of "all the words of this law" is to [make man] fear "the glorious and fearful name." That this end is attained by certain acts we learn likewise from the phrase employed in this verse: "If thou wilt not observe *to do* . . . that thou mayest fear." For this phrase clearly shows that fear of God is inculcated [into our hearts] when we act in accordance with the positive and the negative precepts. But the truths which the Law teaches us--the knowledge of God's Existence and Unity--create in us love of God, as we have shown repeatedly. You know how frequently the Law exhorts us to love God. Comp. "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might" (Deut. vi. 5). The two objects, love and fear of God, are acquired by two different means. The love is the result of the truths taught in the Law, including the true knowledge of the Existence of God; whilst fear of God is produced by the practices prescribed in the Law. Note this explanation.

CHAPTER LIII

THIS chapter treats of the meaning of three terms which we find necessary to explain, viz., *hesed* ("loving kindness"), *mishpat* ("judgment"), and *zedakah* ("righteousness").

In our Commentary on the Sayings of the Fathers (chap. v. 7) we have explained the expression *hesed* as denoting an excess [in some moral quality]. It is especially used of extraordinary kindness. Loving-kindness is practised in two ways: first, we show kindness to those who have no claim whatever upon us; secondly, we are kind to those to whom it is due, in a greater measure than is due to them. In the inspired writings the term *hesed* occurs mostly in the sense of showing kindness to those who have no claim to it whatever. For this reason the term *hesed* is

employed to express the good bestowed upon us by God: "I will mention the loving-kindness of the Lord" (Isa. lxiii. 7). On this account, the very act of the creation is an act of God's loving-kindness. "I have said, The Universe is built up in loving-kindness" (Ps. lxxxix. 3); i.e., the building up of the Universe is an act of loving-kindness. Also, in the enumeration of God's attributes, Scripture says: "And abundant in loving-kindness" (Exod. xxxiv. 6).

p. 393

The term *zedakah* is derived from *zedek*, "righteousness"; it denotes the act of giving every one his due, and of showing kindness to every being according as it deserves. In Scripture, however, the expression *zedakah* is not used in the first sense, and does not apply to the payment of what we owe to others. When we therefore give the hired labourer his wages, or pay a debt, we do not perform an act of *zedakah*. But we do perform an act of *zedakah* when we fulfil those duties towards our fellow-men which our moral conscience imposes upon us; e.g., when we heal the wound of the sufferer. Thus Scripture says, in reference to the returning of the pledge [to the poor debtor]: "And it shall be *zedakah* (righteousness) unto thee" (Deut. xxiv. 11). When we walk in the way of virtue we act righteously towards our intellectual faculty, and pay what is due unto it; and because every virtue is thus *zedakah*, Scripture applies the term to the virtue of faith in God. Comp. "And he believed in the Lord, and he accounted it to him as righteousness" (Gen. xv. 6); "And it shall be our righteousness" (Deut. vi. 25).

The noun *mishpat*, "judgment," denotes the act of deciding upon a certain action in accordance with justice which may demand either mercy or punishment.

We have thus shown that *hesed* denotes pure charity; *zedakah* kindness, prompted by a certain moral conscience in man, and being a means of attaining perfection for his soul, whilst *mishpat* may in some cases find expression in revenge, in other cases in mercy.

In discussing the impropriety of admitting attributes of God (Part I., chap. liii., seq.), we stated that the divine attributes which occur in Scripture are attributes of His actions; thus He is called *hasid*, "kind," because He created the Universe; *zaddik*, "righteous," on account of His mercy with the weak, in providing for every living being according to its powers; and *shofet*, "judge," on account of the relative good and the great relative evils that are decreed by God's justice as directed by His wisdom. These three names occur in the Pentateuch: "Shall not the judge (*shofet*) of all the earth," etc. (Gen. xviii. 25); "Righteous (*zaddik*) and upright is he" (Deut. xxxii. 4); "Abundant in loving-kindness" (*hesed*, Exod. xxxiv. 6).

We intended in explaining these three terms to prepare the reader for the next chapter.

CHAPTER LIV

THE term *hokmah* ("wisdom") in Hebrew is used of four different things: (1) It denotes the knowledge of those truths which lead to the knowledge of God. Comp. "But where shall wisdom

be found?" (Job xxviii. 12); "If thou seekest her like silver" (Prov. ii. 4). The word occurs frequently in this sense. (2) The expression *hokmah* denotes also knowledge of any workmanship. Comp. "And every wise-hearted among you shall come and make all that the Lord hath commanded" (Exod. xxxv. 10); "And all the women that were wise-hearted did spin" (*ibid.* ver. 25). (3) It is also used of the acquisition of moral principles. Comp. "And teach his senators wisdom" (Ps. cv. 22); "With the ancient is wisdom" (Job xii. 12); for it is chiefly the disposition for acquiring moral principles that is developed by old age alone. (4) It implies, lastly, the notion of cunning and subtlety; comp. "Come on, let us deal wisely with them" (Exod. i. 10). In the same

p. 394

sense the term is used in the following passages: "And fetched thence a wise woman" (2 Sam. xiv. 2); "They are wise to do evil" (Jer. iv. 22). It is possible that the Hebrew *hokmah* ("wisdom") expresses the idea of cunning and planning, which may serve in one case as a means of acquiring intellectual perfection, or good moral principles; but may in another case produce skill in workmanship, or even be employed in establishing bad opinions and principles. The attribute *hakam* ("wise") is therefore given to a person that possesses great intellectual faculties, or good moral principles, or skill in art; but also to persons cunning in evil deeds and principles.

According to this explanation, a person that has a true knowledge of the whole Law is called wise in a double sense; he is wise because the Law instructs him in the highest truths, and secondly, because it teaches him good morals. But as the truths contained in the Law are taught by way of tradition, not by a philosophical method, the knowledge of the Law, and the acquisition of true wisdom, are treated in the books of the Prophets and in the words of our Sages as two different things; real wisdom demonstrates by proof those truths which Scripture teaches us by way of tradition. It is to this kind of wisdom, which proves the truth of the Law, that Scripture refers when it extols wisdom, and speaks of the high value of this perfection, and of the consequent paucity of men capable of acquiring it, in sayings like these: "Not many are wise" (Job xxxii. 9); "But where shall wisdom be found" (*ibid.* xxviii. 12)? In the writings of our Sages we notice likewise many passages in which distinction is made between knowledge of the Law and wisdom. They say of Moses, our Teacher, that he was Father in the knowledge of the Law, in wisdom and in prophecy. When Scripture says of Solomon, "And he was wiser than all men" (1 Kings v. 11), our Sages add, "but not greater than Moses"; and the phrase, "than all men," is explained to mean, "than all men of his generation"; for this reason [only] "Heman, Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol," the renowned wise men of that time, are named. Our Sages further say, that man has first to render account concerning his knowledge of the Law, then concerning the acquisition of wisdom, and at last concerning the lessons derived by logical conclusions from the Law, i.e., the lessons concerning his actions. This is also the right order: we must first learn the truths by tradition, after this we must be taught how to prove them, and then investigate the actions that help to improve man's ways. The idea that man will have to render account concerning these three things in the order described, is expressed by our Sages in the following

passage: "When man comes to the trial, he is first asked, 'Hast thou fixed certain seasons for the study of the Law? Hast thou been engaged in the acquisition of wisdom? Hast thou derived from one thing another thing?'" This proves that our Sages distinguished between the knowledge of the Law on the one hand, and wisdom on the other, as the means of proving the lessons taught in the Law by correct reasoning.

Hear now what I have to say after having given the above explanation. The ancient and the modern philosophers have shown that man can acquire four kinds of perfection. The first kind, the lowest, in the acquisition of which people spend their days, is perfection as regards property; the possession of money, garments, furniture, servants, land, and the like; the

p. 395

possession of the title of a great king belongs to this class. There is no close connexion between this possession and its possessor; it is a perfectly imaginary relation when on account of the great advantage a person derives from these possessions, he says, This is my house, this is my servant, this is my money, and these are my hosts and armies. For when he examines himself he will find that all these things are external, and their qualities are entirely independent of the possessor. When, therefore, that relation ceases, he that has been a great king may one morning find that there is no difference between him and the lowest person, and yet no change has taken place in the things which were ascribed to him. The philosophers have shown that he whose sole aim in all his exertions and endeavours is the possession of this kind of perfection, only seeks perfectly imaginary and transient things; and even if these remain his property all his lifetime, they do not give him any perfection.

The second kind is more closely related to man's body than the first. It includes the perfection of the shape, constitution, and form of man's body; the utmost evenness of temperaments, and the proper order and strength of his limbs. This kind of perfection must likewise be excluded from forming our chief aim; because it is a perfection of the body, and man does not possess it as man, but as a living being: he has this property besides in common with the lowest animal; and even if a person possesses the greatest possible strength, he could not be as strong as a mule, much less can he be as strong as a lion or an elephant; he, therefore, can at the utmost have strength that might enable him to carry a heavy burden, or break a thick substance, or do similar things, in which there is no great profit for the body. The soul derives no profit whatever from this kind of perfection.

The third kind of perfection is more closely connected with man himself than the second perfection. It includes moral perfection, the highest degree of excellency in man's character. Most of the precepts aim at producing this perfection; but even this kind is only a preparation for another perfection, and is not sought for its own sake. For all moral principles concern the relation of man to his neighbour; the perfection of man's moral principles is, as it were, given to man for the benefit of mankind. Imagine a person being alone, and having no connexion

whatever with any other person, all his good moral principles are at rest, they are not required, and give man no perfection whatever. These principles are only necessary and useful when man comes in contact with others.

The fourth kind of perfection is the true perfection of man: the possession of the highest, intellectual faculties; the possession of such notions which lead to true metaphysical opinions as regards God. With this perfection man has obtained his final object; it gives him true human perfection; it remains to him alone; it gives him immortality, and on its account he is called man. Examine the first three kinds of perfection, you will find that, if you possess them, they are not your property, but the property of others; according to the ordinary view, however, they belong to you and to others. But the last kind of perfection is exclusively yours; no one else owns any part of it, "They shall be only thine own, and not strangers' with thee" (Prov. v. 17). Your aim must therefore be to attain this [fourth] perfection that is exclusively yours, and you ought not to continue to work and weary

p. 396

yourself for that which belongs to others, whilst neglecting your soul till it has lost entirely its original purity through the dominion of the bodily powers over it. The same idea is expressed in the beginning of those poems, which allegorically represent the state of our soul. "My mother's children were angry with me; they made me the keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept" (Song i. 6). Also the following passage refers to the same subject, "Lest thou give thine honour unto others, and thy years unto the cruel" (Prov. v. 9).

The prophets have likewise explained unto us these things, and have expressed the same opinion on them as the philosophers. They say distinctly that perfection in property, in health, or in character, is not a perfection worthy to be sought as a cause of pride and glory for us: that the knowledge of God, i.e., true wisdom, is the only perfection which we should seek, and in which we should glorify ourselves. Jeremiah, referring to these four kinds of perfection, says: "Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me" (Jer. ix. 22, 23). See how the prophet arranged them according to their estimation in the eyes of the multitude. The rich man occupies the first rank; next is the mighty man; and then the wise man; that is, the man of good moral principles: for in the eyes of the multitude, who are addressed in these words, he is likewise a great man. This is the reason why the three classes are enumerated in this order.

Our Sages have likewise derived from this passage the above-mentioned lessons, and stated the same theory that has been explained in this chapter, viz., that the simple term *ḥokmah*, as a rule, denotes the highest aim of man, the knowledge of God; that those properties which man acquires, makes his peculiar treasure, and considers as his perfection, in reality do not include any perfection: and that the religious acts prescribed in the Law, viz., the various kinds of

worship and the moral principles which benefit all people in their social intercourse with each other, do not constitute the ultimate aim of man, nor can they be compared to it, for they are but preparations leading to it. Hear the opinion of our Sages on this subject in their own words. The passage occurs in *Bereshit Rabba*, and runs thus, "In one place Scripture says, 'And all things that are desirable (*hafazim*) are not to be compared to her' (Prov. viii. 11); and in another place, 'And all things that thou desirest (*hafazeḥa*) are not to be compared unto her'" (*ibid.* iii. 15). By "things that are desirable" the performance of Divine precepts and good deeds is to be understood, whilst "things that thou desirest" refer to precious stones and pearls. Both--things that are desirable, and things that thou desirest--cannot be compared to wisdom, but "in this let him that glorieth glory, that he understandeth and knoweth me." Consider how concise this saying is, and how perfect its author; how nothing is here omitted of all that we have put forth after lengthy explanations and preliminary remarks.

Having stated the sublime ideas contained in that Scriptural passage, and quoted the explanation of our Sages, we will now complete what the remainder of that passage teaches us. The prophet does not content himself with explaining that the knowledge of God is the highest kind of perfection;

p. 397

for if this only had been his intention, he would have said, "But in this let him who glorieth glory, that he understandeth and knoweth me," and would have stopped there; or he would have said, "that he understandeth and knoweth me that I am One," or, "that I have not any likeness," or, "that there is none like me," or a similar phrase. He says, however, that man can only glory in the knowledge of God and in the knowledge of His ways and attributes, which are His actions, as we have shown (Part I. liv.) in expounding the passage, "Show me now thy ways" (Exod. xxxviii. 13). We are thus told in this passage that the Divine acts which ought to be known, and ought to serve as a guide for our actions, are, *hesed*, "loving-kindness," *mishpat*, "judgment," and *zedakah*, "righteousness." Another very important lesson is taught by the additional phrase, "in the earth." It implies a fundamental principle of the Law; it rejects the theory of those who boldly assert that God's providence does not extend below the sphere of the moon, and that the earth with its contents is abandoned, that "the Lord hath forsaken the earth" (Ez. viii. 12). It teaches, as has been taught by the greatest of all wise men in the words, "The earth is the Lord's" (Exod. ix. 29), that His providence extends to the earth in accordance with its nature, in the same manner as it controls the heavens in accordance with their nature. This is expressed in the words, "That I am the Lord which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth." The prophet thus, in conclusion, says, "For in these things I delight, saith the Lord," i.e., My object [in saying this] is that you shall practise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. In a similar manner we have shown (Part I. liv.) that the object of the enumeration of God's thirteen attributes is the lesson that we should acquire similar attributes and act accordingly. The object of the above passage is therefore to declare, that the perfection, in which man can truly glory, is attained by him when he has acquired--as far as this is possible for man--the knowledge of God,

the knowledge of His Providence, and of the manner in which it influences His creatures in their production and continued existence. Having acquired this knowledge he will then be determined always to seek loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness, and thus to imitate the ways of God. We have explained this many times in this treatise.

This is all that I thought proper to discuss in this treatise, and which I considered useful for men like you. I hope that, by the help of God, you will, after due reflection, comprehend all the things which I have treated here. May He grant us and all Israel with us to attain what He promised us, "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped" (Isa. xxxv. 5); "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; they that dwell in the shadow of death upon them hath the light shined" (*ibid.* ix. 1).

God is near to all who call Him, if they call Him in truth, and turn to Him. He is found by every one who seeks Him, if he always goes towards Him, and never goes astray. AMEN.